

THE COMMUNITY OF ST CUTHBERT



ST CUTHBERT

Rhythms of
Grace
study guide

ISSUE 04



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***FAITH ITSELF, IF IT
IS NOT
ACCOMPANIED BY
ACTION, IS DEAD***

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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.



USING THESE RESOURCES

Every spiritual support group is different, which means you may need to adapt these materials to suit your group, but please don't let that put you off. It is so valuable that as a church we can be spending time studying the same things in our groups: values, rooted in scripture, it keeps us connected as a wider community.

This is a quick guide to explain how we have put this resource together, and how we hope that you can use it for your group.

In each issue of this magazine there are some articles written by spiritual support group members who have been living out the rhythms of grace in everyday life. These are additional materials for you to use in an appropriate way for your group. If you would like to write an article, we would love to hear from you.

In each issue there are five bible studies, one on each of the rhythms of grace.

Each study is different, but they will usually include an introductory reflection to read to your group, a bible passage (or multiple) with questions to help your group explore and reflect on scripture together. This is usually followed by some application questions to help you consider how you can live out these rhythms.

The questions are in bold with some prompts underneath to help the leader encourage conversation.

The group questions are in a coloured box, take some time over these to discuss them as a group. Each question could take 3-5 minutes (or even longer) to discuss.

As a community we want to commit not only to studying each of these rhythms but to living out each of them. Some groups meet for a study one week and spend the following session enacting what they learn, sometimes that can be working in a food bank, spending the full session in prayer, or studying a bible passage in a new way, others will intentionally live out the rhythms during the week. Get creative!

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**REJOICE IN THE
LORD ALWAYS;
AGAIN I SAY,
REJOICE.**

”

SUMO SUITS AND DISCIPLING KIDS

by Jenny Guilder

I write this article just a few days after our, 'On Your Marks,' holiday club. As leaders, we're exhausted! Crazy dance moves, sugar coated crafts and inflatable sumo suits have dominated the week - but we wouldn't have wanted to spend our February half term in any other way. This week I have been reminded of the amazing privilege it is to introduce children to Jesus and help them grow as disciples of Christ!

So, what is so exciting about discipling children?

Firstly, we get to tell stories. The Bible is jam-packed full of stories where God shows up and transforms lives. As part of the Open the Book team, we go into schools and simply tell these stories, bringing the Bible to life. In the Parable of the Sower, the sower broadcasts the seeds with little regard to the soil. Indeed, it is our responsibility to simply tell these stories, it's God's responsibility to make the seeds we sow take root.

Next, we can allow opportunities to respond to God. In our Sunday morning kids ministry, we try to factor in time for the children to respond to the story that they've just heard. We ask them questions like; what can we learn about God from this story? What can we learn about ourselves? and what might we do differently or pray in response? Their answers to these questions are so insightful and as leaders, we are often blown away by the kids understanding of the Kingdom of God.

And finally, we can be an example. I accepted Jesus into my life at the age of 4. Since then I have been so grateful for all the people who have taught, challenged and encouraged me in my faith. I may not remember every sermon I've heard, but I do remember the life and witness of those who have journeyed alongside me in my walk with Jesus. My own kids watch me read my Bible, notice how I struggle in difficult situations and (I hope!) see the joy I find in knowing Jesus.

As a Mum, I often make mistakes. I get things wrong and I let my kids down but my hope is that I can point them to their perfect heavenly Father.

It really is a privilege to serve as part of the children's ministry team at St Nic's. If you'd like to be involved in anyway, please speak to our children's worker, Kate Swann: children@stnics.org.uk. We really won't force you to wear an inflatable sumo suit!!!

RHYTHMS IN REAL LIFE: LOCKDOWN EDITION

by Sarah Heslop

I must admit, I feel slightly daunted being asked to write about rhythms of grace in the Heslop household during lockdown. It doesn't always feel very "grace-full". Most of our time is spent managing home schooling and trying to keep boys fed and prevent them killing each other! Yet, here we go...



Prayer!

I've been using the Church of England Daily Prayer App for morning prayer and compline for a while now, and have continued that practice. After loving Pete Greig's devotionals at the start of each day of Spring Harvest Home I downloaded the Lectio 365 app which I am finding really helpful daily. It starts with a pause to "re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God" which is really important when there are so many distractions around. Right at the start of lockdown we made a crossword full of names on our patio doors to remind us to pray for family and friends. They're getting a bit smudged now, but they're still there!

Study!

I'm enjoying the chance to get some study done (although it is often interrupted by boys asking random questions about Spanish or physics or geography.... The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer was a good book to read under lockdown! I've not just been reading Christian books. I can't say I enjoyed Mark Lynas's Our Final Warning but it's a challenging read about climate change. I did however enjoy several talks from Spring Harvest Home which are still available online and which I definitely recommend!

