



#DOYOUKNOWHIMTELFORD

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SMALL GROUP LEADERS NOTES

TELFORD CHRISTIANS TOGETHER

Written and Produced by members of the Telford Area Mission Team

Introduction

The question, “Do you know Him?” in relation to Jesus is one of the most important questions that human beings need to answer. During the Spring and Summer of 2021 the churches of Telford and Wrekin will be asking people in our communities that question in a variety of ways.

These notes for group leaders are intended to enable groups of Christians to become more confident in answering that question for themselves, to get to know more deeply who Jesus is, and to be equipped to introduce Him to others.

Each of the ten sessions explores a different aspect of who Jesus is through prayer, worship, Bible study, and conversation. Each session has broadly the same structure, following a pattern of Welcome, Worship, Word and Witness. They are designed to last between 60 and 90 minutes, and it is hoped that different members of the group will feel able to lead different sections. It is possible that we have provided too much material for some sessions, as we felt it was better to err on the side of too much than too little. Where this is the case for your group, please do feel free to focus on the areas that are most relevant to your group.

A variety of different methods of engaging with the Bible are used, each one appearing twice in the series. We hope that this variety of perspectives will help as wide a range of people as possible to engage with the Bible, and to get to know Him even better.

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Session One: Do you know Him? Jesus is Human and Divine

Welcome

Share stories of times that you made something.

Worship

Reflect on Genesis 1:1-5 together.

You may want to prepare copies of different translations in advance, perhaps using an online tool such as:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

You may also want to have images of artwork based on the first verses of Genesis to spark people's imaginations. Google Images is a good place to get these.

Word

This week we explore John 1:1-14 using the COMA Framework

Context

- What sort of writing is this? (a letter, a poem, a narrative, etc?)
- Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- What links can you see between this and the first verses of Genesis?

Things to draw out:

This is a poetical introduction to a theological biography of Jesus. It uses philosophical and theological language. This might give clues as to the type of person it was written to, as might the echoes of Genesis.

Observation

- What is happening in the passage?
- Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the passage?
- What surprises are there?
- What are the key words?
- What words or ideas are repeated?

Meaning

- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

Things to draw out:

What or who is the Word?

You may want to explore what it means for the Word to be God and for the Word to become Flesh.

Application

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude I need to change?
- How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?
- What does it mean to live as children of God?

Witness

If we are now the body of Christ, his ongoing incarnation, his flesh on earth - how can we follow his example and bring life and light to those around us?

What gifts of creativity have we got that we can share with our communities?

John was sent by God with as a witness to the light, and so are we. Pray together for opportunities to be faithful witnesses to the light this week.

Session Two: Do you know Him? Jesus the Shepherd.

Welcome

Watch this video of a man rescuing a sheep: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kmWsd_wMeY

What situations have we found ourselves in when we could have done with a helping hand to get unstuck?

Worship

Reflect on Psalm 23 together.

You may want to prepare copies of different translations in advance, perhaps using an online tool such as:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

You may also want to have different images of artwork based on this Psalm available for people to look at, and share which one draws them most and why.

Word

This week we are approaching our passage, which is Luke 15:1-7, with our imaginations. The passage is read aloud 3 times. It can be read by one person, or up to 3 different people.

- Before each reading, you will tell them what to be aware of as they listen.
- Following the last reading, there will be 5 minutes of silence during which they continue in the story in their minds, hearts, and spirits - until the leader ends the prayer with "Amen."
- Then they share with each other what happened as they prayed with the story.

First reading instructions - listen to the story for the broad strokes:

- where and when does it take place
- who is there
- what happens

Read through the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes.

Second reading instructions- listen for more details:

- who are the major players, who else is there
- what are they doing
- how do they interact
- what is the setting like
- what time of day is it
- what is the mood, the atmosphere

Read the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes.

Third reading instructions: Notice more detail and begin to feel yourself in that story.

- who are you or what are you (you may be a person or an object)
- what are you doing, thinking, feeling or what is being done to or with you
- what are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location
- what are the emotions and the undertones that you notice

Read the passage slowly and then enter into silence for prayer. Allow 5 minutes for them to pray with the story. End the silence with "Amen" and ask them to slowly leave their prayer and return to this time and place.

Invite each to share what happened for them in the story - who or what they were and what happened. It may be not much of anything, it may seem strange or silly, it may be quite dramatic or powerful for the person. Whatever happens is what they say - there is no right and no wrong answer. Respond to each person's sharing with a simple "Thanks" or "Thank you." Do not enter into conversation around the circle until all have had a chance to share.

