

## Foundations 1:

# Life Begins

Edited by Sarah Small,  
Jon Paul Witt,  
Alan Scantlebury  
and Jo Kimball





# Foundations 1

## Life Begins

*'They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD  
for the display of his splendour.'*

*Isaiah 61:3*



## **Foundations 1: Life Begins, First Edition, October 2017**

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### **Thanks**

Dignity is thankful to Jesus for the life he gives that we explore in this book.

Dignity is thankful to each person and trust who has contributed to this work.

### **The work of Dignity**

Dignity partners with those on the outskirts of society and inspires transformed lives and communities to bring freedom from poverty through relationship with Jesus. We achieve this primarily through Life Groups, locally led Christian community groups that equip people to walk closely with Jesus and to show his love to those around them. Through our work we are seeing people living amazing lives and being part of everyday miracles. Find out more at [www.dignityonline.org.uk](http://www.dignityonline.org.uk)

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### **Biblical Quotations**

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### **Guidance Symbols**

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# Foundations

**Foundations** is a course that helps people explore and grow in their relationship with God and encourages them to serve their community. It was written to provide high quality materials that could be used in a variety of geographical locations and cultural groups around the world. **Foundations** is a set of four books, each containing thirteen interactive group study sessions.

**Foundations** has been written by volunteer guest authors from around the world and compiled and edited by Dignity.

***Foundations 1: Life Begins*** is aimed at those with new or no faith. From simple beginnings it leads people along the early steps of faith and knowing God.

***Foundations 2: Life Grows*** builds the foundations on which faith can grow and gives some doctrinal understanding to underpin use of the Bible and prayer.

***Foundations 3: Life Creates*** concentrates on how disciples living in community can transform what is around them. A healthy Christian naturally re-creates the life that they have been given in their community and in other people.

***Foundations 4: Life Matures*** explores what a mature Christian looks like. This book carries on the themes of the rest of the series, deepening and extending them.

# Authorship

**Foundations 1: Life Begins** was written by volunteer authors from around the world. Authors who contributed to this book are listed here in alphabetical order.



**Cornelius Chalwe** is an Impact Team Leader with Dignity, Anglican priest, change agent and influencer for the maturity and salvation of God's people. He loves God, believes his word brings freedom and opens communities and homes to God.

*Session 11*

**Alan de Wet** describes himself as a floundering engineer, farmer, husband, father and a friend who preaches, teaches and now writes. We know him to be a man who loves God and who shares the life God gives through his words.

*Session 6*



**Kurt Francis** is Associate Pastor at Ruthin Christian Fellowship in Wales. He is married to Ann, has 3 grown up sons and is now a very proud Grandfather. He enjoys reading and spending his time with friends and family and occasionally a spot of fishing.

*Session 2*



**Mary Hardy** came to a living faith in Christ when she was a student in Manchester, England. She is married to Randall and invested many years in their family of 6 children, teaching at a Christian school then educating at home. She enjoys keeping in touch with her family, reading, gardening, language and history.

*Sessions 7 and 8*



**Jo Kimball** has been part of the Dignity team since 2008, travelling extensively in Zambia to work with Life Groups and Impact Teams. She is an organiser and encourager who takes joy in seeing others thriving and learning what it means to be loved by Jesus.

*Session 5*



**Ben Jeffery** is the leader of Soul City, a church he launched with his wife Emma in Stockport, UK. He is part of the NewThing Global Operations team which is shaping a movement that will start 10,000 reproducing churches by 2020.

*Session 1*



**Tobbias Ngala** is the lead Pastor of Trinity Chapel in Mombasa, Kenya. Married to Joyce and blessed with two daughters, he is passionate about planting churches and envisions a life giving church in every city and town in the continent of Africa. He thrives in developing and mentoring pastors and leaders.

*Session 10*



**Sarah Small** grew up in Yorkshire then studied Religions & Theology in Manchester. Following 10 years working in the voluntary sector in the UK and Africa, she is now involved in mission on an urban estate in the UK. She juggles church leadership, voluntary work and family life with 2 children and recently completed an MA in Kingdom Theology.

*Sessions 4, 9 and 13*



**Jon Paul Witt** is the founder of Dignity and has worked with the church in many countries. He is a thinker, pioneer, evangelist and missionary. Jon is married to Judith and has 3 children. They live between Zambia and the UK. Jon's passion is to see people come to know Jesus and for them to radically affect their communities.

*Session 12*

The author of Session 3 wished to remain anonymous.



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# How to use this book

This book is designed to be used as a group study. Only the person leading the session needs a copy of the book. You should try to complete each session within 1.5 - 2 hours. If you find you need longer, you can always complete 1 session over 2 weeks.

## How to lead a session

It is important that you involve everyone in the sessions. It is not simply a case of reading the session and telling people what they should do. We believe that every person has something unique to contribute and that God teaches us through those around us. Therefore, the sessions are written in such a way that people will all need to be involved. There are memory verses, questions, dramas, stories and discussions that will need everyone to take part.

As the group leader you need to steer the conversation and help it go in the right direction, but you do not need to do everything yourself.

You should encourage people who are shy and quiet to try and speak when they can. You should encourage people who are loud and talkative to give other people a chance to share their thoughts as well.

## What you need for each session

The sessions are designed to be simple and not need a lot of resources. You will need:

- A copy of this book for the person leading the session
- A Bible (it is helpful if a few people in the group can bring a Bible as well, but it is not essential)
- Pens and paper, which are often used in the activities. You should encourage people to bring these from home.

If anything else is needed, this will be noted at the start of the session it is needed for. You should prepare these items in advance.

## **Symbols to help you**

To help you lead the sessions we include symbols to tell you what each section is. The symbols are shown below with their meanings. Take some time now to get to know what each symbol means and to look through a few sessions and see how the symbols are used. This will make it easier for you when you are leading a session.



### **Preparation**

To make sure each session goes smoothly there are some simple things you can do to prepare. These include making sure you have any items you need for the session ready and organising volunteers before you meet. You should look at these a few days before you do the session so you have time to do what needs to be done.



### **Aim**

Each section starts with an aim. This guides you in what you are teaching the group and what everyone should understand once they have done the session. You must always keep these aims in mind and ask yourself if you are helping people reach them. It is a good idea to start by sharing this with the group.



### **Memory Verse**

Everyone should learn the memory verse and be able to recite it by the end of the session. You need to teach it to them by reading the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group. Then read it again but this time read it bit by bit, in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Repeat this process, gradually reading longer sections with the group repeating each section until everyone can recite the whole verse without your help.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.



### **Story**

Stories are a brilliant way to introduce subjects and to learn from something that is familiar. Everyone enjoys hearing stories and they are easy to remember! When you tell the stories to the group, you should try to bring them to life by being dramatic. If there is someone in your group who is good at telling stories it would be good to ask them to tell the stories. You will need to ask them before the session and give them time to prepare.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Every session has at least 1 Bible Passage to read, some have more. If there are people in your group who are good readers you could ask them to read these for you. You should ask them in advance so they can practise or say that they do not want to read. Remember that some people cannot read so asking them in front of people when they cannot say no may embarrass them.



### **Speaking**

There are sections that need to be read aloud from the book. When you are going through these you should pause from time to time, especially after important points, and ask people if they have understood what you are saying. If they have not, you might need to repeat a section or discuss something to help them understand.



### **Discussion & Questions**

Answering questions and discussing things helps people to learn and explore something for themselves. This helps them to remember it. When you see the question symbol it is important that you ask the group the question and encourage a few different people to give answers. Sometimes the questions are for discussion in smaller

groups. If the session tells you to, you should divide people into groups of 3 or 4 and give them time to discuss the question. When the whole group comes back together you should allow time for each group to share one or two of the main points they discussed.

If there are a lot of questions or Bible references that people need you could encourage someone from each group to take a photograph of the questions using their mobile phone or prepare in advance by writing out extra copies of the questions.



### **Activity**

People learn through having fun and by doing something. Activities help this to happen. You should involve everyone in the activities and encourage them to have fun while they are doing it!



### **Prayer**

What God says directly to people is extremely important. We want to encourage your group to be praying with and for one another whenever possible. When you see this symbol you should ask people to pray. There are different ways of praying used throughout this book. Sometimes the group is asked to pray all together, sometimes in small groups and sometimes in pairs. Sometimes people are asked to shout loudly to God and at other times people are asked to pray quietly. It is important that you leave enough time for prayer and encourage people to listen to what God is saying.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for people to do. You should explain it carefully to make sure people understand it and then encourage people to do this during the week. At the start of each session, you should allow people some time to feed back on whether they did the task they were given and how it went.



## **Witness**

It is important that we show the love of Jesus to those around us. We can do this in many different ways. Each session gives us an idea about how we can do this. You should explain this carefully to the group and encourage everyone to do these activities during the week. As we show the love of Jesus to those around us we believe Jesus will change lives and bring freedom. It would be good to encourage group members to keep a record of the people they have spoken to as part of these activities and encourage them to keep praying for those people.

5 mins

## **Timings**

In some places we have included a suggested length of time that an activity or discussion should take. This will help you keep the sessions within the overall time.

## **Bible passages and references**

When you see a name and numbers underlined like this Psalms 1:4-6 it is referring you to a passage from the Bible. This particular one means you should read from the book of Psalms, chapter 1 verses 4 to 6.



# Keeping children safe whilst at Life Groups

Together we came up with some simple rules so that our children are safe whether they are at home or with us at a Life Group. These rules are great to apply to other areas of our lives as well. Whether we are working in our fields, at church or with friends, God wants us to ensure that our children are safe.



Everyone who attends a group must make sure their children are safe at home and looked after by a responsible person or bring their children with them.



Group leaders must remind group members to be sure their children are safe at home and looked after by a responsible person and also make children welcome at the group.



Anyone in a group working with children must not work alone but with one or two more people. If it is two people, they must not be from the same family. (They must be from different families.)



Those working with children in a group must have been regularly attending a group for at least 3 months.



Group leaders and members must not take photographs of children when involved in Life Group activities.

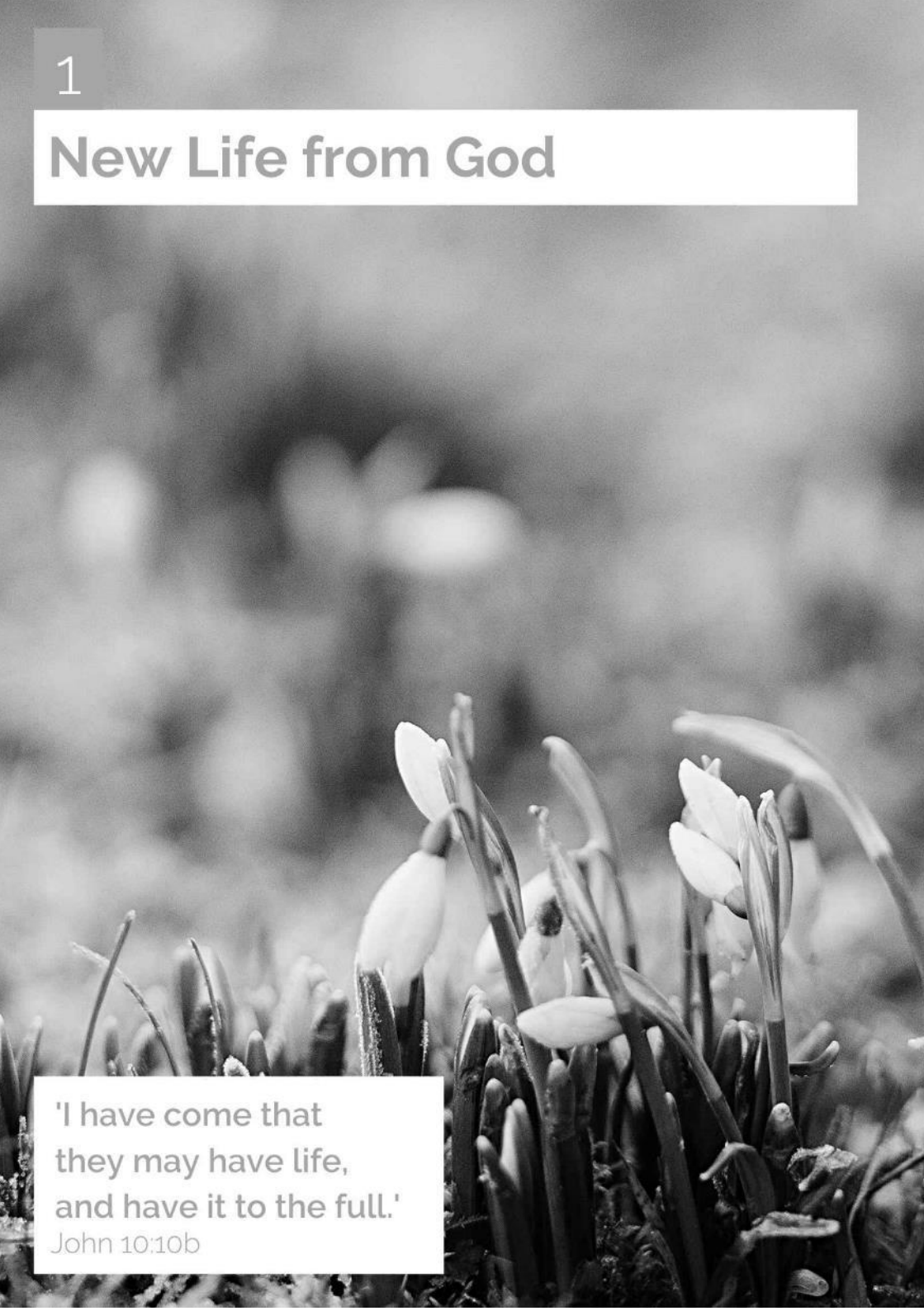


If children are sharing food at group meetings, ensure it is safe for them to eat.



Group members visiting families in the community must go in pairs, for example 2 men to visit a man or 2 women to visit a woman.

# New Life from God

A black and white photograph of snowdrops in bloom. The flowers are in the foreground, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the background. The stems are thin and green, and the leaves are narrow and pointed. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of more snowdrops.

'I have come that  
they may have life,  
and have it to the full.'

John 10:10b



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- Pen and paper for you and some spare in case anybody does not bring their own.

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked everyone to bring a pen and some paper?



## Welcome

5 mins

It is possible that people in the group do not all know each other. You should start this week by telling everyone your name and asking everyone else to tell the group their name. You should thank everyone for coming and explain what will happen in the group. Say a short, simple prayer of thanks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that following Jesus means we can make a fresh start; there can be a new beginning for our lives. Our past is totally forgiven. Before we *knew about* God; now we *know* God.



## Memory Verse

5 mins

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group. Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse. Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

*John 10:10b*



## Story

Read the following story to the group.

Hetty Green was called 'America's Greatest Miser'. A miser is a person who gathers wealth, keeping lots of money for themselves but spending as little as possible.

Despite having lots of money, Hetty lived as though she was poor because she did not want to spend the money she had. She said she ate cold porridge because she thought it was too expensive to heat the water to warm it. Her son had a severe leg injury but she refused to pay for treatment and so his leg had to be amputated. She died just after a furious argument about why skimmed milk was better because it was cheaper than whole milk.

When Hetty died in 1916 everything she owned was valued at \$100 million. That was a lot of money in 1916 and it still is. Can you imagine having so much money but living as if you did not have enough? Hetty had everything that she needed but was not living the life she could have lived.



## Discussion

3 mins

Ask the group what they would do if they inherited a large amount of money?

Allow everyone to make a suggestion.



## Bible Knowledge

Read Ephesians 2:1-9 to the group:

<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in

*which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.*



We might listen to the story of Hetty Green and think that we would never be like her, but the truth is that God's gift of life is much better than anything money can buy, and yet many of us live without ever accepting this gift or as if we have not been given such a great gift.

The passage from the book of Ephesians that we read above is part of a letter to a young church in Turkey. In it Paul, the writer, explains that you were dead, but now you are alive. You have received life. And this should change everything.

But what does it mean that God gave us new life? One simple way to understand this is using a diagram with 3 circles.<sup>1</sup> Explain that you will draw the diagram as you read the next section.

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<sup>1</sup> The 3 Circles diagram originates from Family Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. It is open source material which can be reproduced free of charge.

(Get a piece of paper, the larger the better, and draw out each stage of the diagram as you read through the next section.)

### **Circle 1 - Brokenness**



When we look at the world around us, we can see that things are not good. We see that things are broken. People get sick, marriages and families break down, people hurt one another, lie to each other and steal from one another. Some people have too much and others do not have enough. There are earthquakes and floods. People and nations fight each other.

When we look at ourselves, we know that we too are not perfect. We can see in ourselves the mistakes we make and the ways we are broken.



### **Discussion**

3 mins

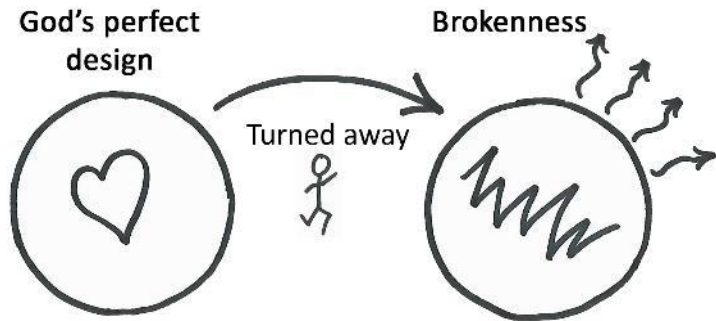
Ask the group if they see anything that is broken in them or in the world around them?

Encourage everyone to make a suggestion.



## Circle 2 – God’s perfect design

(Now draw the next bits of the diagram on your piece of paper.)



