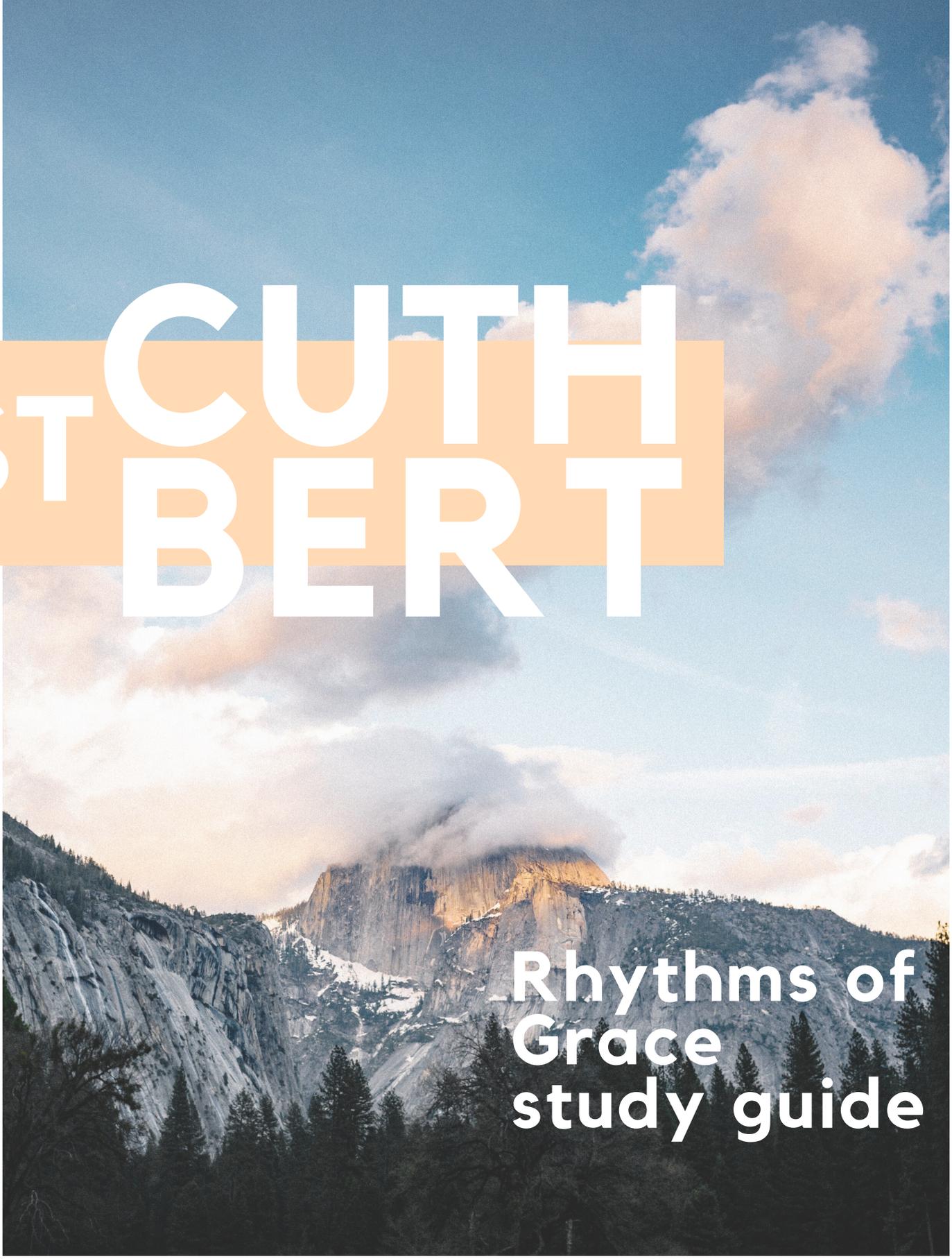


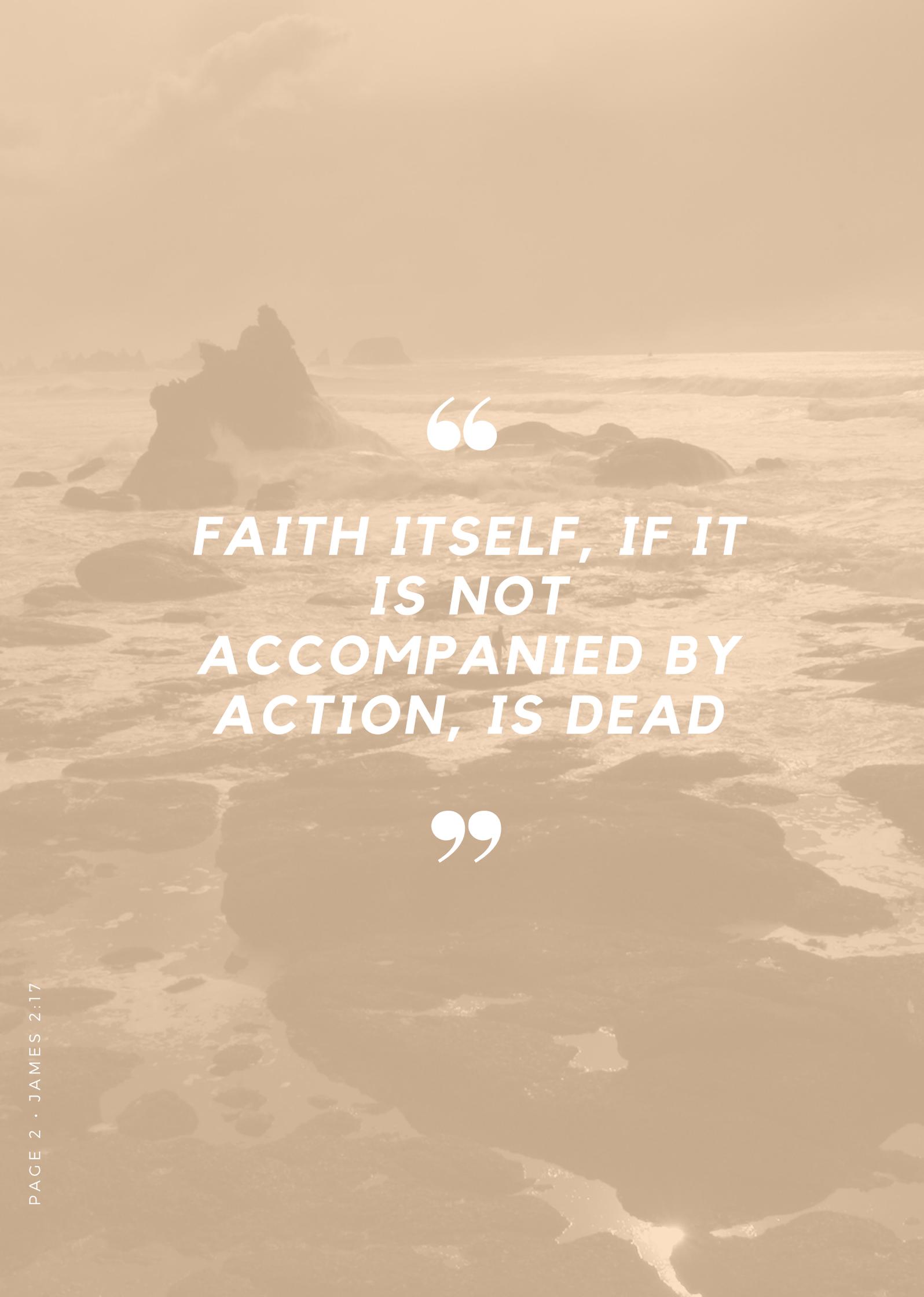
THE COMMUNITY OF ST CUTHBERT



ST CUTHBERT

Rhythms of
Grace
study guide

ISSUE 02



“

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

”

CONTENTS

**04 THE
COMMUNITY
OF ST
CUTHBERT**

**05 RHYTHMS OF
GRACE**

**06 SPIRITUAL
SUPPORT
GROUPS**

**08 RHYTHMS IN
REAL LIFE:
JUSTICE**

A reflection on a spiritual support group's volunteering at a foodbank. By Elaine Duddy