Hospitality!

This looks a little different at the minute, but I love the fact that we're all keeping each other stocked with flour and other essentials on my street. And I'm sure the closer relationships which are being built will turn into hospitality when the opportunity allows. Through "Coxhoe Cares" we've been paired up with a lovely couple who I've spent a lot of time chatting to on the phone.

Justice!

We combined physical activity with justice when Micah and Isaac got sponsored for climbing Scafell Pike by going up and downstairs 386 times! We've done a couple of other charity running challenges too. I've been helping out at the foodbank in Spennymoor. Lots of their regular volunteers are older and vulnerable so they needed help.

Evangelism!

In terms of evangelism I've been inviting people to Church Online (it's much easier to invite people to virtual church than real church) and have set up a group for families in Coxhoe who attend the Children's Service and After School Club I lead there. It's a time of opportunity. Prayer needed. Lots of it.

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**I WILL GIVE TO
THE LORD THE
THANKS DUE TO
HIS
RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND I WILL SING
PRAISE TO THE
NAME OF THE
LORD, THE MOST
HIGH**

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PRAYER MATTERS

by Tom Musson

Read James 5:13-18

What are your first reactions to this passage?

List all the different scenarios for prayer in this passage (hint: there's many!). Have you prayed for any or all of these scenarios before?

This passage shows us three attitudes to prayer.

Faith (in v. 15). Do you believe that when you pray, God is listening?

Righteousness (in v. 16). What does the word righteousness mean to you? do you feel able to pray powerfully and effectively?

Persistence (in v.17). How persistent are you with prayer and in prayer? What do you find difficult with prayer?

Which of these attitudes from our passage do you find most challenging? What could you do in response this week?

Prayer is sometimes so common place in our Christian lives that we forget to time thinking about how privileged the act of prayer is.

We are able to talk whenever and however to the God who created all things. We can come to God in prayer with confidence as we are.

It's not a test - it's a gift!



JUSTICE IN THE PSALMS

by Chloe Langham

Many of the psalms are outpourings of emotion in worship, whether full of praise or said in the midst of despair

Why do we, as human beings, care about justice?

As a group, brainstorm some typical examples of injustices that you are aware of...

Read Psalm 10 together.

Where do you see the theme of justice in this psalm?

Why do we, as human beings, care about justice?

Read Psalm 82

This psalm talks about God's 'divine council' exerting justice. What is divine justice?

Read Psalm 140

This psalm is written from the perspective of the person to whom the injustice is inflicted. What can we learn from their monologue to the Lord?

Read James 2:14-26

What is the connection between faith and action?

What does it mean for God to be a God of justice?

What injustices do you play a part in, be honest with each other?

MOBILE HOSPITALITY

by Peter Johnson

We tend to think of hospitality primarily in terms of welcoming people into our homes for something to eat and drink and for a chat. This is a great thing to do and there are plenty of biblical examples of such home based hospitality. However, there may be times when we cannot easily do this. Our accommodation may be very limited or we may need to allow for the wishes of others in the household. Some of those to whom we want to show hospitality may not be able to get to our homes, because of infirmity or transport difficulties. And of course, the current Covid19 crisis rules out anyone offering home-based hospitality at the moment. So is there an alternative?

Let's remember that hospitality is essentially about expressing Christ's love to others whom we may not always know. It is not limited to a particular location. So while opening our homes where we can is a key expression of this love, it is not the only way to offer hospitality. We can bring it to where others are.

Read the well known story of the Good Samaritan together, Luke 10:30-37.

Talk about the passage, what stands out to you, and what have you realised afresh? Note the victim was a stranger to the Samaritan. Yet seeing the need, the Samaritan came to 'where the man was' (v33). He brought hospitality to the place where the stranger was. Mobile hospitality.

What bigger principle is Jesus illustrating in this story? Look at v2-7. Loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself. The two go together and are inseparable. Christianity is intensely practical but do we sometimes live as if the two strands are not interwoven? (Note: looking after yourself is okay!)





What characterizes the Good Samaritan's hospitality?

(There is no holding back. It is over the top generosity. The Samaritan tends the victim's wounds, provides transport, provides for his care and promises to check him out later. His commitment is open ended: he will pay for any extra expenses (v35). And he does this for a complete stranger.)

Why do you think the two other travellers ignored the victim?

(We can only guess, but was it something to do with maintaining ceremonial purity by ensuring they did not come into contact with what might be a dead body?)

Do we sometimes put more weight on religious conformity than on the love of strangers?