The Bible tells us that when God created the world it was not broken. **God designed** a perfect and incredible world. It says in Genesis 1:31 that:

*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

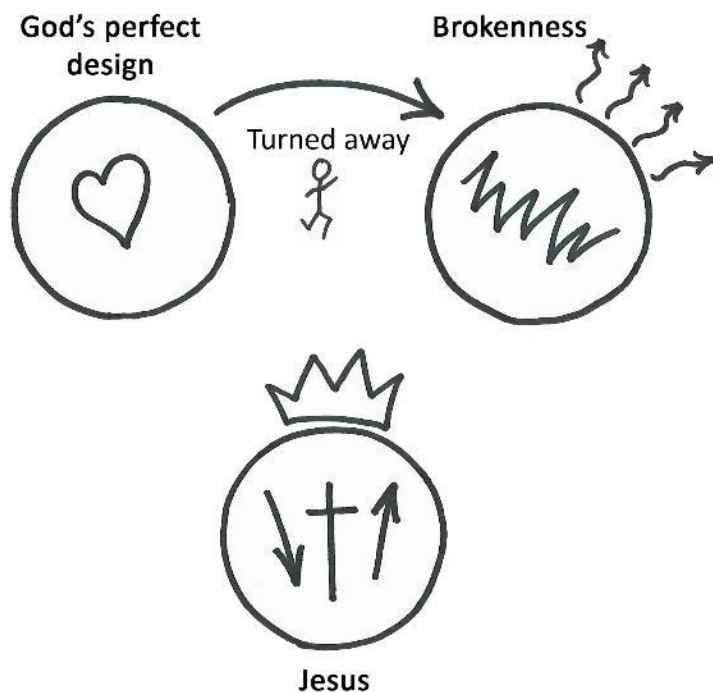
We still see much of God’s perfect design in the world and people around us – all that is good is part of God’s design.

The Bible goes on to tell the story of how God’s perfect design was broken because the first people God made disobeyed him and **turned away** from him. At this point, sin entered the world. Sin is anything that separates us from God. Sin means that the relationship between God and us is broken and that the perfect world God designed is broken. We see this in the brokenness we have discussed.

Many people try and find ways in which to fix the brokenness that they experience but they cannot fix it.

### Circle 3 – God’s plan to restore through Jesus

(Now draw the next bits of the diagram on your piece of paper.)



Our sin and the brokenness that we experience means that we are separated from God, and that we are not able to experience life in all its fullness. God, however, sent his son Jesus to rescue us from this brokenness.

Jesus came to our broken world as a perfect person, and lived a perfect life. He paid the price for our brokenness and sin with his life, dying in our place. But he did not stay dead. After 3 days he rose from the dead, beating death itself. His sacrifice made a way for us to be restored in our relationship with God, for our sins to be forgiven, and for us to live life as it was originally designed to be.



### Activity

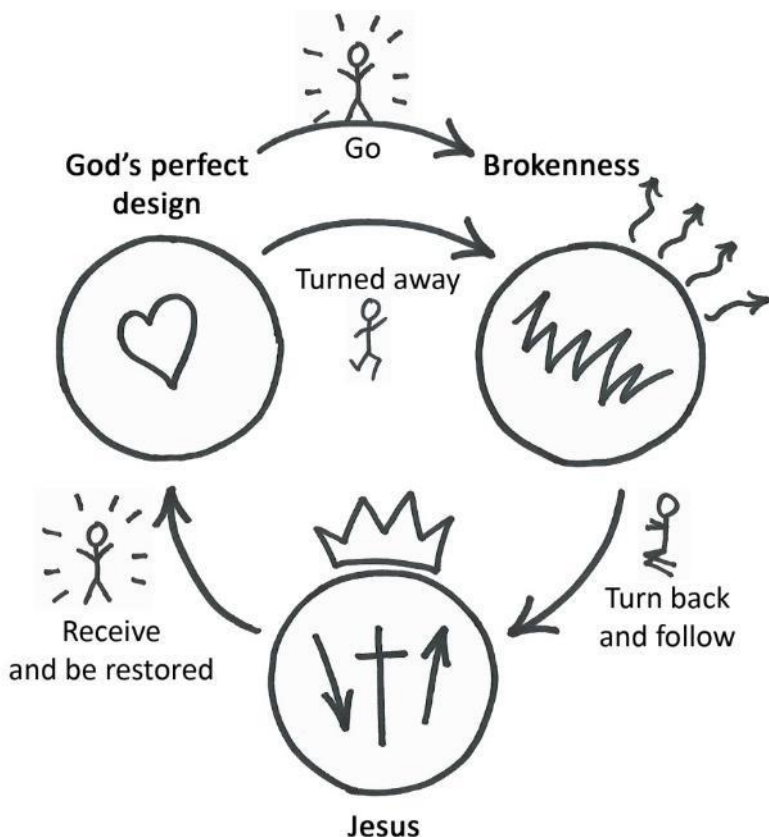
3 mins

Ask the group to recite the memory verse we learnt earlier. See if a few people can say it on their own.



(Now draw the last bits of the diagram on your piece of paper.)

We have learnt that God made a perfect world but that it became broken by sin. We have learnt that Jesus is God and that he came to the world, was killed and came back to life. Today Jesus is alive and is in heaven and he offers us a free gift: life that is full and complete.



Each of us needs to choose if we want to **receive** the gift that Jesus offers us or to walk away and continue living in brokenness.

To **receive** the gift of life there are 2 simple things we need to do.

- Turn away from sin and from living life our way (brokenness) and **turn back** towards Jesus.
- **Choose to follow** Jesus and live life the way he asks us to.

When we do this Jesus promises to **restore** us back to the perfect way we were designed. He offers us the gift of life to the full that we simply need to **receive**. This means that we can immediately be in relationship with God and that God comes to live in us. It also means that throughout our life on earth Jesus will help us to grow in our relationship with God and change us to be more like him. We will have life to the full!

Once we have **received** this gift from Jesus, Jesus asks us to **go** to others in the world who are still living in brokenness so that they can hear and see how they can come near to God.

Do not worry if you do not fully understand everything we have talked about. The 3 circles diagram is a helpful tool that shows us the big picture. We will look in more detail at each of the ideas we have talked about as we work through the ***Foundations*** books.



### Activity

15 mins

Make sure your diagram showing the 3 circles is somewhere everybody can see it.

Everyone will need a piece of paper and a pen. If there are those who struggle with writing this can be done verbally.

- Get the group into pairs.
- One person in each pair should copy the 3 circles diagram, explaining each circle as they draw it out to the person they are paired with.
- Once they have finished, the second person in each pair should do the same thing.

You might need to remind anybody who is struggling to remember parts of the diagram and what they mean.



### **Discussion**

15 mins

Some of us may have already chosen to follow Jesus. We have received the gift of life to the full that Jesus gives.

Some of us may have chosen to follow Jesus but we have not really accepted the gift of life to the full and are actually living as if we are still in brokenness. We are like Hetty Green in our story who had lots of money but lived like she was poor.

Others of us may not have chosen to follow Jesus and receive the gift of life to the full yet.

In your pairs, discuss the following questions:

- Have you chosen to follow Jesus and have you received the gift of life to the full?
- If you have, what was your story of meeting Jesus? Try to answer each of these questions in just 1 minute.
  - What was your life like before you met Jesus?
  - How did you meet Jesus?
  - What is your life like since you met Jesus?
- If you have not chosen to follow Jesus yet, now is a good time to accept the gift of life to the full and invite him into

your life. Try to share how your life is now and why you want to know Jesus. We will pray a prayer together at the end of this session. You can pray it with the leader and invite Jesus into your life.



5 mins

Read the following prayer to the group. Read it in short sections and ask everyone to repeat each section after you if they want to know Jesus or know him more.

Thank you Jesus for dying in my place.

Thank you that you have given me a new life.

I'm sorry for all the sin and brokenness in my life.

I choose to turn away from that.

Given everything that you have done for me

I choose to follow you and I give everything that I have for you!

Help me to experience your life to the full.

Amen.

Allow time for people to continue praying for each other in their pairs based on the discussions they have had. Encourage them to listen to what God is saying to them.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, make a list of everything that has been broken in your life. Start thanking God for everything that he has changed and made whole.



### **Witness**

Take home the copy of the 3 circles that you drew. Practice drawing it so you can draw it from memory. Pray for a friend of yours and then share the 3 circles with them, discussing what the circles mean to you and what you have discovered. Ask your friend which circle

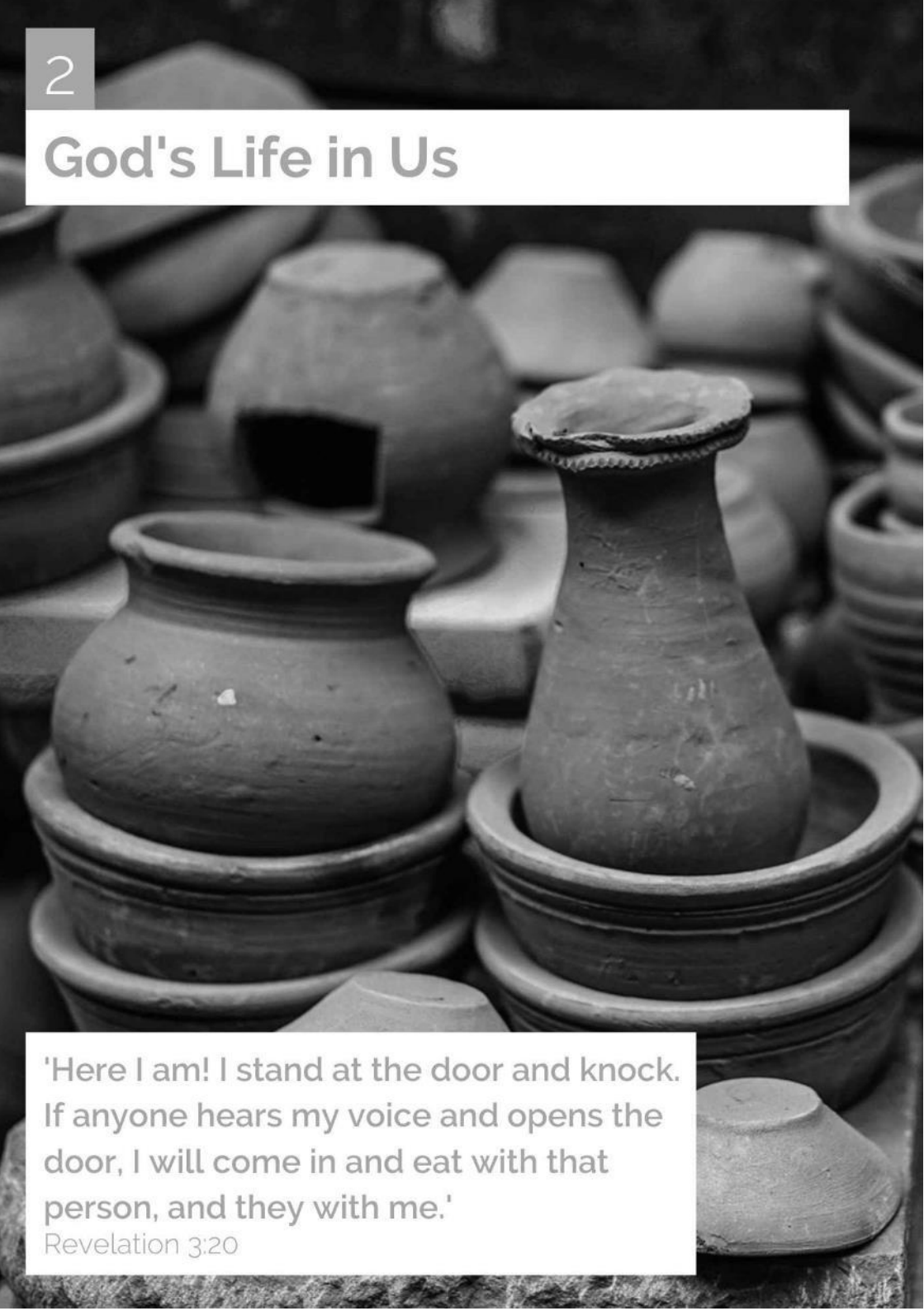
they think they are in and if they would like you to pray with them. Continue to pray for them throughout the rest of the week.

### **Optional Further Study**

If people have a Bible and want to read the story of how God created the world and how it was broken when sin entered the world, they can read this in Genesis 1-3.

If people want to read about what Jesus did when he came to the world, they can read the book of Mark in the Bible. (Matthew, Luke and John also tell the story of Jesus' time on earth.)

## God's Life in Us



'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.  
If anyone hears my voice and opens the  
door, I will come in and eat with that  
person, and they with me.'

Revelation 3:20



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that following Jesus means that God comes to live inside of us. He is always with us and changes us from the inside out.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*

*Revelation 3:20*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

People often say that, 'Beauty is only skin deep'. Values are often placed on people and things based upon outward appearance alone.

In Japan, there is an art form called *Doradango* (which means 'shiny mud balls'). The artists make perfect balls out of the soil of the ground. They start with damp coarse soil and form it into a ball shape. They allow it to dry a little and then gradually over the next few days they begin to add finer and finer sieved soil until they have created a perfect ball of soil about the size of your fist. That might seem quite strange, but what they do next is stranger still.

Before it totally dries the artist takes a cloth and starts to polish the ball of soil. Hours and hours of small circular motions with the cloth create a perfect shiny finish. When the shiny mud balls are finished, they are put on a small wooden circular plinth for everyone to admire.

No matter how wonderful it might look, how skilled the master might have been or how shiny it has become, it is still made of mud. It is simply a shiny ball of mud, made to be admired but with no other practical use.

Put it in a bucket of water and soon you will see that it has become what it always was, just dirt, nothing else.

Today we are going to learn that God wants to make us beautiful by living in us. God knows us and can see past our outward appearance, perceiving what we are really like. He does not just want to polish our outward appearance like the artist polishes the shiny mud balls. Instead, God has chosen to live in us so that he can change us from the inside.

This means that we can be very different to the shiny mud balls that look good on the outside but are still only mud on the inside. When we ask God to live inside us, we have the potential to be so much more and to be truly beautiful on the inside as well as the outside.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 to the group:

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.*

*<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup>We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup>We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup>So then, death is at work in us, but life is at*

*work in you.*



### **We are like a jar made of clay**

Today's passage was written by Paul, one of the leaders of the early Church. Paul used the picture of a humble jar made of clay, an ordinary earthen vessel, fired in a kiln. A clay jar might not be much to look at. It may often look plain and ordinary but it can be used to contain and keep valuable and important items like olive oil, wine, food or parchments or sometimes treasure of gold and silver.

Paul used the illustration of a clay jar as a picture of himself and of us.

### **Jesus is like the treasure inside us**

We ourselves are like the jar, fragile and breakable. Paul makes the point that God has sent Jesus to be the treasure inside us.

Sometimes we may look like we are special. God was using Paul powerfully but in this illustration Paul points out that it is not his own skill or power that makes him great. Instead he says that the treasure that God had put inside him makes him great.

Paul was saying it is not about how we look or how much we know. Instead it is about *who* we know – Jesus. To have faith in Jesus, to have this treasure inside of us, is to know Jesus for ourselves.

Paul wanted the church to understand that the most important thing is Jesus and his life working in us and through us. In fact, in Philippians 2:13 he said:

*For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.*

God is looking for humble people to put his treasure inside of. He has created us for a higher purpose and wants to give us his treasure in our hearts – Jesus.

### **Are you like a clay jar?**

If you put a plain clay jar next to a beautiful porcelain vase, the porcelain vase will look more special. (You can show people this picture to help make this point.)



The plain clay jar does not look very special. It has nothing to make you believe it is beautiful. It can only point to the treasure inside itself.

The decorated porcelain jar will draw your attention towards itself and it will take the glory. You might never look inside it.

Some people settle for looking good on the outside, pursuing beauty, intellect, social status or wealth. They are just like a porcelain vase or the mud balls in our story today. They live with no purpose other than to glorify themselves (to make themselves look

good). They hear the message of Jesus, but they do not let it into their heart. This is short sighted. Eventually, shiny things become chipped, broken and dull.

Other people worry less about how they look on the outside and are concerned more about what is on the inside. They are more like a plain clay jar. They invite Jesus to come live inside of them. This is something far greater: this is a beauty that never fades and it belongs to Jesus! These lives honour Jesus and belong to him.



5 mins

### Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the following questions. Try to be honest about your answers.

- Do we value things or people by how they look on the outside or by what they are like on the inside?
- Do we value people who have lots of money or things more than people who have very little?
- Is outward appearance or status the most important thing or did God create us for something more?
- If God created us for more than this, what sort of things might he want to do in and through us?



### Jesus wants to live in you

Jesus wants to come and live in you. We read about this in lots of different parts of the Bible.

In the book of Revelation 3:20, Jesus says:

*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*

If you can hear him, Jesus is saying, 'I want to come and live in your

life.'

If Jesus lives in us, he changes our behaviour, attitudes, words and thoughts. He makes us whole and good. Here is another way in which this is explained.

In John 15:5 Jesus says:

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

The wonderful thing is that God has made it possible for Jesus to live in us. The first thing that happens to us is that God cleans us up and makes our hearts new. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul explains that when Jesus enters into our life, we are changed. He says:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!*

Over time Jesus changes our behaviours and attitudes. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 we read that God wants to dwell in his people so that the world might see him through us:

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?*



5 mins

### Activity

Sit down in pairs and share what you see of Christ in each other. Be kind but honest. The answers might be revealing and encouraging.



10 mins

### Prayer

Get the group to repeat the memory verse. Offer some people the chance to say it on their own if they feel able.

*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*

*Revelation 3:20*

It is important to give people an opportunity to respond to what God has said to them today. Ask if there is anyone who would like to invite God to send Jesus to live inside them? If there is, lead them in this simple prayer.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you want to live inside me. Thank you that even though I am like a plain clay vase you want to be the treasure inside me. Today, I accept this treasure, this new life and ask that you come and change me from the inside out. Come and live in my heart. I am sorry for the way I have been living and from now on I want to live for you. Amen.

Now, in the same pairs as the activity, ask the group to pray for one another based on the discussions they had. Encourage them to listen to what God is saying to them.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do.

Each morning this week, ask God to give you opportunities to allow others to see and experience Jesus in you. Relax; God loves nothing more than using those who are willing!



### **Witness**

This week take the time to speak to someone who you might otherwise avoid because of their appearance or status. Listen carefully to them and encourage them that God loves them. Explain to them about the treasure in your heart, Jesus in you. Share with

them that he wants to give them life too. Offer to pray with them.

