



Edited by Sarah Small,
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and Jo Kimball

Foundations 3:

Life Creates



www.dignityonline.org.uk

Foundations 3

Life Creates

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

Isaiah 61:3b

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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

The team behind Foundations

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



Kate Dean has worked in education for over thirty years and loves to see children thriving and becoming who God made them. She continues to work with schools and head teachers and wants the very best provision for children and young people. Kate has recently become a trustee with Dignity and is looking forward to her new role with the Charity.

Session 12



Anthony Delaney is married to Zoe and leads Ivy Church Manchester in the United Kingdom. Anthony is the founder of LAUNCH Church Multiplication Catalyst and also leads 'NewThing' in western Europe. He has written several books and appears regularly on BBC radio. He also blogs at anthonydelaney.com.

Session 2



Dennis Hardy made Jesus the Lord of his life at 16 years of age. He believes that it is more important to go and tell people rather than ask them to come and find out. With his wife Jane and young family Dennis spent 10 years in Bangkok. They now live in Manchester, UK and are actively engaged in ways to go and tell others.

Session 9

Michael Heng is married to Mina and together they have 2 sons. They live on the North East coast of England where Michael runs a small laundry and ironing service. He gave up a career as a surgeon to give more time to his relationship with Christ and his family.

Session 3

Mina Heng was born in Mauritius and came to Liverpool for her studies. While there she met Michael and they have now been married for 18 years and have 2 sons. Mina became a Christian when she attended youth group meetings as a teenager. God gave her a purpose, a reason to be and she says life suddenly made sense.

Session 6



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 11



Reverend Peter Matthews is an Anglican church leader in Old Trafford, Manchester. He previously taught physics in three different schools, spending most of his teaching career in Africa.

Session 7



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, 8 and 13



Richard Thompson is Head of Ndubaluba Outdoor Centre, part of Chengelo School in Mkushi, Zambia. Richard is passionate about developing Christian Adventure Learning and uses a range of adventurous and outdoor activities to challenge young people regarding their faith. Originally from the UK, he has worked at Ndubaluba for 23 years and is married with 2 children.

Session 5



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.

Sessions 1 and 10

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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.

It is assumed that people studying this book have already studied ***Foundations 1: Life Begins*** and ***Foundations 2: Life Grows***. This means that some ideas are not explained again in this book. If some people are joining your group who are new Christians you may need to cover some of the ideas from the previous books with them. One way to do this is to start another study group. Dignity's book ***Plant*** can help you with this.

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 Psalm 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.

1

God as Community



'Hear, O Israel: the Lord
our God, the Lord is one.'

Deuteronomy 6:4



Preparation

What you need for this session:

- An empty, see-through bottle, some juice that you dilute, some drinking water and a cup for each member of the group
- Pen and paper

Have you:

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



Welcome

5 mins

Welcome everyone to the group and thank them for coming. If there are any new people joining the group you should start by telling everyone your name and asking everyone else to tell the group their name. You should explain what will happen in the group.

Say a short, simple prayer of thanks.



Aim

This aim of the session this week is to understand that God exists in loving community in himself. Though he is one God, he shows himself in 3 persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They share the same nature, living and working together in love, as we should also do.



Memory Verse

5 mins

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.

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Deuteronomy 6:4



Story

Read the following story to the group:

Faith lives in the Okavango Delta in Northern Botswana. She lives in a village in the sandy, dusty area of the delta. Her village is typical of many in the region, where people from distant places have travelled to live in the area. The area has lots of tourism and people compete to get one of the jobs at the many lodges and reserves.

This means that Faith's village is not the same as it once was. It used to be that you knew someone from generation to generation. People would stay in the same place all of their lives. Nowadays this is not the case. People move in and out depending on their work, some even have homes elsewhere. People do not know one another and they do not live together like they used to. This means that if someone is struggling, often people do not know about it. No one helps. There is no togetherness or a sense of community like there used to be.

A sad day in the village happened. Brenda and Lewis had been married for many years. Unfortunately, Lewis was hit by a local minibus on his way to market. He died instantly, and left his widow and five children to struggle on their own. Brenda was overwhelmed with grief. She could not cope with losing Lewis and the challenges that it brought to her. Over time the children stopped going to school, they sometimes did not eat and Brenda was rarely seen.

Faith was disturbed by all of this. She had always been a Christian and knew that community was very important. She remembered how in the past people had helped her. Even though she did not fully understand why, she knew that community was very important to God. It was right to stand with and help one another. With that in mind Faith decided to help.

She started visiting everyone she knew in the village and talked to them about how things had changed and how Brenda needed help. Everyone she spoke to agreed that they could do much more together and that it was important to help out where possible. Although Faith could not do much on her own, everyone together started to make sure that Brenda and her children were taken care of. They visited her, contributed to school fees and included her in their lives. Her children began to smile again, they were happy and they had a future. Brenda was seen around the village and felt part of the community. All of this was down to Faith and her heart for community.



Ask the group what would have happened if Faith had done nothing?

2 mins



Bible Knowledge

The memory verse is very important for us to think about God in community and what it means for us as Christians. You may ask, “What does a verse about God being one person have to do with community?”

This verse from Deuteronomy is a famous verse in the Jewish faith, the faith from which Christianity takes its roots. It is a shout, a declaration to the ancient nation of Israel about who God is.

That is why the first words of the verse are 'Hear, O Israel'. The next parts of the verse are where it gets interesting.

'The Lord our God' means exactly what it says. The Jewish name for God was Yahweh and it is rooted in God's name for himself 'I Am' (Exodus 3:14). Today's memory verse says Yahweh is God, the one God, our only God.

So what does this have to do with community? The next part of the verse tells us this.

'The Lord is one.' The word 'one' in this verse does not and cannot mean one person. It is a word that must have more than one person. The word 'one' is a translation of a Hebrew word 'echad', which means a unity of purpose, mind or agreement. For example, it would be like all the people in your village or community agreeing together on a particular matter and saying, 'We are one'.

What our memory verse means is, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God, the Lord your God lives in a community of more than one person'.

That can be pretty hard to understand. You may have heard of the Trinity – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – either earlier in ***Foundations***, or somewhere else. This is how it works. God lives in a community of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

What is exciting is that he invites us to be part of this community. As his people we have a part in God's community and are invited to be one with him. As we accept his new life and join this

community, this life in us then works to create opportunities for even more people to join in too.



Activity

5 mins

For this activity you will need an empty, see-through bottle, some juice that you dilute and some drinking water.

This activity helps people to understand how close the community of God is.

- Take the empty bottle and some juice. In front of everyone pour some juice into the bottle. (Pour in enough juice so that when it is diluted with water it will be nice to drink.)
- Ask everyone if they can see the juice.
- Now fill the rest of the bottle up with water. Shake this bottle in front of everyone so that they know the water and the juice are mixed.
- Pass the bottle around the entire group, asking them if they can see where the water starts and ends, and where the juice is. (The answer is that they cannot see this.)
- Pour everyone a drink of the mixed juice and ask everyone how it tastes. They will say things like, 'sweet', 'good' or 'nice'.
- Explain that when people are in a community so close that you cannot see the beginning and the end, then that tastes good to everyone.

That is what the community of God is like. Our community should be the same. We are going to read some Bible passages that explain this to us.



Read Romans 12:4-5 and Acts 2:42-47 to the group:

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:4-5

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47



Discussion

15 mins

These questions are designed to help us to understand the passages and what they mean for our community. Split everyone into groups of 3 or 4 people so they can discuss the questions and feed back to everyone. You may wish to give each group a different question.

- How close must you be to someone that people outside of that relationship would call you 'one'? What does that mean for our community?
- How can we live together as one?

- What stops people living in community? How can we overcome that?
- Who is the most important in a community?
- Why do we not include everyone in our community of God's people?

Allow time for each group to share their thoughts with everyone. This is a very important discussion question. Ask everyone to come together. Read Acts 2:46-47 again and discuss these questions as an entire group:

- Do you think we should include those who do not believe or who are even against God in our community?
- Why do you think this?

We will explore this question in different ways throughout the rest of this book.



15 mins

Prayer

We have looked at the fact that God is one, not as a single person, but as a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have learned that our community of the church is meant to be the same.

With everyone as a group, start by praising God that he has included us in his community. Worship him that he saved us and we now stand with him and others in his kingdom. Emphasise that it is not anything to do with our own effort. You could sing a song together or speak out thanks to God together.

Now we are going to prayerfully acknowledge that we do not always live in the way that God designed us to or act in the way he

asks us to. When we look at our church and other churches around us, we can often see division and arguments. Division can be between individuals, families or whole churches. As God's family, we are not living in community.

Ask the group to stand and hold their hands out in front of them. Pray a simple prayer asking God to bring to their minds any divisions in his community the church that he wants to heal. Allow some time of quiet for people to wait and listen to God.

Ask people to return to their small groups and to share what God said to them if they feel comfortable doing so. Spend some time praying for the situations God has brought to mind. You may need to say sorry to God. You may need to pray for healing, forgiveness and unity.

Bring the group together and finish by repeating today's memory verse together and by thanking God that he is a God of community.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, make sure that you spend time with other members of your group to continue to pray and take action to build unity and community in God's family.

When you meet, remind each other of the situations you have just prayed for. Pray together again. Then discuss what action you need to or can take to partner with those prayers. Is there somebody you need to say sorry to? Is there somebody you need to forgive? Is there another church you need to stop working against and start working with?

Pray together and commit to doing these actions either on your own or together, whichever is most appropriate.



Witness

Our witness this week will be to take action to heal divisions within God's family. Whatever you have been praying about and planning in your groups, go ahead and do the thing you have committed to do. Remember to pray as you go, to speak with love and kindness and to focus on how God is community and invites us to be in his community with those around us.

God's Community - Church



'So they pulled their boats up on shore,
left everything and followed him.'

Luke 5:11



Preparation

What you need for this session:

- A net, bowl or tub, paper and pens or pencils.

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 learn more about God's community of people, called the church. The church, (sometimes called the Body of Christ) is a loving community which is designed to demonstrate God's truth, love and mercy to the world around it.



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.

So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Luke 5:11



Story

Read the following story to the group:

Jane was a sad and lonely lady who struggled with her health, her family and her relationships. She had had a job but her boss was harsh and did not understand that she was unable to work quickly due to her poor health. Eventually Jane ended up losing that job and she began to borrow money in order to live.

Life began to get more and more out of control for Jane. At that time however, she noticed that there was a group of people meeting in the community hall near to her house on a Sunday. They would give her a wave and a friendly smile when they saw her which cheered her up.

One day, a person entering the meeting spotted Jane and asked whether she would like to come inside and have some food with them. Jane was hungry and so thought this would be a good idea. She ate with the group and they began to share with her that they were part of a local church. They came together to share food, stories about what God was doing in their lives and to pray for one another and their neighbours.

Jane began to attend the meetings more regularly. She found out that the group knew people who could help her with her increasing debts, they could help her find work and most importantly they seemed to really care about her, and wanted to get to know her. They would spend time chatting with her and being friendly, something she had rarely experienced before. One of the group explained that they all met and shared their lives together because they had experienced new life from God and they wanted to share this hope with their friends and neighbours.

Eventually Jane gave her life to God too and joined the church; she began to experience God's life transforming her own. It was not always easy - old habits and people she once knew continued to cause her problems - but her life was transformed little by little by God, working through his community, the church.



Bible Knowledge

Read Matthew 4:18-22 to the group:

¹⁸As 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.

¹⁹'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going 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, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.



What a big challenge these first followers of Jesus were faced with! He tells them to leave everything so they can follow him. He goes to these little groups of families and friends and says, 'Now you are going to work for me. But you cannot work for me and work for yourselves too. You have to put me and my call first.' This would have been a big sacrifice, to leave behind their livelihood. Sometimes Jesus calls people to do that, to literally leave what they have been doing in order to follow him. Other times he simply asks us to put him first in the things that we are already doing, using us to honour and serve him where we are.

Jesus took the everyday thing that they knew (how to catch fish) and used it to teach them what he wanted them to do. He said, 'I will use the skills and gifts you already have, but instead of catching fish, I want you to work together to catch people for me.' He uses those who have experienced his new life to reach out and spread that new life to others.

Jesus did not start out by building churches. He did not start by constructing buildings. He started by calling and making disciples (followers), and building them together in community, teaching them to make more disciples and more communities with him at the centre. This was like the church that Jane, in our story above, encountered. They invited her into their community and shared with her the new life that they had received from God.

When the word 'church' is used in the Bible it never refers to a building but it talks about a group of people coming together on a mission, with Jesus at the centre of it all. That is church. **If you make disciples (followers) you will eventually always get church. But if you build church buildings, you will not necessarily get disciples of Jesus.**

These gatherings of people who begin to follow Jesus together can be small, medium or large; a Life Group can even be an expression of church. The size is not important. What matters to God is, 'Are these good nets to catch more people, to bring them into my kingdom?' As well as being nets to reach others, these groups of people learned who God was: they worshipped him together, they shared the ups and downs of life together and supported one another. They were an attractive community, always creating opportunities to welcome new members and giving of their time and energy for the good of one another.

The fishermen were all exhausted and felt like they could not do the job they were meant to do. But when they said to Jesus, 'Because you say so, we will do it,' they saw a miracle! Perhaps that is what helped them decide to follow him. It is not easy to put God first and trust him, but that is what the first disciples were challenged to do so that they could be part of the new Jesus community. They lived closely in community with each other for three years, day and night. They saw how Jesus did everything and learned to copy him, to imitate how he lived and loved.

Would you have left everything behind – or just taken the fish to market and stayed where you were?

Later after they saw him die, be raised to life and go up to heaven, they remembered the fishing lessons he had shown them, and went out fishing for people.

Read Acts 2 (we read a part of this last week) to see how the same Peter who found that he could not catch any fish in his own power, 'caught' over 3000 people to come and follow Jesus when he preached his very first sermon!

To help so many people find their way back to God's love forever must have made him even happier than the day his nets were so full they almost broke.



15 mins

Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the following questions:

- Is there anything that you have or do that gets in the way of your calling to follow Jesus more closely?
- Are you part of a church? What is it like?
- Do you think you need a building to be a 'proper' church?

- What do you think it means to say Jesus is the leader of the church? Do you think that church leaders are like Jesus?

Bring the group back together and make sure everyone has a chance to share their answers.



Activity

Everybody will need a pen and some paper.

10 mins

Explain that we are going to think about the people we know who do not believe in Jesus yet or are outside of the community of church.

Ask everyone to draw, cut or rip out some fish shapes on their paper. On each fish shape they make, ask people to draw or write the names of friends, family members or people in the community that do not know Jesus and are not yet part of God's community. Remember to think about the people you see who are lonely or who are on the margins of community, or even excluded from community.



Prayer

Put a net, bowl or tub and in the middle of the room.

10 mins

Ask everybody to stand in a circle around the net, bowl or tub.

Invite people to come one by one and put the fish they have made into the net, bowl or tub. As they put each fish into the net, bowl or tub as them to say the name of the person it represents. While this is happening, encourage the whole group to be praying aloud that each person named will come to know Jesus and be part of God's community.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week ask God for an opportunity to tell the story about the miraculous catch of fish to someone who does not know Jesus yet. Ask God to give you the courage to do this. As you share this story pray that God would create the new life that you have experienced in those that you share with.