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

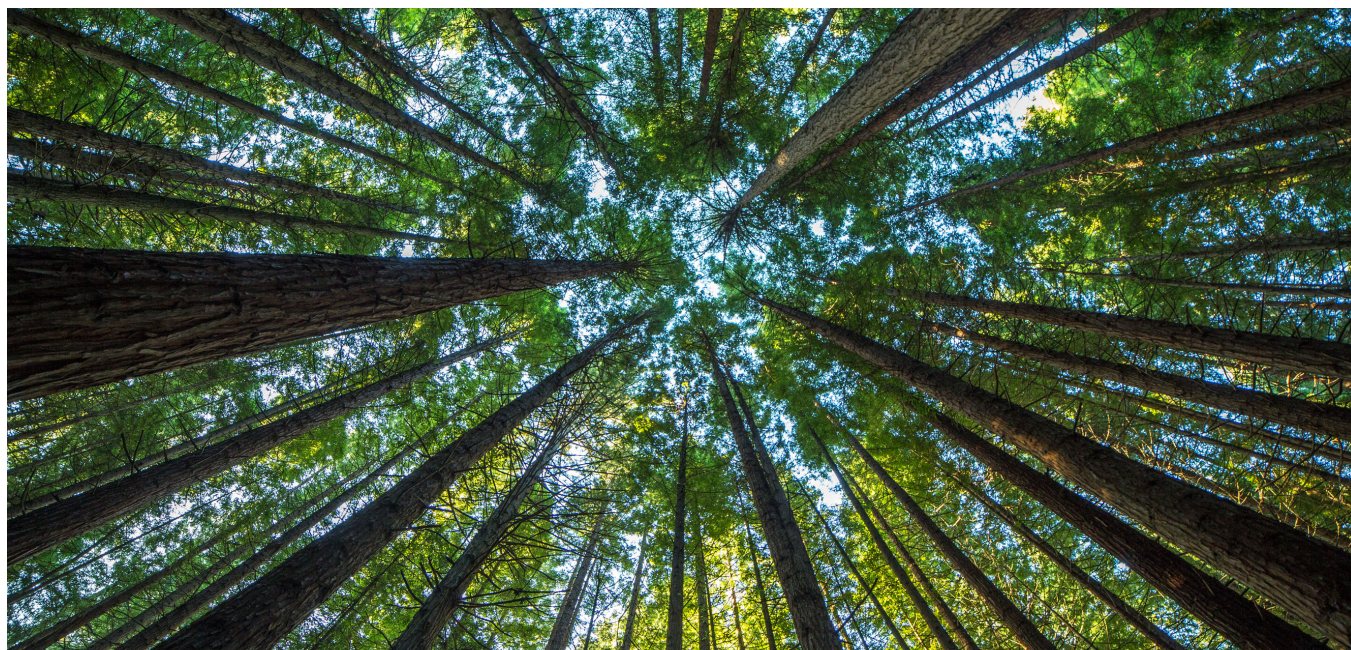
Try putting yourself in the Good Samaritan's position when he first saw the victim. What fears/issues do you think would have gone through your mind? How do you think you might have responded?

Do you have any recent examples of mobile hospitality that you have received or given which you can share and thank God for?

Think about your daily routine and the people you might meet or see, both complete strangers and people you know. What new opportunities might there be for bringing Christ's hospitality to them? What are the challenges you would face?

Let us pray.

Save us, Jesus, from hurrying away, because we do not wish to help, because we do not know how to help, because we dare not. Inspire us to use our lives serving one another. Amen.



ORDINARY EVANGELISM

by David Lucas

In many ways, our lives have contracted during this COVID-19 crisis. If we were honest with ourselves, many of our pre-pandemic habits were structured to avoid or distract from the ordinary; but this is exactly what we have been forced to confront in these strange times. Let us then think how we might embrace the ordinary for purposes of Evangelism.

Read Matthew 13:1-23 together.

What stands out to you in this passage?

Parables are stories in word-pictures. In what way does Jesus use these ordinary images to speak of the Kingdom of God?

In what ways has God revealed himself to *you* through times that are ordinary, both now and pre-COVID-19?

Can you think of how you might share this with others?

In your conversations with others who may not yet know Jesus, how do you see God revealing Himself to them in this time? Can you discuss examples?

In what way might you seek to honour the good things that God is already doing in the lives of these others? Can you think of examples?

How might you imaginatively speak the Gospel into the lives of these others?

As a group, how might you commit to sharing the Gospel in this time?



DISCOVER THE BIBLE

by Claire Elwood

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

Read Isaiah 2:1-5 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

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**O HOUSE OF
JACOB, COME, LET
US WALK IN THE
LIGHT OF THE
LORD**

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