Throughout the week keep praying for the friend you shared the 3 circles with last week and the people you spoke to this week.

## New Life Grows



'I thank my God every time I remember you... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 13&6



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that just as a baby grows into a child then an adult, so we grow in our new life with God. We become more like Jesus, and our thoughts and actions become more like Jesus'.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verses and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read them again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole passage. Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*I thank my God every time I remember you...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 1:3&6*



## Story

Read the following story about a boy called Peter Pan to the group:

When Peter Pan was young, he ran away from home and went to live in Neverland, a place where he would never grow up or get old. He met other children who lived there and stayed young, just like he would. All the children played together. They had lots of adventures and explored Neverland together. Everything was lots of fun and nobody was telling them what they had to do.

One day Peter went back to the land where he was born and met three children: Wendy, John and Michael. They became friends and Peter invited them to come to Neverland with him.

When all the children in Neverland met Wendy they were excited and asked her to be their mother. Wendy saw that there was nobody else to be like a mother to the children because nobody ever grew up so she agreed to try. Wendy did her best, but she was only young herself and did not have any experience.

One day Wendy told all of the children a story – it was her story. She told the children how a girl and her two brothers had left home and run away to Neverland. They missed their mother and father and they knew that their parents would be missing them.

Wendy felt sad when she told the story and decided it was time for her and her brothers to go home. She invited Peter and all the others to come with them.

They all returned home and Wendy's parents agreed to adopt all of the children, including Peter. The children were all excited to have a new family, to learn new things and eventually to grow up and become adults themselves. But Peter was sad. He wanted to return to Neverland and never grow up. He wanted to stay young forever. Peter chose to leave all his friends behind and return to Neverland on his own. To stay young, Peter had to forget about his adventures

with his friends and what he had learnt of the wider world.

Peter Pan is a story written by J.M. Barrie in 1904. The character of Peter Pan is thought to be based on J.M. Barrie's brother who died in an accident when he was 14 and therefore never had the chance to grow up. Although Peter Pan had lots of adventures and it all seemed like fun, his story shows us that ultimately, it is a very sad thing if children do not grow up.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read Ephesians 4:11-15 to the group:

*<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*



Babies are adorable, but they are not supposed to stay babies forever. A healthy baby grows up and learns lots of new skills.

If you have children you will remember the joy of the day when they took their first steps. It was not perfect. It was wobbly and most probably ended in a fall. But it was a great moment. If you have a

child who has learnt to talk, do you remember what the first words were that your child spoke? Was it 'Mum' or 'Dad'? It brings joy to a parent's heart when their child learns something new. We are proud of them when they grow and develop. We want them to do well.

When we become a Christian we accept God's gift of new life. The Bible says we become born again. (You can read [John 3:1-8](#) for more on this.) Our physical body is not reborn as such but we are born into a new spiritual life. In the same way that a baby grows and changes, so we grow and change in our spiritual life after this point.

When babies are born, their bodies are not fully developed. Initially they grow by drinking milk; as they grow older they learn to eat solid food and their bodies get stronger so they can sit by themselves and later stand and then walk and run. Their brains develop too. Their characters develop and they learn how to communicate with others.

This growing does not happen by itself. It takes a LOT of eating and drinking and a LOT of learning and practice for a baby to become an adult. More than anything it takes time to grow. No-one becomes an adult overnight. Most of the time a child does not realise that it is growing. But we as parents notice because they grow out of their clothes. Healthy children grow up.

This also needs to happen to in our spiritual life when we are born again. We start off like a small baby, needing milk. It takes time to grow and a lot of feeding and drinking is needed to make growth happen.

In [2 Corinthians 13:9](#) Paul is praying for the Christians based in Corinth, Greece. He prays:

*our prayer is that you may be fully restored.*

The original Greek word Paul used for fully restored means to be strengthened and perfected. God wants us to grow up. God does not want us to stay as spiritual babies.

In Hebrews 5:12-14 the author is upset with the Jewish believers he is writing to. He says:

*<sup>12</sup>In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup>Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

He tells them that they have been believers for a very long time and by now they should be teaching others. But in fact, they are only babies, still drinking milk and needing to be cared for. Paul wants them to grow up to become strong Christians who know the difference between right and wrong. How sad God must be when he sees one of his children not growing.



### **Activity**

10 mins

In groups of 3 or 4, read Ephesians 4:11-15 again. Ask each group to see if they can find the following words or phrases in the passage:

- Built up
- Grow
- Until we all reach
- Become
- Infants
- Mature

Ask them to discuss what the words or phrases mean.

After 5 minutes, bring the groups back together and ask them to share their thoughts on the meaning of the words.

You are looking for answers that talk about a process, moving forward or progressing and speak of time and change.



It says in Ephesians 4:15 that to be mature is to be like Jesus. So that is what we want to be – like Jesus.

Most of us do want to grow and become mature. Most of us want to be like Jesus, but many times we do not know how to grow. All the studies in this book are designed to teach you and help you to grow. They are like food and drink for your spiritual life to help it grow.



5 mins

### **Discussion**

Ask the group what a baby needs to do in order for it to grow? As they come up with answers (see below) you can use these explanations to show how we also need these things in our spiritual life.

- Eat food and drink – In our spiritual life we need to eat and drink the Word of God.
- Breathe air – To breathe in our spiritual life we need to talk to God and receive from God's Holy Spirit.
- Receive love – We need to be loved and cared for by our spiritual family (other Christians).
- Exercise and be active – We need to exercise our spiritual muscles in doing God-things like giving, serving and worshipping God.



In all of this, we need to keep in mind that it is God who works in our lives through his Holy Spirit to make us grow spiritually; this is

not something that we can do for ourselves.

If we know the WHOLE Bible, it may still only be knowledge in our head, but our spiritual life is weak and small unless God's Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us grow spiritually.

If we are part of a church and we give, serve and preach, but God's Holy Spirit is not at work in our lives, then we have not fully grown in our spiritual life.

Our spiritual life will only grow if we do everything with faith in God and our focus is on God and not on our own ability. If you are going to trust in yourself to make this happen it will not happen.

When you read your Bible, you need to read it in faith that God will teach you and help you grow. When you pray, you need to pray in faith that God's Holy Spirit hears you and that he rewards those who seek him and that his Holy Spirit will encourage you, strengthen you and clean you – in fact, his Holy Spirit will turn your heart of stone into a heart of flesh. When you love and serve others, you need to do it to bring honour to God and in faith believe that he is making you more like Jesus. When you worship God with all that you are he makes your spiritual muscles grow.

Jesus taught his disciples in Luke 11:1-13 how to pray. (You do not need to read this passage now, but you can encourage people to read it at home during the week.) Jesus tells his disciples to ask for God to send his Holy Spirit to work in them. Jesus says that God will give you his Holy Spirit when you ask him for it. He is like a good father and he knows how to give good gifts to his children. We will find out more about God's Holy Spirit in later study sessions.



15 mins

## Prayer

In order for a baby to grow up, it first needs to be born; so it is with our faith. If we want to grow and develop in faith, we first need to take that step to ask God to help us be 'born-again.' Ask if there is anyone in the group who would like to make that step today. If there is then pray the following prayer together:

Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me the gift of new life.  
Today, I wish to accept that gift. I turn away from my old life  
and ask for you to come and live in me, helping me to become  
more like you. Amen.

Next, in groups of 3 or 4 people, ask people to pray together. Allow time for people to pray slowly and thoughtfully as they think about how God is working in their life.

Each person should:

- Thank God for any areas of your life where he has helped you to grow.
- Ask God to show you any areas where he wants you to grow more.
- Ask God to send his Holy Spirit to work in you and to help you grow up spiritually.

Bring the group back together and close with this prayer.

Thank you Lord that you are a good father and that you love to give us all we need to become more like your son Jesus. May your Holy Spirit work in our lives so that we can grow and bring you honour. Give us a desire in our hearts to want to grow, to want to 'eat' your word and 'breathe' your Holy Spirit so that your kingdom may come in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, find someone who is more mature in their faith than you and spend some time with them. Ask them how God has been at work in their lives and put one thing that they say into practice in your own life.



### **Witness**

This week, tell someone what God has done in your life. Share how he has begun a good work and what he is doing in you at the moment. This could be the friend you shared the 3 circles with or the person you spoke to last week or somebody else.



4

## Sharing New Life

'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Matthew 28:19



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to help us to understand that as we begin to follow Jesus, we become part of God's plan for reaching other people too. Our new life is an example for others of what God can do, and he asks us to share our story and the good news of Jesus, with the people around us.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

*Matthew 28:19*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

Thandiwe is 9 months pregnant and her baby is due any day now. Thandiwe is well known in her community. Her husband Chimwemwe is a well-respected chief and they work side by side to support their community. They are both much loved by everyone in their community.

When Thandiwe and Chimwemwe told people that they were expecting a baby there had been great excitement. Everyone was excited for the couple's first baby. They wondered if this new baby would lead their community too one day? People wanted to know how Thandiwe was feeling during her pregnancy. Was she well? Was she sick? Was the baby kicking yet?

People wondered whether the baby would be a boy or a girl. They tried to guess what name it would be given. Would it be born early or late and would it be born safe and well? As the time passed people began to get more and more excited. Now that Thandiwe is due to give birth any day the community is even more eager to hear news.

Early in the morning a young boy notices a group of women walking quickly to the Thandiwe and Chimwemwe's home. The boy runs and tells his mother who guesses that the baby is on its way and the women have been called to help. She tells a friend, who tells another friend and so on. Soon a crowd is gathering outside the chief's home. People want to be the first to hear the news and maybe even see the new baby. They wait quietly outside, nervous but excited.

In the middle of the afternoon Thandiwe and Chimwemwe come

out of their home, both looking tired and happy. In Chimwemwe's arms is their new baby girl, carefully wrapped in a beautiful fabric and kicking and shouting for everyone to see and hear! There is a great cheer and people start to take photos on their phones.

Soon the happy news spreads quickly throughout the community. For the whole week more and more people come by to congratulate Thandiwe and Chimwemwe and celebrate with them. Everyone wants to know about the new baby girl and to try and see her. The local journalists even send a photo to the Lusaka Times. Her arrival is good news!



When we have good news we want to tell people about it. We want to share the joy and excitement with our friends and families. The new life that God gives us is good news! When we receive this gift from God it is natural to want to share this good news with our friends, family and the people around us. When we share our story and talk about the new life God has given us, people can see how good God is and what Jesus has done in our lives. They will witness the effect of this good news in our lives.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read John 4:4-30 to the group:

*<sup>4</sup>Now he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.*

*<sup>7</sup>When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

*<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*

*<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'*

*<sup>11</sup>'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?'*

*<sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'*

*<sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'*

*<sup>16</sup>He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'*

*<sup>17</sup>'I have no husband,' she replied.*

*Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup>The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'*

*<sup>19</sup>'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our*

*ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'*

*<sup>21</sup>'Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'*

*<sup>25</sup>The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.'*

*<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.'*

*<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want' or 'Why are you talking with her?'*

*<sup>28</sup>Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup>'Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?' <sup>30</sup>They came out of the town and made their way towards him.*



### **Activity – Good News**

10 mins

Each member in the group is to think up some good news to tell the rest of the group. They have to decide how best to share the news, for example they could simply tell the people, sing a song about it, write a note, draw a picture or some other means of telling the news. Encourage them to be imaginative.

As they share the good news encourage the group to clap and cheer! It is good to share good news!



In our Bible story today Jesus is travelling with his disciples. He enters a town in which the people are Samaritans. As the story tells us, Samaritan people do not usually associate with Jewish people (as Jesus was). However, Jesus takes the opportunity to chat with the Samaritan woman as he waits by a well. This was also unusual because men rarely spoke with women. This explains why the woman was surprised when Jesus addressed her and asked her for a drink of water.

Jesus takes the opportunity to teach her about 'living water.' This is another way of talking about the life that he offers and surprisingly he tells her that this water is for her, even though she is a woman, a Samaritan and a sinner. She is delighted with this news and amazed with Jesus' insight into her life so she rushes straight back to her village to tell them all to come and meet Jesus too.

In this passage the woman asks Jesus if he is the Messiah. The Messiah was understood to be a person who would be sent from God to rescue his people. It was thought that the Messiah would be a military leader who would overthrow the oppressive Roman Empire of the time and liberate the Jewish people. However, Jesus tells the lady he is the Messiah, but he is different to what was expected. He has come to rescue all people, not just the Jews, and those who would seem most unlikely are offered new life from Jesus too.



### **Discussion**

15 mins

In Session 1 of this book, we heard about the new life that God give us. In Session 2 we learnt that God lives inside us, like treasure in a

clay jar. In session 3 we explored what it means to be growing in our spiritual lives.

We are going to repeat an activity from Session 1 now. Try to include some of the things we have learnt so far in the answers you give.

Ask people to get into pairs and to practise telling their story using the following questions. They should try to answer each of these questions in just 1 minute.

- What was your life like before you met Jesus?
- How did you meet Jesus?
- What is your life like since you met Jesus?

After 6 or 7 minutes, ask people to join together into groups of 4. Explain that we are going to think about how God's gift of new life is for everyone as we saw in today's Bible passage. Ask them to discuss the following questions.

- How does it make you feel that God's new life is for everyone, not just those who are like us, or who might seem to deserve it?
- Who are the people in your community that would be the most unlikely recipients of God's new life?
- Discuss ways in which you could reach out to these people and share God's new life with them. This could include sharing your own story.



15 mins

### **Prayer**

In your groups thank God for the new life that you have all received from God. If there are people in the group who have not yet accepted this gift of new life then give them an opportunity to do so

now. If they wish to respond and accept this gift then ask them to pray this prayer with you:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your gift of new life. Thank you that even though I do not deserve it, you came to rescue me too. Today, I accept this new life and ask that you come and change me from the inside out. Come and live in my heart. I am sorry for the way I have been living and from now on I want to live for you. Amen.

Now spend some time praying for those that you discussed who might seem like unlikely recipients of God's new life. Ask God to give you opportunities to share your own story with them and to show them how much God loves them.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, make sure you have remembered today's memory verse and repeat it every day. As you repeat the verse ask God to show you how you might 'go' and 'make disciples of all nations'.

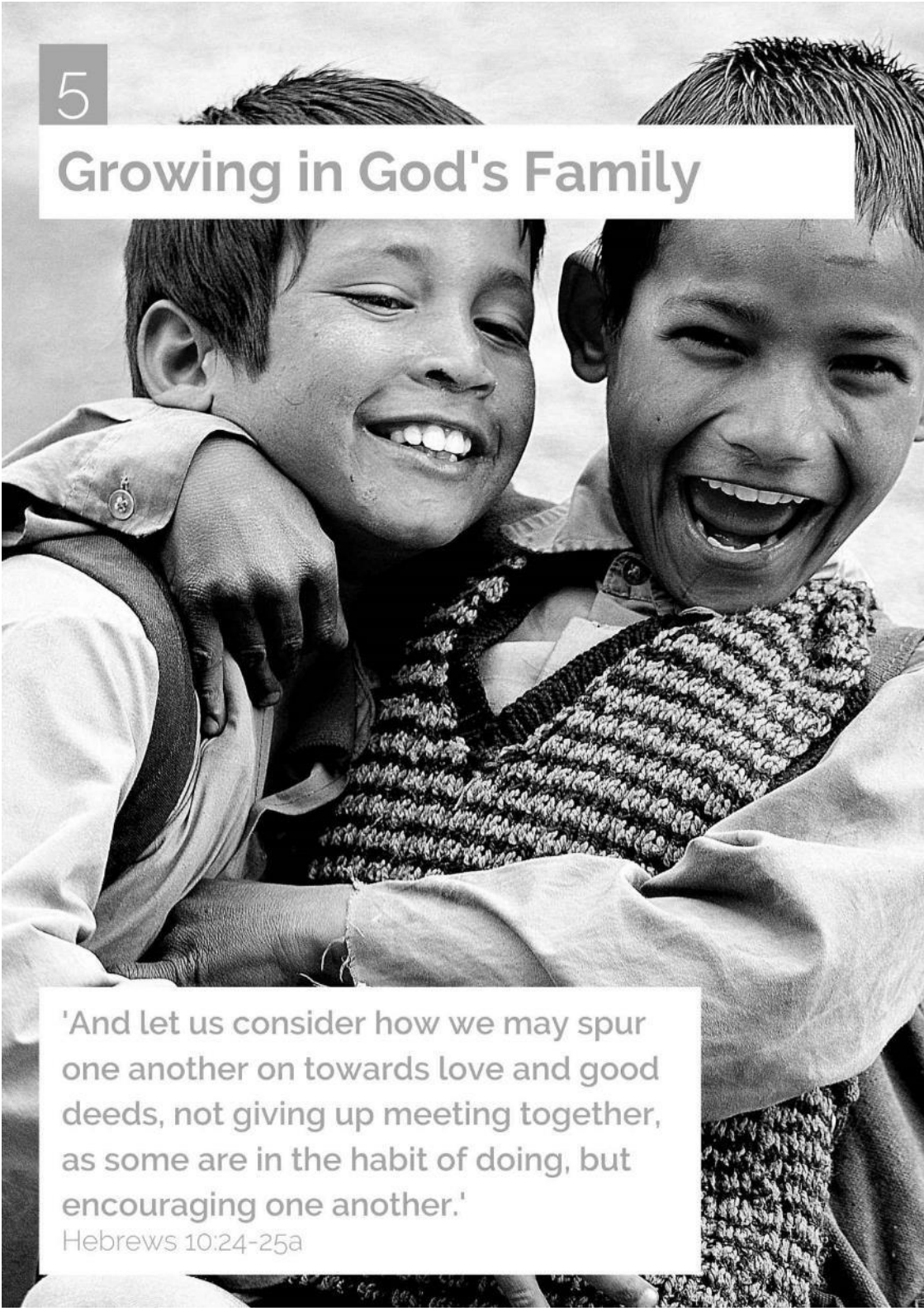


### **Witness**

Remember those people that you discussed earlier and the ways in which you said you would try and reach them. Go and see those people, putting your plans into action this week. Maybe invite them to join your group or see if they would be interested in starting a new one. Pray before and after you go.