Witness

God's community extended to include us in his church, the community of those who love him. We are to do the same and extend our community to include those who have nothing to do with God. They are meant to be included. They are our friends and those we spend time with. They are those who are lonely or excluded from community. If we do not invite them into God's community, how else can they know the love and community of God?

This week, find a way to practically include those currently outside of God's community. Visit them, bless them, have food with them, laugh or cry with them! Your actions are the beginning of inviting people into God's community.

Do this together.



3

What are my Gifts?

'A spiritual gift is given to each of us
so we can help each other.'

1 Corinthians 12:7



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 as a sign of our new life in God the Holy Spirit gives each one of us gifts. They are valuable for the health of the whole church and for the world around. The Bible lists a number of these gifts, and we will look at ways in which you can discover which you have.



Memory Verse

5 mins

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.

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

1 Corinthians 12:7¹

¹ Scripture quotation taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.



Story

Read the following story to the group. It is written by Michael who, with his family, attends a church of about 100 people of all ages in a small town in the North of England.

About a year ago we felt God asked us as a church to explore the spiritual gifts. We then studied these gifts together in our Sunday sermons, and in our various Bible study groups that met during the week in our homes.

We found it helpful to remind ourselves, or learn for the first time, what these gifts are (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, tongues, prophecy, discernment and miraculous powers), what the purpose of receiving them is (to serve the church and wider community), what each of these gifts actually do, and how we use them properly.

We spent time identifying which gifts we each already had. We did this through individual reflection and also by asking those close to us to tell us which gifts they could see in us. We also talked about gifts within us which could be latent, undiscovered or unexplored gifts. We each prayed for God to show us the gifts we already had and to give us any gifts he still had for us. Over the next few months we started trying to develop these gifts in the church.

As a result, one lady who had been working in a school and leading on our worship team was encouraged to develop her gift of preaching and teaching. She now regularly and powerfully teaches us from God's word. Another man who had musical skills that he had not been using joined the worship team and eventually ended up leading it in a new and dynamic way. Both

have really blessed the church.

Another lady who had been feeling tired and uninspired as part of the worship team stepped down in order to start a new Bible study group. This has reached out to several people, couples and families who had not felt fully connected with the church and brought them right back into the body of the church. So we can see the use of spiritual gifts blessed those within the church and outside of it as well.

To discover and best use our spiritual gifts for God, we had to be loving, honest, sacrificial and willing to offer ourselves to the service of God for the benefit of his body, and the wider community.



Bible Knowledge

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 to the group:

¹Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols. ³Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a

message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.



We are all created and loved by God, each with a unique set of characteristics, skills and abilities. These skills and abilities are gifts that often lead us to pursue particular interests and opportunities. As well as these natural gifts, God also enhances some of our abilities, or even gives us new abilities, in a supernatural way; these are what we understand as spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. Some are permanent and we will grow in them; others are for a specific time. The Holy Spirit wants the gifts to be used to direct people to Jesus, help us to be more like Jesus, to build up the body of Christ, and to bless the world in which we live. They are not just for our own personal use. The use of our spiritual gifts is evidence of God's life in us. God's life in us is always looking to create more life in our relationships and communities.

Today we are going to look in more detail at what the gifts are, how we discover which ones we already have and how we might receive those we desire. Next week we will look at how to nurture and use these gifts.

What are the spiritual gifts?

In today's Bible passage a number of different spiritual gifts are listed. These are:

- Wisdom: Applying God's wisdom in specific situations.
- Knowledge: The ability to bring truth to a person, group or situation through seeing God's view or through Biblical insight.
- Faith: The ability to trust God and to act on his promises with confidence and unwavering belief in his ability to fulfil his promises.
- Healing: The ability to be God's means for restoring people physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- Miraculous powers: The ability to perform supernatural miracles.
- Prophecy: The ability to reveal truth and speak it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or encouragement.
- Distinguishing between spirits (discernment): The ability to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, and which spirits are good and which are evil.
- Speaking in different kinds of tongues: The ability to speak an unlearned language of prayer, either earthly or heavenly.
- Interpretation of tongues: The ability to make understood the message shared by someone who is speaking in tongues.²

This is only one of a number of lists of spiritual gifts that we find in the Bible. We will look at some of the other places that talk about spiritual gifts in our small groups now.

² Definitions based on Bugbee, Bruce & Cousins, Don (2005) *The Purpose of Gifts* Zondervan, pages 44-51



Discussion

15 mins

Split into groups of 3 or 4 people and look at 1 or 2 of these passages below per group. Make sure each passage is being looked at by at least 1 group.

Ask each group to look at the passage or passages they have been given and find the spiritual gifts that are included in them. The spiritual gifts are included in brackets here to help you when people are giving feedback.

- 1 Corinthians 12:28 (Apostles, prophets, teachers, helpers, administrators)
- Romans 12:6-8 (Encouragement, giving, leadership, mercy)
- Ephesians 4:11 (Evangelism, shepherding)
- 1 Peter 4:9-10 (Hospitality)
- Exodus 31:3-5 (Craftsmanship)
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (Intercession)
- Psalms 150:3-5 (Creative communication)

Give everyone 5 minutes to do this and then come back together as one group and ask each small group to tell the others what spiritual gifts they found in the passages.

- Ask if anybody was surprised by or interested in any of the gifts they found in the Bible passages.



How do we identify the gifts that we have been given?

The apostle Paul tells us to 'eagerly desire the spiritual gifts.' So, as people who have received new life from God, we need to be aware of the gifts and be asking God what gifts he wants us to use for his work.

In order to work out what gifts we already have and then identify those which we desire, we may follow a series of steps:

- **Step 1:** Pray and ask God to reveal to you the gifting that you have or that he wishes you to have. He is the giver of gifts and knows you better than anyone.
- **Step 2:** On your own, think about the different spiritual gifts we have read about today. Do you recognise any of these as a gift you have already identified and used? Do you recognise a gift that you know that you have but have not used yet? Do you think that you might have a certain gift, but are unsure?
- **Step 3:** Speak to someone who knows you well like a family member, a Life Group member or a church leader. Ask them whether they can see any specific gifts in you, or discern any specific word from God for you, regarding your gifts.

When you are taking these steps, it is good to consider whether the gifts fit with your personality and character. Remember that although spiritual gifts may 'fit in', these are a supernatural gift and not the result of our own human abilities. They are given by God, not for our benefit but for the wider benefit of those around us.

The Bible has countless stories of men and women who were able to use gifts that demonstrated the supernatural power of God. These continue to be available to believers today in order to restore God's plan and purpose on earth and draw people toward him.



Activity

20 mins

Separate again into groups of 3 or 4 and go through the steps we have just learnt about. This will help you to discern the spiritual gifts of those in the group.

Within each group, spend time praying, thinking about and discussing the spiritual gifts of each person in that group.



Prayer

10 mins

The Bible tells us that spiritual gifts are given through the laying on of hands (see [1 Timothy 4:14](#)).

In your groups of 3 or 4 pray for each other in turn, laying hands on the person being prayed for and requesting that God fill them again with his Holy Spirit and give them spiritual gifts for his glory. Thank God for the gifts that the person already has and pray that he will enable them to grow in the use of these gifts.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, make a list of the spiritual gifts discussed earlier in both the teaching and the discussion time. Continue to pray and meditate on this list, asking God to make clear to you the gifts that he has given you already and those he may want to add to you.

Pray about how you may develop these gifts further. Ask God how, where and when he wants you to use these gifts.



Witness

This week, choose one of the gifts that you have been identified as having. Spend some time practising the use of the gift.

As you learn what gifts you have, use one to bless someone who is part of God's family already. This could be someone else in your Life Group, someone in your church or from a different church.

Pray for opportunities to be bold and use the gifts that you have been given.

Summary list of spiritual gifts from the passages we read today

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miraculous powers
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing between spirits
- Speaking in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Apostleship
- Teaching
- Helping
- Administration
- Encouragement
- Giving
- Leadership
- Mercy
- Evangelism
- Shepherding
- Hospitality
- Craftsmanship
- Intercession
- Creative communication



4

How do I use my Gifts?

'Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.'

1 Corinthians 14:1



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 use the spiritual gifts that we identified last week. As we learn how to put these gifts into practice, then God can use us to create more of his life in the community around us.



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.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:1



Story

Read the following story to the group:

Hannah had travelled to the Copperbelt area of Zambia with a team from her church in the UK, in order to spend some time working alongside a team of local builders and craftspeople to build a medical clinic for the area. Hannah was not much of a builder; though she had a go she was not really much help to the villagers who were doing a great job already.

Towards the end of their stay in the village, Hannah and her team were asked to share at a celebration service to thank God for the work that had been done in the village so far. Some members of the team shared words of encouragement from the Bible, others sang songs, and others spent time praying for members of the community.

During the time of prayer one of the ladies of the village who had been helping to look after Hannah and her team came directly to Hannah to ask for prayer for healing from a severe pain that she had been experiencing following the birth of her children. Hannah was immediately filled with fear: how could she pray adequately for this woman? What if the lady was not healed – what would this say about Hannah and the God that she served?

Despite her fears, Hannah cared for the lady and did not want to turn her away so decided to pray. She laid a hand on the lady's shoulder and prayed to God, asking him to perform the healing that only he could, in the places only he could understand.

A few days after praying that prayer Hannah and her team said their final goodbyes to their new friends in the village. Hannah had not thought much more about her prayer for healing until the lady approached her again and with a joyful smile on her face told her that her pain had gone and she was feeling well again. She

had been healed by God through Hannah's timid prayer – praise Jesus!



Bible Knowledge

Read Romans 12:3-8 to the group:

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.



Activity – Good News

5 mins

Last week we began to look at the spiritual gifts in the Bible. Can you spend some time remembering what the different gifts are? Try and make a list of the many gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to his people. Work together in small groups and then at the end see if there were any that you forgot.

(Note: There is a list at the end of last week's session for reference.)



What are spiritual gifts for?

As our Bible passage today says, the gifts of the Spirit are given to each one in different measure. It reminds us that we are all part of one body and our different gifts are designed and given to complement one another for the benefit of the whole body. If we use our gifts for our own selfish desires, if we deny using them at all, if we promote only one gift over all the others, then we are not fulfilling God's will for giving the gifts in the first place. Our memory verse also reminds us to use our gifts in love. An attitude of humility and love is essential when we seek to serve those around us, otherwise we risk causing upset and offence and not truly representing the good news of Jesus that we carry. It is better to have no gift and to love, than it is to have many gifts and be proud and selfish.

How do we use our spiritual gifts?

In the first instance we need to be aware of what our gifts are, or what gift it is that we would like to receive. Last week we looked at some ways of discovering our gifts, and ways in which we can pray for gifts. Once we know what they are then we need to start using them. This can take some courage and a bit of practise. Here is another story from Hannah (who we heard about earlier):

I learned about the gift of speaking in tongues at church and was always intrigued as to how it worked. I decided to ask God to give me the gift of speaking in tongues so that I could use that language to pray to him when my words did not seem enough, and also as a sign of his Holy Spirit working in me.

For a while after I prayed nothing much really happened. I decided to pray again and felt God say to me, 'You already have the gift – you just need to use it!' The first time I spoke

in tongues I was a bit nervous; I felt a bit self-conscious, like I might be making it up and imagining things. However, during the worship in church one day I prayed, opened my mouth, and tentatively began to speak. What came out were words that I did not know, and had not learned. I was amazed! I now have a prayer language that I can use at any time and in any situation that not only draws me close to God but also reminds me that he is the giver of good gifts and wants to bless us. Sometimes I speak in tongues regularly and at length, other times just every now and then. But I always know the gift is there: I just get to choose when to use it.



Activity – Good News

30 mins

Our memory verse this week suggests that we should eagerly desire the gift of prophecy. We are going to do an exercise that helps us to explore this gift and learn how we might start using it.

Prophecy is simply hearing from God. This could be directly from his word in the Bible; it could involve some revelation about the future, some encouragement or even a challenge. The most important thing is that it comes from God and is in line with his word (the Bible) and what we know of his nature.

You will need paper and pens for this exercise.

Have everyone in the group draw around their hand on a piece of paper and write their name or draw a symbol they will recognise at the top of the paper.

Place these pieces of paper around the place you are meeting, then bring the group together to pray. Ask God to enable each

one of you to receive a prophetic word for one or more people in the group.

Once you have prayed, have the group split up, listen to God, and then go and write or draw a picture on the hand of the person that God has put in their mind. Write or draw what you feel he is saying. It only needs to be 1-2 words, a passage of scripture or a simple picture of something. Aim to do this for at least half the time you have today to make sure everyone has a few things written on their paper hands.

Once you have finished, have everyone collect their own handprint and read what has been written there.

Ask people to share anything that specifically speaks to them or encourages them from this exercise.



Where should I use my gifts?

You can use your gifts anywhere. There are sick people inside and outside the church and there are people who need to hear from God everywhere. Our society needs Godly leaders, our businesses need humble and honest employees, our homes need loving and serving parents. The gifts of the Spirit are not restricted to use only in the church, however some common sense and careful thought is useful when deciding when and where to use them. Always spend a few moments praying to God in your heart when you feel he may be asking you to use a gift in your daily life. Ask him to either create or remove the opportunity and follow his leading.

Spiritual gifts are an incredible tool to demonstrate God's power and his presence to those who do not know him yet. It can take

some courage to use the gifts that you have been given, but as you take small steps you will see God working through you and reaching those around you with his life.



15 mins

Prayer

In groups of 3 or 4 people, spend some time together thanking God for speaking to you through the activity earlier in this session.

Encourage group members to share any words or pictures that they received that were particularly accurate or timely for them.

Also pray for those who found this exercise difficult. Pray that God would continue to help them to grow in their gifts.



To do this week

There is still much more that we can learn about the spiritual gifts. This week spend some time either on your own or in small groups studying the passages about the gifts of the spirit further.

Continue to ask God to reveal gifts that you already have and also pray for him to give you any further gifts that you may need. Also pray together that God will give you the courage to use any gifts that you already have.



Witness

As we mentioned, our gifts can be used anywhere and serve as a witness to the power and presence of God. This week ask God to give you an opportunity to step out in faith and use a gift he has given you to bless someone who does not know him yet.

Pray each morning, take some time to listen to God and be ready to respond when God gives you the opportunity. Perhaps he will give you a word of encouragement or knowledge for someone, or

he will ask you to pray for someone and bring his healing or he will give you the opportunity to show hospitality to someone.

If you are nervous, do not worry. Simply ask God to help you to be brave!

Notes

5

Trust and Faith

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.'

Proverbs 3:5-6



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 the life God has given us depends on us placing our trust and faith in him, not in our own abilities. Just as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have unquestioning trust and faith in each other, so we can trust God to keep us growing in him, and use us through our gifts to make a difference in our world.



Memory Verse

5 mins

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 the passage 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.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,*

and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6



Story

Read the following story about fear and trust at Mount Mumpu in Mkushi, Zambia to the group. The story is written by one of the teachers at the local school.