**10 4 QUICK
THOUGHTS ON
PRAYER**

A discussion on the challenges of prayer. By LeAnne Davis

**13 THE ESSENCE
OF PRAYER**

A Group Study Guide on Prayer

**15 FAITH IN
ACTION**

A Group Study Guide on Justice

**17 HOSPITALITY
IN A BUSY
WORLD**

A Group Study Guide on Hospitality

**19 SHARING THE
GOOD NEWS**

A Group Study Guide on Evangelism

**21 CHALLENGED
BY THE BIBLE**

A Group Study Guide on Study





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

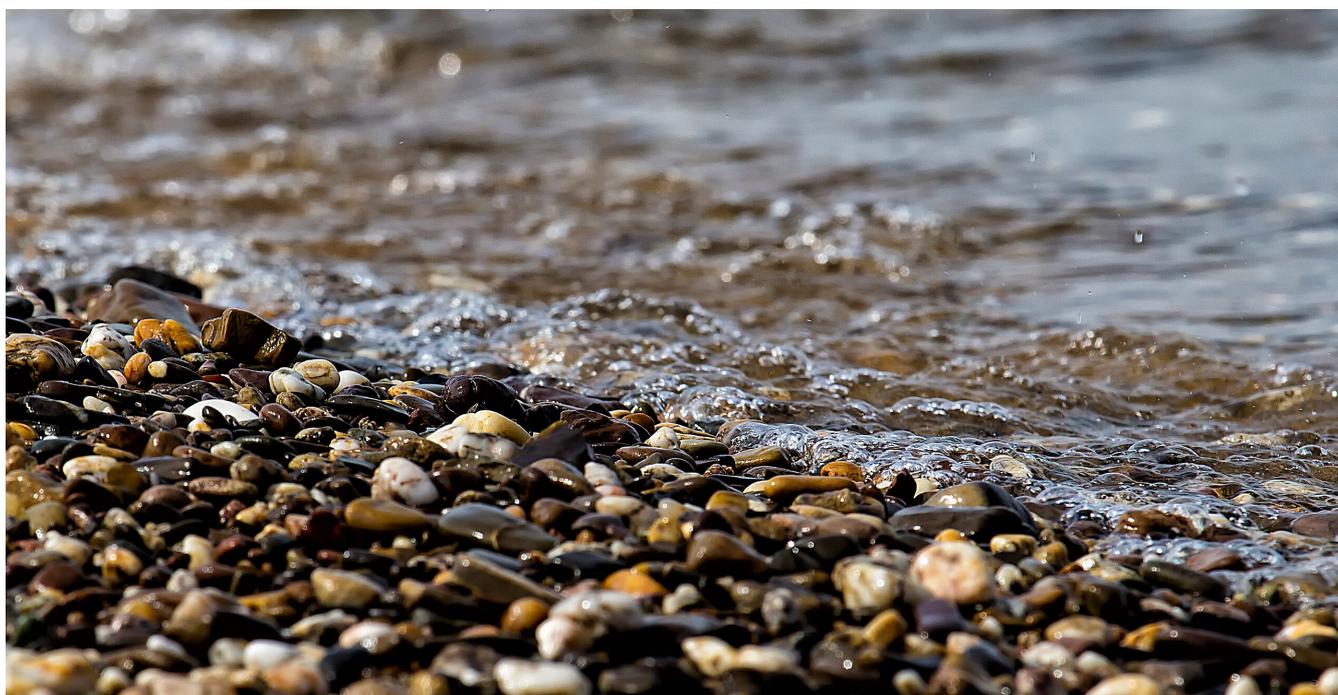
Prayer: Resolve to pray each day. Spend time with God in prayer, listening to God as well as speaking to Him. Pray for at least ten minutes each morning or evening.

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.