# Notes

## Growing in God's Family



'And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.'

Hebrews 10:24-25a



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that our new life from God means we are now a part of his family: he is our Father and we are his children. We need to play our part in this family to learn and to grow in God.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verses and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read them again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole passage.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25a*



## Story

Read the following story to the group.

Miriam, Ruth, Simon and Jacob live in a small village with both of their parents. Each day starts with the family walking to the borehole together. They collect as much water as they can and then return home. After that Miriam, Ruth and Simon all go to school. Jacob is still a baby so he stays at home with his mother and father.

When the children come home from school they all help their mother and father with different jobs. Miriam helps prepare the food. She works hard and her mother has taught her how to mix flavours and cook well. Ruth helps with the cleaning but most of the time she looks after Jacob. She is helping him learn to walk at the moment and he's beginning to say a few words! Simon is strong and helps his father in the field. His father has shown him when to plant different seeds, what fertiliser is needed and how much water to give different crops.

The family all work hard, doing different jobs. At the end of each day, they sit down together and share their meal. They talk about the day and spend time listening to what has happened. Maybe someone had a difficult or interesting conversation with a neighbour. Maybe someone is unwell today. Maybe Jacob has said a new word and they can all celebrate together. Maybe some of the children have argued with each other and they need to apologise to each other. Maybe one of the older children has passed a test at school. Maybe their mother or father tells them a story from their own childhood.

All through the day Miriam, Ruth, Simon and Jacob are learning from each other and from their parents. They are learning how to work together and they are learning important skills that they need to survive in life. They are also learning how to listen and talk to each other and how to encourage one another. They know they can talk to their parents when they are happy or sad and they can talk

about the good and the bad things in their lives.

As the family works together and spends time together they are all learning from each other.



Like the four children in today's story, when we are born it is usually into a family of some sort. This can include parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles. When we are young we need our family to protect us, to help us to grow and to teach us. As we grow older we can play a more active role in helping others in the family, caring for those who are young or old, assisting them in times of sickness or trouble. As we grow we begin to bring our unique contribution to family life, making it better and stronger than it was before. We also begin to represent the family to others. We speak and do business on behalf of the family.

This is a helpful picture for us when we think about following Jesus. When we choose to follow Jesus, God calls us his sons and daughters, we are adopted into God's family. We are going to explore this together by reading about some people who chose to follow Jesus.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read Matthew 4:18-22 to the group:

*<sup>18</sup>As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." <sup>20</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*<sup>21</sup>Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their*

*father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,<sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*



In the next chapters of the book of Matthew, we read about what happens after Peter (also called Simon), Andrew, James and John and the others disciples started to follow Jesus. We read that Jesus healed people who were sick and cast out demons. We read about what he taught these four men, his other disciples and large crowds that gathered around him. In one place we read that Jesus visited Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law. We read about how he was in a boat with his disciples when a great storm came. The disciples were scared but Jesus commanded the storm to be still, and it was.

Jesus spends time with Peter, Andrew, James, John and the other disciples. He shows them how to do the things he does and he talks to them. He visits their homes and travels with them. He is with them when they are afraid and shows them that they can trust in God.

Now we are going to read about another key moment in the story of Peter, Andrew, James and John and the other disciples.



Read Matthew 10:1 and 7-8 to the group:

*<sup>1</sup>Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*

*<sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'<sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely*

*give.*



Having spent time with his disciples and teaching them, Jesus then sends them out to reach many other people.

In many ways Peter, Andrew, James and John became like family to Jesus. They spent time with him, learning from him as we would learn from our parents and siblings. As they began to grow in understanding and faith Jesus sent them out to carry on the work he had begun. Jesus did not want to do the work of God alone; he wanted to do it with other people. He invited his disciples and now he invites us to be part of his family and to work with him and each other.



5 mins

### **Discussion**

It is important to remember that not everyone has good experiences of family and that some people may have grown up without a family.

In groups of 3 or 4 people, discuss the following questions:

- How does it make you feel that Jesus treated his disciples like family, spending time with them, showing them things and teaching them?
- Do you have good or bad experiences of family in your life and how do you think this might affect the way you feel about being part of God's family?



When we begin to follow Jesus he invites us into God's family. This is a spiritual, worldwide family that stretches over time. We do not know everyone in this family because it is so big, but Jesus gives us people around us to share our day to day life with. This could be people in our church, Life Group or other small group.

It is important for us to spend time with these people who are also following Jesus. We can learn from each other and the different experiences we each have. There will be people who have followed Jesus for a long time and can be like spiritual parents to us. As we grow up in faith, there will be people who we need to be spiritual parents for. We can encourage one another and pray for each other. This can help us when we feel far from God or are struggling to be disciplined. Together we can hold each other accountable.

Like brothers and sisters, we may sometimes disagree and fight with each other, but as in any family it is important that we make peace with one another. Together we can be a strong spiritual family, following Jesus and inviting others to join the family.

You may have noticed that if you do not make time to see family and friends, you drift away from them, slowly feeling less close to them. So it is with our spiritual family. If we do not spend time together we will drift away from one another. We will become vulnerable and weak, easily discouraged or mislead. This does not mean that it is wrong to spend time with God on your own. That is also an important thing to do and we will discover more about this in the next session.

We can spend time together as part of God's family in different ways. We might sing together, read the Bible together, pray together or simply spend time quietly asking God to speak to us. We might share a meal together, help the poor in our community together or work together. There are many ways in which we can be a spiritual family.

We should always remember that our new life in God makes us part of a new family. We need that family as we grow in our faith and

our family needs us too.



5 mins

### **Activity – The Copying Game**

In a family, we often learn by doing things together. We watch how someone else does something and we copy them. Explain that we are going to play a game to help us remember this!

Divide everyone into pairs. In each pair one person is to lead, making up actions, and the other is to follow by copying the actions. Explain that the winners of the game are the pair who can do the silliest actions!

Demonstrate this by getting a volunteer and asking them to copy everything you do for a minute. You might turn around on the spot, pat yourself on the head, jump up and down, run around the room or pull a funny face! It can be as silly as you like.

Once everyone is ready, shout “Go” and give everyone 2 or 3 minutes to play the game.

Remember to look for the silliest action so you can choose a winner at the end.



10 mins

### **Discussion**

In groups of 3 or 4, discuss the following questions:

- We have just had some fun copying each other. Can you share an example of a time you have learnt something by copying someone?
- Can you share an example of a time you were struggling and your family or friends encouraged you and helped you carry on or overcome the challenges you faced?
- Is there a time you have felt encouraged by simply spending

time with family or friends?



15 mins

### **Prayer**

We are going to spend some time praying with and for each other now. Remaining in the groups of 3 or 4 people, start by asking people to answer these questions.

- Is there anything you would like to share to encourage your spiritual family?
- Is there anything you are struggling with that you need your spiritual family to encourage you in?

Let people have time to listen to God and each other and to share openly and honestly. Once people have had time to discuss these questions, ask them to pray for each other in their groups.

Now bring the whole group back together. Encourage everyone to stand in a circle and to hold hands with the people on either side of them. We are going to spend some time saying thank you to God for our family. Invite everyone to say short prayers of thanks to God for the family he has given us. After a while, close the time of prayer with your own prayer.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week choose one person in the group and commit to meet up with each other before the next group session to encourage one another. If there is someone in your group who you have a disagreement with, this would be a good opportunity to commit to meet up with them and make peace. You may need to apologise and forgive each other. This might seem hard but it is an important thing to do in our spiritual family.

Before you meet spend some time praying for them and ask God for something that you can encourage them with, maybe a passage of scripture, a song or simply some kind words of truth that will help them to know him better.

When you meet, encourage one another, ask one another about the challenges they are facing and then pray together asking God to help you overcome those challenges. You can share any feedback from this at next week's session.



### **Witness**

As you spend time in God's presence, he will speak to you. Ask him to help you to encourage someone who is not yet in God's family and invite them to join your group next week. Ask him who you should speak to, perhaps a person you reached out to last week.

# In a Quiet Place with God



'Be still, and know that I am God.'

Psalm 46:10a



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that in order to grow closer to God and become more like him, we need to spend regular quiet time with him.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again getting the group to repeat it after you until everyone can recite the whole verse. Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Be still, and know that I am God.*

*Psalms 46:10a*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

Daniel was a young man living in a village when he met Comfort, a beautiful young girl who worked as a shopkeeper. He fell in love

with her and wanted to marry her, but he was very aware that he needed to get to know her before he could propose to her.

He visited her daily at the shop where she worked and they chatted whenever they could, but it was a busy shop and it was never long before another customer arrived and she would have to leave him to help serve the customer. Also, the owner of the shop did not like to see them sitting chatting so he always found extra jobs for her to do if the shop got quiet. They tried to talk as she worked but it was difficult as her mind was on her work and not on their conversation.

Daniel realised that he was never going to get to know Comfort at the shop, so they arranged to meet at a coffee shop after work each day on her way home. However, the coffee shop was a busy shop and many of their friends frequented the coffee shop and would come and join them at their table. Also, the music was always very loud so it was difficult to hear each other as they spoke.

Daniel became more and more frustrated at not being able to spend time with Comfort who he loved, so he decided he would visit her at her parents' home. But when he was there they had to sit in the lounge where her father was watching TV. The father liked Daniel and would chat to him about the sport he was watching. Comfort's mother would join them and loved to talk, asking them about their day and their plans. Comfort had younger brothers who played in the lounge, and were always asking Daniel to play with them, which he did because he liked the brothers and he also wanted to please Comfort.

Daniel began to despair as he realised that although he was spending a lot of time in her presence, he was not getting to know Comfort. Wherever they met there were distractions, interruptions,

and noise preventing them from chatting one-to-one. He realised that there was only one solution. He asked her to leave for work an hour earlier each morning, and they met daily in a quiet spot down by the river where there were no distractions or interruptions, and where the only noise was the gently flowing river and the sound of their voices as they chatted to each other.

Soon they got to know each other very well and their love for each other grew deeper daily. It was not long before Daniel asked Comfort's father for her hand in marriage.



### **Activity**

10 mins

Divide the group into pairs. Encourage people to pair up with someone they do not know very well. Each pair will need to team up with another pair, so there will be groups of 4 people.

Within each group, each pair is given 2 minutes to get to know as much about each other as they can. Things such as: how old they are, where they were born, what they do for a living, their favourite food and so on.

While they are chatting, the other 2 people in their group must try to distract them by making a noise, asking them questions, calling them on their mobiles or doing whatever they can to prevent them communicating.

They should then swap roles and the second pair should try to get to know each other. Each pair then gets a chance to give feedback on what they know about each other. See which pair managed to get to know each other best under the circumstances.

Bring everyone back together and ask if it is it easy to get to know someone amidst many distractions and lots of noise.



## Bible Knowledge

Read Mark 1:21-39 to the group:

*<sup>21</sup>They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup>The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. <sup>23</sup>Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup>'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!'*

*<sup>25</sup>'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' <sup>26</sup>The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

*<sup>27</sup>The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' <sup>28</sup>News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*

*<sup>29</sup>As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup>Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup>So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

*<sup>32</sup>That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup>The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup>and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

<sup>35</sup>*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup>and when they found him, they exclaimed: ‘Everyone is looking for you!’*

<sup>38</sup>*Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’ <sup>39</sup>So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*



In the first part of this passage we see an outline of one of Jesus’ busiest days. The next day Jesus knew that it was more important for him to spend time alone with his Father to be spiritually refreshed, than it was to spend time in bed to be physically refreshed. He knew that he needed quiet time alone with God.

Jesus knew that once the others awoke and the day started he would not get a chance to be alone with his Father. We can see this in verses 36 to 39 where his disciples come to find him and tell him that everyone was looking for him. The crowds wanted to see Jesus. They wanted to be with him. They wanted healing and deliverance, and to hear his teaching. They would not give him a break, and he would be on the move for the day, travelling from village to village teaching and ministering to the people there.

Verse 35 tells us that Jesus went to a solitary place and ‘prayed’. We could easily be mistaken into thinking that he just presented God with a list of needs and requests. But the word ‘prayed’ used here means much more than this: it includes worship, thanksgiving, supplication (needs and requests), and ‘waiting’ on God the Father.

Waiting is a term used to describe sitting quietly in God's presence listening for him to speak to you. Jesus knew that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ([Isaiah 40:31](#)) and he put it into practice! He knew that his ministry could (and most probably would) fail if he did not.

During his time of solitude with his Father, Jesus would have expressed his love for God and his gratitude to God. He would have prayed for specific needs or situations and also for authority, power and strength to continue his ministry.

He would have waited on God, listening to God's expressions of love for him, as well as for directions and instructions for the day ahead. We see from verse 38 that Jesus had a very clear plan for the day after having spent time with his Father – to move on from that place to the nearby villages.

If Jesus, the Son of God who had such authority and power, needed a time of refreshing with God, how much more do we need it?



### Activity

5 mins

To be like Jesus and spend time with God requires discipline from us. We are each going to make a plan that will help us to do this. Ask the group to break into pairs to discuss the following questions. Each person should decide on their own answer and share it within their pair, writing down their own decision to help them remember it.

- Where is a place that you can be alone, so that it is just you and God? This place must be a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, interrupted, or distracted. It should be somewhere you can be every day.
- When is a good time in your day to set aside time to be

quiet with God? Think about your daily routine and decide upon a good time for you. Many people find that the best time for this is first thing in the morning. You could start with 10 minutes and increase the time as you get used to the habit.

Encourage people to write down their plan if they are able to. This will help them to remember it.



5 mins

In their pairs, ask people to pray for each other. Be specific in prayer, naming the place and time where each person is going to spend quiet time with God and ask God to help them to meet with him in a personal and intimate manner.



At first it may seem awkward and un-natural. Satan will try to discourage you by telling you that it is a waste of time and that you cannot hear God. But do not give up. Keep going and as the days turn to weeks it will become more natural and more real. You will have days where you feel so close to God, followed by days where you feel further away from him. Do not give up. Relationships take time and effort. Work at being in a quiet place with God.



15 mins

### **Activity**

Explain that we are going to practise a quiet time now. Ask the group to follow these steps. You will need to read them out one at a time, allowing time for people to do each part.

- Choose a space in the room in which to sit or stand to be quiet.
- Turn off your mobile phone.
- Quiet your mind to get rid of all the thoughts, worries or ideas that are racing around there. (Spending time with God first thing in the morning before your mind gets too busy

can be helpful.)

- Be still. Sit still. Do not pace up and down or move around.
- Start by worshipping and adoring God. Express your love for him. (Allow a few minutes for this and the next few steps.)
- Confess any sin you are aware of and ask him to show you any you may have overlooked. Get right with God.
- Spend some time thanking him for his goodness and all he has done for you.
- Ask him to meet your needs and present any requests you have to him.
- End by spending some time 'waiting on God'. Read some verses from the Bible. You could start with Psalm 46 today. Read slowly. Read carefully. Read prayerfully. Pray the scriptures back to God.
- As you read, listen attentively. Write down anything you hear or any thoughts you have that may be from him. (When you are on your own, if you find your mind wandering, read out loud. That helps us focus.)

Bring the group back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from their experience.



5 mins

### **Prayer**

Lead the group in this prayer. Read one sentence at a time and ask the group to repeat each line after you if they want to:

Dear Lord Jesus, I love you and I want to get to know you more intimately every day. Please teach me to be still, to be quiet and to spend time with just you and me. Help me to make this part of my day every day. Please protect me from Satan's attacks as he seeks to distract me and interrupt our times together. I love you Lord Jesus, help me to walk closely with

you, amen.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, put into action the plan you made earlier. Go to the place you decided on at the time of day you decided. Go once every day and follow the simple steps we went through today. (You may need to remind people of these). Commit to doing this and to encouraging 2 others in your group to do this during the week.

Ask people to take note of how often they are distracted, or disturbed, or interrupted during their time with God throughout the week. Ask them to think about what is it that is distracting or interrupting them, then to think what they can do to overcome these distractions and interruptions.



### **Witness**

Think of all the people you have already spoken to and ask God if there is a particular person he wants you to speak to again this week or if there is somebody new. Go and tell the person God puts on your mind that you are going to be spending some quiet time with God. Explain to them that you are making time to talk to God and to hear from him. Tell them what you have learnt today and invite them to do the same.

# What is the Bible?



'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

2 Timothy 3:16-17



## Preparation

This session will require group members to have access to a Bible. You should contact people and ask them to bring a Bible if they have one. In the session, please make sure Bibles are shared within the group and that anyone who cannot read is supported by someone who can. If anyone has access to the internet on their phone they can access both text and audio Bibles online. (See the resources section at the end of this session if you need some examples of where to find these.)

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked everyone to bring a Bible if they have one?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to introduce us to God's word, the Bible. The Bible tells the story of God and his people and helps us to know him better.



## Memory Verse

Read the memory verses and Bible reference aloud to the group. Read them again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group

repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole passage.  
Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*



### Story

Read the following story to the group:

Just over 200 years ago there lived in Wales a young girl called Mary Jones. She came from a poor family but her father and mother were both Christian believers. Mary herself came to faith in Christ when she was about eight. She had been taught the Bible since she was young, but Mary longed to be able to read one for herself. But there were some problems to overcome. First, she could not read; second where would she get a Bible, and how would she ever be able to afford one?

The first problem was solved when a school opened in a village near her home. Mary could learn to read after all! She had to walk there and back every day in all weather, but she persevered. She already did household chores at home, but Mary began to take on extra work for other people, trying to save up little by little. She washed clothes, she kept hens, and she sold eggs. Each time she made a small profit, she stored it away safely, thinking of the day when she would reach her target.

After saving for six years she reckoned she had enough funds. Mary asked a local church leader about buying a Bible. He knew of none,

but told her about a man called Thomas Charles at Bala - 26 miles away. He sometimes had Bibles for sale. Welsh Bibles were scarce in those days, but Mary was determined. So at the age of 14 she set out on a very long walk. She had to cross high mountains between her home and the town of Bala. The way was rough and stony and she walked barefoot, but she made it.