There is a mountain in Mkushi - one of the highest in Zambia - and every year a group of students from the nearby Chengelo Christian School climb it together. The name of the mountain is 'Mumpu Welume', which in the local Lala language mean: 'Mountain of the Devil'. It has a large cave in the shape of an upturned mouth on its rocky western side. (Show everyone the picture at the start of this session.) The appearance of this cave gives rise to its name and also to many stories about the mountain. Local people would never climb the mountain and believe that there is a 'spirit' of Mumpu which needs to be appeased by gifts of salt, mealie meal and tobacco if they are to hunt or move in the area.

For our group to climb Mount Mumpu we have to go right into the cave, right through the mouth of the devil! Round the campfire on the night before the ascent, our group of teenagers listen intently to the stories of Mount Mumpu. Their eyes widen as I tell them about the mountain spirit living in the cave. By the time all the stories have finished all you can hear is the wind whistling through the trees and flames flickering and popping in the twisted branches of the fire.

It is at this moment that I ask them, 'Who do you put your trust in?' It is suddenly a real dilemma, a real situation. The group is full

of genuine fear of the mountain, of darkness, yet they know that Jesus Christ said that he is the light of the world. Who should they put their trust in? The circumstances might force these young people to fear or to put their trust in ancestors and spirits, but trust and faith in God goes beyond circumstances and fear. As we sit around the campfire, we make the decision together that even in these uncertain circumstances, we place our trust in God. We pray for his protection and acknowledge that he is sovereign.

One year a group of students took up a large cross through the cave and to the top of Mount Mumpu. They planted it right at the top of the mountain because despite its name, Mount Mumpu is God's mountain just like everything else in the earth. It is his mountain and we do not need to be afraid to climb it! That group of young people loved the adventure of hiking up the rocky slopes, scrambling through the cave and the exhilaration of the summit, just like it should be when we trust him on this adventure of life.



Bible Knowledge

Read Matthew 14:22-33 to the group:

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the lake,

they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'

²⁸'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'

²⁹'Come,' he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'

³²And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

³³Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'



In this passage we see Peter, spontaneous impulsive Peter, respond to the call of Jesus. Jesus had just miraculously fed 5,000 people and had sent the disciples off in the boat while he dispersed the crowd. He then took some time out with his father God in prayer on the mountainside. (This was because his cousin John the Baptist had recently been killed and he was in mourning.)

It was dawn and the boat was far out onto the lake when Jesus walked across the water to the disciples. The disciples were petrified by this figure walking towards them across the waves.

Imagine yourself in the same situation: would you be scared as well?

Jesus reassures them telling them not be afraid because it is him. Peter immediately responds, full of faith and trust: 'If you say come, I will come!' Do we have the same impulsive, almost childlike faith of Peter as he expectantly climbs over the side of the boat to meet Jesus on the water?

Yet that good start soon fades as Peter becomes conscious of his situation, the waves and the wind, and starts to sink. We are so like these disciples of Jesus! **How often have we responded to a call of Jesus with great faith and determination, only to focus on our circumstances, become overwhelmed with challenges, and begin to sink?**

Peter did what any of us would do when our heads start to sink beneath the waters of the tests in our lives: he cried out to Jesus. Jesus reaches out to him and pulls him up. Jesus then challenged Peter (verse 31) by asking him why he doubted, the same question he asks us in our situations. Why do we doubt?

I do not think that Peter at that moment lost his faith. Jesus did not think so either; he just started to doubt. In [Mark 9:24](#) we read of a father whose son is very poorly and has been for his whole life. The father says, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' We can understand how Peter and that father felt. We have faith in God and trust him, yet our circumstances work to undermine that faith and cause us to doubt that Jesus can do what he says he can.

However, perhaps this is the problem we face with trust: trust is not about God doing what we want, it about trusting God to do what he wants! Trust and faith are not just a one-off decision we made at the start of our Christian journey; they are everyday decisions we make. In [Luke 9:23](#) Jesus says, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me'. Faith is a daily decision to say, 'Today Jesus I trust you for everything'.

In the midst of testing circumstances faith is saying, 'Lord I put my trust in you' and then thinking it and acting on it. At the bottom of Mount Mumpu in the story, we have to say, 'Lord I put my trust in you!' I always like to read [Joshua 24](#) at that moment because in verse 15 Joshua says, 'Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve'. (You can read the story later if you want to.) We have to decide that each day. Our faith begins to build and grow as we experience the results of daily faith and trust. When we submit our wills to his we experience the faithfulness of God and develop more faith for the next test. The life that he has placed in us begins to grow and develop as we put it into action.

Even our failures, similar to Peter's experience in the passage, can build our faith for the future. Peter built his faith in Christ through trust and stepping out of the boat. Eventually Jesus called Peter the 'rock' of the church (Matt 16:18). A rock is something firm and stable. Our faith as it grows should become more firm and stable, like a rock upon which we, and others, can stand.

Peter knew an important characteristic of Jesus that often seems so blurred to many, that when we step out of the boat and trust him, he will always be there to reach out to us and pull us through. That is the nature of Jesus. His desire is that our hearts

should not be troubled, that we should believe in God and believe in him (John 14:1). Jesus desires for us to trust him in everything. Yet, this trust is not something he forces onto us; it has to be our decision for this is how a relationship based upon love works. We respond to his call by trusting him every day, Jesus responds to us with a saving eternal love and encourages us not to doubt him. We can trust him, for he is faithful.

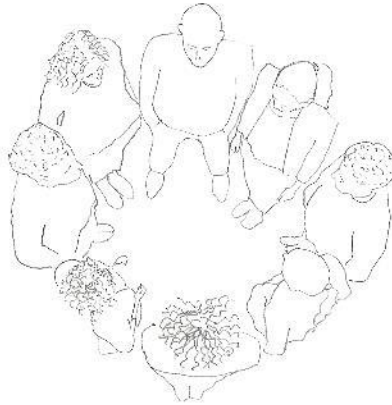


Activity

10 mins

A good way to demonstrate how trust can develop and build is the trust circle.

Ask people to form groups with 6, 7 or 8 people in each group. Each group should form a circle by standing shoulder to shoulder with each other.



One person should stand in the middle of each circle. The person in the middle should fold their arms over their chest and stand straight like a plank of wood.



The others in the circle place both their hands out in front of them and put one foot forward (still shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the circle). The person in the middle, keeping their legs straight like a plank of wood, leans onto the hands of the people in the circle. The people in the circle gently push the person in the middle around the circle. The idea is NOT to let the person in the middle fall, always support them.



This builds trust for the person in the middle that they can trust the others in the circle and the others in the circle prove their trustworthiness!

- Ask the person in the middle how they felt?
- Did it get easier to trust?
- How can this activity relate to our trust in God?



Discussion

15 mins

In groups of 3 or 4 people discuss these questions and verses in the Bible. After the discussion, allow time for the groups to feed back to the whole group.

- Luke 17:1-10 How do we build our trust and faith? What is key?
- Mark 9:14-29 The statement by the father in verse 24 seems to contradict itself. How can we believe (trust) yet still need to overcome unbelief (a lack of trust)? Have you examples of this in your own life?
- What situations cause us to doubt and fail to trust in God?
- What should our response be?
- How can failures build our faith?
- What does it mean to deny ourselves and pick up the cross daily?



Prayer

10 mins

In your small groups, use the thoughts below to honestly share with God about your trust and faith. Spend time praying for one another too, to encourage others to build their trust and faith.

Here are some ideas for how you could pray:

- Lord I believe in you; help me overcome my doubts and lack of trust.
- Confess areas of doubt, fear and lack of trust.

- Ask God to help you overcome these areas, for power and strength through his Holy Spirit.
- Pray to God for any specific situations you are in now which require more faith and trust than normal. Pray that he may strengthen you.
- Ask others to pray for you in those situations too.
- Pray you can use failures (be specific if you like) in your life to build your faith.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do.

This week read Hebrews 11. Pick one character from the list of people of faith. Write down or remember 5 examples of how they trusted in God. Then meet with someone else from the group and discuss these questions together.

- Can you apply any of these examples to your life this week?
- How can you trust God more in your life?
- How can you overcome a lack of trust?
- How can you encourage someone else this week to trust God?



Witness

God's life in us means we are changed inside which leads to a change in our practical actions too. The people around us will see these changes in us.

This week, think of a situation where you are trusting someone or something more than you are trusting God. Pray about the situation, giving it to God. Decide to trust God more than the person or thing you have been trusting. Now change the way you are acting to reflect the decision you have made to trust God.

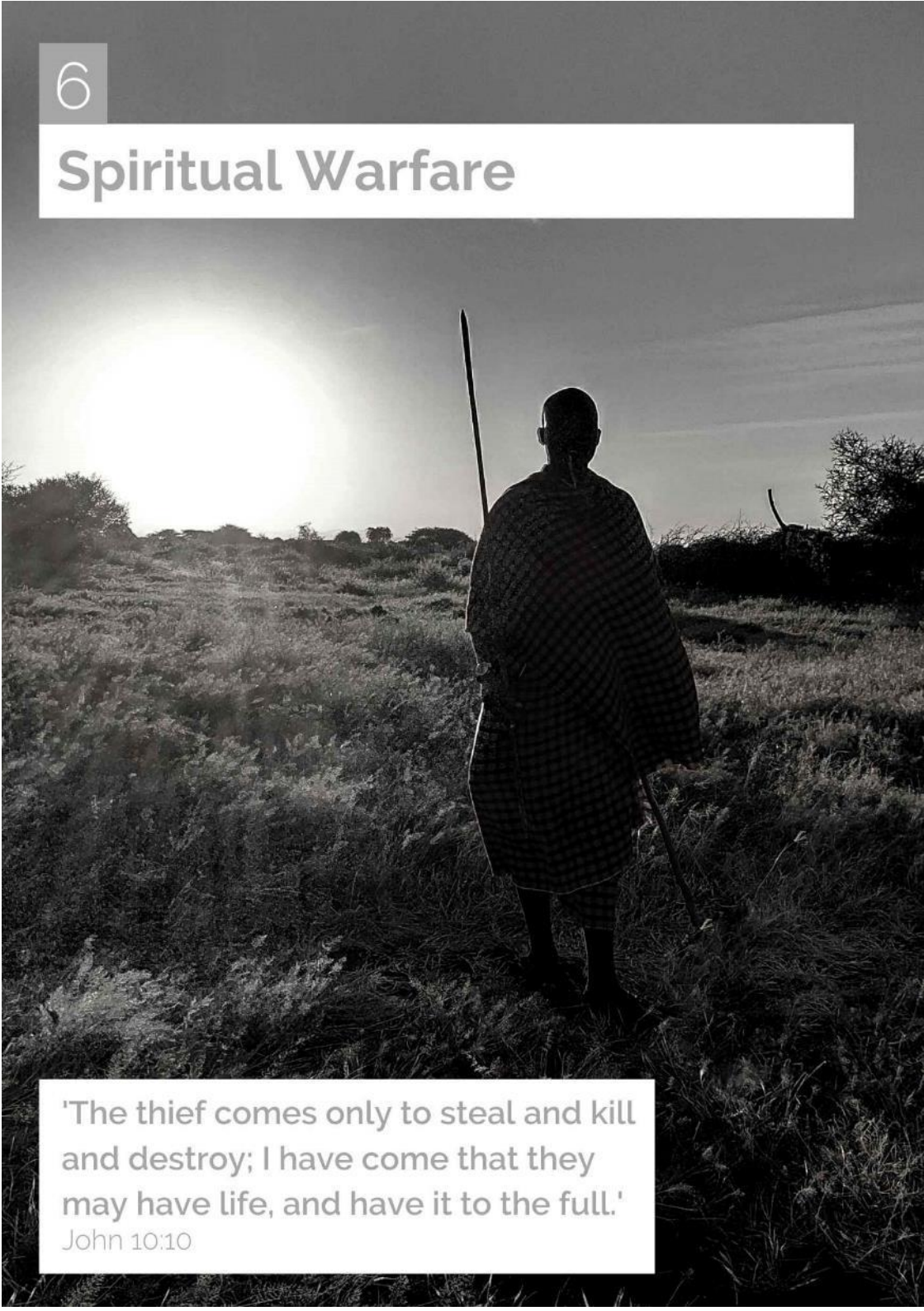
For example, maybe you have been trusting a neighbour or friend to do a certain job for you. Sometimes they are too busy to do it. Normally if they tell you then cannot help you, you panic and say things to your friend to try and persuade them to find time to do this job. This week, if your friend does not have time to help you, remember that you are trusting God to help you instead. Say a simple, quick prayer in your heart, then you can thank your friend for normally helping and tell them that you understand that they cannot help you this week. Ask God to help you do the job yourself or to send someone else to help!

Another example is trusting money more than trusting God. If you find yourself trusting money to solve your problems more than you trust God, pray about it and then give some money away to someone who needs it more than you. Ask God to provide for your needs. Trust him.

By acting differently, you are putting yourself in a situation where you have to trust God. You are also giving God the opportunity to show how trustworthy he is. Other people will see this through your life!

6

Spiritual Warfare



'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

John 10:10



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 when we receive new life from God, we also enter into a battle against the spiritual powers that oppose God. God has ultimately defeated these powers; however, they can still present some obstacles that we can overcome through prayer, worship and practical actions.



Memory Verse

5 mins

You have already learnt part of today's memory verse in the very first session on ***Foundations 1: Life Begins*** when we learnt that Jesus came to give us new life. Today's memory verse adds to what we have learnt before.

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.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10



Story

Read the following story to the group:

For as long as she can remember Marina has heard voices in her head. Sometimes she hears them a lot and at others times less so. She receives treatment from doctors for this condition, and though it has helped a little, the voices have never really gone away. The voices tell her things about herself, about others and sometimes they even give her instructions about how to act. At times they have told her to hurt herself, or others.

Recently however, Marina received God's new life and became a Christian which meant that she began to read the Bible. In the Bible she found all kinds of truth about who she is as a child of God, and also how we should act once we receive new life. She started to realise that the voices she heard were not telling her God's truth about her or about her situation. She decided to write down some verses from the Bible and now when she hears the voices she replies to them with God's truth, standing firm on his word and the promises that he has made to her. This is helping her each day.

(Mental illness can be very difficult for those who suffer with it and the people around them. It is often complicated and we cannot assume that what helps one person will help all others. Healing can come through a miracle or through medical assistance.)



Bible Knowledge

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 to the group:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.



The Bible is very clear that the devil, though an active enemy, is a defeated enemy. He was defeated through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, but he retains some influence until the day when Jesus returns. The closer we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we advance to the front line of the conflict.

Paul, the writer of the letter to the Ephesians, writes to his audience about the battle that they are in using an image that

they would be very familiar with - that of a Roman soldier. He gives his readers some ideas about *how* they can fight against the devil's schemes. In the same way that a soldier on a battlefield would not survive long if he or she forgot they were in a war, so we too need to be alert and prepared to face the devil at all times.



10 mins

Discussion: Who are we fighting?

Read Ephesians 6:10-12 to the group:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:10-12

Ask the group to tell you who or what they think might be our enemies. You are looking for the following answers:

- Rulers
- Authorities
- Powers
- Spiritual forces of evil

Ask the group what they think these things mean. Discuss where this fight is taking place and what they think this might mean.



