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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 lifegiving 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 Dlocese of Durham or beyond.

WHOEVER DRINKS THE
WATER I GIVE THEM
WILL NEVER THIRST.
INDEED, THE WATER I
GIVE HIM WILL
BECOME IN HIM A
SPRING OF WATER
WELLING UP TO
ETERNAL LIFE



### LISTENING TO GOD

### by Jeff Hattan

Last time we looked at prayer as talking to God. This study is on prayer and listening to God.

#### Read Samuel 3:1-12

**Fun fact:** Samuel in Hebrew sounds like the word for 'listened to' or 'God heard', at this point he is just 12 years old!

## How many characters are in this passage, who are they and what are their roles?

Three: God, Eli and Samuel. God is the initiator, the main speaker. Eli is a helper, enabler. Samuel is a servant (albeit a young one!).

# Why might it be important to be told Samuel called himself a servant?

Samuel could have become puffed up with pride because God chose to speak to him. By calling himself a servant he is being humble.

# Why do you think we are told 'in those days the word of the LORD was rare'?

LORD in upper case always means God

# When Samuel heard God's voice he thought it was Eli. Why might that have been the case?

See verse 7. Samuel needed Eli to understand and recognise God's voice. He didn't try and work it all out by himself.

Do you have a 'mature' Christian friend who can help you in your understanding of prayer and how God speaks to you?

What advice does Eli give Samuel?
Go and listen

The very essence of prayer is in Verse 10b: 'Speak Lord for your servant is listening'. Maybe sometimes we can be guilty of saying 'Listen Lord for your servant is speaking'. Discuss.

# Not all of God's speaking is verbal. How else might God speak to us?

A picture, a scene, a painting, a piece of music. Listening to God might involve all or any of our senses.

Read 1 Kings 19:9b-13 together.

How does Elijah's hearing God differ from that of Samuel?

What ways was Elijah expecting to hear God speak? Noisy, spectacular, obvious.

#### But how did God speak?

In a gentle whisper, a still small voice, a thin sound

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

What ways do you find helpful to listen to God?

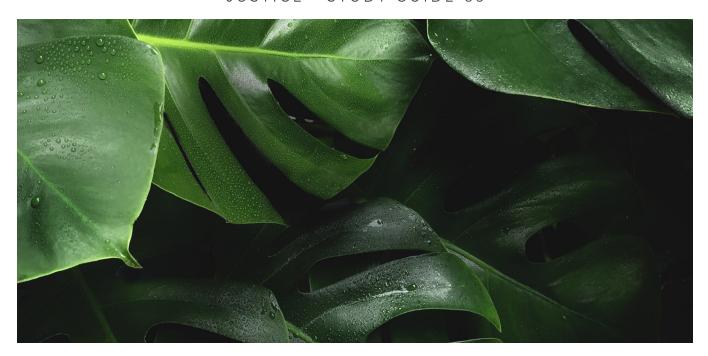
How might God speak to us in a picture, music, fragrance etc.?

How easily do we limit God speaking to us by only expecting Him to do it in a certain and known way?

If someone we know very well rings us up we don't need to ask who is speaking as we recognise their voice. How might this be translated to our recognising our Father's voice?

Seek the giver not the gift. Seek the speaker not the voice. Discuss.





### CLIMATE JUSTICE

### by Richard Lilly Dick Swarbrick

There is a growing consciousness of how God's creation is in a mess, with rising sea-levels, more extreme climate events and profound loss of the rich biodiversity man inherited on earth. And all the evidence points to man as the culprit.

#### Read Psalm 107 together.

Do you recognise the link between human activity and climate change? What should our response be?

#### What is climate injustice?

"Global warming, caused by carbon emissions mostly coming from the rich countries of the "North", inflicts severe suffering on the poor countries of the "South". From: "Voices from the South" by Romy Tiongco & Kate Fenn-Tye

What does this psalm say to us about our dependence on the Creator?

What key issues of social justice are highlighted in this psalm?

What key issues of climate justice are discussed in this psalm?

How do social justice and climate justice issues combine?

Which rights that we have could be influenced by climate issues? Right to breathe clean air etc. Do we have a duty to ensure these rights for people across the world

by protecting our world?

#### What should our response be, as Christians?

#### Where can we make a difference?

Transport options
Reducing our meat intake
Pray for enlightenment in government and in policy decisions at local,
national and international levels

#### Speak and ponder the words of the following hymn together:

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise



### HOSPITALITY HUMILITY & GENEROSITY

### by Zoe Mathias

In our last study we talked about how to show hospitality to God. This session is designed to help us think about how we can be more hospitable to other people.

What does hospitality mean to you?

Read Luke 14:7-14 together.

What are your first reactions to this passage? Does anything stand out?

The parable is set during a wedding feast. Why do you think the image of a wedding is used by Jesus here to challenge our attitude to hospitality?

Focus on verse 10. What influences us when we choose a place to sit at a social gathering of some kind (e.g. a meal, church)? What similarities or differences do we see between ourselves and the guests in the story?