There is then opportunity for more open conversation about what people have discovered about themselves and Jesus in this Scripture. If there is time you may want to repeat the exercise with Luke 15:11-31.

Witness

Who do you know that needs Jesus' shepherding care this week?

How could you show it to them, pray for them, introduce them to the Good Shepherd?

Session Three: Do you know Him? Jesus the Crucified.

Welcome

Discuss what comes to mind when we think of each of these words in turn...

Servant, Sacrifice, Love and (The) Cross then read - Isaiah 53: 1-12

Worship

Have different images of artwork based on the crucifixion available for people to look at, ask and discuss which one speaks to them? Why does it speak to them? What feelings does it evoke for them?

Sing, or listen to a song or hymn - holding this artwork in their mind's eye or on a card in front of them.

How deep the Father's love for us
The power of the cross
When I survey

Word

This week we are approaching our passage, which is 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25, with the Swedish Method.

Pray - We ask God to speak to each of us through his word.

Read - We read the passage out loud twice - this can be done by one person or by two.

When the passage has been read once, the group are asked to each think about these three things, which will be discussed when the passage has been read again.

The three things will be -

A light bulb: Something that 'shines' out to you, something that has an impact on you or draws your attention.

A question mark: Anything not understood from the text, or a question you'd like to ask the writer of the letter (i.e. Paul) or what you'd like to ask God about this.

An arrow: A personal application of this for ourselves.

After the the Bible passage is read for the second time, some thinking time should be given for each person to consider that they might like to say for each point. Then each person is invited to share with the group (if they would like to) - first their light bulbs; then their question marks and finally their arrows.

This may lead to further or deeper discussion about the passage and people may change their lightbulbs or questions based on the thoughts of other people.

When participants have discussed the three points - a fourth will be added.

The fourth point is active -

A speech bubble with a name: Someone who would benefit from hearing about what you have discovered in the passage, before the next Bible study.

It may be that it is helpful to suggest that those in the group could note down the person and the ideas to be shared.

Note: if there are less than five people in the group, it's helpful to choose two or three 'light bulbs', questions, and applications each. You can then share according to the time available.

Witness

The speech bubbles with names will mean that the message will be shared with others outside of the group in the coming week.

As the session is coming to an end make sure there is time for participants to share - what they think others will benefit from hearing from this study so that they can encourage one another.

Pray: Invite people to join together in prayer for those people who have been named in the speech bubbles. As a group pray also for those going out to witness, that they may be blessed with compassion and words of truth and healing.

If there are individuals in the group who are nervous about sharing, encourage prayer pairs or triplets who will be praying for each other as they go out to share this beneficial message before the next session.

Session Four: Do you know Him? Jesus the Risen One.

Welcome

In 1956, Wilson Greatbatch was building a heart rhythm recording device. He reached into a box for a resistor to complete the circuitry, but pulled out the wrong one - it wasn't quite the right size. He installed the ill-fitting resistor and noticed that the circuit emitted electrical pulses. It made him think of the timing of the heartbeat.

Greatbatch had previously thought that electrical stimulation might be able to stimulate the circuitry of the heart if there was some kind of breakdown there - this new device made him think it might be possible to create a version small enough to actually provide this stimulation. His aim to develop a device to record the heart rhythm was ended but - he began to shrink his device and on May 7, 1958, a version of his pacemaker was successfully inserted into a dog.

What experiences have we had of things ending with the surprising result of everything changing for the better?

Worship

This week we are approaching our passage, which is 1 Corinthians 15: 12- 22, using the Lectio Divina (Holy Reading) method.

The group we will go through a process to read this passage spiritually together. There are five stages - Silencio; Lectio; Meditatio; Oratio and Contemplatio. Through these steps we invite God's word to sink deeper into our hearts and imaginations.

To do this first we need to prepare through song and silence. Choose a hymn or song to listen to or sing- some suggestions are...

Thine be the glory
Resurrection Day
See what a morning

In Silencio (silence) we thank God for life and his presence and take some time in quiet to sit and slow down. We sit comfortably, alert, and relaxed. We say a simple prayer, such as: "Lord, give me ears to hear, and space to really listen."

Word

We now move into Lectio (reading): It will be helpful if three volunteers have been prompted to read the passage ahead of time.

As the passage is read for the first time, each person listens for a word that sticks out, a word that God might be using to speak to them. In silence each person reflects on the word or phrase that has spoken to them. The group share aloud the word/phrase that has spoken to their heart.

The passage is read again. If one word or phrase stood out the first time, see if it does the second time.