Our first step in successfully fighting against our spiritual enemies is recognising our weakness and Jesus' great strength. If we depend on ourselves, we are doomed to failure as we are weak. Dependence on Jesus is crucial. Worshipping Jesus and submitting

ourselves to him is a key form of spiritual warfare as through worship we are reminding ourselves and the enemy who Jesus is and what he has done.

This passage repeatedly reminds us of our inability to fight on our own. We need strength (verse 10), weapons (verses 11 and 14–17) and lines of communication with God to help us (verses 18–20). Without these things we would be unable to stand against our enemies. Left to ourselves we would soon crumble in the heat of battle. We are simply inadequate for the task. However, God loves his people and never leaves them defenceless.

In verse 10, Paul recognises that we are weak and when life gets tough we want to give up. This spiritual war is not an easy battle but as we said before it has ultimately been won by Jesus. He is our strength and we need to depend on him and his power.

The image of the soldier helps us to understand what weapons we too can fight with. The soldier is not dressed like a civilian, but wears armour and carries weapons to protect him or herself against the enemy. Verse 11 tells us that as a Christian we need to dress like a soldier, putting on the ‘full armour of God’ so we are ready to fight. We have to stand up with God and not be overcome by the devil’s schemes.

When we see or think we are in danger, we are immediately on our guard; this passage tells us how we can defend



ourselves and it also gives suggestions for how we can actively fight back against the work of the devil. We have the authority to do so. Sometimes that fight can be very obvious, other times the fight can be going on inside our hearts or minds. Verse 13 encourages us by reminding us that God has not left us to fight alone; instead he has given us the protection and weapons we need to help us stand firm in him. We are going to look at each of them now.



15 mins

Activity – The Armour of God

As you talk about each piece of the armour that God has given us, encourage people to make an action that will help them remember it. For example, when you talk about the belt of truth, everyone could stand up and pretend to fasten a belt around their waist. Encourage everyone to use their imagination!

The belt of truth

What does a belt do? It holds your trousers up. It gives shape to your dress. In the case of a Roman soldier, it allowed him to carry a weapon – a dagger. Believing in the truth that Jesus died on the cross and came back to life 3 days later is the basis of our faith. The devil wants to deceive us about the truth of Jesus. Believing and holding on to Jesus' truths gives our lives shape and reason for doing the things we do.

The breastplate of righteousness

A breastplate is used to protect your chest, which in turn protects your heart. Righteousness refers to our relationship with God and with each other. The devil wants to destroy our relationships with God and each other so that we feel alone on this journey of life. We can protect our heart by protecting our relationship with God.

This means we can spend time talking with him in prayer, reading his word and by encouraging one another.

Feet fitted with readiness from the gospel of peace

Our feet take us where we want to go. God asks us to take his good news to the ends of the world. We can make sure we are ready by practising telling our personal story of how we know Jesus and by being prepared to share how God has transformed our lives. Sometimes our witness can also be a silent witness when people observe our way of life. The gospel of peace is a gospel of unity and togetherness. The devil wants to cause division and arguments. By walking closely with Jesus, we can bring unity and togetherness wherever we go in addition to his good news. We can take part in practical actions of love that will overturn the work of the devil.

Shield of faith

Carrying a shield tells us we are under attack. An attack can come from any direction – top, middle, bottom, sideways – and we can use a shield to protect ourselves. Roman soldiers linked their shields together to form a wall and protect themselves and each other. The devil will do whatever he can to make us doubt God's truth, but our faith in God can protect us and each other, whatever situations we find ourselves in. Faith means we make a decision to believe God.

Helmet of salvation

A helmet, in addition to protecting your head, helps to identify which army you belong to. It is the first thing you reveal when you are under cover. Our helmet of salvation shows the world that we belong to God's army. The devil wants to knock us down as a Christian but our salvation is secure in Jesus' cross. No matter

what we struggle with, nothing can separate us from the love of God and take away our salvation.

The sword of the Spirit

2 Timothy 3:16 says that, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'. We can use God's word to attack the enemy like we would use a sword to attack the enemy. This is what was happening in our story earlier as Marina used the truth of the word of God to come against the voices she heard. It is also a strategy that Jesus himself used when he was tempted by the devil. You can read more about this story in Luke 14:1-12.

Prayer

The passage finishes by telling us to pray on all occasions. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing or thinking, prayer is the most powerful weapon of all. We can talk about our victories and our struggles to a God who understands. Jesus is always praying for us in the presence of our Father God.



10 mins

Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the ways in which we might recognise our enemy and then discuss ways we can use the armour of God to protect ourselves. The following questions might be helpful:

- Can you think of an example of when a lie has caused trouble?
- Can you think of a time when relationships have been broken and hurt has been caused?
- Can you think of a time you have found yourself doubting whether God is good?

- For each of these situations, think about whether there was a spiritual cause leading to suffering and hurt.
- For each of these situations, which part of the armour might have helped?
- What actions can we take to ‘put on the full armour of God’?



Activity

5 mins

Ask someone to read [Ephesians 6:14-18](#) to the group. As it is read, ask everyone to stand up and do all the different actions they have made representing the different parts of the armour.



Prayer

10 mins

Read the following prayer out, asking the group to repeat it after you. You could encourage them to do the physical actions from the memory verse as a sign of putting on the armour.

Heavenly Father, I know from the work of Jesus Christ that the devil and his followers are a defeated enemy. I also know from your word, the Bible, that the enemy continues to roam the earth and attack us. Jesus, I ask for your help in putting on your armour – the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the belt of truth, and the sword of the Spirit in order to resist the enemy so he will flee.

I praise you, Jesus, for your victory over the enemy, for his complete defeat, and I claim that victory for myself as I remain in you. Amen.

As well as putting on the armour of God we also need to turn away from any ties or links that we have had with the devil, either knowingly or unknowingly. Examples of these would be spells,

curses, visiting witchdoctors or taking part in wrong religious acts. It is important to ask God to help you to be truly free and to walk in the freedom. This could involve repenting from fear, from ties to the supernatural or from spirits that are not the Holy Spirit.

Now we are going to have an opportunity to turn away from anything that has a hold on our life. We are going to do this in our groups. If there is something you feel unable to share in your group but believe God wants to set you free from, you can either say these things quietly in your heart (rather than out loud) or you can come and talk to the group leader after the session.

With people in their groups, lead everyone in a prayer that turns away from anything that may have a hold on our lives.

Lord Jesus, I renounce the following things:

(Invite people to say out loud or quietly in their heart anything they are aware of in their life that is evil or wrong.)

I give these things to you, Lord.

Thank you for setting me free.

Amen

As the groups do this, you may notice that some people have great difficulty turning away from different areas, like they just cannot get the words out of their mouth. 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 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.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week repeat the actions that you made up for the armour each morning when you get up. Ask Jesus to help you spot any attacks from the enemy and use the armour you have put on. Here are a few examples of what this could mean:

- When you hear lies, you speak truth.
- When you doubt God's goodness, you read a verse in the Bible that reminds you of the truth.
- If your relationship with God or another person is not good, you make time to say sorry and work to make it better.
- When you feel threatened, you pray.



Witness

Most of the weapons God gives us are about protecting ourselves from attack. There is one that is different. We are told to make sure our feet are fitted with readiness from the gospel of peace. This is about going out and sharing the good news of Jesus with others.

This week make time to pray about a person who does not know Jesus, a situation where the peace of the gospel is not present or where evil is clearly present. Pray for this person or situation and ask God to change it. After you have prayed, go and speak to that person or seek to bring peace to that situation. Go in peace and share peace.

Remember to TRUST God as you do this. You cannot do this in your own strength. You need to rely on God – this is a spiritual war!

Optional Further Study

If people have time and access to a Bible (or a friend with a Bible) here are some more verses they can read to help them recognise the work of the devil and of God:

Work of the devil³

- John 10:10 Destruction and death
- Luke 22: 31; Revelation 2:10-11 Persecution
- Matthew 4:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5 Temptation
- John 13:2; Luke 22:3 Betraying Jesus or Christians
- Genesis 3; Acts 5:3; 2 Corinthians 2:9-11; Ephesians 6:11 The tricks and lies of the devil

Work of God

- John 10:10 Life to the full
- Psalm 9:9 Stronghold in trouble
- James 1:13 God does not tempt
- Deuteronomy 7:9 God is faithful
- John 14:6 Jesus is the truth

³ Brisbane School of Theology (2013). *Secrets of Spiritual Warfare: How to destroy the flesh, defeat the world, and cast out demons!* [Online] Available at: <http://bst.qld.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/SpiritualWarfare%20PowerPoint.pdf> [Accessed 6 July 2018]

- Matthew 16:22-23
Denying and rejecting the cross, taking the easy way
- Matthew 7:13 Taking the narrow, hard way, and accepting Jesus leads to life
- Matthew 4:8-10
Worshipping other things including the devil
- 1 Chronicles 16:25; Exodus 20:2-3 Worship only God
- 2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9
Appearing as an angel of light (falsehood, manipulation)
- 1 John 4:7-21; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 God is love
- 1 Thessalonians 2:18
Damaging the work of the gospel
- Romans 1:16 Gospel is the power of God
- (The story of) Job
Accusing and destroying
- (The story of) Job
Faithful creator, and God of blessing

Praying for our Community



'I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.'

1 Timothy 2:1



Preparation

What you need for this session:

- A large piece of paper, or some small pieces that you can fasten together.
- A marker or a thick pen.

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 learn how to pray not just for ourselves, but for our communities, so that the needs of those around us are brought to God and his new life can come.



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 urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.

1 Timothy 2:1



Story

Read the following story to the group:

Ever since Pete and his family moved to their neighbourhood, he has been gathering people together to pray for the needs of his friends and neighbours. Sometimes they just pray for 1 or 2 people or situations that they know about. Other times they pray for all sorts of different things, asking God to reveal to them things that otherwise they would not have known about.

One thing that they particularly like doing is walking around the community and praying as they go (this is called prayer walking). Sometimes they pray out loud, other times they pray quietly. Often, as they go around they meet people that they may not have seen for a while or they see things that they may not have noticed before that they can begin to pray about.

A few weeks ago Pete and some friends went out during a warm afternoon. They spotted lots of young people starting to gather in a place, some on motorbikes, others on bicycles, many of them with some sort of weapon. It became clear that there were 2 distinct groups gathering and it looked like they were going to fight one another.

Pete and his friends decided to make their way over to the place where the young people had begun to gather. They stopped and spent some time praying for God to disperse the people and to bring peace to the neighbourhood. Almost immediately their prayers were answered: the mood of many of those there seemed to change. In fact some of those who did not leave ended up talking to Pete and his friends about their faith which created an opportunity to share about the new life that they have

experienced and the God who brings peace not just to our individual lives, but to our whole community.



Bible Knowledge

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8 to the group:

¹I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. ⁷And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle – I am telling the truth, I am not lying – and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

⁸Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.



In the Bible passage, the apostle Paul writes to the young church leader Timothy to guide and encourage him in his ministry to a challenging church in difficult circumstances. He uses the word ‘all’ a lot, reminding us that we are called to pray for all people as God wants all to be saved and that Jesus died on the cross in order for this to happen. All is everyone: the high and the low; the educated and those unschooled; the rich and poor; the good and the bad; the persecutor and the victim. Whoever they are makes no difference to God as he wants them all to receive what he has for them. He loves them and so we are to love them too. What is

more loving than to come to God in prayer and ask on their behalf?

As well as praying for those in our communities, Paul encourages us to pray for those in leadership and government over us, even if we disagree with them or they are against us. **If we pray for peace and for wisdom for all of those in power, that they may come to know God and be transformed by him, how much could we see changed?** Not just in our lives, or the lives of our communities but in our nations, our continents, and our whole world.

Jesus also taught us to pray for our enemies, for those who persecute you. This is a difficult thing to do but worth remembering in the light of Paul's advice to pray for 'all' people. God can help you to pray for those you find difficult. You can also use your spiritual gifts to help you to pray, for example if you find that you do not have the right words you could pray in tongues or you could prophesy scriptures over people and situations.

Going out prayer walking in our communities can also be a powerful witness to those around us, and a demonstration of God's power in an area. Last week we talked about spiritual warfare and our enemy the devil. He too is interested in influencing not just individuals but whole communities and neighbourhoods. However, we want God to be present in and bless all the places that we set our feet (Joshua 1:3, Deuteronomy 11:24) as well as all the people that we meet along the way.



Activity

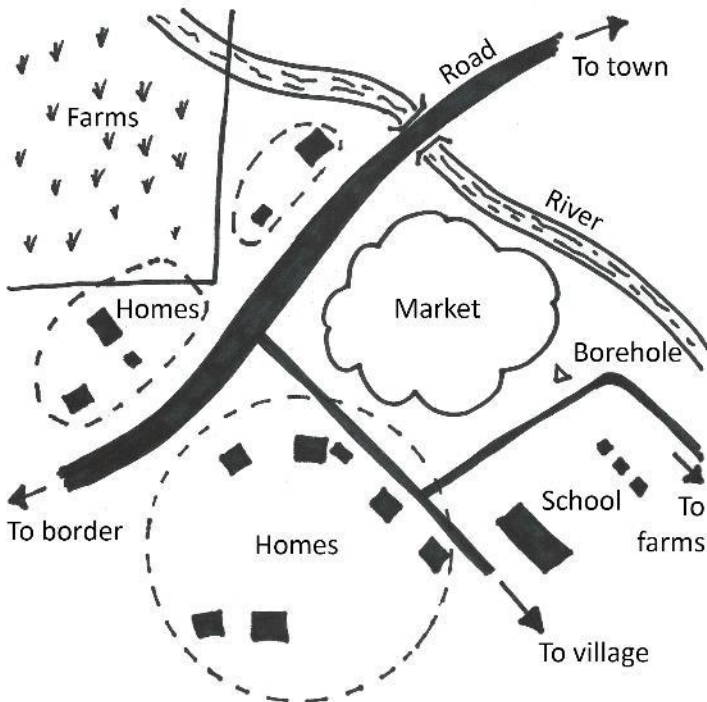
15 mins

Find a large piece of paper, or use multiple pieces. You are going to draw a simple map on this paper.

Start by talking about what you know is in your community; begin with the homes and places around where members of the group live and draw on the paper what you see as important and even what might not be that important!

Build up this map and do not worry if it looks messy as it is for you as a group to help pray for your community.

This is an example of what your map might look like. Yours should be based on your community.



If you are able to keep the map you have drawn together you can use it to pray for your community at other times.



As we have already learnt, there is only one God, and we can pray to him by his Son Jesus who has shown his love by dying for us all. We are united as brothers and sisters no matter what church we are from, so we can all come to him together in prayer. Prayer does not have to be a formal thing; it is about simply coming before God, speaking with him and listening to what he says back.

Jesus taught the disciples how to pray and part of that was ‘your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’ ([Matthew 5:10](#)). Praying for our community and the people who make it up is asking for God to bring heaven nearer to earth.

May his kingdom come in your community.



Activity

20 mins

Now is a good time to practise prayer walking together. Get into small groups of 3-4 people.

Pray together before you set off, asking God to highlight any situations or persons that he might specifically want you to pray for and speak with.

