

THE COMMUNITY OF ST CUTHBERT



# St CUTHBERT

Rhythms of  
Grace  
study guide

JANUARY 2020



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**LEARN TO DO  
RIGHT; SEEK  
JUSTICE. DEFEND  
THE OPPRESSED.  
TAKE UP THE  
CAUSE OF THE  
FATHERLESS;  
PLEAD THE CASE  
OF THE WIDOW.**

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## COMMUNITY OF ST CUTHBERT

Being a Christian is a lifelong process of coming to know and trust Jesus Christ. It's a steady (and sometimes unsteady) growth in obedience and wisdom. In a word, it is being a disciple.

Being a disciple of Christ means answering fundamental questions as to who we are (identity), what we do (purpose), and what communities are we in (belonging).

Becoming a disciple of Christ means placing our discipleship at the very centre of our lives. This is not a one-day-a-week hobby. Our discipleship determines who we are, the choices we make and the people - both locally and across the globe, who make up our spiritual family.

The Community of St Cuthbert welcomes any Christian who longs to grow in their discipleship to Jesus and who is prepared to journey with others in a quest for a life-changing faith. Drawing inspiration from the life of St Cuthbert and centred in the Diocese of Durham, the community of St Cuthbert is united in a common commitment to a spiritual lifestyle. This lifestyle is shaped by five Rhythms of Grace and by participation in a Spiritual Support Group which seeks to deepen discipleship and refocus our way of living.

The five Rhythms seek to grow life-giving habits. These are starting points that can help us to understand who we are, and what we need to do to grow as disciples of Christ.

# FIVE RHYTHMS OF GRACE

**Prayer:** Resolve to pray each day. Spend time with God in prayer, listening to God as well as speaking to Him. Pray for at least ten minutes each morning or evening.

**Hospitality:** Practise hospitality. Look at the way the church played a role in the life of the early church in Acts 2. Consider how Jesus - especially in Luke's Gospel - links food and welcome in parables and in action. Break bread together with those who know Jesus and those who have yet to know him as a way of expressing God's love.

**Study:** Set aside time for study and learning, read a passage from the Bible each day. Use reading notes or study guides to deepen your understanding of the Bible and wider issues of theology. Read a Christian book, listen to a podcast or watch a film that will encourage, inspire and challenge you.

**Justice:** Serve others and work for justice. Recognise God's bias to the poor at home and abroad. Undertake acts of generosity without being asked. Get involved in a community initiative that will help others. Oppose inequality and injustice whenever you encounter it.

**Evangelism:** Share your faith with others. Participate in God's Mission both locally and globally. Ask God to give you the courage to share your faith, look for opportunities to explain what you believe to close friends or relatives, and get involved in a world-mission initiative: offer prayerful, practical or financial support.





# SPIRITUAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Spiritual Support Groups give structure to our dispersed community.

They consist of small groups of people who commit themselves to meet regularly to encourage and support each other in their desire to become people deeply rooted in God and to grow in spiritual maturity.

## **What happens when the group meets?**

When a Spiritual Support Group meets, each member in turn is given space to speak honestly about some aspect of their current Christian journey. Usually they will focus on one or more of the *Rhythms of Grace*.

After a member has spoken in this way, there will be a short time for silent reflection, followed by a time when the other members can comment on what has been said.

The keynote here is support and encouragement. Alongside this there will be an element of accountability in a way that shows one another we are actively interested in supporting each in their discipleship. It is usual at the end of each meeting for each member to choose some specific task to work at in the days leading up to the next meeting.

## **How often do groups meet?**

This depends on the group. For some it will be weekly, for others fortnightly, the important thing is that people commit to turn up to support one another and make every effort to attend.

## **What happens next?**

The Community with launch in 2019/2020 and will be based at St Nics although open to any Christian in the Diocese of Durham or beyond.

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**OUR FATHER IN  
HEAVEN,  
HALLOWED BE  
YOUR NAME. YOUR  
KINGDOM COME,  
YOUR WILL BE  
DONE, ON EARTH  
AS IT IS IN  
HEAVEN.**

”



# THE GOD TO WHOM WE PRAY

by Jeff Hattan

The "god" to whom a person prays and how they pray says so much about their belief as to the nature and character of that "god".

**Read Matthew 6:5-13 together.**

**When Jesus teaches us to pray, He starts with the very nature of the God. What does verse 9 tell us about the nature of God?**

He is our Father. Our God is a relational God, not a remote or distant one. God is in heaven, not simply like any old father! He is hallowed, which simply means holy, set apart, and revered.

**From the very outset, Jesus tells us that when we pray we come to a holy God who is knowable as Father and He is seated in the heavens. Why is this important to our praying?**

Without knowing such a holy, heavenly God is our Father we could be tempted to back off in praying. This encourages us in the assurance that our God is approachable.

**Jesus doesn't lead us straight into our needs. He continues to teach us about Father God. Secure in the knowledge we CAN approach this holy God we press on to HIS priorities. What priorities does Jesus teach us to pray for in verse 10?**

God's kingdom to come, and His will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.



**That may be easy to pray generally as a set prayer, but how do those priorities impact us individually?**

We are praying these priorities will be manifest in each of us. His Kingdom rule in me, His will be done in me, in obedience in me. How might that look when worked out?

**Knowing we can approach this holy, heavenly Father, we are now encouraged to pray for ourselves. Even in this, God's character is more fully revealed.**

**What does In Matthew 6:11-13, tell us about the God to whom we pray?**

He provides, forgives and protects.

**Read James 1:13-14 together. Why then does Jesus teach us to ask God not to lead us into temptation?**

God doesn't tempt us but he does allow us to be tempted that our faith and trust in Him grows and strengthens.

**Here are some questions to think about, discuss and share as a group:**

How do you think of God/visualise Him when you pray? How does that help you?

What might prayer be like if we didn't know God as our perfect Father in heaven? what if he was known as an energy or life force or a moral policeman?

From our passage, what might stop us getting over-familiar, even flippant in our prayer?

What does your prayer life reveal about your relationship with God at this moment in time?



# WHAT IS JUSTICE?

by David Day

**"Seek justice; encourage the oppressed; defend the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." - Isaiah 1:17**

**If you had only this one, short verse to go by, how would you describe justice?**

**Read Exodus 23:1-9 together.**

**What does acting justly entail?**

Can you give specific, modern examples of each of the actions mentioned? Are there examples in any films, novels, TV dramas, items on TV news or in the papers?

**One person cited the following actions as a short guide to acting justly. What do you think of it?**

**"Take turns.  
Tell the truth.  
Play by the rules.  
Think about how your actions will affect others.  
Listen to people with an open mind.  
Don't blame others for your mistakes.  
Don't take advantage of other people.  
Don't play favourites."**

Is any item too trivial to be included, or just plain wrong? What would you add? Would you delete anything?

How many church projects in Durham could be described as aimed at acting justly? Are you involved in any of them? Would you seriously consider getting involved?