When she knocked on Mr Charles' door she was tired and dirty, but her eyes were bright with excitement. 'Do you have Bibles for sale, sir?' she asked breathlessly. Mr Charles did not know what to say. All his Bibles had either been sold or were already promised to someone else. But here was this eager young girl with tears in her eyes, who had saved for so long and walked so far. Surely she could not to be turned away empty-handed. Mr Charles thought quickly. 'I will give you my last one,' he told her, 'and get a replacement for my other customer.'

So Mary got her Bible and continued to read it all her life. It was in a museum but is back in Wales now, with the story of how she got it written in the back in her own handwriting. And Mr Charles? Well, he was really moved by the determination of this young girl and decided to start up a Bible Society so that more people could have Bibles of their own. Mary Jones' love for the Bible and the God of the Bible proved a blessing not just to herself and her family, but to many other people as well.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 to the group:

*<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup>and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation*

*through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*



The Bible is a powerful book. As our passage suggests, we can be changed as we take its truth into our hearts. It is primarily God's story: a series of books that tell of the creation of the world, its history so far, the love He has for His people, His plan to save us through his son Jesus, and the final events of history.

The story of Mary Jones shows how important it is to have a Bible that we can read in our own language. Perhaps, like Mary, you have never had a Bible of your own. Why not decide today to pray to God and ask him to help you to save up and get one that you and your family can read together.



### **Discussion**

For each of the following questions, encourage one or two people to share what they think the answer is. After people have shared their answers, read the answers given here.



### **What is the Bible?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

The Bible is a unique collection of writings or *Scriptures*. The word *Bible* comes from the Greek name for the original documents, translated *book*. It is actually a collection of 66 books, written at different times and for different readers. It is divided into two sections:

- The Old Testament is made up of 39 books all dated before Jesus' birth.
- The New Testament is made up of 27 books (many of which

are actually letters), covering the birth of Jesus to the end of the world.

The diagram on the next page shows the different types of books of the Bible and how they sit within different categories. In the Old Testament the books are divided into 5 categories:

- Law: These books tell the start of the story of God and his people and set out the way he asked them to live.
- History: These books span many, many years and continue the story of God and his people, sometimes a whole nation, sometimes a small family or an individual.
- Poetry: Using vivid language and evoking our emotions these books help us understand the fullness of life.
- Major & minor prophets: In each of these books we read God's words to his people at certain times to challenge or encourage them. We can learn a lot about God's character and about people in these books.

In the New Testament the books are divided into 4 categories:

- Gospels: These books record what happened while Jesus lived on earth.
- Early Church: After Jesus left earth, the people who followed him told others about him. Their story is recorded here.
- Letters: The leaders of the early church wrote letters to many groups of believers to encourage them. These letters are recorded here.
- Prophecy: As with the Old Testament prophetic books, this book sets out God's message to his people. Through symbolic language we are given warning and comfort.

Old Testament		Law	History	Poetry	Minor Prophets
			Joshua	Job	Hosea
			Judges	Psalms	Joel
			Ruth	Proverbs	Amos
			1 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Obadiah
		Genesis	2 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Jonah
		Exodus	1 Kings		Micah
		Leviticus	2 Kings		Nahum
		Numbers	1 Chronicles		Habakkuk
		Deuteronomy	2 Chronicles		Zephaniah
			Ezra	Isaiah	Haggai
			Nehemiah	Jeremiah	Zechariah
			Esther	Lamentations	Malachi
				Ezekiel	
				Daniel	

New Testament		Gospels	Letters	Letters	Prophecy
		Matthew	Romans		James
		Mark	1 Corinthians	1 Timothy	1 Peter
		Luke	2 Corinthians	2 Timothy	2 Peter
		John	Galatians	Titus	1 John
			Ephesians	Philemon	2 John
			Philippians		3 John
			Colossians		Jude
		Acts	1 Thessalonians	Hebrews	
			2 Thessalonians		Revelation

Now translated into most of the world's languages, the Bible remains one of its best-selling books.

### **Who wrote the words in our passage?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

Paul, a leader in the early church, wrote these words in a letter to Timothy. Timothy's family had taught him the Scriptures (another term for the Bible) since he was young. Paul later met him and took him along on his travels to teach people about God and to encourage believers. Paul was imprisoned for his faith in Jesus, and in this letter, is now near the end of his life. He wrote to encourage his young helper to continue in his faith in Jesus and remind him how important the Scriptures are.

### **Why is the Bible special?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

Paul told Timothy the Scriptures were inspired by God himself, or '*God-breathed*'. Though the styles of the books vary, there are amazing connections between them with key words, themes and ideas woven throughout the overall story. In fact, it is the real history of the real world we know and live in.

### **What can the Bible do?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

The Bible can give us understanding about God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It gives us his view of the world, from beginning to end. It explains where mankind came from and why life is full of problems. As well as giving us the big picture, it shows us what we are like as people. It tells us why we became separated from God, what he has done about that problem and how we can be part of his rescue plan.

### **What can the Bible not do?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

We should note carefully what Paul wrote: the Scriptures can make us ‘wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.’ Though it contains words of life, of itself the Bible cannot give anyone spiritual life. That life comes to us through Jesus Christ, when we put our faith in him. The Bible is incredibly useful to us, but to find salvation we need to put our faith in Jesus, who is the living Word. In fact, we could call the Bible a signpost, pointing us along the right road to the right person, Jesus, who can save us from our sin and offer us new life.

### **How can the Scriptures help us?**

(Remember to let one or two people suggest answers first.)

Paul says the Scriptures are helpful for, ‘teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.’ They can show us where we have gone wrong, like a light shining into the dark corners of our hearts and our thinking. They give us examples to follow as well as examples to avoid. The Scriptures also give us hope, showing that God can use anyone, no matter how flawed they were before they trusted him.

The Bible also helps to train us in righteousness – it does not come naturally to us! The Holy Spirit (the helper whom Jesus sent to his disciples after his resurrection) speaks to our hearts and consciences to make us long for holy and clean lives. He will often use the Scriptures to encourage us towards this goal.

Finally, Paul encouraged Timothy to mature in his relationship with God. He spoke of the man of God being *complete*. God has good works for us all to do. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul says:

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

*Ephesians 2:10*

We will be best fitted to do these if we go on as disciples and get to know God better. Both the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit have a big part to play in this process – precious gifts indeed.



### **Activity**

10 mins

Break into groups of 3 or 4 people and try to answer the following questions:

- Has anyone ever felt that God was speaking to them through a particular verse or passage in the Bible?
- Which one was it?
- What difference did this make to you?
- What did you do as a result?



### **Prayer**

10 mins

Stay in your small groups and pray together, thanking God for his gift of the Bible.

You could ask him:

- To help you to understand and get to know him better through reading or listening to it.
- To help you to obey what he is saying to you through it.
- To give you an opportunity and the courage to share the truths you learn from the Bible with others.

Pray through today's memory verse for each person, asking God to thoroughly equip them for good works as they read his word.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, when you see a road or a signpost, thank God for pointing you to Jesus Christ. Thank him for his gift of the Scriptures to make you wise for salvation.

Either on your own or with 1 or 2 others from the group read a short book of the Bible. It is up to you which book you read. If you are unsure where to start you could try James, 1 Peter or 1 John, letters written to the early church. The book of Mark is also a good place to start. It is a bit longer and it tells the story of what happened while Jesus was on earth.

If anyone does not have a Bible or cannot read encourage them to meet with someone else in the group who has a Bible and is able to read it to them.



### **Witness**

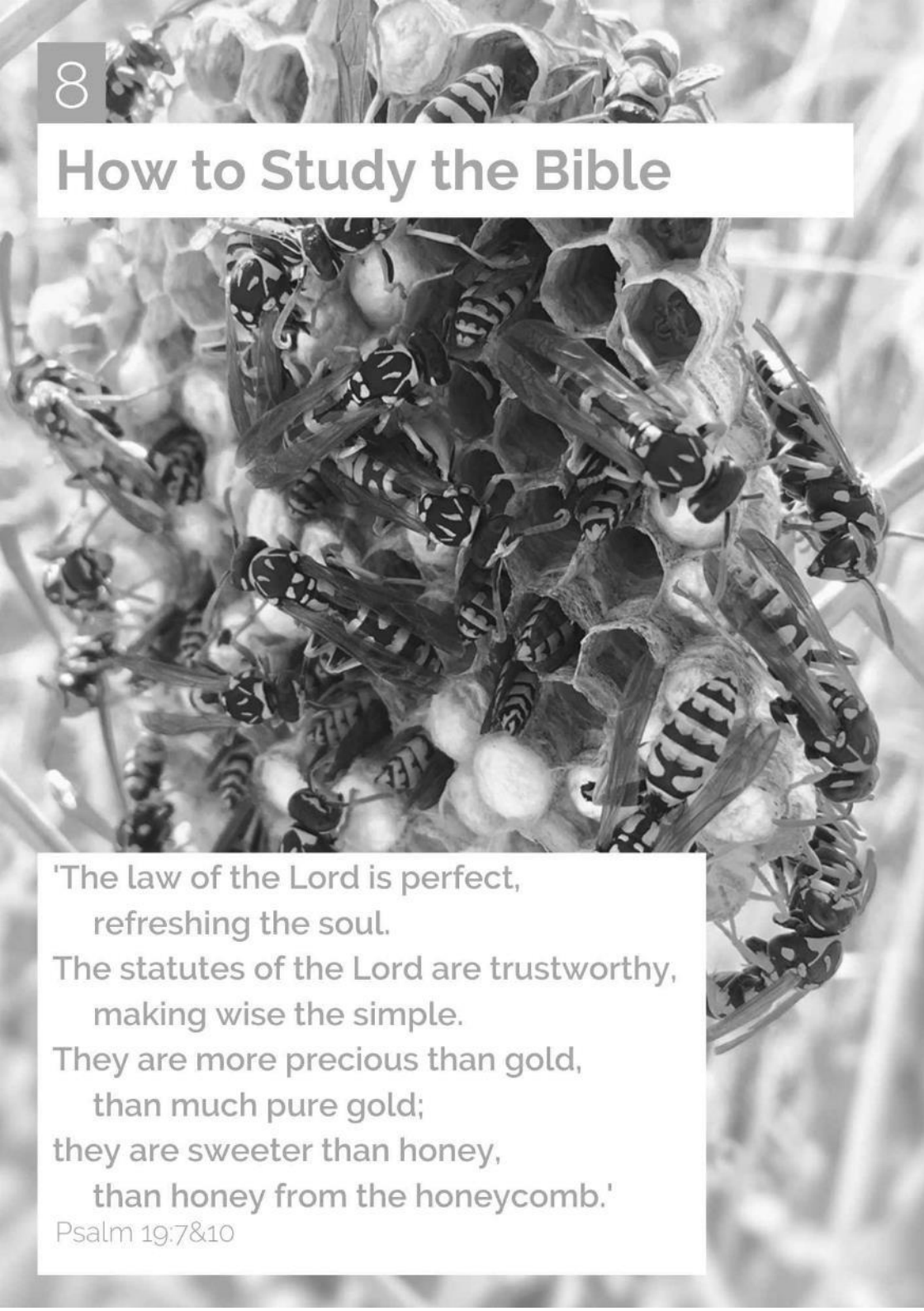
Having asked God for an opportunity to share truth from the Bible with others, look out for those opportunities and speak up when they come your way!

Think of all the people you have already spoken to as part of our witness activities. Ask God if there is someone you have already spoken to that he wants you to talk to again or if he wants you to speak to somebody new this week. God will put somebody on your mind to speak to. You could use the 3 circles diagram, share a memory verse or do something kind for somebody as a way to share the truth from the Bible.

You can share the answers to prayer with the group next time.

# Notes

## How to Study the Bible



'The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.  
They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.'

Psalms 19:7&10



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- 3 or 4 Bibles

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked 3 or 4 people to bring a Bible if they have one?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to learn how to study the Bible. This includes ideas about where to begin and some methods for encountering God and applying his word to our lives.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verses and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read them again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole passage.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.*

*They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.*

*Psalms 19:7&10*



### **Story**

Read the following story to the group. It is the story of King David from the Bible.

Once there was a young boy in Israel called David. He was a shepherd. He spent much time outdoors looking after his sheep or doing jobs for his father. He was the youngest son in the family of Jesse and his brothers probably did not think he would amount to much – because he was the little one. But David loved God and his truth. He used to look at the wonderful world around him and thank God for what he had made. He loved music too. He could play the harp and write poems, and some of these were set to music.

In the course of time David's family got a big surprise. A prophet called Samuel came along and wanted to see all the boys – God had told him to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the future king of Israel. Which one would he choose? The oldest? The strongest? The best-looking? He chose none of these – God had told Samuel to look beyond their outward appearance to the heart, the inner attitude of the person. So, young David was selected.

He was a brave young man, and his faith and courage were soon tested. You probably know how he defeated a great giant of a man called Goliath using only his slingshot and stones from the stream. David endured many difficulties because the previous king (Saul) was jealous of him and wanted to kill him, but in the end God's plan

came about and David was proclaimed king. His kingdom grew larger and King David prospered. But he never forgot God. He prayed and sang songs of praise to him in good times and bad. Some of the Psalms in our Bible today are songs written by that very same David, and they have helped Christians over the years to lift up their hearts and praise God, realising that he is always in control and always faithful.

Our passage today comes from one of David's Psalms. We shall see how he loved the Lord's words and ways and found such blessing in obeying them.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read Psalm 19:7-11 to the group:

*<sup>7</sup>The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.*

*<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.*

*<sup>9</sup>The fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring for ever.*

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.*

*<sup>10</sup>They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.*

*<sup>11</sup>By them your servant is warned;*

*in keeping them there is great reward.*



### **Where should we start?**

It can be daunting to know where to start in the Bible; it is such a big book. Reading it from cover to cover is not always the best way to begin; eventually we want to be able to read the whole Bible, but we build up to that. Why not start with one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) then move onto Acts to learn about the life of the early Church. Turn to Psalms to find songs and poems covering all aspects of human life and experience, or Genesis to find out about how God created the world.

### **How can God speak to us through the Bible?**

Sometimes you may read the Bible and nothing seems to stand out to you. Do not worry. You are still taking in truth, and over time it will shape the way you look at life. The truth in the Bible applies to us no matter how we feel. Regular reading of the whole Bible will help you grasp the 'big picture' of what the Bible is about, as well as studying small parts of it in more depth. When you start to read a book of the Bible, try to find out where in the big story it fits. *Who* wrote the book, *when* and *why*?

At other times, you will find yourself reading a certain section and the words seem to jump off the page and really impress themselves upon you. If that happens, you should take notice, thinking carefully about how they apply to your life, your thinking and your situation. Are they an answer to prayers you prayed recently? Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do something, to go somewhere, to change something? Is he rebuking you for some wrong attitude in your heart?

Pray that God will help you understand what you read. Do not be discouraged by hard sections. Just keep going. Sometimes you will

say, 'Oh, I see now!' as things you read later on explain parts you had not understood earlier.

The Bible is rather like a mine. Some of the precious things are on the surface or near it. They are easy to pick up. But some of the precious things are deep underground, and you have to do some hard work to reach them. That is why it speaks of meditating, considering and reflecting on what you have read.

You will not know it all in 5 minutes but each time we read, asking God to help us, we are building more of his truth into our hearts and minds. Gradually the Holy Spirit can reshape our thinking, bringing us more into line with what he wants us to be. (You could read Psalm 119: 9-11 to explore this further.) Do not give up! But do keep in touch with other believers. Share with them what you are learning from the Bible. It will encourage them, and one day they can encourage you.

Remember what David said in Psalm 19:11 – in keeping God's ways there is great reward. We all like the idea of a reward, but this one lasts and lasts. It is not just like money or a nice present – it is being built up stronger in our faith and love for the living God and getting to know him better. David spoke of God's words being sweeter than honey and better than gold, reminding us that his things are of much greater worth than things that are enjoyed and greatly valued in this world.



### Activity

15 mins

We are going to spend 15 minutes learning one method for studying the Bible. Split the group into smaller groups or 3-4 people, ensuring that at least one person in each group has a Bible that they can read confidently.

In their groups, ask people to do the following:

Read: One person reads aloud Mark 6:30-44, 'Jesus feeds the five thousand'.

Retell: Other people in the group retell the story in their own words.

Reflect: Everyone discusses the following questions and their answers:

- What does the passage tell us about God?
- What does the passage tell us about ourselves?
- Is there anything we should do as a result of reading this passage?

Review: Decide in the group what each member will do as a result of reading the passage, discussing any further questions.



We could be reading the Bible regularly in our quiet time with God. It helps us to get to know him better and it's one of the best ways in which he can speak to us.

It is also important for us to begin to share with others what we have been learning from our Bible study, and to hold one another accountable to those decisions that we make as a result of reading God's word. The passage for today, including our memory verse, shows us that there are many benefits to reading God's word.



### **Activity**

5 mins

Divide your group into two and appoint a leader (a fairly confident reader) for each half. Make sure each person leading a group has a Bible and is ready to read Psalm 19:7-11.

- Prompted by their leader, one group reads aloud the first part of each couplet (verses 7-10), for example: 'The Law of

the Lord is perfect.'

- The other group then reads aloud the last part, for example: 'refreshing the soul.'
- Read through verses 7-10 in this way.
- Then, both groups say together the concluding section (verse 11) all together from 'By them your servant is warned...'



5 mins

### **Discussion**

Get everyone into groups of 3 or 4 people.

Say that the last verse (Psalm 19:11) speaks of great reward in keeping God's ways. Ask the groups to see what rewards they can find in the earlier verses.

After a few minutes, go round the room and ask each group to share 1 reward they found until they have all been shared.



10 mins

### **Prayer**

In the same small groups, thank God that the Bible has been preserved through the years and that we can read it here. Pray that he will help us to understand what we read.

Thank him for the blessings we receive when we read and obey what the Holy Spirit shows us.

Ask him to show us anything he has to say about our own community, situations or needs.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, spend some time looking through a Bible (or listening to an audio Bible)

and pick one or two stories to practice the method we used today:  
Read, Retell, Reflect, Review.



