



DTS Gathering Report

During the October half-term around 130 YWAMers descended on south Bristol for an evangelism conference. They came to sleep on church floors and to love our city! It was a week of training on sharing our faith in sensitive and creative ways with time to apply the training on the streets of Bristol. It was a great week, we hope you are encouraged as you read this report.

Youth With A Mission is best known around the world for our Discipleship Training Schools (DTS), these courses can be done in over 400 locations in around 180 nations throughout the world. The courses are slightly different at each location, however they all have the same core components. For example, we always have at least 12 weeks of training, looking at key aspects of Christianity such as; Lordship, Relationships, The Father Heart of God, Biblical studies & Identity in Christ. Alongside this we have small groups and various types of ministry training. Once those 12 weeks are complete we then have an international outreach where we take our trainees on a short term missions trip.

In 2009 YWAM England decided to gather together all of the DTS's running around the nation for one week of the school. These gatherings started as part of YWAM England's strategy for the Olympic Games outreach, but they proved such a success that we felt compelled to continue them. The gatherings are always focused on evangelism with a mixture of classroom training followed by application. Many DTS

trainees who have the opportunity to come to a gathering say that they are a main highlight of their whole DTS experience.



'Evangelism isn't an activity it's a question'

So often Christians get unnerved when talking about evangelism because we talk about it as an activity, as something we do. However in YWAM we like to think of it as a question, and the question is, 'How big is your heart?' That's why our slogan is **'To know God and make Him known'**, it's about love. The more I know of God, the more I am compelled to find creative ways to communicate the gospel. When we think about communication, we think about how people receive what we are communicating.

We also often make this statement; "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care". Again, it's about love and how we communicate love. It's also about value - people just don't know quite how valuable they are. The more we are able to show them their value, but even more show how much God values them, it blows their minds.

Another area that prevents Christians from sharing their faith is the whole area of fear. In YWAM we talk about this as the *fear of man*. It's that fear that says 'What if they reject me?' 'What if they don't like what I have to say?' 'What if they persecute me or ridicule me?'. And this is a very real fear, but it is something that we like to work on in YWAM. Surely we should be more concerned with what the Lord thinks about us than what other humans think about us. And so during our training time we make space to, with God, sort out this fear in the lives of the trainees. I am always blown away by the freedom and breakthrough that comes through this session. During our teaching time we ask the question, 'What does success look like?'. So often we think that to be successful means we must see people become Christians. In a way this is true, but equally it's unhelpful. Does this mean that if a certain amount of people are not 'led to the Lord' that we have failed? I don't think so. We believe that everyone is on a journey, some are closer to God than others. When we look to share our faith we're looking to move them closer to Jesus than

they were before the conversation started. This might mean that we meet someone who doesn't believe that God exists at all, but when we leave they might have changed their minds. Surely that is success!

Using this to measure success we are greatly encouraged. Using some conservative numbers we can confidently say this; On average 70 pairs of YWAMers went out on 5 occasions. Most groups spoke to more than one person, a few didn't manage to speak to anyone, however we think we can say that 70 people would have met one of our pairs each session and had a meaningful encounter with them. This means that during our evangelism conference 350 people in Bristol had a meaningful encounter with a Christian! That's amazing, before anything else, we've got to celebrate that!!! Of those 350 people, many did say that they wanted to know more about Jesus and Christianity.



So many outreach opportunities

As much as possible we try to provide many different types of outreach opportunities for our trainees. Ultimately this week is about helping them become effective in outreach as much as looking to see people meet Jesus. One outreach we in YWAM Bristol like to do is use blackboards. We take the boards to a location where there are people passing by and ask a question, such as 'Where does love come from?'. We then invite those who pass by to write their answer on the blackboards. It's always surprising what response we get, a lot of people like to engage with it and it often leads to fantastic conversations.

As mentioned, we love to show people how valuable they are, so we took out some cameras and made some signs for people to hold. Those who had their photos taken are able to download them from our website as well. We had one homeless couple hold a sign saying 'I'm homeless, not helpless.' [\(click here to see the webpage\)](#) We like to take cardboard signs out onto the street and ask God what he says about Bristol, then we write the signs and hold them up in the city centre. People always come up and ask us why we're doing it and it leads to great conversations. Most people will go through their day without even thinking about God, without thinking about what life is about. Our hope and intention is to bring those thoughts and questions to the surface, and in that place ask that God would meet them and show Himself to them.

At night we hand out tea and coffee and look for homeless people to feed and encourage and of course good old fashioned street evangelism. We ask God for

divine appointments then go out and find them.



What about follow up?

We are so excited that so many people had a good encounter with Christians last week. We are convinced that many seeds were sown, and we have to trust that God will continue to grow those seeds. However we have a role too. Where possible we have the contact details of those we met and we have invited them to meet with us to continue the conversation. Our hope and prayer is that we will be able to build good relationships with them and help them settle into a church close to their home. Unfortunately many that we connected with were under 18, this means that legally we cannot take their contact information, and so we pray that God would be faithful and see them surrounded by Christians. He did that with the apostle Paul after his conversion, I'm sure He can do it again!



Finally...

Finally we want to say a huge thank you to all of those who made this week possible. Thank you to the YWAM England and YWAM Scotland DTS's for coming and investing into our city. Thank you to the YWAMers from Newcastle, Taunton, Holmsted, The Kings Lodge, Coventry, Reading and Carlisle who came to serve and boost the numbers of the behind the scenes hands.

Thank you to **St Pauls Church** Bedminster, **The Salvation Army** Bedminster, **St Aldhelms** Bedminster and to the **New Room** in Broadmead. Thank you for opening your doors up to us and allowing us to use your facilities. You were so very generous and trusting.

Finally thank you to all who prayed for us. God is so good, His love endures for ever! We now know that in Bristol the harvest is ripe, God is still at work in our city and we are excited for the future.

As for YWAM Bristol, please do continue to pray for us, there is a lot from the gathering that we need to process over the next few weeks. There is a lot that we want to see happen, and we are seeking God for our next steps and trusting him as we move forward.