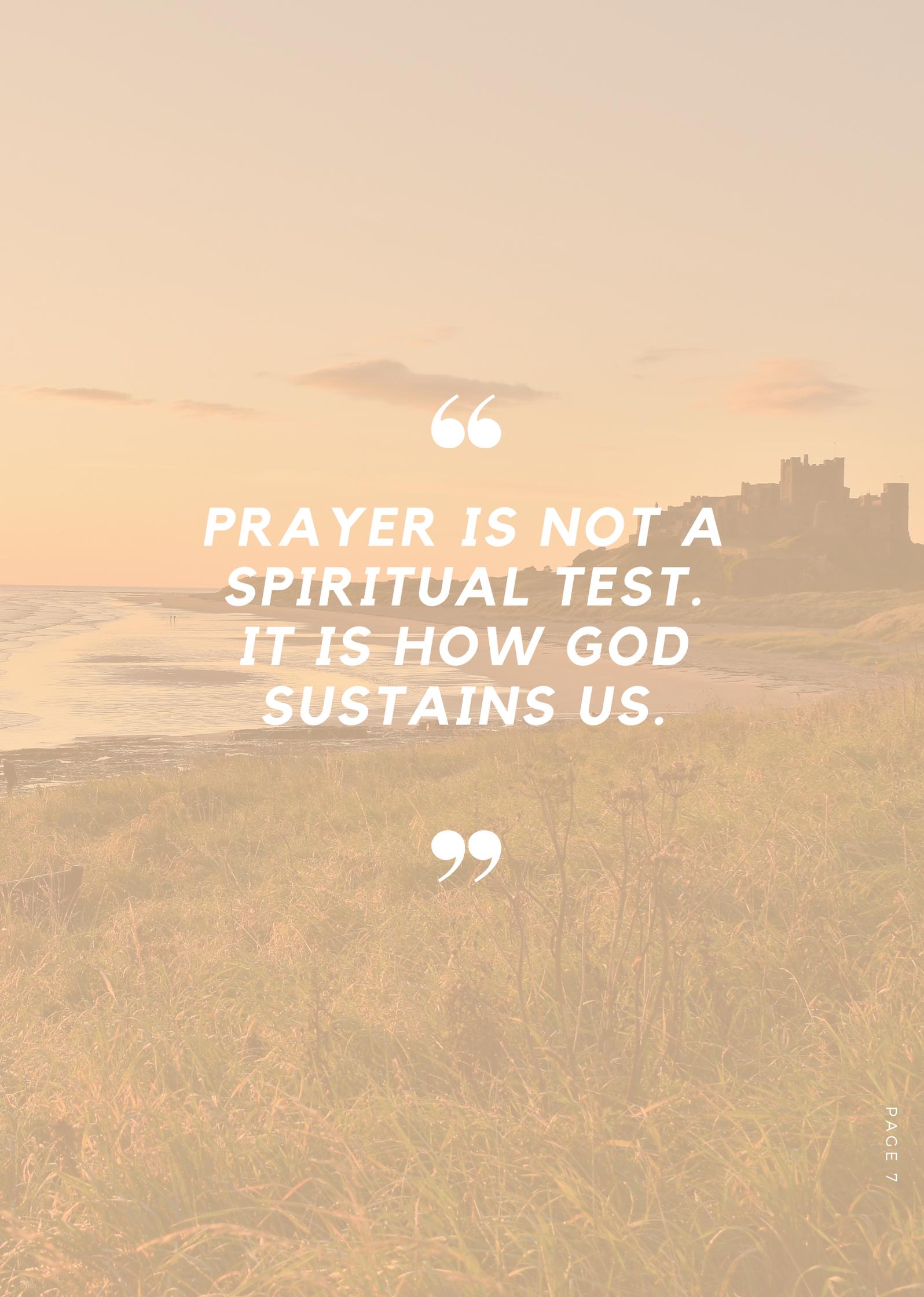
The keynote here is support and encouragement. Alongside this there will be an element of accountability in a way that shows one another we are actively interested in supporting each in their discipleship. It is usual at the end of each meeting for each member to choose some specific task to work at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



“

**PRAYER IS NOT A
SPIRITUAL TEST.
IT IS HOW GOD
SUSTAINS US.**

”

RHYTHMS IN REAL LIFE: JUSTICE

by Elaine Duddy

Do you ever wonder how to help those in need in our community and live out your faith in a more practical way? So do we. This past December, our spiritual support group swapped our usual meeting venue from a cosy living room to the County Durham Foodbank Warehouse.

The County Durham Foodbank opened in 2011 to support those in the local area living below the poverty line. In its first year alone it helped to feed 3,209 people and by 2013 the figure was 11,684, with the numbers still rising.

Although the need for food is the primary reason for a user's visit, the Foodbank also realises the importance of talking to those in need and assisting where possible with any other difficulties they may be facing in their lives. Increasingly they are trying to add financial advice and other services to their foodbank distribution points.

During our evening at the foodbank we helped to sort through the recently donated food, checking sell by dates on tins and categorising them. We then moved these sorted tins/packets to the appropriate sections of the warehouse.