### **Witness**

When God speaks to you through the Bible or answers your prayers, be bold! Tell others what the Lord has done for you.

Remind yourself of the memory verses you have learnt so far. Once you feel confident that you know the memory verses, share them with others – pass it on!

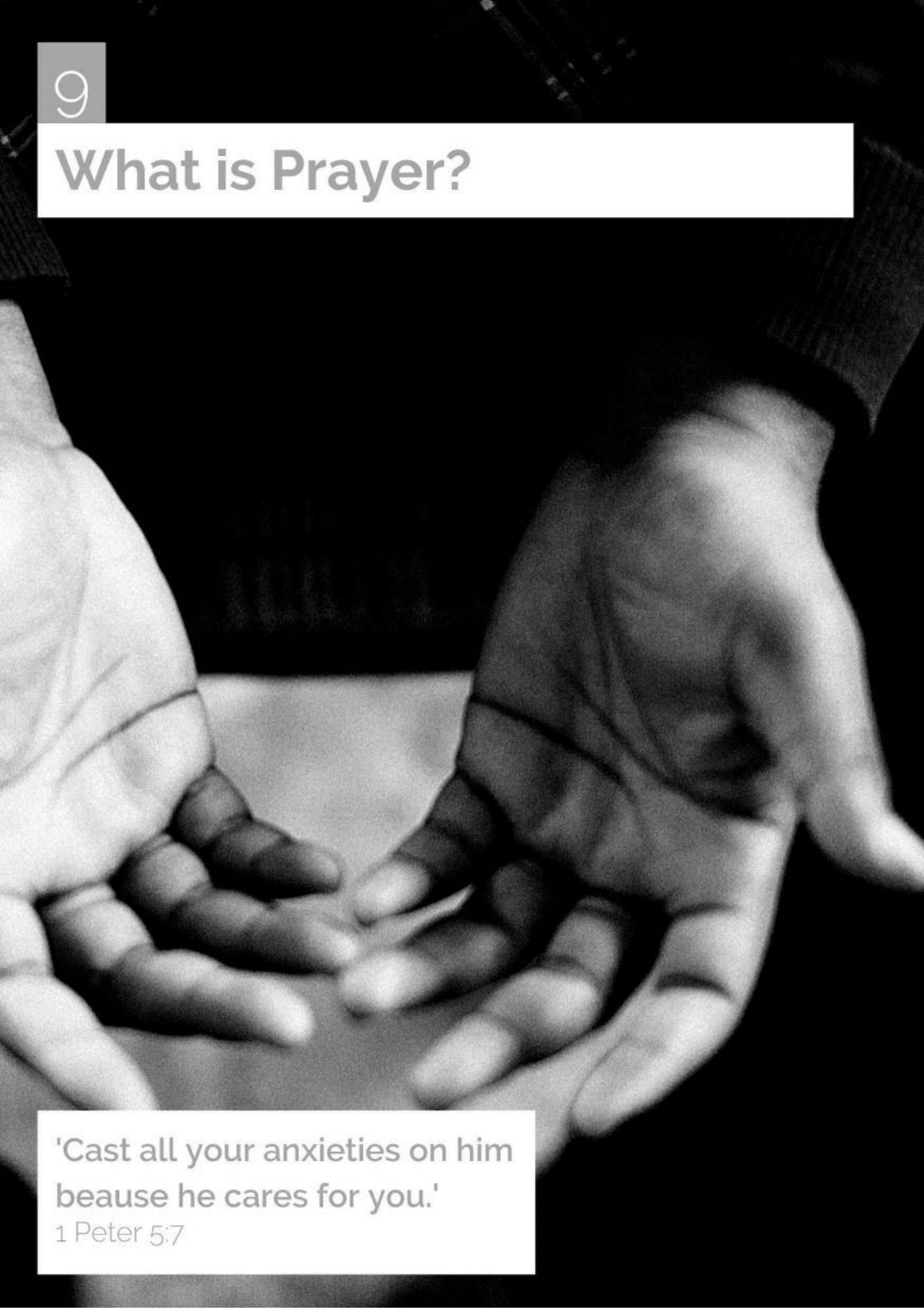
### **Resources**

There are many online resources that can help us to access the Bible and learn more about it. If you have internet access you can look at:

- [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)  
Online Bible Access in variety of versions including audio Bible
- [www.youversion.com](http://www.youversion.com)  
An app that you can download to your phone or computer with the whole Bible and reading plans on it, including audio Bible
- [www.thebibleproject.com](http://www.thebibleproject.com)  
Free video summaries of books of the Bible and its central themes
- [www.easyenglish.bible](http://www.easyenglish.bible)  
An online Bible written in easy to read English.

# Notes

# What is Prayer?

A black and white photograph showing two hands held out, palms up, in a gesture of prayer or offering. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hands. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the lines on the palms.

'Cast all your anxieties on him  
because he cares for you.'

1 Peter 5:7



## Preparation

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand what prayer is. It is communication with God. It is like a child learning its parent's language and involves talking and listening.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again getting the group to repeat it after you until everyone can recite the whole verse. Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

*1 Peter 5:7*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

A man's daughter had asked the local pastor to come and pray with her father. When the pastor arrived, he found the man

lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The priest assumed that the old man had been informed of his visit.

‘I guess you were expecting me,’ he said.

‘No, who are you?’

‘I’m the new associate at your local church,’ the pastor replied. ‘When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up.’

‘Oh yeah, the chair,’ said the bedridden man. ‘Would you mind closing the door?’ Puzzled, the pastor shut the door. ‘I’ve never told anyone this, not even my daughter,’ said the man. ‘But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it always went right over my head.’

‘I abandoned any attempt at prayer,’ the old man continued, ‘until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, “Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here’s what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It’s not spooky because he promised, ‘I’ll be with you always.’ Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you’re doing with me right now.” So, I tried it and I’ve liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I’m careful, though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she’d either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm.’ The pastor was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him,

and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the pastor that her daddy had died that afternoon.

‘Did he seem to die in peace?’ he asked.

‘Yes, when I left the house around two o’clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange. In fact, beyond strange – kind of weird. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside the bed.’<sup>2</sup>



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read Matthew 6:9-13 to the group:

*<sup>9</sup>This, then, is how you should pray:*

*‘Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,*

*<sup>10</sup>your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*<sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread.*

*<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.’*

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<sup>2</sup> Unknown (Undated). *An Empty Chair* [ONLINE] Available at: [www.storiesforpreaching.com/an-empty-chair/](http://www.storiesforpreaching.com/an-empty-chair/) [Accessed 29 November 2017]



## **What is prayer?**

Most people pray, even if that prayer is nothing more than, ‘Help!’ Prayer is the most natural way of communicating with God. It is our ‘lifeline’ to God and the most basic way to express our faith. There is not a set way to pray. Prayer does not have a defined structure, and it is something that we can grow and develop in as we mature in our faith.

Prayer can be:

- Crying out to God in times of need.
- A long high-pitched sound of delight, as a result of being handed a gift.
- Praying on behalf of the needs of others.
- Devotional time with God.
- A time of just listening in the presence of God.
- Spending time just receiving the love of God.

As we heard in the story of the old man, prayer may seem difficult at first, but actually once we realise that Jesus is with us and we can talk directly to him then it becomes much easier. As we practise, our prayers can develop and grow. We learn how to communicate with God about our deeper feelings, the circumstances we find ourselves in and the world around us. Our prayers turn into action and they make a difference.

## **Jesus prayed**

Jesus spent a lot of time praying to his Father God. In this Bible passage he teaches his followers a prayer that we now call ‘The Lord’s Prayer’. As well as teaching us how to pray, it teaches us what sort of things to pray for too. Prayer is necessary if we want to grow in our relationship with God.

## What does the Lord's Prayer tell us?

We are going to look at each phrase of the Lord's Prayer to see what it tells us.

- *'Our Father in heaven'*  
This tells us to remember who God is, and how we can address him. As our Father, in Heaven. He is not just Jesus' father, but he is ours too and that means he cares for us: he wants to hear from us.
- *'hallowed' (Holy) 'be your name'*  
This tells us that God is Holy, he is our Father but he is also the Creator of the world, greater than we can ever imagine.
- *'your kingdom come'*  
This tells us that he has a plan and we are to pray it into action. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand: we want his Kingdom, the time when his authority over all things on earth is complete, to come soon.
- *'your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'*  
In heaven God's will is done, so we pray for that to be the case on earth as well – for earth to be transformed.
- *'Give us today our daily bread'*  
This tells us that we are to trust God for what we need day by day. That way we stay reliant upon him and not on ourselves.
- *'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'*  
This tells us that God has forgiven us. This is great news but this forgiveness must be passed on to those who have hurt us or who owe us too.
- *'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*  
This tells us to pray for protection against temptation and also for deliverance from Satan.

These are all great prayers to pray: they teach us who God is, who we are, what his priorities are and what sort of help we need from him. Try praying the Lord's Prayer regularly. Pray through each line slowly, asking God to reveal any specific things he wants to tell you about each area.



### Activity

3 mins

Ask everyone if they can remember the memory verse. Get the group to say it aloud again.



### Prayer for enemies

Jesus teaching on prayer was often challenging. He also said:

*<sup>43</sup>You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'<sup>44</sup>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*

*Matthew 5:43-44*

Praying for our enemies may seem very difficult to us, but we need to take this instruction seriously. God loves everyone, and he wants them all to have the new life that we have found; therefore we need to be active in praying for even the most difficult people.



3 mins

### Prayer

Ask everyone to pray quietly for a few minutes for their enemies: this could be anyone they dislike or have had an argument with or simply just do not get on with. Encourage them to ask God to help them love that person like he does and to heal that relationship.



### Does God answer all of our prayers?

There are many things that we could pray for and God is not limited when it comes to answering our prayers. However, there are many times in which it seems like our prayers are not answered. God does

hear all of our prayers but he only says YES to those prayers which are in line with his good and perfect will for our lives and for the world around us. It can be hard when we think our prayers are not being answered, when it seems like God is not listening to us. In these situations we need to remember that God ultimately knows best and to ask him again to help us to pray in line with what he wants. Sometimes this will mean that we need to continue to persevere in prayer, other times we may need to change what it is that we are praying for.



### **Discussion – How to pray?**

5 mins

Split into groups of 3 or 4 people. Ask the groups to discuss the following questions:

- What sorts of things have you seen people do when they pray or have you read about people praying in the Bible (for example kneel, walk around, go somewhere alone, shout, be quiet, sing, cry)?
- How do you feel comfortable praying?
- What sorts of other ways to pray do you think you might like to try?



### **Activity**

15 mins

Praying ACTS - This is a way in which we can structure our prayers to God.

Break into groups of 2 or 3 and pray through the ACTS method together:

- **A: Adoration**  
Tell God how you feel about him, express your love for him, praise him. If you are struggling for words look at the book of Psalms for inspiration.

- **C: Confession**

Tell God about the things you have done or the areas of your life that you are sorry for. Ask him to change you from the inside out.

- **T: Thanksgiving**

Remember all the things God has done for you or given you, remember who he is and what he has done for us all and thank him.

- **S: Supplication**

This means to ask God for what we need for ourselves and the world around us (see [Philippians 4:6](#) for more on this).

You can pray like this in groups or on your own, you can pray out loud or in your head and in whatever language is most comfortable to you. You could even write it down if that helps you to focus.



5 mins

### **Prayer**

Pray the Lord's Prayer as found in our Bible passage above together this week. Have as many people as would like to pray out a line. Encourage them to learn this prayer off by heart and to pray it in their own time too.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, set some time aside with God to pray through the ACTS method we have just used. Once you have prayed to God, spend time quietly listening to him. He may answer you through a passage of scripture, a word in your mind, something that you see around you, another person or in many different ways. Ask him to help you to clearly hear him and recognise his voice.

Make a record of anything God says to you this week.




## **Witness**

This week take the opportunity to offer to pray with someone that you meet. You do not have to pray long elaborate prayers, simply ask God to be with them and to guide your prayers. Feed back to the group when you next meet about how it went.

Take some time to remember all the people you have already spoken to as part of these witness activities. Pray for each one. Take some time to sit quietly and listen to God. He might prompt you to go and visit someone again and pray with them as well.

## Praying Together



'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.'

Acts 4:31



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- Pen and paper

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked everyone to bring a pen and some paper?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to learn about the importance of praying together in our new family.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

*Acts 4:31*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

Uganda was historically known as a people who made covenants with tribal gods through human sacrifice. This cultic practice unleashed a spirit of death and destruction over this lush country. Repressive leadership from Iddi Amin Dada, Milton Obote, and others left the common man in fear daily. In 1984 imprisonment, torture, and death were assigned to the church through the military: millions died. On top of this, the World Health Organization declared that by 1997, one third of the population would be wiped out through AIDS.

It was this persecution that caused underground prayer meetings to spring up across Uganda. The churches across the nation began to unite in fervent, desperate prayer for God to show up and stop the death and destruction.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this prayer Daniel Bernard (the author of the book we have just read a section from) testifies that the national crime rate dropped, as did HIV and AIDS prevalence in Uganda. Prayer makes a difference, particularly when groups of people come together.



## Bible Knowledge

Read Acts 4:23-31 to the group:

*<sup>23</sup>On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.<sup>24</sup>When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. ‘Sovereign Lord,’ they said, ‘you*

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Bernard, *Praying up a Storm* (Shippensburg, PA.: Destiny Image Publishers Inc., 2004), p122.

*made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup>You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:*

*'Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
<sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth rise up  
and the rulers band together  
against the Lord  
and against his anointed one.'*

*<sup>27</sup>Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup>They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. <sup>29</sup>Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. <sup>30</sup>Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'*

*<sup>31</sup>After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*



Many of us often pray alone and we love to do that because it helps us, yet when we come in the presence of brothers and sisters to pray together there is the strength of community. It is incredibly powerful when believers gather and pray together. Our Bible reading makes this very clear.

### **Background information**

Our Bible passage was written at a time that was very hard for the

church. The church was being persecuted by the authorities.



### Discussion

5 mins

Ask the group if they know about the circumstances we find Peter and John in.

- Encourage them to look back at the first part of Acts 4 to understand what has just happened.
- Ask a few people to share what they learn about the circumstances Peter and John are in.

Sum up the discussions by saying that Peter and John, leaders of the church at that time, were in danger and had just been released from prison. They were under so much pressure to stop representing Jesus Christ. During these very desperate times, Peter and John had the church supporting them, and on their release joined other believers in prayer.



Verse 23 reminds us of the importance of having people who care about us, and these people make up the body (or family) of Christ. Peter and John here had a support group of people who believed and followed Christ. Those people joined in what we call corporate prayer. They joined in the joy of their release but also in sharing their burdens. There is surely no greater thing they could have expected than trusted brothers and sisters supporting them.

In verses 25 and 26 we see that the believers prayed Psalms 2:1-2 together. In verses 27 – 29 they took that passage of scripture and prayed it over their situation, reminding themselves that any plots against God, or resistance of him is in vain. This truth will have encouraged them before they moved onto their next prayers.

Verses 29 and 30 allow us to hear what they prayed for next. In their

prayer we see 3 distinct things worth praying for:

- **They prayed for God to intervene on their behalf.**  
They recognised he has ultimate power; he is SOVEREIGN (he has supreme power). He is above all, and he sees and knows the threats they had received.
- **They prayed for boldness to be able to speak God's word.**  
Naturally we would have expected them to pray away persecution or to ask for protection of their lives, yet led by the Holy Spirit, they prayed for BOLDNESS to speak out more.
- **They prayed for miracles through the hand of Jesus Christ.**  
It seems that when threatened, they always reacted in a counter logical way: here they prayed for God to do more MIRACLES through them. This can only enhance unity when God's miracles are seen among us.

Peter, John and the rest of Jesus' followers prayed for more opportunities to proclaim and demonstrate God's Kingdom, even in the face of extreme opposition. They knew that people would accept Jesus if they could hear about him and see him in action. Nothing could stand against him if that were to happen. In verse 31 we see the immediate answer to their prayer because when we pray, God hears.

We are told that two things happened:

- **A miracle**  
The place they were meeting in was shaken: that is a miracle. It is a direct act of God within the world.
- **A direct answer to prayer**  
They prayed for boldness and they received that through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Overall we see a church that shows us the importance and power of praying together. We understand now that the act of praying together brings us into God's presence in a different, often more powerful way than when we pray alone.



### **Discussion**

10 mins

Ask the group what they think are some benefits of praying together.

Allow time for people to voice their answers and, once people have shared their thoughts, sum up by reading points below, drawing out discussion points that have been made.

- Praying together means that collectively more prayers are prayed. Highlight the uniqueness of each prayer within the collective whole.
- Praying together enhances a deep sense of community. It reminds me that I am not alone; I feel that I am a necessary part of a greater purpose.
- Praying together grows my faith as I see the commitment of others and hear about what God is doing in others.
- Praying together gives me an opportunity to love others as I help bear their burdens in prayer.

Ask the group at what times in their lives do they think praying together will be the appropriate thing to do. Encourage them to share examples and sum up by giving some examples yourself.



### **Activity**

5 mins

Ask everyone to get a piece of paper and a pen.

Ask each one to write or draw a picture of three examples in our

world today where people are in danger because of standing for Christ. It could be something they heard about from a friend or heard in the news.



15 mins

### **Prayer**

After everyone has completed the activity, ask each one to share one of their three examples and take time as a group to pray for people in those circumstances.

Ask everyone to take their list of three examples home with them and carry them with them throughout the week as a reminder to continue praying for the people in danger.