Then go out and do it – you can pray however you feel most comfortable, in your head or out loud. Remember if you are speaking with someone to ask first whether they would like you to pray for them.

Come back together after 15-20 minutes.



Prayer

10 mins

When you have all come back ask people to tell the rest of the group what happened while they were prayer walking. Use the

map, and your stories from prayer walking, to help you to pray together for different people, places and things in your community. As you pray, if God puts anyone, anything or any place on your heart, you should add it to your map.

If it is possible, encourage people to take a photograph of the map using their mobile phone so that they can use the map for this week's homework.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, in groups of 2 or 3, find some more time to walk around where you live and pray for the people and situations around. If you were able to take a photograph of the map you can use this as a reminder of the things you were praying for together. Make a note of anything that God puts on your heart and add it to the map when you next meet.

If you do not know what to pray then simply pray blessings on the people and places.

Do not pray for places from afar, walk to them to pray. You may see a person or something new or God may give you a picture, word or Bible verse.

As things change and people's lives are impacted by God, mark these on the map as an encouragement and for future stories of what God is doing in your community.



Witness

If you meet someone and have the opportunity, then tell them what you are doing and ask them what they would like prayer for.

Offer to pray for them and keep the prayer simple and about what they ask for. If they seem uncomfortable about being prayed for, offer to pray a simple blessing.

If they ask to know more and have lots of questions you can suggest that you organise a time to get together where you can explain your God's life in you more fully and how that has brought you to pray for them and their area.

Notes

Witness - Why and How?



'For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.'

1 Corinthians 4:20



Preparation

Have you:

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

What you need:

- Matches or a jug of water



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 each of us has a unique story to tell about our new life in Jesus, and his work in our community. We are witnesses to his work and through sharing our stories and experiences, as we discover this new life, more and more people will discover this life for themselves too.



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.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

1 Corinthians 4:20



Story

Read the following story to the group:

In October 2011 there was an outbreak of a terrible disease in Kambwali, Northern Zambia. Children were mysteriously dying. 17 had already died. Nobody knew what was causing the sickness. It seemed to be some kind of disease that caused haemorrhaging and violent stomach pain and so far it had been fatal to all who suffered from it.

Many people in the area believed that the Chief of the area wanted to gain more power and had bewitched the children to demonstrate his power. A mob rose against the Chief and went to his palace to beat him.

The mob also rose against the Dignity Life Group in the area. The Life Group had been studying the Bible, praying and working together for the good of the community by building unity and caring for those in need. As the Life Group grew, people began to oppose it as they thought the group might become powerful. A rumour spread that the group were Satanists and suddenly the group was also blamed for the mysterious death of the children.

At that time, a Dignity team member visited the Life Group to encourage them. While she was there the Life Group gathered to pray together and invited a number of other people from the community. They met to pray in the morning at the local school.

After they prayed together no more children died of the disease!

People in the area were more and more amazed as they saw the Life Group's prayers being answered over the following days. Everyone knew that the Christians had prayed together and they witnessed that the disease was stopped after the Christians had prayed.

The mob that had risen against the Chief and the Life Group saw what had happened and stopped their actions.

The Chief was very relieved to see no more children dying and to see peace restored to his community. He ordered all his representatives to talk to the Life Group in Kambwali and to start similar groups in many more areas so others would learn about the powerful God he had seen act.

God had powerfully defended his people and his honour and stopped the needless death of children from a merciless disease. As a result of God working through the prayers of his people the community, the mob and the Chief all witnessed God's power. They told many other people, and lots of surrounding communities were opened up to the good news of Jesus.



Bible Knowledge

Read Acts 1:8 to the group:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.



What is witnessing?

To be a witness means that you have seen or experienced something happening that you are then asked to talk about. Often we talk about witnesses in relation to a crime being committed; those who have seen the event are called into court to explain what it was that they saw. Every witness has a unique view of the situation, just as each of us has a unique story about how God has been working in our lives. We all have something to say about the new life that we are experiencing through God and

as we share what we know, God will create opportunities for others to come to know it too.

Jesus said,

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven'.

Matthew 5:14-16

We all have this light in us, however sometimes we can be shy, embarrassed or fearful to tell about what he has done in us. Yet we are reminded that we should be ready and prepared to give an answer to those who ask us about the hope that we have ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). In this session we are going to look at some of the ways in which we can be ready to share what God has done. This involves both our words and our actions as our memory verse shows us – it is not just about words (though our words are very important), it is also about power as well, that is the demonstration of the Kingdom of God coming.

The objective of our life is to become more like Christ, so we can look at how Jesus witnessed to people as an example. Jesus came to find and save those who were lost. He reached out to them in different ways at different times.

Witness involves both actions and words. Jesus modelled this. At the start of the book of Acts, the author Luke mentions that in his previous book he wrote about 'all that Jesus began to do and to

teach' (Acts 1:1). We know from the book of James that faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

The book of Revelation also teaches that Christians have victory over the devil through 'the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony' (Revelation 12:11). This means our testimony, our story, is powerful to change lives. Most Christians underestimate the power of their personal story.

Why do we witness?

God sends us out to everyone so we can be his witnesses. We do not do this because our life in heaven depends on it; instead, we have been given a mission to share the life of Jesus and his Kingdom with everyone. God is a creator and he is always looking for opportunities to create new life in people and communities, and he partners with us to make this happen.

How do you witness

Every week as part of *Foundations* we have a witness section. This is always a practical idea about how you can share through your words or actions something of the new life that you have received from God. Over the past sessions we have suggested many ways in which you can witness to your new faith.

One particular thing that is useful to do is to have practised your testimony so that you can easily, and quickly, tell people who ask you what your faith is about.

Your testimony is simply the story of how you met Jesus and what he has done in your life since then.



Activity

15 mins

This week we are going to practise giving a brief overview of our testimony. Often people do not want to hear a long story, so we are going to be focussing on the key points of our story in order to get the most important information across.

Think about how you would answer the three following questions:

- What was your life like before you met Jesus?
- How did you meet him?
- What has changed as a result of the new life Jesus has brought you?

In groups of 3 or 4 people, have everyone practise answering these 3 questions in the space of time it takes either for a match to burn out or a jug of water to be poured slowly. If you do not have a match or a jug of water, you could use a timer on a phone that should be set to 2 minutes or less.



Other ways that we can witness are through the use of our spiritual gifts, through demonstration of God's power and through consistently living differently to those around us. Our lives as well as our words speak loudly about the work of Jesus in us.

When Jesus lives in us by his Holy Spirit, then he can help and direct us by his voice. We can be sensitive to his voice and also confident that he will supply the power that is required to demonstrate the reality of our words.



Discussion

10 mins

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the following questions:

- Why might you find it difficult to witness to your faith?
- How might you overcome some of these reasons?
- How has God changed your life since you gave your life to him?
- What areas of your life do you think you still need to ask God to transform?



Prayer

5 mins

Ask the group to stand and form a circle and hold hands. As they stand together, ask them to repeat this simple prayer after you.

God in me,
help me to be your witness;
transform my life, my words and my actions
so that when people look at me, they can see you.
Amen.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week continue practising sharing your testimony with a few other members of the group. Keep trying until you can remember it without prompting and you can tell it quickly.



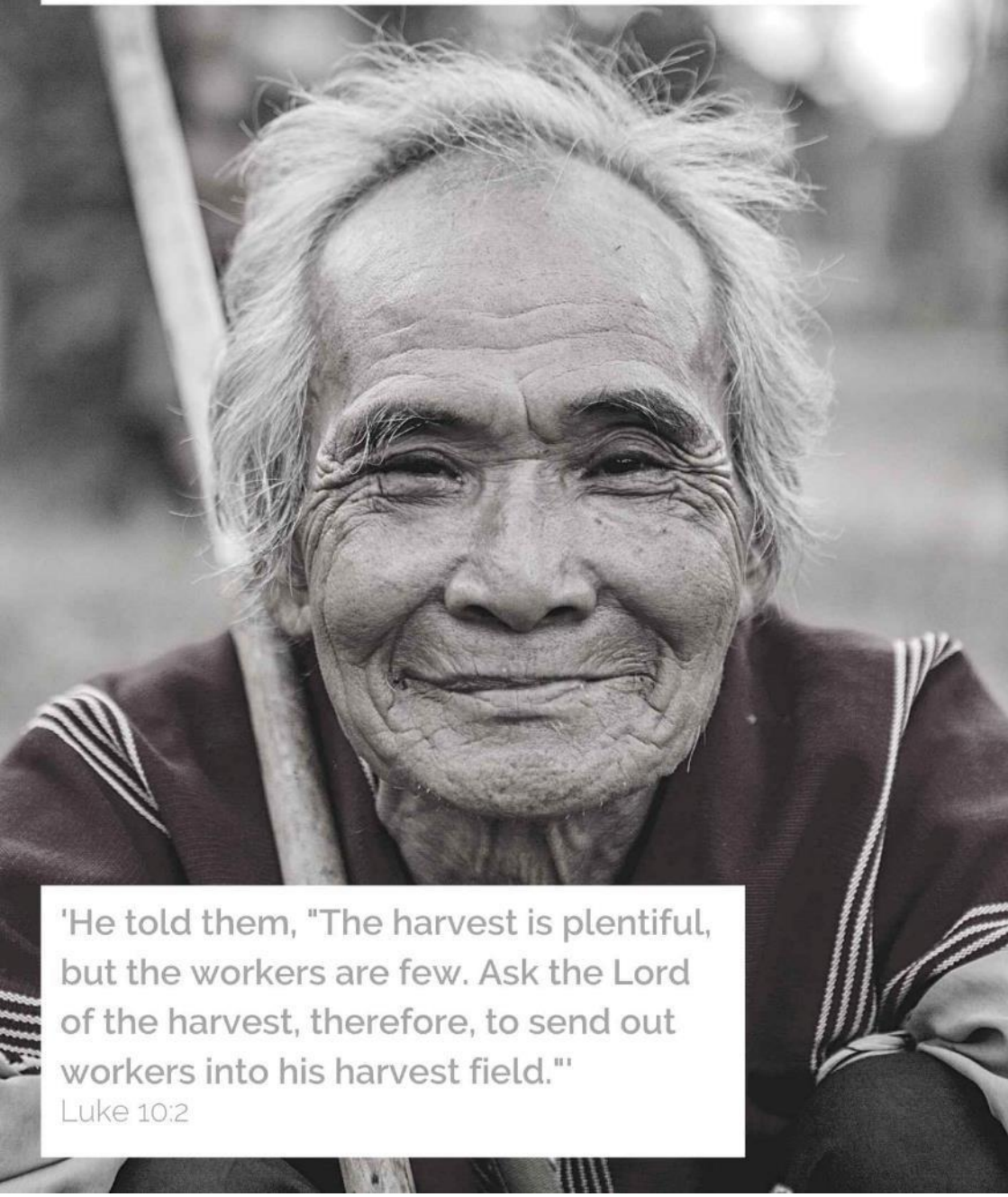
Witness

All the different activities we have done are a form of witness! Last week we were prayer walking and speaking to people as we went. Go out prayer walking again. Ask God to give you an opportunity to tell someone your testimony to someone who needs to hear about how God is good and interested in our lives.

Remember that you are not alone – God’s Spirit of power is in you. Once you have shared with people, ask them if there is anything they would like God to do for them and then pray for this to happen.

Notes

Go and Tell Others



'He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Luke 10:2



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 this session is to explore who you might go and tell about the new life that Jesus is growing in you. Whether that is near or far, in everyday or extraordinary ways, all of us are called to tell other people about the faith that we have.



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.

He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

Luke 10:2



Story

Read the following story to the group:

There was a man named Mr Nat who, sadly, separated from his wife of many years after she began to have symptoms of Parkinson's disease. He also left his job as a lawyer to become a Buddhist monk, travelling to many places far from home.

For many years, Nat found no satisfaction in the strict practices of the Buddhist temples. He eventually decided to follow Christianity instead of Buddhism. He soon began to experience God's new life in his heart, he grew in sympathy for his ex-wife, Mrs Sonjay. He decided to speak with the pastor of his church, Pastor Pitak, and requested that the pastor visit her and pray for her.

Pastor Pitak went with Nat to Sonjay's house on the edge of a beautiful inland sea. Sonjay was now very poorly as the Parkinson's disease had got worse over time. Nat introduced the pastor and they talked briefly together. When the pastor told Sonjay he had come to pray for her, she widened her eyes and began to focus intently. Nat and the pastor sang a song about the power of Jesus and Nat told Sonjay about his new faith in Jesus. Pastor Pitak then told the simple story about Jesus' birth, his death and his resurrection. He asked her to raise her hand if she understood and again if she wanted to open heart to God. She raised her hand twice and Pitak led her in a prayer of commitment to Jesus.

Sonjay then got up from her chair and walked with some difficulty onto the balcony to show them the beautiful view over the sea. She was showing them her greatest welcome. Pastor Pitak now knows he can go back to visit again and help her to understand more about faith in Jesus. Her warm welcome has opened a door for God to work in her.



Bible Knowledge

Read Luke 10:1-20 to the group:

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.’

⁵‘When you enter a house, first say, “Peace to this house.” ⁶If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.’

⁸‘When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹Heal those there who are ill and tell them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” ¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹“Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God has come near.” ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.’

¹³‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you,

Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.'

¹⁶Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'

¹⁸He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'



When Jesus lived on earth he spent time visiting many towns and villages. He had a big vision and a simple plan. His vision was of a ripe field, ready for harvest. His plan was to send his followers to meet the people and tell them about him. They were not to get distracted or trust in themselves so he told them that they should not carry anything with them. They were to look for a person who was ready to welcome them. If they met a lot of opposition they should move on to another town.

As believers in Jesus we have a privilege and responsibility to be witnesses for Jesus in our day to day lives. We all have friends, neighbours and family and they all need to see Jesus at work in our lives.

There are also times when Jesus calls us to go beyond that and reach into certain places where he himself wants to go. We cannot do that alone. Maybe God is leading your church, Bible

study group or Life Group to visit a neighbourhood or a group of villages. If there is an agreement amongst you that God is leading you, then how would you do it?

First you have to look outwards with Jesus and see that there is a 'harvest'. It can look as though no one is ready or interested in your message of hope but there are people who are ready and you will not know that until you go out and find them. This is what it means to 'Go!' (verse 3). It means go out and join with another believer who will go with you. Do not be discouraged or downhearted if many other believers do not want to join you straight away. You only need a small team and Jesus himself said that finding those kind of hard-workers (labourers) would be difficult. Also, do not fear: Jesus said he would be with us in all things.

Do not get distracted. Set a time to go and do not let the events of life turn you aside. Do not take lots of books or things with you. Keep your focus on the place God has shown you to visit. Remember to put your trust in God; he will provide a way for you.

Have a simple plan. You are not taking an invitation to a meeting but you are going to get into a conversation that will lead you to share your story of new life in Jesus with a person in that place. In the passage it talks about finding a person of peace, which is someone who will welcome you and your message and perhaps even create opportunities for you to share your message more widely in their family or community. Make sure you pray and ask God to show you who these people are.

Use a simple and direct approach. You could start by asking the people you meet whether they have anything you can pray for

them. Or in a place where Christians have never been you could simply ask whether they have heard about Jesus.