These sections included pasta, tinned tomatoes, tinned soup, tinned fruit and cooking sauces. I was particularly moved by the donations of baby food and nappies and the realisation that poverty can affect anyone. In 2018/19, The Trussell Trust's Foodbank Network (of which the Durham Foodbank is one) provided 1,583,668 three-day emergency food supplies and support to UK people in crisis. and, of these, 577,618 went to children.



The donations that we sorted would then go to those in need for all sorts of reasons, ranging from redundancy, to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. A simple box of food makes a big difference, with foodbanks helping prevent crime, housing loss, family breakdown and mental health problems. Foodbanks partner with a wide range of care professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers and the police to identify people in crisis and issue them with a food bank voucher. Foodbank clients bring their voucher to a foodbank centre where it can be redeemed for three days' emergency food.

Our house group found this experience immensely rewarding and worthwhile and by each person contributing a relatively small amount of time and energy, a big difference was made.

The best thing about serving with the foodbank is how easy they make it to serve. We were given clear directions, which made the time we spent feel effective and worth it. The foodbank also makes it easy to sign up to volunteer as well! If this sounds like something you and your Spiritual Support Group would like to do, then scan the QR code with your phone, or visit their website: durham.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/volunteer/

*scan this code to
volunteer*





4 QUICK THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

by LeAnne Davis

A person doesn't have to read the bible long before discovering that one of the main businesses of life is prayer. The gospel writer, Mark, tells us that 'in the morning a great while before day, Jesus rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed' (Mark 1:35).

He did not allow himself to be distracted with the busyness of life. Instead, He determined to give his attention to the word of God and prayer.

Prayer is the main way God changes us. Missionary William Carey wrote "Prayer - secret fervent, believing prayer - lies at the root of all personal godliness". And John Wesley said "God does nothing but in answer to prayer". Yet, if we're honest with ourselves, we often find that we are not in the mood to pray for even 10 minutes.

Firstly, prayer is not a spiritual test. For many people, including myself, thinking about prayer reminds us of tests that we have failed and spiritual standards that we haven't met. When asked "How's your prayer life?" the typical reaction of most people is the feeling of shame. But here, Jesus is showing us that we need time away from the world to be with God on our own in order to be sent into the world. This is how He sustains us.

Prayer is a privilege. We don't have to get direction from God, we get to receive direction. We don't have to satisfy our spiritual thirst, we get to drink in God's presence. As Christians we should not pray as duty but rather prayer is something we get to do!

Secondly, not being in the mood to pray is a normal experience. Honestly once I've got the kids up, dressed, found the missing shoe, and got them to breakfast club, I'm just relieved I made it to church in time for morning prayer. It's important to recognise that not being in the mood is incredibly common, even for Christians. The fact is, no one "feels spiritual" all of the time. The spiritual life is simply not a continual "mountaintop" experience.

Of course, it is entirely possible that we are not in the mood to pray because we are avoiding God. We know that God is putting His finger on something that we do not wish to change. But if unwillingness to change is not the issue, then take comfort, it is normal, you do not need to be in a 'prayer mood' anymore than you need to be in a 'housework mood' or in an 'exercise mood'.

Thirdly, feelings are not always associated with answers. Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, received many extraordinary answers to prayer. Later in life someone asked him "do you always feel joyful when you pray?" "No," he answered, "my heart usually felt like wood and most major victories came through 'emotionless prayer.'" in other words, he didn't feel like God was listening. My personal experience is that there has been no relationship between my feelings and God's responses.

Lastly, our need to be independent can get in the way. Is it any wonder we find it hard to take time out to be alone with God in prayer? We are trained from a young age to be self-reliant, and not depend on anyone. Our sinful pride gives self-reliance a boost by demanding independence, especially from God, the exact opposite to what Jesus does in Mark 1:35. If we are going to fully participate in the mission of God and His calling to us to extend His kingdom, we must take the time to be with our heavenly Father, but time and time again our need to be independent gets in the way. I'll leave you with this...when you are in the mood, pray! When you are not in the mood, pray! As one English pastor put it, 'When you cannot pray as you would, pray as you can'.





