

PARTNERING WITH YOUR CHURCH



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When I first became involved with Playgroups I was really excited about seeing women come to Playgroup and move from there, through ministries such as Women's Bible study and Alpha, to a personal relationship with Jesus. Isn't that all our hearts desire? A week before Easter I had the extreme privilege of seeing that dream become a reality!!

Jane and I met last year; in fact we met in the delivery room!! As we journeyed together as new Mums Jane started coming to Playgroup with me...and she loved it. The space, the women, the coffee!! The more she came, the more she came to love the women she met there and long for the freedom she saw in them.

Our story could end here, I could tell you of the wonderful conversations we have each week and I could share with you my longing for her to one day come to faith.

But that's not my story and it's not Jane's. It's not the story because my church chose to do something new – it chose to partner with Playgroups.

The leaders of the Women's Bible study decided to partner with Playgroup by running a 4 week Parenting Series during the normal Bible study timeslot and extending personal invitations to Playgroup members. This is where Jane's journey really took off; she came along and said she had never encountered a group of women like them before. They loved her and loved her son, so when the Parenting series was over she kept coming.

As we met for our weekly post-Bible study lunch the other week Jane looked at me and said "I want the freedom I see in those women. I want to be free." As she said those words, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper in my ear "Now is the time. It's going to be today". And it was.

Less than a year after meeting, and 6 months after joining our Playgroup, my friend Jane put her trust in Jesus. It happened both because Playgroups provided a warm and loving space where Jane felt welcomed, and because Playgroups and Women's Bible study partnered together to provide a stepping stone to faith.

None of us need to be convinced of the importance of Christian Playgroups. We know the power of a loving community of women and we relate to that sense of coming before Christ, tired and broken. Jane came to Playgroup a tired and overwhelmed new Mum looking for friendship. She came to know the ultimate friend in Jesus, by seeing the freedom He gives his followers. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." (Gal 5:1) What joy!

Are you partnering with your church? Does your church understand that they need to partner with you? How can you, together, proclaim the gospel of Christ, a gospel of love and grace and compassion, with those in your midst? It's time to start that conversation!