Meditatio(meditation): Encourage the group to meditate upon that word or phrase and to ask God how this word speaks to their life. Let imaginations be engaged, as well as hearts and minds. As these images, thoughts, and feelings come, allow time for people to think about them.

After 2-5 mins share with one another what these word or phrase mean to us.

We hear the reading for the third time.

Oratio(prayer): In silence we reflect on what God might be saying to us through this word or phrase, we ask God to speak to us, and then we listen. If anyone would like to they are invited to journal or write down thoughts that come to mind, and what you believe God is saying to you. It could be an action to take, a truth to discover about God, a way of life to change, someone to forgive, or something to celebrate.

We share aloud how we feel God may be calling us to respond.

Contemplatio(contemplation):

Prayers are said to celebrate hearing from God, for confidence to respond to what God has spoken through the silence and for the simple pleasure of being able to spend time in God's presence. Each participant may be invited to join the prayer asking for support for themselves or others as they go forward.

Witness

As we go, what will we take from this experience of Lectio Divina?

How can what we have learnt about Jesus or ourselves encourage us to share love and hope with others?

Can we describe how we heard from God during our holy reading?

Session Five: Do you know Him? Jesus the King.

Welcome

Which is your favourite Royal and why?

Worship

Reflect on Psalm 93 together.

You may want to prepare copies of different translations in advance, perhaps using an online tool such as:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Word

This week we explore Luke 24: 43 – 52 using the COMA Framework

Context

- What sort of writing is this? (a letter, a poem, a narrative, etc?)
- Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- What has happened so far in this particular book of the Bible?
- What has happened just prior to this section?

Things to draw out:

Jesus has preached and healed and travelled with His message that He calls good news. This led to Him having many followers, but also upset all sorts of people and eventually led to His death by crucifixion. There was an expectation that His kingship would overthrow the Roman rule, however He was about other things.

Just when everything seemed to be lost, Jesus rises from the dead and is seen by individual people and by groups. This passage is one of those resurrection appearances. It speaks of a Kingdom, and a kingly rule beyond human expectation!

Observation

- What is happening in the passage?
- What surprises are there?
- What are the key words?
- What words or ideas are repeated?

Things to draw out:

Look at what Jesus makes clear – that He has done the things that God promised He would do and how this establishes His kingdom.

In this process, Jesus opens the minds of His listeners, so that they can understand. This includes understanding remarkable things – like His resurrection. It also highlights a radical new way of life. This is the wisdom and power of the King.

This radical new way involves big ideas and realities – such as speaking about forgiveness of sins. This is the reality of the ‘new and living way’ that is Jesus’ rule.

This is an expression of the Kingdom – Jesus’ rule continues.

Meaning

- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

Things to draw out:

Jesus tells them:

To be willing to wait – in the right place for the right time for the King’s activity.

To be expectant – power from the person of God – Spirit

We also see a good example in their worshipful attitude.

Application

- What can we learn from this passage about how we should live with this idea that Jesus is with us?
- How good are we at waiting? What helps waiting, especially when this involves us both as individuals and as a community?
- How well do we deal with being expectant? What helps us keep faithful to God at such times?

Witness

In the community which you live, who needs to hear the good news that Jesus is King, and that He is still keen to be among us?

How easy do you find it to live under the Kingship of Jesus?

Session Six: Do you know Him? Jesus with us.

Welcome

Ask the group to share stories of reunions or meeting people unexpectedly.

Worship

Choose a hymn or song to listen to or sing- some suggestions are...

Immanuel - Stuart Townend
O come, O come, Emmanuel

Word

This Bible discussion is written from within a Christian tradition called Liberation Theology. This theology recognises that God works powerfully with the poor and the dispossessed. This is witnessed in such events as the Exodus, the Exile and the Incarnation.

In John 15:26-16:15, Jesus has gathered His followers around Him to prepare them for the time when He is not around any longer.

- 15: 26 & 27 – Jesus, after explaining the relationship between His disciples and the wider world.
- 16: 1 – 5 – Jesus offers a warning of what is to come, and of how He will empower Christians.
- 16: 6 – 15 – Jesus promises the presence of the Holy Spirit as the best way forward.

A few considerations when looking at this section of John's Gospel.

Jesus' words and warning are not spoken to create fear, but to enable faith – to be among the lowly and the powerless, to be within the despised, does not mean that you are ineffective!

Such teaching could easily leave us fearful, but this is a case of being aware so as to be strong. Notice that the Holy Spirit is described as our helper, as one who comes along side individuals and groups.

Here Jesus is dealing with the values of His Kingdom. If Christian believers live these values, then there will be a reaction because 'salt' effects change. Even in difficult situations, this is positive in terms of how God operates!