You are vulnerable at that point. Jesus said you would feel like a sheep amongst wolves so don't be surprised if you feel that way! However, God has a way of opening doors and if you meet someone who responds positively to you then you have met the person of peace that God has led you to. Their response will be peaceful and you will have freedom to share further with them. Remember the 3 circles method of sharing that we looked at in the first session of ***Foundations 1: Life Begins***? You could use that to help to communicate your message (we will revisit this later in the session). Or you could use the method that we practised last week.

Do not just walk away without thinking how God would want you to leave. If they invite you for some hospitality then accept it right away. God is opening their heart. What you have shared is very important and you should expect a response. This could be to gather other people in their group of family or friends to read one of Jesus' parables and think about how that affects their lives and how they could share that with others. Also be willing to pray for them and bring God's healing into their lives. Be ready for anything and do not limit what God can do.

You have opened up a village or a neighbourhood group; this is how Jesus saw it when he sent out the 72. And they returned very surprised and joyful that God had opened doors. You will begin to see that this plan works. Why would it not? It was the simple plan that Jesus used. The only limitation is ourselves, if we believe it cannot work or we disqualify ourselves from trying. So, be bold

and be encouraged – Jesus has asked you to go, he will go with you, and he has a harvest waiting for you!



15 mins

Discussion

Ask people to discuss these questions in groups of 3 or 4. Read 1 question, allow a few minutes for discussion then ask people to share their answers. Some typical answers are given after each question. You can sum up each question with these answers before moving onto the next question.

- Where could God ask you to go?

Typical answer: It is likely that God will ask you to go to a place or people group where people do not know him.

- How do you think you would recognise a person of peace?

Typical answer: A person of peace is someone who is not opposed to you or someone who does not just want a long argument about faith. They will probably get more interested as you share your story of new life in Jesus with them. They may not have been instantly ready when you first met them.

- How would you share the good news about Jesus? Do you know how to share it briefly in a way that makes it clear a decision to receive Jesus is needed?

Typical answer: It is very helpful to be able to share the good news clearly in around 5 minutes (or less) because otherwise people can get bored or lose track of what you are saying. The important points of the message are: we are separated

from God by our own turning away from him (sin); our attempts to heal our brokenness do not work (give very brief examples); God sent Jesus who took the punishment for our wrongdoing and opened a way back; we have to turn back and receive this if we want to be restored to God.

- What would you say to people who said they were ready to receive Christ?

Typical answer: You should pray with them and lead them to know God's complete forgiveness. You should help them to understand that they are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). You should stay with them and enjoy their welcome for longer or make a plan to come back very soon and if possible within no more than 1 day's time.

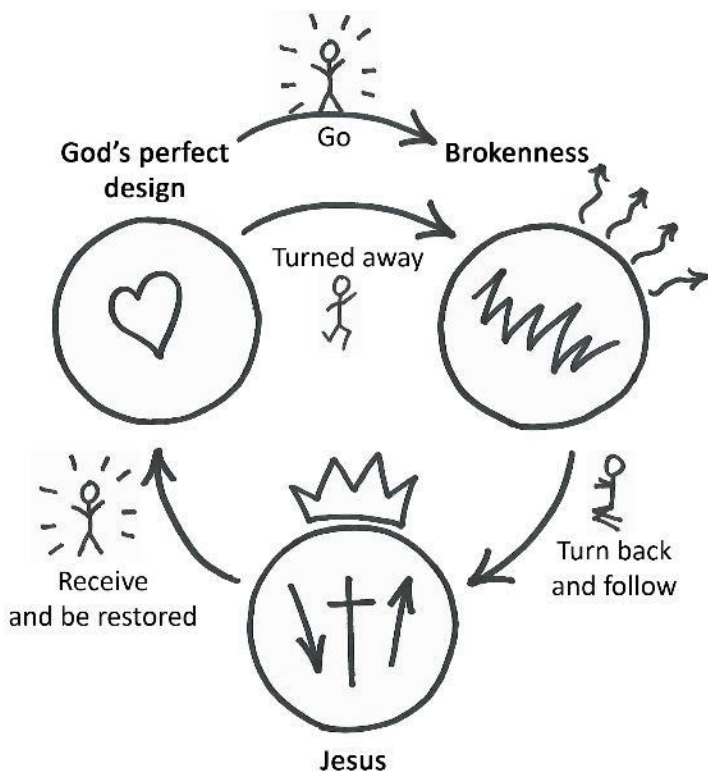


Activity

15 mins

Do you remember the diagram we drew with 3 circles⁴ in the very first session of ***Foundations 1: Life Creates***? We are going to use it again today.

⁴ 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.



Using this simple diagram, work out how you could share the gospel in 5 minutes.

Try beginning with the circle showing God's Design. Then try beginning with the circle showing our brokenness. Which way worked best?



Prayer

10 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 respond to today's session by asking Jesus to send them out.

Lord Jesus,
Thank you for reminding me that the harvest is ready.
Help me to see it as I go.
Send workers to go with me, to help and encourage me,
and help us to go with courage and focus.
Show us where to go and open up doors for us.
Help us to keep going as we seek to tell everyone that we
can about you.
Amen.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week set a daily alarm on your phone or a clock for 10:02 each morning. When it goes off, pray through our memory verse, Luke 10:2. (If you do not have a phone or alarm clock think of something you do every day and then when you do it each day this week, stop and pray these prayers.)

- Pray about your own involvement as a worker bringing in the harvest that Jesus spoke of.
- Practise the 3 circles diagram again.
- Ask God where he wants to send you, and to link you up with people you can go with.



Witness

We have already been speaking to people in our community. We have seen today that Jesus sends us out further. Go to a neighbouring community and share what you are doing. If you know someone there, arrange to meet them and tell them about your Life Group. You could help them start one in their community. If you do not know someone, simply go and prayer walk in the community. As you pray ask God to bring you to the

people he has placed in that community who will help others to know Jesus.

10

Justice



'But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!'

Amos 5:24



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 explore the question, 'What is Justice?' Just as we know that God is love, the Bible tells us that God is just, and he is seeking to bring about justice in the world.



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.

*But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!*

Amos 5:24



Story

Read the following story taken from the *Times of Zambia* to the group. Explain that it is the story of a young girl, an only child,

sent to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Before going to Lusaka she had never been far outside of her village.

When Tomaida Tembo received news of her impending trip to Lusaka, she was 500 km away in Katete's Kathumba village in the Eastern Province of Zambia. The 11-year-old did not know how to react.

Lusaka to her had been a mythical place and according to those that had been to the city, it was a place of 'agebenga' (bandits) and the 'akapenta' (prostitutes) who patrolled and patronised the streets of the city of 'lights'.

What had been a mythical place to Tomaida was soon to become reality.

To make her travelling easy, the distant cousin had sent enough money to cover her travelling expenses and a lot more to help her mother settle down after her departure. It was five years ago since the morning Tomaida left the sanctuary of her mother on a journey that changed her life forever.

Wandering on the cold streets of Lusaka, Tomaida awaits her next client on Addis Ababa drive.⁵

Explain that Tomaida was sent to Lusaka by her family, sold into a life to make money for her family by working with her cousin in Lusaka. However, when she arrived in Lusaka, her cousin forced her into a life of sexual slavery and prostitution.

⁵ (2003) 'Tomaida Tembo's Story' *Times of Zambia*, July 11th

Tomaida does not know if anything will ever be different; she is held captive, sold by her very own family.

This story would be shocking if it was false. It is even more shocking though because it is true. Tomaida is a real person and this is her true story: her childhood and her future were taken from her by being sold at only 11 years old. In a report produced by the US government, the situation - which is by no means unique to Zambia - is laid bare:

Zambia is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Child victims, primarily trafficked within the country for labor and sexual exploitation, tend to be female, adolescent, and orphaned. In exchange for money or gifts, relatives or acquaintances often facilitate the trafficking of a child to an urban center for prostitution. Children are sometimes trafficked as a consequence of soliciting help from strangers such as truck drivers. Many Zambian child laborers, particularly those in the agriculture, domestic service, and fishing sectors, are also victims of human trafficking. Traffickers most often operate through ad hoc, flexible networks of relatives, truck drivers, business people, cross-border traders, and religious leaders.⁶



Bible Knowledge

Read Isaiah 42:1-9 to the group:

⁶ U.S. Department of State (2009). *Trafficking in Persons Report 2009, Country Narratives -- Countries Q Through Z* [Online] Available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/123139.htm> [Accessed 19 July 2018]

¹Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.
²He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.
³A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
⁴he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”
⁵This is what God the Lord says –
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:
⁶I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
⁷to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in
darkness.
⁸I am the Lord; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols.
⁹See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;

*before they spring into being
I announce them to you.'*



Have you ever been in a situation where you were feeling content and everything was okay in your life? Everything was at peace and you were not worried about anything? That feeling you had, there is a Hebrew word for it; it is called 'Shalom'. Shalom is not simply what we say in English as 'peace'. It is the sense that everything is okay for everyone in the world. So, that feeling you had when everything was at peace is Shalom.

The problem is that we do not live in a world that is full of 'Shalom'. People experience terrible suffering and injustice. Problems, people trafficking and fighting are around us everywhere. There is not a single day in our world where everything is at peace or shalom. Someone somewhere is either an aggressor or a victim.

There is another Hebrew word describing something that this world needs. The word is, 'tsedeqah'. We say it as 'Justice' or 'Righteousness'. In the Bible, wherever you see the words righteousness or justice it is often this Hebrew idea that it is referring to. God wants shalom for our world: peace, harmony, love and justice. This means that God's righteousness and justice must happen in every situation.

So what does this have to do with us?

As people who want to follow Jesus, we are called to be people of justice and righteousness and to uphold those ideas in our lives, businesses and every situation that we come across. It is not good

enough to say that we follow Christ and yet ignore things that are not okay in our world. The two cannot go together.

Jesus brings justice

Our Bible passage this week is taken from the book of Isaiah: he was a prophet who lived 700 years before Jesus. However, in this passage he is talking about Jesus, prophesying who Jesus is. He tells us that Jesus is the chosen one of God, who will bring 'justice to the nations'. God wants everyone to experience his justice and righteousness which is one of the reasons that he has placed his Spirit with Jesus and sent them to us. Today justice is brought about by God's Spirit working in the world, through the lives of those who have the Spirit in them.

We cannot ignore this.

Justice rescues the weak and encourages the lowly

There is a picture in verses 2-4 of those who are weak and low. The picture is of a candle or fire that is about to go out. You treat this carefully, with patience and understanding. In time, the flame is coaxed back into life. Not only is this a fantastic picture for us to learn from, it is also how we should treat the weak, the oppressed, the poor and the lowly.

Those that are suffering, or have made bad decisions, or have been exploited by people do not need our condemnation, they need our help. We are called as followers of Jesus to come alongside those who need justice and righteousness and coax them back to life. Verse 4 says that God will faithfully, without ceasing, want to bring justice to our world.

Think about our story. This would mean that Tomaida would be helped out of the terrible situation she finds herself in.

Justice demands that situations are changed

Injustice is when something that is not fair or right has happened to someone. This could be something as little as a lie told against someone. It could be as serious as someone who is kidnapped, denied their liberty and sold as a slave. Both are unjust.

We could look at these situations and decide that we cannot or should not do anything about them. This would be easier but also incorrect and would not be working for God's shalom in this world. Verses 5-7 tell us that it is God who gives us his Spirit and breath to live. This is for a particular task. It is to bring justice to people. We are to set the prisoners free, to open the eyes of the blind and to bring healing and hope to those situations that are unjust.

That is one of the purposes for the Spirit in our lives. We cannot ignore it.

Justice needs God

True justice means that we need to work with our creator in bringing justice to our lives, our communities, our work or any situation. Justice and righteousness go together; you cannot have one without the other. In verse 8 the passage speaks of God not wanting to share his glory with any idol. We live in a world where people follow all kinds of idols. From gods carved of stone, to money, to people, there are plenty of false gods to follow. It is often the following of these gods that causes injustice in the first place. Greed leads to putting money above people for example. If we wish to enable people to experience justice and righteousness, then our own lives must be filled with the justice

and righteousness of the creator, God himself. Without this, our justice will often only change one injustice for another. We need God to bring justice to this world.

This is a taste of eternal life. Those who follow God in truth, justice and righteousness will create the world that is to come in their everyday lives, every day in every place. That is shalom.



15 mins

Discussion

There are a number of questions to discuss this week. The first questions can be discussed as a whole group with the last questions discussed in smaller groups.

Whole group questions:

- Have you ever been a victim of injustice? What happened and how did it make you feel? Did anyone help you?
- Why do you think that God's righteousness and justice go together? Why can you not say you love God unless you also love your brother or sister and those around you?

Small group questions (people should answer these questions together in groups of 3 or 4 people):

- Who are the people who are 'prisoners' or 'lowly', victims of injustice in our lives and where we live?
- What can we do for them?
- What does Shalom/everything to be at peace mean for your village?

With all of these questions, make sure that everyone listens to and understands everyone's opinion and answer.



10 mins

Activity

Often, injustice starts in the disagreements and conflicts that we have in our own personal lives.

Spend 5 minutes thinking about who you are in conflict with, do not like, or have even treated wrongly and unjustly. There may be someone you have cheated or been unfair to. There may be something extreme that you have taken a part in that has created tragedy in someone's life in the past.

In groups of 3 or 4 people, be brave and confess to each other any situations you are involved where there is conflict. Tell each other what you may have done either deliberately or accidentally.

Secondly, discuss how you can make the situation better or make amends in the situation. If you are able to, write this down on a piece of paper: you will need it later.



10 mins

Prayer

In their groups, encourage everyone to think about themselves and the situations they have been talking about.

- Have we brought injustice to people? If so, we must ask for forgiveness and change our ways.
- Ask God to help us see the situation and the people involved as he sees them.
- Ask God how we can make amends in each situation. If people are able, encourage them to write down what God says.

Finish by praying for justice to come and asking everyone to say the memory verse together.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week take home the pieces of paper that you wrote on during the activity and prayer. It is important that we act upon what we feel God has shown us. We should not leave it undone.

Continue to pray about the situation and ask for God to be glorified in the situation, no matter how difficult it might seem.