### **To do this week**

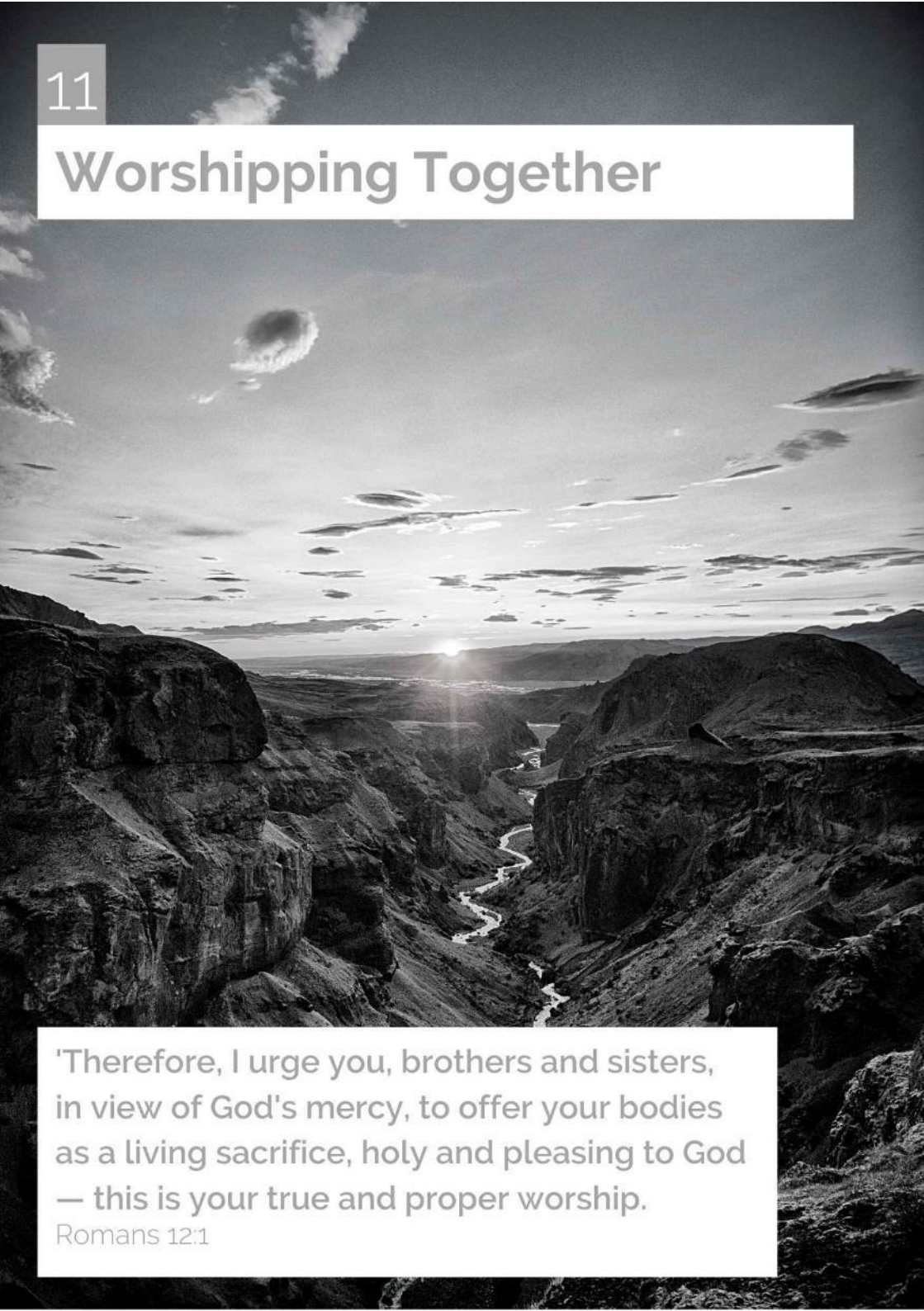
Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, set a 30 minute time of prayer as a group or with groups of friends you know. Choose at least 3 things that you want to pray for boldly. Pray together in faith and watch what God will do. Look for passages in the Bible that may be good to help you to pray together. (Psalms is a good place to start.)



### **Witness**

As part of being true to what we have just studied, commit to help 1 or 2 people understand the importance of praying together. Pick someone who is not a member of your group, perhaps someone you have already spoken to, and arrange to meet with them this week to chat about prayer.

# Worshipping Together



'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship.

Romans 12:1



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- To help the group activity run smoothly, write the references for the Bible passages for each group on a piece of paper. You can then give the relevant references to each group.

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked 5 people to bring a Bible for the group activity?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to learn about the importance of worshipping God together in our new family. We will discover ways in which we can worship by coming together and honouring the source of the new life we all share.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's*

*mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.*

*Romans 12:1*



## **Story**

Read the following story to the group:

Cornelius grew up in a village where people would gather and worship an idol by the name of 'Chibne Cikumkuluka' (The Big Stone That Rolls). It was believed that The Big Stone That Rolls supplied extra fish in the lake whenever it rolled into the water. There were a group of people who worked as priests of the idol. They were respected very much and would gather people together and plan for the ceremonies. Whenever the ceremony was carried out, beer would be brewed and food would be prepared in celebration of the extra fish that would be harvested from the lake. It was a popular ritual.

In order for the priests to carry out the rites and rituals, they expected payment from the other people in the community; often this was given as payment in kind with people cultivating the priest's fields for them. If the priests were not satisfied with the payment or felt that they had been disrespected in any way, they would not perform the rites, the stone would not roll and there would be no extra fish.

At that time, a Catholic priest came and preached against the worship of idols, saying that instead people should worship Jesus, the true God. These missionaries said that people should choose who they wanted to worship, Jesus or the idol. The missionaries also worked to set up a school and a clinic to serve everyone in the community.

There was a division in the community. Those who were faithful to The Big Stone That Rolls, particularly those who benefited from the rites, rituals and payments were unhappy about this new message to the community. They saw that it threatened their livelihood. However many other people believed the good news of Jesus as they saw the impact the love of Jesus was having on their community through the work of the missionaries. People began to understand that all people could come to Jesus – they did not have to be a priest, they did not have to make payment.

Over time, the word of God spoke to powerfully to many people. People witnessed the overall change that came about in their community through the school and clinic. Even the children of the priests were welcomed into the school and this spoke powerfully to the community. People began to choose to believe in Jesus, worshipping him and no longer worshipping The Big Stone That Rolls. People trusted in God to supply all their needs and so they stopped the idol worship. A feeling of unity and togetherness grew overtime. The old class system where priests held power over people was defeated and all the people began to understand that they were loved and equal in the eyes of Jesus. This was like a miracle in the community.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read 1 Chronicles 16:23-27 to the group:

*<sup>23</sup>Sing to the Lord, all the earth;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.*

*<sup>24</sup>Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.*

*<sup>25</sup>For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;  
he is to be feared above all gods.*

*<sup>26</sup>For all the gods of the nations are idols,  
but the Lord made the heavens.*

*<sup>27</sup>Splendour and majesty are before him;  
strength and joy are in his dwelling-place.*



### **What does the word ‘worship’ mean?**

The word worship came from the old English word ‘worthship’ and is closely linked to the modern word worthiness. To worship is to acknowledge the worth of the one being worshipped. When we worship we are showing our allegiance and our devotion.

Worship can take many forms and be directed towards different things. People may worship God, other gods (idols) or even physical things such as money, family or a football team. Our lives tend to demonstrate what it is that we worship. Where we spend our time, how we act and how we use our resources all reveal the true objects of our worship.

### **Who do Christians worship?**

As Christians, we worship the God of the Bible. Our Bible passage today shows us a little part of his character and we get to know more about him throughout the rest of the Bible.



### **Discussion**

5 mins

Ask the group to look again at today’s passage, [1 Chronicles 16:23-27](#) and discuss these two questions:

- What does this passage tell us about God and his character? (Answers should include that he is great and worthy of praise, he is to be feared above all other gods, he created the heavens, he is splendid, majestic, strong and joyful.)
- What does this passage instruct us to do? (Answers should include that we should sing to the Lord,

proclaim his salvation every day, declare his glory and tell of his marvellous deeds to all people.)



For Christians, worship is the public and private proclamation of the wonderful character and works of God. We believe he is the creator of the world, the most powerful and holy of all and also a loving Father God who sent his son Jesus to save us from our sin. We believe he continues to work in our lives through his Holy Spirit.

The purpose of our worship is to glorify God in many different ways. When we worship we should do so with respect, remembering who God is and our position before him. In worship we come to God and acknowledge that he is holy, we surrender ourselves and our lives to him.

### **What is the purpose of worshipping God?**

Our first concern as Christians is with the glory of God. Our first loyalty is to him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, over and above all other loyalties. As we worship God we are giving glory to him and acknowledging his worthiness. In the process we are also spiritually affected. As we worship God we are giving him the place he deserves in our lives and our will becomes more aligned with his will. Our worship can also be the beginning of evangelism to the people around us.

We should be careful that our worship is not empty praise or hollow words. If we forget to focus on who we are worshipping and concentrate instead on what we are doing, we will leave worship without being spiritually affected by God. It will be like going to a concert or shop!

### **How do we worship?**

Worship can take many different forms. We can glorify God through prayer and thanksgiving, confessing our sins, praying for others and formal or informal services. Worship should be at the centre of all Christians' lives and together we should be a worshipping community. As we worship, we can also learn from each other.

Sacrifice has always been an element of worship. In the Old Testament an animal was sacrificed in order to enable people to worship God. For example we see Abraham building an altar to the Lord upon which to make sacrifices ([Genesis 12:8](#) and [13:3-4](#)). However this is no longer necessary because Jesus' sacrifice of himself upon the cross replaced the old system, allowing all of us to worship God freely if we have faith in him knowing our sins are forgiven. Worship is a response to God's love and the life, work and resurrection of Jesus.

In the New Testament, worship included the following elements: praise, prayer, preaching, contribution and sacrament (a visible action that we do as a sign of something that God does inside us). These are still part of our worship today so we will look at each of these now.



### Activity

10 mins

Divide the group into 5 smaller groups. Give each group one of the following acts of worship listed below. Ask them to see what the Bible teaches us about that kind of worship by looking at the verses suggested and any others they can think of.

After about 5 minutes bring the groups back together and ask them to share what they have learnt. You are looking for the sort of answers given below for each group.

**Group 1 – Prayer:** Look at [Proverbs 15:8](#), [1 Thessalonians 1:2](#) and [1](#)

Timothy 2:1.

- Prayers can be prayers of thanksgiving, confession, intercession and public worship.

**Group 2 – Praise:** Look at 2 Samuel 22:50 and Colossians 3:16.

- Praise can be the singing of hymns (choruses) or psalms
- It can be expressing God's goodness and greatness

**Group 3 – Preaching/studying of God's word:** Look at Psalms 1:2-3 and Acts 18:5.

- We are instructed to delight in the word of God
- We can glorify God through studying his word, memorising it, teaching and preaching it and through living it out in obedience to him.

**Group 4 – Contributions:** Look at 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 9:7.

- Offering (almsgiving), towards the work of the community of the faithful
- Generous and cheerful giving

**Group 5 – Sacraments:** Look at Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 1 Peter 3:21.

- Baptism is also a form of worship. It is an outward sign of our new life with God.
- The sharing of Holy Communion is a form of worship. It binds us together as a community of faith and in an eternal relationship with God.



Often we sing songs of worship, but worship is more than just singing: as we read in our memory verse, our whole lives should be an act of worship to God.

In Micah 6:6-8 and Amos 5:21-24 the worshipping community is given a clear duty to reflect God's holiness in their actions. This means that we ought to show God's glory through our services of mercy to our neighbours (see Matthew 22:36-39 and Romans 12).

Humility is the beginning of worship. Therefore when we learn to serve God humbly by extending his mercy to the torn world around us we are worshipping him.



10 mins

Now put what you have learnt into practice. Choose 1-2 methods of worship and use them to spend 10 minutes worshipping God together.



10 mins

### **Discussion**

As a group discuss the following questions:

- How can we include everyone in our worship?
- Is there anything that divides us and stops us worshipping as a community? If so, what is it? (If anything is raised, it would be good to allow time for the group to repent of it together, perhaps by leading them in a prayer of repentance.)
- Is it possible for our communities to emphasise doctrines or beliefs rather than faith and end up with hollow or empty worship?



15 mins

### **Prayer**

Divide the group into groups of 3 or 4 people. Ask them to pray for the following things:

- Pray for one another and the community, that we would give all our worship to God. Pray that any other idols would be revealed and set aside.

- Confess sins committed.
- Commit ourselves to, and take action to, worship God in unity, loving one another and doing things together when need be.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, spend some time daily in worshipping God. See if you can meet with others from the group to worship God together. Ask God to show you things that need to change in your life in order for you to be a 'living sacrifice.'



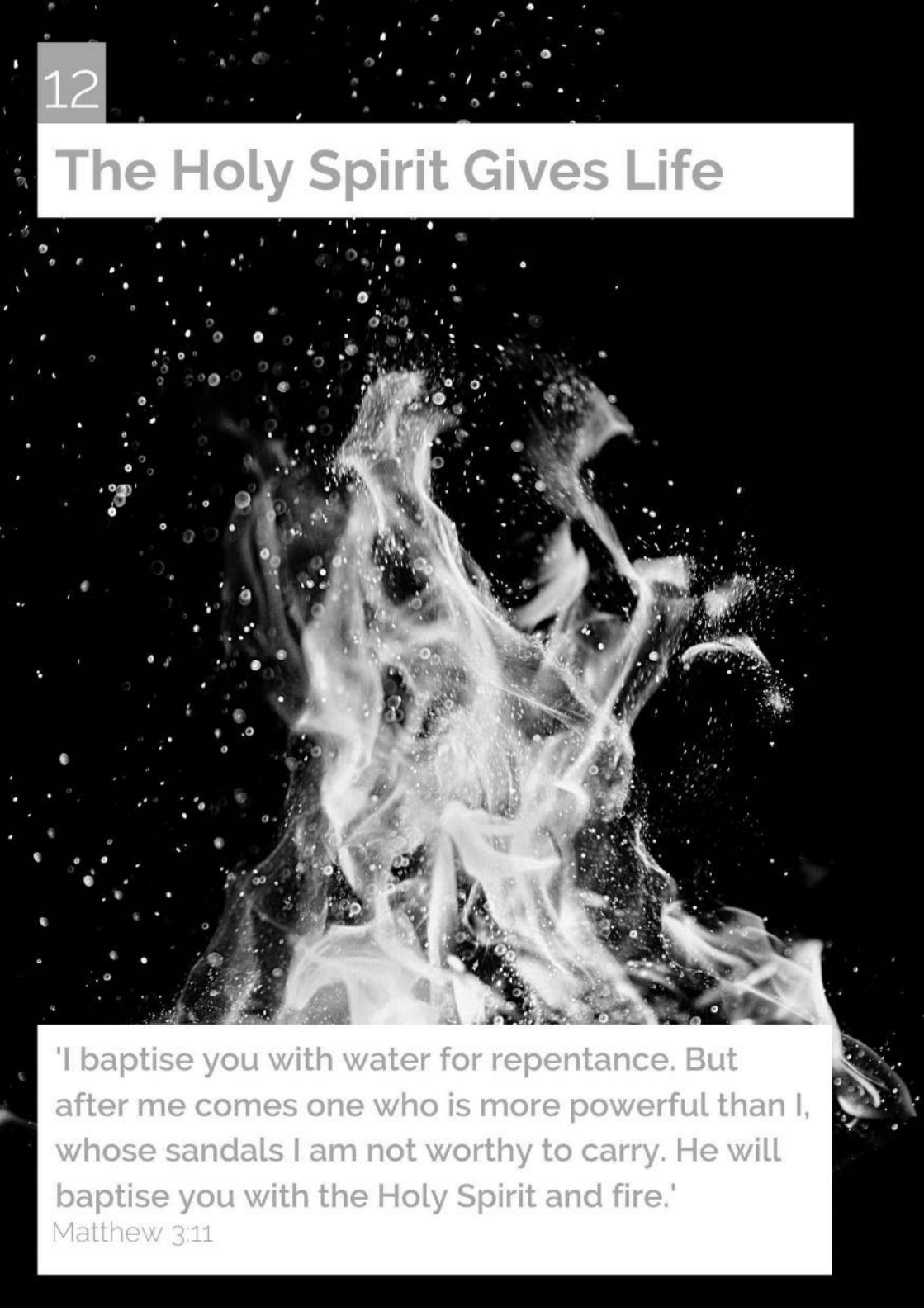
### **Witness**

Explain that as we worship God, he is bringing new life to us. Through our worship, others can see God's glory and also come to know him, finding new life in him.

This week, worship God by telling somebody you see about God's goodness. Ask God to help you know the right person to talk to. You could ask the person if they have a story about God's goodness or if they would like to find out more.

Invite them to join you at church or your group to worship God with you.

## The Holy Spirit Gives Life



'I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Matthew 3:11



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- A wooden splint or twig, roughly 20cm long, for every member of the group
- A box of matches

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to understand that being a Christian is not just about knowing about Jesus or believing in him. Jesus promised he would send his Holy Spirit to live inside us and that the Holy Spirit would be the source of new life in our own spirits.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not*

*worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

*Matthew 3:11*



## **Story**

Read the following story to the group:

Faith lives on an island in the middle of the Okavango Delta, Northern Botswana. The area is known for its wildlife and is one of the best places in the world to see rare species of birds. Faith and her family grow many types of vegetables that they sell on the mainland. Her days are spent sowing, tending and selling the produce to feed her family.

Despite how popular the area is, life is hard for Faith and her family. Three times a week Faith needs to cross the river delta, a large area of water, to sell her family's produce at the local market. She travels in a small boat across water that contains animals like crocodiles and hippos.

Her boat is a small makoro, a hollowed out log in the shape of a canoe. She moves the makoro by using paddles, made of tree branches. It is hard work and if hot, is even harder. Often she is very tired by the time she makes it to the mainland. She is not only carrying herself, she is also carrying the produce to sell. Tomatoes weigh a lot in a small makoro.

There is a lot of wind in the Okavango region. One day whilst feeling very tired paddling, she felt the wind brush her face and she had an idea. She wondered if she could use the very same wind to make her journey easier. At home she made a very large piece of cloth, sewing it together and attached it with rope to the canoe. She decided that the next time the wind came she would try something

different.