Questions for a bible study/ discussion.

Relating to 15: 26 – 27.

- How easy is it to love with such a promise? (You might want to compare this with the fulfilment of promise seen in Acts 2: 1 – 21.)
- How do people feel about being able to point others to the truth?
- How do people find they successfully and unsuccessfully live with the helping of the Holy Spirit? (Possible link to the sections ahead; and again you might want to compare this with the fulfilment of promise seen in Acts 2: 1 – 21.)

Relating to 16: 1 – 4.

- What do people in the group consider the idea of warning to involve?
- Why is it good news that God wants to warn His people?
- How does this teaching from Jesus help the powerless to be strong?

Relating to 16: 5 – 15.

- What do people consider that the concept of help' involves? (In Galatians 5: 16, this relationship with the Holy Spirit is described as a 'walk' – that is an active and ongoing participation.)
- How do people see this happening in their faith communities?
- How does the idea of God as Spirit being involved with Christians, within their homes, places of work or whatever they are, help people to pray and to act?

Witness

If Jesus is with us everywhere and all the time, what difference does that make to our daily lives?

Who do we know that could do with knowing that Jesus is with them?

Session Seven: Do you know Him? Jesus the Son of God.

Welcome

Ask the group to share family traits or characteristics that go down from generation to generation.

Worship

You may want to light a candle, and have a few minutes of quiet reflection.

We come before God in prayer, laying aside the stresses and busyness of the day:

Gracious God,

Thank you for weaving in and through the busyness of our lives

And walking with us through the everyday

Offering a helping hand and an encouraging ear when needed.

You are Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.

And we offer this time to you now.

Amen.

Word

Listen together as someone reads today's scripture:-

John 3 v 1 – 17

Encourage group members to read the passage of scripture again but this time on their own. Suggest that they ponder these questions:

- What words or phrases stand out to you?
- Is there anything about the passage that you hadn't noticed before or surprises you?

Having given enough time for people to soak in the Word, ask people to share their thoughts with the group.

Some things that you may want to draw out and some possible questions.

Jews were very familiar with the idea of being born again so teaching about new birth was nothing new to Nicodemus. When a person from another faith becomes a Jew they are considered to be born again. All previous sins are gone and it is like becoming a new person.

When God enters our lives through his Spirit we are changed and reborn, so it is possible to say that we have experienced both a rebirth and a recreation. This might be a concept that not everyone finds easy to grapple with.

What are your thoughts on the idea of spiritual rebirth?

Most of us will be the owners of smart phones which have a million and one uses in addition to phone calls and texting. We may love them and can't imagine being without one but the majority of us will have no idea how they work. Yet our lack of understanding about our phones doesn't stop us enjoying its benefits.

Because we don't understand how the Spirit works in our lives and the lives of others it doesn't mean that it isn't still there.

What family characteristics of God do we see in Jesus, God's Son?

Listen to the Bible reading together again.

Witness

Encourage the group to share their own stories of new birth. Some of these may be dramatic, or gradual. Encourage people that there is no testimony that is better or worse than another, they are our stories.

A useful structure for sharing these stories is:

What life was like. What God did. What life is like now.

Closing Prayer

Thank you Lord

That you have been central to our conversations this evening

Continue to breathe your Spirit into the lives of each one of us

As we prepare to leave this place.

Amen.

Session Eight: Do you know Him? Jesus the Provider.

Welcome

Who is the best cook that you know, and what is their top dish?

Worship

Share stories of God's provision in your lives, and spend some time thanking and praising God in prayer for this provision.

Word

This week we are approaching our passage, which is Matthew 15:29-39 with our imaginations.

The passage is read aloud 3 times. It can be read by one person, or up to 3 different people.

- Before each reading, you will tell them what to be aware of as they listen.
- Following the last reading, there will be 5 minutes of silence during which they continue in the story in their minds, hearts, and spirits - until the leader ends the prayer with "Amen."
- Then they share with each other what happened as they prayed with the story.

First reading instructions - listen to the story for the broad strokes:

- where and when does it take place
- who is there
- what happens

Read through the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes.

Second reading instructions- listen for more details:

- who are the major players, who else is there
- what are they doing
- how do they interact
- what is the setting like
- what time of day is it
- what is the mood, the atmosphere

Read the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes.

Third reading instructions: Notice more detail and begin to feel yourself in that story.