“

**THE KINGDOM OF
GOD HAS COME
NEAR. REPENT AND
BELIEVE THE GOOD
NEWS!**

”



THE ESSENCE OF PRAYER

by Jeff Hattan

We saw in our last study that at the heart of prayer is our relationship with Abba, Father, our God in heaven. This time we are looking at the means of prayer. Jesus said when you pray SAY this. Speech, talking, is our primary means of relating to each other. It is no less so in prayer. It is a two-way conversation of speaking and listening.

Read Genesis 18:20-33 and Matthew 26:39-42 together.

How might the way we converse/d with our fathers and mothers colour the way we converse with Abba, Father?

Re-read Genesis 18:20-23 in as many versions as are present.

Describe as a group how you see the tone and progression of this conversation between Abraham and God.

What stands out to you?

Abraham could have asked God to spare the righteous and punish the guilty, instead what does he ask for?

For God to spare everyone. Why? Because of the righteous living there.

What might that say about our influence in our communities?

Abraham is VERY bold in his speaking to God and doesn't hold back.

How do you think God viewed this boldness in prayer?

Do you think it pleased Him or not? Why do you think that?

Re-read Matthew 26:39-42.

Once again, describe the tone and progression of this prayer. What stands out for you?

How does Jesus' prayer differ from Abraham's prayer?

Does it differ?

Like Abraham, Jesus pulls no punches and doesn't hold back in his honest, heartfelt, request.

How do you hear Jesus' statement "yet not my will but Yours"?

Is this some fateful resignation or is it faith and trust in action?

In Verse 41 Jesus gently rebukes the disciples and says "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak". How might this be true in us in our talking to the Father?

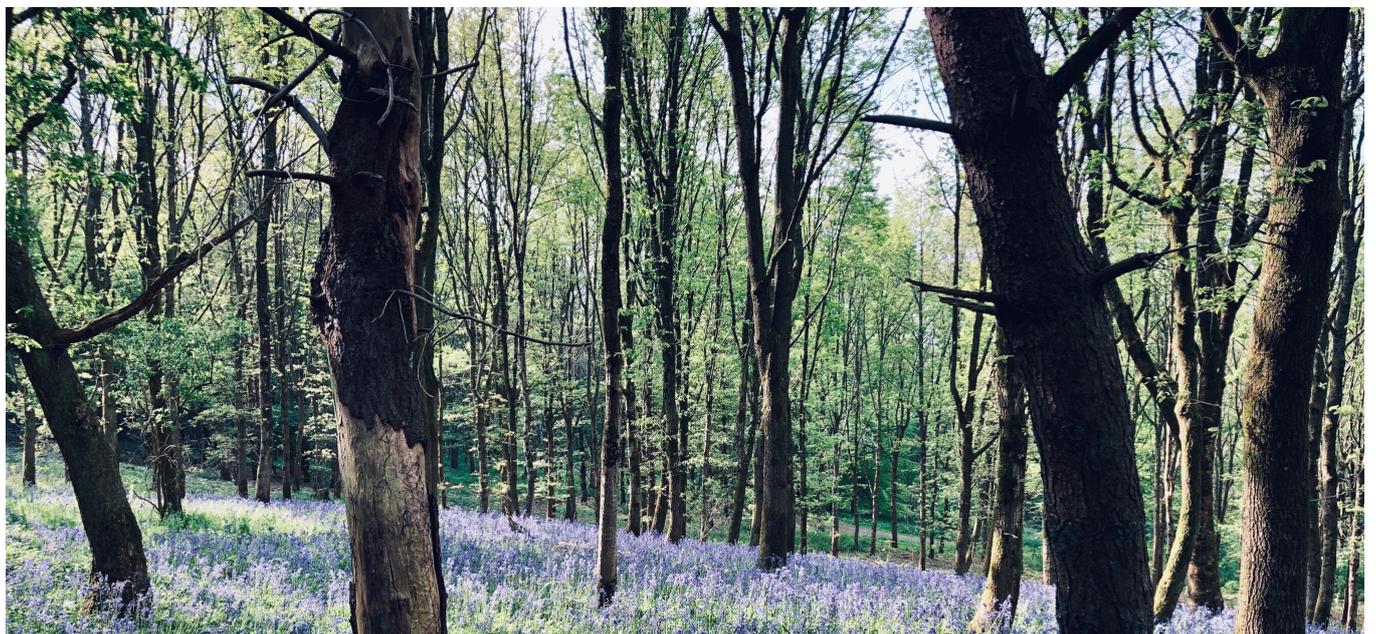
Here are some questions to think about, discuss and share as a group:

Both Abraham and Jesus are very specific in their prayer requests. How specific are you in your prayer life? Does it matter or not?