One day, Faith was out on the water travelling to market and the wind came. The wind was very strong and was powerfully gusting. Quickly, she threw the cloth up and it opened out into the air. It was a very large sail designed to pull the boat along. The wind filled the sail and started to pull the makoro. To begin with it was so strong it nearly pulled the makoro over into the water. Compared to paddling it was very fast. For the first time in her life she was sailing a boat rather than paddling the boat. The wind rather than her arms was powering her journey.

Like Faith we can struggle to make changes in our lives and the world around us when relying on our own strength. As Christians, however, we have access to God's Holy Spirit, his wind, to provide the power to enable movement and change in us. Our role is simply to invite him into our lives, to put the sail out into the wind.



### **Bible Knowledge**

Read Matthew 3:11-17 to the group. It starts with John the Baptist talking.

*<sup>11</sup>I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'*

*<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?'*

*<sup>15</sup>Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented.*

*<sup>16</sup>As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'*



John the Baptist was sent by God to announce and prepare people for the coming of Jesus. This Bible passage in Matthew tells the story of Jesus being baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. There are a number of lessons that we can learn from it.

### **John knew who Jesus was**

John the Baptist was a man. He had a calling from God to announce Jesus but he knew his place in this world. He said that, 'after me comes one who is more powerful than I' (verse 11). John was not Jesus; he was simply a servant of God. It is the same with all of us. Often people act like they are the one who can help or save people. This is not true. We need to be aware of the limitations of our life whilst expecting God to work in us and through our lives. It is his Holy Spirit that gives life to us and to others.

In John's gospel, as Jesus was approaching the river to be baptised, John cries out, 'Behold, the Lamb of God' ([John 1:36](#)). Today, this seems a very puzzling thing to say. What does it mean? A lamb was traditionally used in the Jewish religion of the time as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The lamb would be sacrificed to God and through that process people would be cleansed of their sin and made right again with God. They could not do it themselves.

In the same way, Jesus was the lamb of God. He was the one that God had sent to be a sacrifice for the sin of the world. John recognised this and shouted, 'Behold the lamb of God.' John was recognising that it is a work of God that puts us in a right place with God. Literally, God's Spirit gives us life.

### **Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit and fire**

Before Jesus left his disciples, he promised that he would send them a gift: his Holy Spirit to live inside of them. The Holy Spirit, like Jesus, is fully God and he comes into our lives at our invitation and makes God's presence and power personal to each one of us. The Bible talks about being baptised, or filled with God's Holy Spirit.

What does it mean for Jesus to baptise us with fire? Fire is a picture used in the Bible to talk about the Holy Spirit as being powerful and uncontrollable. Fire also burns and consumes. If you watch a bush fire anywhere in the world, fire burns up all before it. God's power can burn up the habits and thoughts that keep us far from God.

Another picture that the Bible uses is that of a powerful wind. The word that the Bible uses is 'ruach,' a powerful gale blowing through our lives. We are not meant to do everything ourselves in our life. Like Faith's sail in our story, our life is to be filled with God's Spirit.

The Holy Spirit present in our lives not only gives us life, but allows us to give life to everyone around us.



### **Activity**

5 mins

For this activity you will need a stick or wooden splint for everyone in the group. As this activity involves fire, please move to a safe area outside away from buildings. If any children are taking part in this

activity they should be accompanied and assisted by an adult.

- Take your own stick and light it on fire with a match or naked flame.
- As the stick becomes alight, explain how this is what God does with our own life. He sets it on fire by his Holy Spirit. The fire represents godliness and us becoming alive. Make sure everyone understands this.
- Light each person's stick from your own around the group. As you do this, explain that this is how the Spirit gives life. As each of us passes on the message of Jesus to other people they too can receive the gift of new life. The Holy Spirit comes and he sets us all on fire.
- Ask one or two others in the group to light others' sticks as well to show that life can pass from one person to another.



### **John and Jesus knew the Spirit gives life**

Does it seem strange that Jesus himself needed to be baptised?

Jesus was fully man and fully God, human and divine. A popular old song says that God 'emptied himself of all but love'<sup>4</sup> to come in the form of Jesus to this Earth and save us.

But Jesus, like any man, still needed the Holy Spirit to accomplish what God, his Father, wanted him to accomplish. When Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended upon him; people saw what seemed like a dove rest on him. If Jesus himself and John the Baptist needed the life of the Holy Spirit, then so do we!



### **Activity**

If Jesus himself needed the Holy Spirit then how much more do we?

5 mins

In order to be filled with the Holy Spirit we first need to say 'yes' to God and give him permission to live in our lives.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Wesley, 'And Can It Be', 1738

Ask the group if there is anyone who would like to take this step today. If there is then pray this prayer with them by reading it out one line at a time and asking them to repeat it after you.

Lord Jesus, I want to be filled with your Holy Spirit.  
Thank you for the gift of new life that you offer me.  
Today, I choose to accept that gift.  
I'm sorry for the ways in which I have been living;  
please come and live in me  
and help me to live the rest of my life for you.  
Fill me with your Holy Spirit and make me new.  
Amen.



### **Discussion**

10 mins

There are three questions to discuss in groups of 3 or 4 people. After discussing, make time to feed back to the rest of the wider group. It's important that everyone can learn from each other.

- Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit before? What was it like?
- What parts of our lives can change for the better with the Holy Spirit?
- Is there any sin in our life that we need to be free from? If we are not sure what sins are, ask if there are areas of our life that make us feel guilty or bad.

Make sure you spend some time sharing answers with the whole group.



### **Prayer**

15 mins

In the Bible it says that we should lay hands on one another when we pray. Every member of the group should be prayed for one by one. Ask everyone else in the group to gather around the person being prayed for and to lay hands on them. Together, pray for them

to be baptised (filled) with the Holy Spirit. Expect to see evidence of the Holy Spirit filling people: some may laugh, cry, feel peace or joy like never before. Welcome the Holy Spirit to do his good work in the group.

As the group does this, you may notice that some people have an unexpected, agitated or even violent reaction. Others may get very emotional. You may see some people start to show behaviour that is not normal; it is like a spirit is showing itself in them. Whatever happens, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is in charge. Do not be scared or intimidated. Simply command the spirit to be quiet and command it to come out of the person in the name of the Lord Jesus. We cannot do these things in our own strength; it is only in the power of Jesus.

After the spirit has left or the person who was upset calms down, it is time to ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill that person to overflowing. This is very important and will ensure that this person walks on in their relationship with Jesus.

Pray for each person in the group, one by one. You can also pray for those areas of life in which people are struggling that may have been mentioned in the discussion earlier.



### **To do this week**

Each week there is some homework for us to do. Every day pray for yourself and all the people you have spoken to as part of the witness activities we have done, that the Holy Spirit of God will come and give you life.



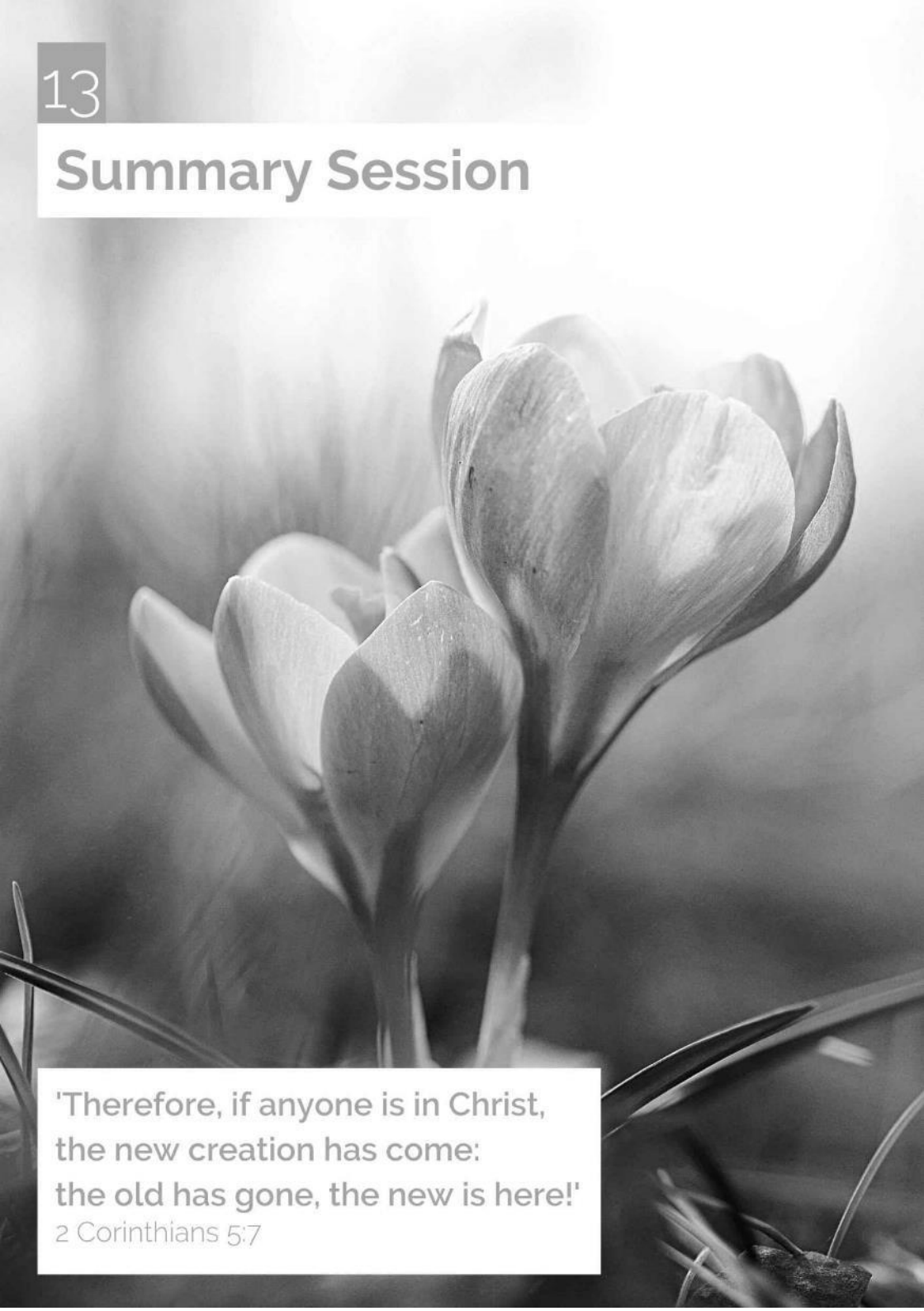
### **Witness**

Explain to the group that God's purpose is not simply to bring his

life-giving Holy Spirit to our lives. Think of all the people you have spoken to in the activities we have done. Jesus wants to bring his life to all of them and other people and situations around us. This is just as it was with Jesus when he was on earth. The Holy Spirit brought life to him and to all of mankind through him.

This week, individually or together with some of your group, ask the Holy Spirit to highlight to you all one situation that you can help with in your community. Pray together that the Holy Spirit of God will impact the situation and ask him what you should do about resolving the issue.

## Summary Session



'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
the new creation has come:  
the old has gone, the new is here!'

2 Corinthians 5:7



## Preparation

What you need for this session:

- Pen and paper

Have you:

- Asked someone in the group to read the story?
- Asked someone in the group to read the Bible Passage?
- Asked everyone to bring a pen and some paper?



5 mins

## Welcome & Feedback

- Thank everyone for coming to the group.
- Start with a short, simple prayer.
- Ask the group whether they did the 'To do this week' and 'Witness' tasks from last week.
- Invite people to share anything they have learnt or experienced from doing these tasks.



## Aim

The aim of the session this week is to remind ourselves about the main ideas that we have covered in Foundations Book 1 and to look ahead to what is to come in Book 2.



5 mins

## Memory Verse

Read the memory verse and Bible reference aloud to the group.

Read it again in small sections, getting the group to repeat each section after you. Gradually read it in longer sections with the group repeating each bit until everyone can recite the whole verse.

Encourage some people to try and repeat it on their own.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*



## Story

Read the following story to the group:

There is a small coastal town in the UK called Whitby. It is famous for its fishing industry, among other things. Over a hundred years ago many houses were built in the town in order to accommodate the many fishermen. They were small houses, built on cheap land near to the cliff edge. In recent years many of those houses have become holiday homes for tourists who wish to visit the area and have a nice view of the sea.

In 2012 there had been a lot of rain and bad weather and there was a landslide in which the land underneath five of the houses nearest to the sea began to slip away. The houses began to fall down and the people living in them had to get out quickly. All the houses were destroyed and there was further damage to neighbouring houses further down the street.

Despite being a beautiful place to live, it is now too dangerous to stay too close to the cliff edge and much work is being done in order to try and save other nearby houses.



## Bible Knowledge

Read Matthew 7:24-27 to the group:

*<sup>24</sup> Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came*

*down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*



## Discussion

5 mins

Ask the group whether they have ever had experience of building a house.

- How would they decide where is a good place to build?
- Where would be a bad place to build?



Jesus tells the story of two men, one who builds his house upon sand, and the other who builds it upon a rock. When the storms come, as they invariably do, the house that was built on sand was destroyed, whereas the house built upon the rock remained. Both of our stories teach us a valuable lesson: if we do not get our foundations right then whatever we build will fall down when storms come. As well as being good practical advice, this is also spiritual advice to us. As Christians we believe that it is essential to build our lives on firm foundations; in fact God is frequently referred to as 'The Rock' in the Bible. In this book, and throughout this whole 'Foundations' series we are learning how we can find new life in God, and how we can build that life with foundations firmly on the rock.

It takes time to build something on rock, much longer than it does to build on sand. This is why many people are tempted to take the shorter, easier way. But the Bible tells us to live differently. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus says:

*<sup>13</sup>Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

Our Christian life is an adventure, there will be ups and downs, challenges and celebrations BUT if we keep our foundations firm on the rock then we will withstand whatever happens.



15 mins

### Activity

Looking back at the previous sessions that you have studied, ask each person to share one particular thing that they have learned, found challenging or that has begun to change how they think and act.



### Looking back at Book 1: Life Begins

In this first book in the series, *Life Begins*, we introduced the idea of new life as a gift from God. It is something that he has for each one of us, regardless of who we are or what we have done. As our memory verse reminds us:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

Now that the new is here what does it look like?

The gift of new life means that if we ask him to, God sets us free from our old lives of sin and struggle. We are no longer separated from him, but he brings us back into a loving relationship with him, which will last forever. He comes to live in our hearts and begins the process of transforming us from the inside out. He loves us just as we are, but too much to let us stay that way. As we get to know God and say yes to him more and more, he takes our lives and moulds them so that we become more like him.

Just as in life we are born into a family, so it is with our life in God: we join his worldwide family. We have new brothers and sisters,

and a new heavenly Father. This means that we are no longer to behave as enemies towards anyone; we are to forgive those we have previously struggled against. In fact in Matthew 5:44 the Bible goes so far as to say:

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*

As we mentioned before it will take time to get to know God and play our part in our new family. We need time alone with him and time together with our new Christian family as well. We can do this through praying to him and listening to him, through the reading and studying of the Bible, and through worshipping him both on our own and with our new family.

Finally we introduced the person of the Holy Spirit to you, showing you that he is the one who comes to live in our hearts when we invite him in. It is the Holy Spirit who brings the life, like the wind in Faith's sails. We spent some time praying for the Holy Spirit to come and fill our lives and give us the same closeness to God.

### **Looking ahead to Book 2: Life Grows**

In the next book, ***Life Grows***, we will learn much more about the Holy Spirit and what it means to be filled with him. We will also learn more about God's character as the one who loves us, and how that love should affect both our thoughts and our actions. We will begin to understand in more detail what Jesus' death on the cross really means for us and how God now sees us.

Each of the sessions will enable us to explore more of the new life that we have been given, it will direct our steps, enlighten our minds and hopefully encourage our hearts. We really encourage you to carry on and join us for Foundations Book 2.



15 mins

## Prayer

Remind the group that in order to accept the gift of new life and for everything they have been learning about to be real for them they have to take a step of faith, and to then keep taking steps of faith to learn from God. Ask if there is anyone who is yet to take the first step of faith of accepting God's gift of life. If there is then pray the following prayer with them:

Thank you Jesus for dying in my place.

Thank you that you have given me a new life.

I'm sorry for all the sin in my life.

Given everything that you have done for me I will now give everything that I have for you!

Help me to experience your life.

Amen.

Take some time to thank God together for the experiences that the group have shared about their time looking at Foundations Book 1.

After thanking God and praising him, spend some time praying about any specific needs and challenges that members of the group might be currently facing.



## To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. Find a rock, either a small one that you can hold in your hand or a larger one that you can sit or stand upon. Spend some time thinking about how strong that rock is. Then start to thank God that he is even stronger and ask him to continue to build your life upon him, 'The Rock.'



## Witness

Pray and ask God to show someone to you who you could invite to

the next group meeting as you start Book 2. Perhaps it is someone you have been sharing your story with through the witness activities, someone you shared a memory verse with, showed the 3 circles to or simply went and spoke to. Tell them how much you have learned from the group and ask them to consider joining in next time.

# Memory Verses

‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.’

*John 10:10b*

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.’

*Revelation 3:20*

‘I thank my God every time I remember you....being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’

*Philippians 1:3&6*

‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’

*Matthew 28:19*

‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.’

*Hebrews 10:24-25a*

‘Be still, and know that I am God.’

*Psalms 46:10a*

‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

‘The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.  
They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.’

*Psalms 19:7&10*

‘Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.’

*1 Peter 5:7*

‘After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.’

*Acts 4:31*

‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.’

*Romans 12:1*

‘I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’

*Matthew 3:11*

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!’

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

# Notes



# List of Images

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## FOUNDATIONS 1:

# Life Begins

**Foundations** is a resource that helps people explore and grow in their relationship with God and encourages them to serve their community. It was written to provide high quality materials that could be used in a variety of geographical locations and cultural groups around the world. Foundations is a set of four books, each containing thirteen interactive group Bible study sessions.

**Foundations** has been written by volunteer guest authors from around the world and compiled and edited by Dignity.

**Foundations 1: Life Begins** is aimed at those with new or no faith. From simple beginnings it leads people along the early steps of faith and knowing God.

Contact us on [hello@dignityonline.org.uk](mailto:hello@dignityonline.org.uk) or  
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