The passage presents 2 important attitudes to our hospitality:

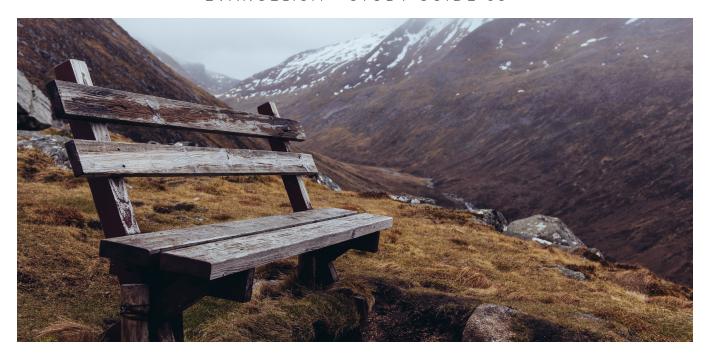
- Humility (v11). What motivates your hospitality? Do you seek a reward?
- Generosity (v13-14). Are you only hospitable to certain people? Why so?

So how is the biblical view of hospitality in Luke 14:12-14 similar or different to the description you discussed at the beginning? Does it challenge to whom you should be hospitable to?

In what ways have you shown hospitality in the last week?

How could you grow in your offering of hospitality to those you meet?





### EVANGELISM: A WAY OF LIFE

by Claire Elwood

At church we are used to thinking of evangelism as events at which someone known as an evangelist gives a stirring talk, or inviting people to Alpha and these are ways of sharing the good news of Jesus. There are others too.

Someone once said, "You (the Christian) are the first bible anyone will read".

Read Luke 5:27-32 together.

What are your initial thoughts about the passage? Does anything strike you?



- Piece of paper
- Pen/pencil

Jesus has called Levi to be His disciple. How did that calling come about and what effect did it have?

Levi may not have known Jesus very well but he knew enough to know that all his friends would want to meet Jesus too. What is the most important thing about Jesus you would want to share with a friend?

Think about the people you know.

Draw a series of circles with you in the centre.

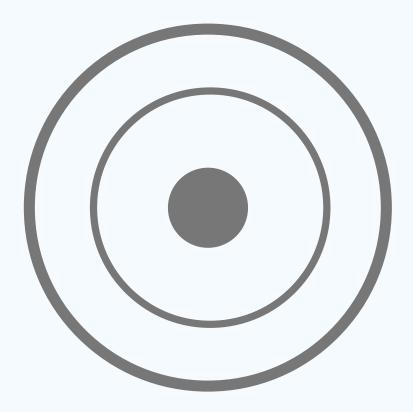
Inside the next circle name all the people closest to you.

Around the edge of the outer circle name those people you know slightly.

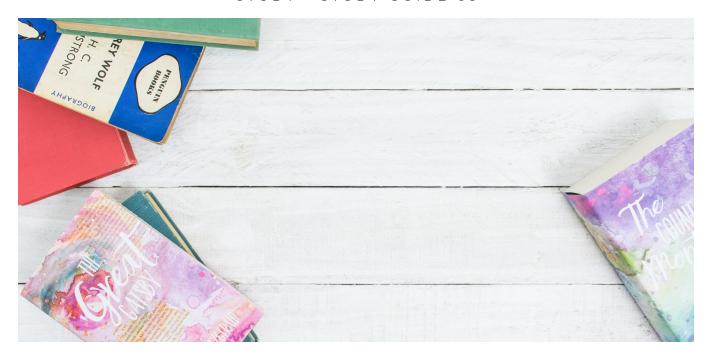
Identify who is already a Christian and who is not as far as you know. Do you have the same friends as someone else in your Spiritual Support Group?

Can you list 3 people you know who do not know Jesus? In your group, share this list and commit to praying for those on the list every day.

Ask God for inspiration. How would you like to get some of these people together? In what ways could you share Jesus with them?



If this exercise has made you realise that all your friends are Christians, take another look at your outer edge. Who is on the fringe of your life? Can you actively choose to get to know someone better? Who is God pointing out to you? Chat through with your group what you think you are going to do about this and ask them to hold you accountable and keep encouraging you as you begin to pray for someone.



### READING THE BIBLE

### by Claire Elwood

There are different ways to read the bible and many resources to help us. This sessions is an introduction into a simple and open way of reading the bible called Discovery Bible Study. It doesn't require any expert knowledge, encourages memorisation of the text and ultimately, as disciples of Christ, encourages those who know good news to go share it.

#### Read John 4:1-26 together

With bibles closed, ask one member of the group to retell the story using their own words. If anything is missed out, feel free to chip in!

#### Reread the passage together

What does this passage show us about the character of God?

What commands or promises are there?

Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you something about this passage.

What is God saying to us right now? What is standing out to you?

### With whom can we share this new insight?

You don't need to stress about this one, just try to carry your insight into the week with you in readiness of sharing.

IT IS NOT THE
HEALTHY WHO
NEED A DOCTOR,
BUT THE SICK, I
HAVE NOT COME
TO CALL THE
RIGHTEOUS, BUT
THE SINNERS