- who are you or what are you (you may be a person or an object)
- what are you doing, thinking, feeling or what is being done to or with you
- what are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location
- what are the emotions and the undertones that you notice

Read the passage slowly and then enter into silence for prayer. Allow 5 minutes for them to pray with the story. End the silence with "Amen" and ask them to slowly leave their prayer and return to this time and place.

Invite each to share what happened for them in the story - who or what they were and what happened. It may be not much of anything, it may seem strange or silly, it may be quite dramatic or powerful for the person. Whatever happens is what they say - there is no right and no wrong answer. Respond to each person's sharing with a simple "Thanks" or "Thank you." Do not enter into conversation around the circle until all have had a chance to share.

There is then opportunity for more open conversation about what people have discovered about themselves and Jesus in this Scripture.

Witness

Who might you pray for healing for this week?

What might God be asking you to contribute so that it can be multiplied to provide for those around you?

Session Nine: Do you know Him? Jesus the Revolutionary.

Welcome

Watch this video, or share the story of the Fosbury Flop

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZsH46Ek2ao>

The Fosbury Flop is a technique used in the high jump. Before Fosbury most elite jumpers used the straddle technique, Western Roll, Eastern cut-off or scissors jump to clear the bar. The Fosbury Flop was popularized and perfected by American athlete Dick Fosbury, whose gold medal in the 1968 Summer Olympics brought it to the world's attention. Fosbury was able to clear much greater heights than other jumpers with his new technique and over the next few years the flop became the dominant style of the event.

Who in your sphere of work or leisure pursuits turned the world upside down and how?

Worship

Sing together, listen to a recording, or watch an online video of one of these songs:

Will you come and follow me - <https://youtu.be/GiXnbOORTAU>

O for a thousand tongues to sing

Traditional - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e475ww32Jg>

Contemporary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w3DXMkyj7Q>

Word

This week we are looking at our Bible passage from the perspective of Liberation Theology. Before reading the passage, encourage members of the group to be particularly listening out for the theme of freedom, and issues of power, privilege, or wealth.

Read Luke 4:14-21

Having read the passage, these questions might help to explore some of these ideas.

What sources or kinds of power are seen or implied in this story?

Who has this power?

What kind of privilege does Jesus exercise and what does he do with it?

What freedoms are being proclaimed here?

How might you hear this passage as:

- A foodbank client
- Someone living with a disability
- A prison inmate
- A victim of a crime the perpetrator of which is in prison
- What is Jesus turning upside down in this passage?

Witness

“Liberation theology argues that in order to speak of God, one must first contemplate God’s love and then put into practice the commandment to love our neighbours.”
Gustavo Gutierrez¹

Having contemplated God’s revolutionary love in Jesus, how can we put it into practice in loving those around us this week?

Session Ten: Do you know Him? Jesus the choice.

Welcome

Invite the group to share times when they have had a choice to make, and how they made it.

Worship

You may want to light a candle, and have a few minutes of quiet reflection.

We come before God in prayer, laying aside the stresses and busyness of the day:

Gracious God,
Creator and Redeemer
Thank you for being with us
As we open your word.
Help us to listen to what you have to say to us
Through your Spirit
And as we learn from one another.

Amen

Word

A group member reads the scripture passage out loud.

Luke 8 v 1 – 15

This story is a parable which not only uncovers truth but it can also disguise it. It would have been delivered at a time when Jesus' preaching was very popular. In telling the story, he would have been looking for listeners who will take it seriously and not adopt a casual approach towards it.

There is more that can be said about the passage, but this is a story which requires some time and some probing. Do not assume that you understand its meaning or that it even only has one interpretation. This parable is giving you choices to make.

Read the passage again individually whilst looking for the following (10 – 15 minutes):-

A light bulb: What stands out for you the most in the passage?

A question: A question you would like to ask about the passage.

An arrow: How does this apply to you?

Write down something next to each point if you can.

- Go round the group and share your light bulbs. Spend time discussing responses.

- Each person should now share their questions and others in the group can respond. Keep the questions and answers focussed upon the passage of scripture.

- Encourage people to share how they think the passage applies to their own life.

Like a detective you are being encouraged in investigation, recognising that everyone in the group can play a part in finding the answer.

When participants have discussed the three points - a fourth will be added.

The last point is active -

A speech bubble with a name: Someone who would benefit from hearing about what you have discovered in the passage, before the next Bible study.

Witness

The speech bubbles with names will mean that the message will be shared with others outside of the group in the coming week.

As the session is coming to an end make sure there is time for participants to share - what they think others will benefit from hearing from this study so that they can encourage one another.

Close the session with a time of prayer, encouraging someone to open and somebody else to close the prayers so that group members can join in.

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