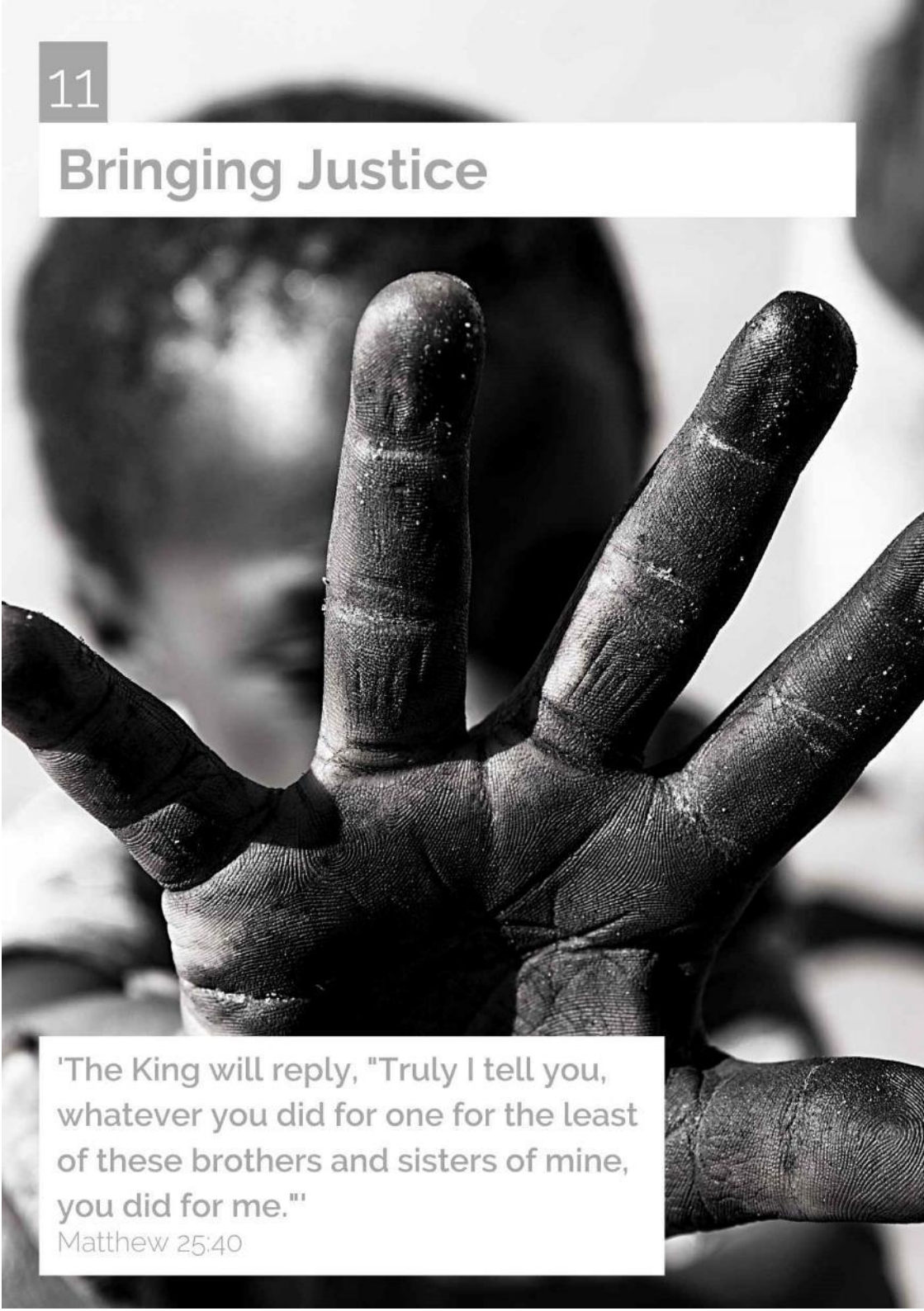
Witness

This week arrange a time to go with 1 or 2 of your friends and put the situation right. Whatever you have written on your piece of paper, make sure that it practically happens. Bring God's change to the situation.

If the opportunity arises, make sure you explain why you are putting the situation right and the things you have learnt in your group this week.

Notes

Bringing Justice



'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 identify situations of injustice in our communities and to learn how we can start to tackle them. God calls us to love our communities, and demonstrate our new life in him through bringing about justice for those who are weak, poor and oppressed.



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.

The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40



In the last session we learnt about 'Shalom' (God given peace where all is well for everyone). We acknowledged that things are not as they should be in our communities and the wider world. We learnt about justice and righteousness and how they are part of who God is and why they are needed in our communities.



Discussion

Ask people to share something they can remember from last week's session.



Throughout the last week we have been thinking about situations in our own lives and communities where we are not experiencing God's deep peace (shalom) and God has shown us that his justice is needed.

Injustice could be caused by something that appears small like a lie or it could be because of something that appears large, like someone being kidnapped. Whatever the cause, there is injustice and people are suffering.

Our session today can help us think about how we should react to situations around us where people are suffering because of injustice.



Story

Explain that this week we have 4 true stories from Life Groups in Zambia and Namibia. Read the following stories to the group:

Story 1: A Life Group had been meeting together for a while. They were sharing ideas about how they could show Jesus' love to their community. As they shared ideas, people remembered a very sharp corner in one of the bush roads where accidents kept

happening and people were being injured. They felt that the Life Group could try to do something about this and a group of 12 people have since improved the road and made a path to one side. Since then there have been no more accidents!

Story 2: A Life Group had been praying for their community which has been known as a crime zone for many years. For a year the Life Group had been praying specifically for the people who are known to cause trouble and one day they invited them to come to their group. The trouble causers came and over time they built friendships with the Life Group members and met Jesus. They have given their lives to Jesus and have changed the way they live. As a result, crime levels have dropped and the reputation of their village has changed for good!

Story 3: A lady who is HIV positive had been forced to live on the edges of her community because people thought she was a bad and dangerous person. She said, 'I used to think that if I'm HIV positive, then I couldn't be a child of God.' People did not want anything to do with her. The Life Group in her community chose to act differently and invited her to come to their meetings. She started to come and felt welcome and loved and was able to talk about her battle with the disease. She became a Christian and gave her life to Jesus. Now she says, 'I feel a joy in me that I didn't have before.' She is now reaching out to other HIV sufferers and has created a support group. Many are getting practical help and coming to know Jesus.

Story 4: Some young men were drinking a lot and causing trouble for their families. Their local Life Group welcomed them in and as they joined the group to study the Bible they discovered peace and received Jesus as their personal saviour. They have stopped

drinking and this has also brought peace to their homes and families. Members of the same Life Group had been contributing a small amount of money on a regular basis until they had saved enough money to buy a pig together. The pig then had piglets and the Life Group gave these to those who were struggling to pay school fees and other essential costs. In the long term the pigs will help generate income for these families.



Bible Knowledge

Read [James 1:19-27](#) to the group:

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans

and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.



5 mins

Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4 people, ask everyone to answer the following questions about our Bible passage:

- What do we learn about God?
- What do we learn about ourselves?
- What does this passage tell us to do?

Bring the group back together and ask each group to share one answer to each question.



3 mins

Activity

Ask the group if anyone has looked at themselves in a mirror or photograph recently.

Pick a person who has done so and ask them to describe what they look like. Ask everyone else in the group whether they gave a good description. Repeat this exercise with another volunteer.



The Bible passage we have read and discussed together gives us the example of someone who looks in a mirror and then forgets what they look like. That would seem silly to us! But often this is what we are like when we read the Bible; we look at it, then immediately forget or neglect what it says, and what it has asked of us. The passage makes it very clear that God wants the new life he has given to us to involve us taking action.

The passage begins by saying we should get rid of anything bad in our lives and humbly accept what God has planted in us (verses

19-21). Remember it is not our actions that save us. God has planted new life in us through Jesus. However, having received this gift from God, we should be sure to ‘clean out’ anything in our life that is not good.

The passage goes on to instruct us to do what God says in his word (verses 22 – 25). Interestingly, there are 2 promises in verse 25. Firstly, we are told that God’s word gives freedom. Secondly, we are also told that anyone who hears the word and takes action based on what they have heard will be blessed in what they do. It is clear that God wants us to study his word and to put it into practice.

Finally we read that true religion looks like something: being careful about what we say, caring for orphans and widows and being different to society around us (verses 26-27). God is asking us to live a different type of life to many of the people around us. He is asking us to stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves, to work to bring justice.

We are going to use the stories we read earlier to help us think about what this could mean for us and our communities.



Activity

20 mins

Divide the group into 4 smaller groups. Give each group 1 of the stories we read about Life Groups. Each group should have a different story.

The groups may need to read their story again. They should prepare a short drama (1 or 2 minutes long) to tell the story. Give everyone 5 minutes to prepare their drama.

One by one, ask each group to perform their drama for everyone else. After each story is acted out, answer these questions:

- In this story, who was suffering because of injustice in the community?
- How do we feel and how do we think God feels about that injustice?
- What action did a Life Group take?
- What was the result?

After each group has acted out their story and the questions have been discussed, sum up the main points that came up again and again.



20 mins

Discussion — What is happening in our community?

Ask everyone if there is any injustice and oppression in your community.

Some examples are:

- Someone exploiting the vulnerable
- There is a person who cheats people financially
- Children are abused
- A person does not fulfil their role in the community properly
- An official who is corrupt and problematic
- Someone is experiencing domestic violence
- An elderly person has been left by their family

Discuss this question openly. You may need to prompt and help people to discuss this. You will need to be patient and encourage people to be honest and brave.

If one situation is brought to light, discuss it as a whole group. If a number of different situations are raised, you can break into smaller groups to discuss them.

Answer the following questions together:

- How do we feel about this situation and how do we think God feels about it?
- What will happen if we do nothing?
- What action can we take to do something about it together? For example, will it help to talk to and challenge someone? Must we stand by someone to stop them being exploited? Is there someone in authority who can help?

Make a plan to do something about the situation and commit to doing it together. It is important that this action does not recklessly put you or anyone else in danger. For example, do not go and confront a local criminal; it may be better to get the authorities involved.

The important thought to remember is that we can bring God's justice and change to people's lives.



15 mins

Prayer

Today we are going to pray for the situations we have discussed and the plans we have made. We can pray for God to go before us, that he will give us boldness and that he will bring his justice to the situations we have discussed.

If you have made one plan as a group, then pray in this way:

- Stand in a circle and turn to the person on your left.
- Pray for that person as they seek to bring God's justice to your community.

If you have made a number of plans as small groups, then pray in this way:

- Each group should stand up, one group at a time, and share a brief summary of their plans. Everyone else should stand around them and pray for them as they put these plans into action. Do this for each group.



To do this week

In the next 2 or 3 days, meet with the people in your final group today and pray again for the situations that God has put on your heart. Spend some time together looking at your plan and start taking steps to do something about it. Perhaps you need to contact someone or get some things ready.



Witness

The witness this week is to put our plans into action. Take care and be sensitive to people's needs and emotions and to keep them and yourself safe. Remember that it is important that this action does not recklessly put you or anyone else in danger.

What you do this week might just be the beginning. You might need to continue caring for those that God has put on your heart.

Additional Resources

A good resource to help you bring justice to your community together is *Love Your Village*. It is a 10 week study course that you can do as a group and is available from Dignity or a Dignity Impact Team member (www.dignityonline.org.uk/love-your-village).



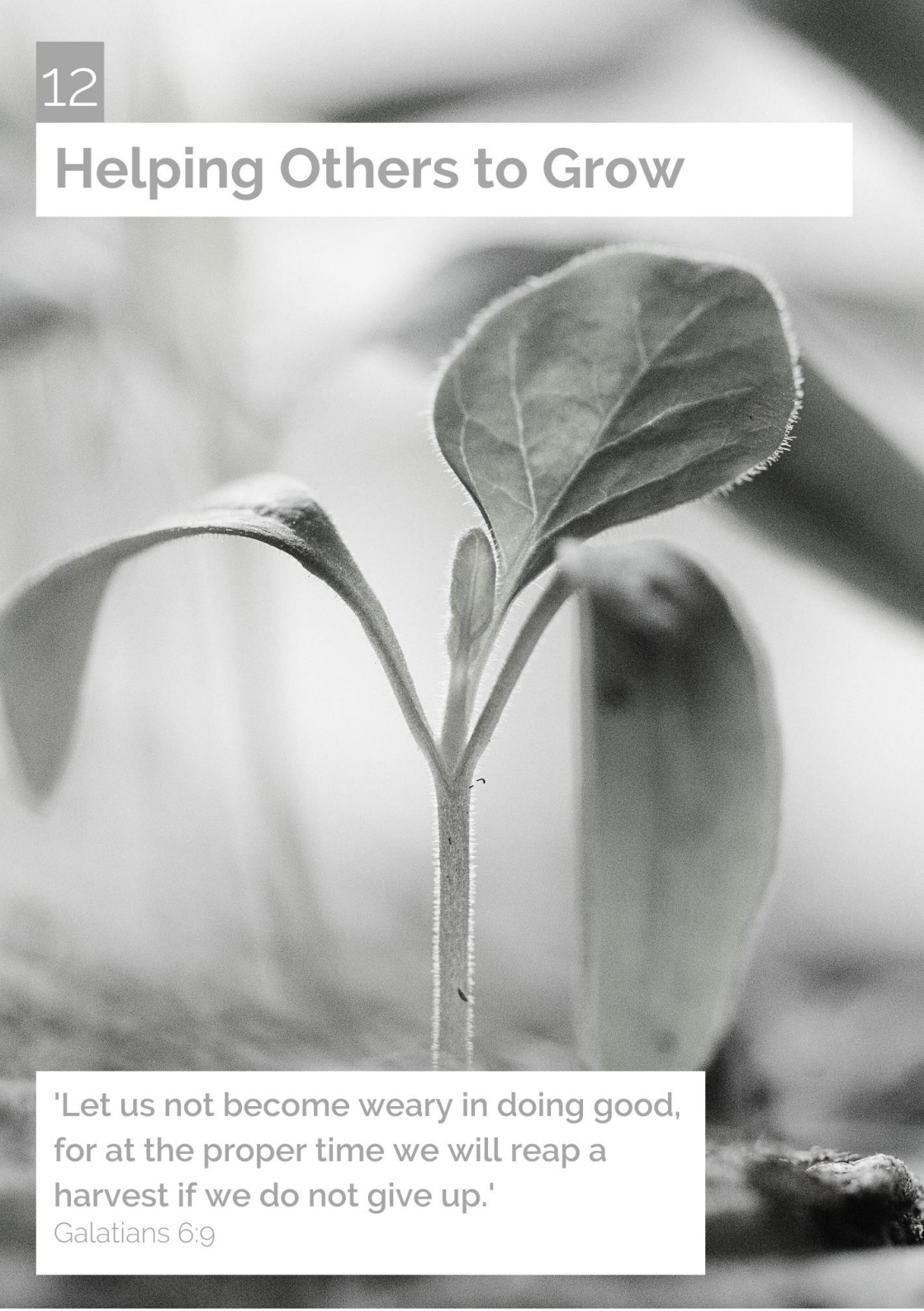
Love Your Village

How to Practice Justice When Things Go Wrong

© Dignity and Faith UK



Helping Others to Grow



'Let us not become weary in doing good,
for at the proper time we will reap a
harvest if we do not give up.'

Galatians 6:9



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 that we can help others to grow, both individually and in community. As God works to grow his new life in us, he also uses us to help grow his new life in others.



Memory Verse

5 mins

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 the passage 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.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9



Story

Read the following story to the group:

A farmer once gave his young son a small piece of land and some seeds. The boy was so excited! He said to himself, 'My seeds are so precious and I don't want to lose them so I will find a box to keep them in.'

The boy found a box and put his seeds in it and placed it on his piece of earth. Every day he looked at his precious seeds but they were not growing. So he went to his father and showed him his seeds. His father smiled and said, 'Your seeds need light to grow. If you keep them in a box, they cannot see the sun and they will not grow.' So the boy took his seeds out of the box and laid them on the soil in the sun and watched them to see if they would grow.

But the big birds came and the small animals came and tried to steal the seeds. The boy shouted and waved his arms at the thieves to make them go away. His father saw this and said, 'Your seeds need to be planted in the soil to grow. The soil will feed them and the birds will not be able to steal them.' So the boy planted the seeds in the ground, far away from each other. His father watched him then said to him gently, 'Plant your seeds closer to each other so that when they grow they can support each other when the winds come.' So the boy planted his seeds near to each other and waited for them to grow. But they did not grow!

He was sad and went to his father and asked him why the seeds were not growing. His father replied, 'You must give your seeds some water every day.' So the boy gave his seeds some water every day. But after a few days, nothing had appeared! The boy was so sad. Why were his seeds not growing? His father asked him why he was so sad. 'My seeds won't grow,' cried the boy. 'Ah,

but you must be patient,' his father replied, 'it takes time for the seeds to grow.'

After a time the seeds did indeed begin to grow. The boy was happy. But then some grubs came and started to nibble the leaves and the boy shouted. His father came over and told him, 'You must take care of your seeds and pull the grubs off the leaves or they will all be eaten.' So the boy pulled the grubs off the leaves and the plants continued to grow. They grew strong and high in the sunlight and the boy gave them water every day. When the winds came the plants swayed together and provided support for each other.

Then one day the fruit appeared. The boy's father said to him, 'See in the fruit, my son. Here are many more seeds. You can grow them next time and you will have many more plants.' The boy was very happy indeed! He said to his father, 'Yes I will. And now I know that my seeds need light to shine on them and soil to nourish them. They need to be close to shelter each other from the winds and I need to keep the leaves clean from grubs that want to eat them. And I must be patient with my seeds which take time to grow. Now I know how to make my seeds grow strong and tall and I will always have more seeds every time.' 'My son,' said his kind father, 'you are now wise and your seeds will grow strong and tall.'

This story describes how seeds need the right conditions to grow well. As Christians we grow well when we have fellowship together with Jesus. We flourish in the light of God's truth, are nourished by God and take care of each other.



Bible Knowledge

Read Acts 2:42-47 to the group:

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



Activity

10 mins

Make up some actions that illustrate the five activities listed below. For example, worship could be standing up with hands stretched up in worship. Then put them all together to show what the early believers did in the Bible passage in Acts.

- Reading the Bible together
- Sharing our lives
- Generosity and serving others
- Prayer
- Worship

Now read the passage again and ask everyone to do the actions they have made up at the right moment in the passage.



We have looked at this passage before in Session 1 of Life Creates. It gives us a picture of community. At the time this

passage was being written, Jesus had been taken up into heaven and Jesus' followers had been filled with the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, addressed a crowd and about 3000 people were baptised as a result of hearing his message. In this passage in Acts we see how these new Christians **grow together** in their love for Jesus and for one another.

The believers realised that they were spiritually connected to one another and to God, so they made sure they met together every day to sing and worship God, listen to God's teaching, pray, serve each other, eat together and share their lives with each other. They understood that their connection was through Jesus Christ. They were sharing a life that is based on their relationship with Jesus, partners together in bringing God's heavenly ways on the earth. They were all born again into God's family. They were full of joy and generous to others. Miracles happened! Every day many more people decided to follow Jesus and joined their joyful group.

Teaching

In verse 42 we read that the new Christians listened carefully to the teaching of those who had been with Jesus. When we meet together as believers we listen to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles through reading the Bible together and asking God's Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and minds through the scripture. Then we grow in our understanding. God opens our eyes and hearts to him more and more and we start hearing his voice for ourselves.

Meeting and eating

Like the early believers, we will open our homes so that we can meet together to worship God, eat together and break bread

together (v 42) as Jesus instructed us to during his last meal before he was crucified (Luke 22:19-20). The meals of the new believers were a celebration, full of joy rather than an obligation (v 46). Joy makes us strong and helps us to follow Jesus in every part of our lives.

When we meet with others and remind each other of what God is doing in our lives, we are encouraged and our faith grows. We learn to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes that can be a challenge as other people can irritate or frustrate us just like every human family! But God calls us to be kind and patient as he is with us. As we learn this we grow more like Jesus.

Prayer

The believers also devoted themselves to prayer (v 42). Jesus prayed and we pray. We talk to God, who is our good Father, praising him, thanking him and asking him to help us. As we pray, our friendship with God grows and when we pray together as believers, we grow together and we rejoice when we see his answers to our prayers. The prayers of believers together are powerful in changing us and the situations we face.

Worship

The Christians worshipped together every day. They met in the place of worship as well as in their homes. When we worship, we experience more of the wonderful presence of Jesus who is always with us. God loves our worship and he knows it is good for us too! When we feel his presence, we are strengthened, our faith increases and we know we are loved. We are overcome with the majesty of Jesus (v 43) and in that context we see signs from God and miracles happen (v 43).

Generosity and serving

The believers were known for being generous (v 45-46). Some translations of the Bible write that the believers had sincere hearts. A sincere heart is one that is truthful and open. We are willing to be honest with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to give with a willing heart. The early believers shared their lives, their food, their homes and their possessions. They helped those in need. They helped believers they had never even met. Whether we have a lot or a little, we can share it with others. We can be generous also with our time, our patience, our love. We are generous with others because Jesus has been so generous to us. When we serve others, like Jesus did, we can forget about our own troubles and as we bless others, God blesses us in so many ways. In return, we receive help and encouragement from our brothers and sisters and are blessed again.

This passage in Acts shows us that we need each other to grow in a healthy way. Then we will grow also as individuals and our communities will grow when more people join us. Love is the key. Jesus said, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35).

Discipleship and Accountability

It takes discipline to be part of a community like this. Sometimes we might not want to meet together, a tendency that our memory verse warns us against. At other times we might become 'weary in doing good' as it says in [Galatians 6:9](#). At times like this when we feel tired and discouraged, it can be tempting to distance ourselves from our new community and even to doubt our new life. It is especially on these occasions that we need our fellow believers to help us, to offer support, encouragement and even sometimes a challenge when we might be in the wrong. It's

important that these things are all done in love and not from a critical heart. In the same way that Jesus spent lots of time with a small group of people that he loved dearly, teaching and challenging them, so we should be aiming to do the same. It is important to be part of a group, like this group, where we can study and learn together, worship together, grow in love and good deeds together, and support and challenge one another when things are tough. As the boy in our story needed to provide the soil, water and sun for the growth of his seeds, so we too need to be helping one another to grow in Jesus. Through monitoring the condition and progress of ourselves and others, we can offer help and support where we can.



15 mins

Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the following questions. Once people have had time to discuss these questions, bring the group back together and ask people to share some of their answers.

- What is God's Holy Spirit talking to you about from this Bible passage?
- In what ways is your community of believers like that of the early Christians? How can you love each other more?
- What sorts of things stop you from growing in your faith? How can you support one another to overcome these things?



15 mins

Prayer

Read the following prayer aloud:

Mighty God, our heavenly Father, you are so kind and patient with us because you are a good Father and we are your beloved children. Thank you that your Holy Spirit

works in us to grow us into mature Christians. Thank you that you give us brothers and sisters in Christ to support and encourage us to grow. Please help us to grow together: to meet together, to read the scriptures, to serve and be generous and to worship and pray together. Help us to spur one another on to love and good deeds. We pray this in Jesus' name, thank you.

Now encourage the group to pray together about the things you have been talking about today. Encourage them to pray specifically about any issues that have been raised.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week, arrange to meet with 1 or 2 other people from your group and think about these questions together:

- In which areas of my life do I want to grow more?
- What can I do to help this happen?
- How can we help one another to grow in these areas this week?

Share your answers with each other, pray about them and commit to taking action. Follow up by supporting each other and asking if you have done the things you committed to doing.



Witness

Think back to some of the people you have already spoken to or interacted with as part of the activities we have been doing. Pray for each of them and as you pray ask God to show you which one of them needs encouragement from you this week. Go and meet

with that person, spend time with them, listen to them and encourage them – you will be helping them to grow.

Notes

13

Summary Session



'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.'

James 1:27



Preparation

Have you:

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



Welcome & Feedback

5 mins

- 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 3: Life Creates***. We will also look ahead to what is to come in ***Foundations 4: Life Matures***.



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.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:27



Story

There is an old story called ‘The boy who cried wolf.’

Many years ago in a small village in the hills there lived a young boy. He was a shepherd, looking after his father’s sheep. The villagers were all going about their usual business one day when the young boy came running down into the village shouting, “Wolf! Wolf!”

The people of the village immediately stopped what they were doing and rushed together up to the fields where the sheep were grazing, in order to chase off the wolf and rescue the flock. However when they got there they found no sign of a wolf, and the sheep were grazing happily.

The young boy was very amused that his simple cry had caused all of the villagers to run around and stop what they were doing.

A few days later the young boy was out in the fields again. Feeling a little bored and in need of some amusement he tried the same trick. He ran down into the village crying, “Wolf! Wolf!”

This time only a few of the villagers ran up to the flock with him to help him to chase away the wolf. Upon realising that once again they had been tricked, the villagers were very unhappy with the boy. A few days passed again; this time, whilst watching the sheep the boy caught sight of a wolf making its way toward the flock. In utter panic he ran down into the village, shouting and crying, “Wolf! Wolf!”

The villagers all looked at him in disbelief.

“Do you expect us to believe you this time – no! We will not fall for your trick again.”

The boy pleaded and begged but nobody would believe him, so he ran back up to his flock but it was too late. All the sheep had been attacked by the wolf: the flock was no more.

Because the boy had lied so many times in order to trick people, they were not able to believe him when eventually he told the truth.



Bible Knowledge

Read [James 2:14-18](#) to the group:

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.



Our faith is a matter not just of words, but of action too. Our passage today reminds us that our words and actions need to match up, otherwise, like the boy in the story, people may not trust our life in Jesus. If we say something but do not do anything about it, then that calls into question how much we truly believe

what we are saying, and how much we are willing to let God change us, and use us to change our communities.



15 mins

Activity: 2 Truths and 1 Lie

How well do you really know those in your group? Play this short game to find out!

Ask everyone to think of 2 things about themselves which are true and then make up 1 thing about themselves which is not true (these can be serious or silly things).

Split the group down into smaller groups of 3-4 people. Taking it in turns, each person should tell the others in their group the 3 things about themselves. The other people in the group should try and guess which are true and which is a lie.



Throughout this book, *Life Creates*, we have been looking at ways in which our faith can practically transform our lives and our communities. In our memory verse James tells us that ‘true religion’ is that which does something; in his case it helps out the very poorest and most vulnerable people in our society. Our faith is not some private thing that we can keep to ourselves. It is not some intellectual thing that can stay in our minds. It is a practical thing which should lead us to follow the example that Jesus demonstrated, to help us to reach out to those in our society who most need the new life that Jesus offers. In that way Jesus can transform not just us, but those around us as well.

Looking back at Foundations 3: Life Creates

In this third book in the *Foundations* series we have looked at the fact that God exists in community, and that he calls us to join him as part of this community. When we accept his new life we join

his family; we are part of what he calls his body. This family and body are images of the church. This means that though each of us is different, we need one another to flourish and grow. Each of us has been given gifts, and has the opportunity to receive spiritual gifts to help the body to grow and develop and also to help our communities and those that we spend our time with. This requires us to exercise faith, which as we use it, grows more and more.

We spent some time looking at Spiritual Warfare and how we can defend ourselves and also fight back against the plans of our enemy, the devil. As part of this session we spent some time praying for one another to turn away from any ties with anything spiritual that is not of God, trusting him to set us free. We also learned how to pray for our communities, for those that we meet when we are out and about. We practised sharing our stories so that we could be a witness to God amongst our friends, family and possibly even further afield.

Towards the end of the book we also explored the concept of God's justice, looking at how we can tackle our own unjust behaviour as well as the injustices that we see around us, locally and further afield. Finally, we looked at how we can play our part in helping others to grow in their new life, as we have experienced growth too.



20 mins

Discussion

We will now look back over the previous 12 sessions in ***Foundations 3: Life Creates*** and spend some time discussing in smaller groups some of the main lessons that you learned.

In groups of 3 or 4, share some of your experiences of witnessing to those in your community including those experiences that were more challenging.

Finally, test one another on the 13 memory verses (including today's) and see if you can help one another to remember the scriptures that we have covered.

If there is time, discuss which of these verses you have found most helpful or has spoken to you in some particular way over the last 12 weeks.



Looking ahead to Foundations 4: Life Matures

In ***Foundations 4***, the final book of the Life series we will look at how ***Life Matures***. We will look in more depth at how our lives change as we become more mature in our faith. Just as in life a baby grows eventually into an adult, so in our spiritual lives we can grow and become more mature. We learn about signs of this maturity which include the willingness to change, what the Bible calls, 'dying to self.' We will learn more about how we can hear from God and obey him, paying attention to how God has led his people throughout history, and how he continues to lead them today.

We will explore in more detail how we can share what God has given us - our lives, time and money - understanding that everything that we have was given to us by God, and we use it best when we surrender it back to him. This changes how we see the world, how we understand our place, and our ambitions for the future. To finish we look at how we can endure in our faith and finish the race of faith well, until at last we go to be with Jesus forever.



15 mins

Prayer

In small groups spend a few moments sharing any prayer requests that have arisen throughout this session. Perhaps you could share some points of praise for the things that you have seen God do in and through you as you have worked through this material. You can also share some prayer points for areas in which you feel still need some work, or a breakthrough, before you move on to the next book.

Once you have shared these praise points and requests, take some time in your group to pray for one another.

Finally, as a whole group, pray the following prayer together:

Lord Jesus,

Thank you that you have created new life in me, and that through me you wish to create new life in my family and my community. I pray that you would help me to continue to put my faith into action, so that you can work in and through me, to reach those who need you most.

Amen.



To do this week

Each week there is some homework for us to do. This week spend some time meditating on our memory verse. Perhaps meet up with 1-2 other group members and discuss together:

- What is 'pure religion'?
- What does it mean to keep yourself from being polluted by the world?
- Are there any orphans or widows or other vulnerable people in your community that you could care for?



Witness

We have reached out to many different people while we have studied this book together. Our actions will have impacted people's lives, creating change. This is what God asks us to do. This week we are going to reach out to someone in our community who is vulnerable.

Think about someone who is struggling, this may be an orphan, a widow, a vulnerable or needy people in your community. Think how you can bless and support them this week then go and do something about it. This could be sharing some food, giving some clothes, helping them with a task that they find difficult or even helping them to access other sources of help.

If possible, share with them why you have been motivated to help them, explaining the link between your faith and your positive actions.

Memory Verses

‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’

Deuteronomy 6:4

‘So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.’

Luke 5:11

‘A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.’

1 Corinthians 12:7⁷

‘Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.’

1 Corinthians 14:1

‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.’

Proverbs 3:5-6

‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.’

John 10:10

‘I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.’

1 Timothy 2:1

⁷ Scripture quotation taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

‘For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.’

1 Corinthians 4:20

‘He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”’

Luke 10:2

‘But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!’

Amos 5:24

‘The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”’

Matthew 25:40

‘Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.’

Galatians 6:9

‘Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.’

James 1:27

Notes

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FOUNDATIONS 3:

Life Creates

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 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.

Contact us on hello@dignityonline.org.uk or
+44 (0)7340 573 937. For a full range of our
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