With Abraham's prayer it is God who ends the conversation. Have you ever experienced God either starting or stopping a prayer conversation with you?

"All prayer should be audibly spoken". Discuss.

Do you find it easy to be open and honest with God in your prayers?





FAITH IN ACTION

by David Day

There is a healthy suspicion about words without deeds. We say, 'All mouth and no trousers', 'talks cheap', 'actions speak louder than words', 'he's an armchair critic', 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating', 'it is easy to talk the talk but can you walk the walk?'

Samuel Pepys went to church on Christmas Day and heard the Bishop preach a powerful sermon on the duty of charity. He adds in his diary: 'But I also heard some say that the Bishop doth not give one groat to the poor himself'; James has reached a crisis in the church to which he writes. There is a great deal of talk about faith. Will it be expressed in deeds? Is it all talk? Will words result in action? Everything that's said in church needs to find a practical expression in the world outside.

Read James 2:14-26 together.

What is the connection between faith and action?

Imagine the standpoint of someone who wants to emphasise faith but isn't that bothered about action. How does James express that view?

Now imagine the standpoint of someone who thinks action is much more important than believing. How does James characterise that view?

James presents two images: a dead body; demons and their creed. What point is he making by using these images?

What use does James make of the OT characters Abraham and Rahab?

What should the church do? Talk about any critical incident which has made you take seriously the call to 'do justly'.

We are all one body in Christ; how does that express itself in the way we behave?

Ponder the lyrics of the hymn: 'Be Thou My Vision'. What actions follow from these beliefs?

What does it mean to ask God to be our vision?

What do the lyrics mean when they say 'naught be all else to me'?

How does God give us wisdom to act justly?

What else stands out to you?

**Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.**

**Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.**

**Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my high tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.**

**Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

**High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

HOSPITALITY IN A BUSY WORLD

by **Chloe Langham**

There are two sides to hospitality to consider in this study. Firstly, we show hospitality to other people, and secondly we need to be hospitable to God.

What do you think good hospitality involves?

Read Luke 10:38-42 together.

Mary and Martha approach Jesus' visit in two different ways. How do they each show hospitality to Jesus?

What are the benefits and downfalls of each of these methods of showing hospitality?

Jesus says that Martha is 'troubled by many things'. What does He mean by this?

Is there anything that you are particularly distracted by at the minute? Perhaps something that is preventing you from spending time with God?

These are not necessarily bad things, as with Martha who had good intentions of showing hospitality to Jesus. Good things can fill up our lives too.

In Luke 10:41 Jesus refers to Martha as 'worried' or 'anxious'. If we were to try and be less worried when considering being hospitable, how might this change our approach to hospitality?

Perhaps we would feel more able to spontaneously offer hospitality rather than feeling the need to be perfectly prepared.





Looking at Luke 10:42, what does Jesus mean when He says that 'Mary has chosen the good portion'?

Looking at Mary's example, how do you think you could be more hospitable to God in your life?

Neither of these women have a perfectly balanced approach to hospitality. Is your natural style of hospitality more inclined one way than the other? How can you try to use the other method of hospitality in your life this week?

"Christians are called to be hospitable to all people in our preparations but also by listening to people and spending time with them. In a similar way, we are called to be hospitable to Jesus". What do you think of this quotation?

Consider these words from the final verse of 'The Servant King'. What does it mean for us to practise hospitality as people of the Servant King?

*So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving*



SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

by Tom Musson

February has arrived and normal life has resumed after the busyness of Advent and Christmas have gone. At the heart of both these seasons was the celebration of Jesus being born to us as our saviour, born to set us free and transform our lives. It is Good News! Christmas is an important Christian festival, did you share the Good News of this season with anyone?

When was the last time you told someone about Jesus?

Don't be tempted to skip here. Look for honesty, remember to give everyone a chance to share their answers.

Jesus tells us to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19), and so being able and willing to share our faith and the Good News with others is a necessary and vital aspect of our Christian lives. What springs to mind when you hear the word 'evangelism'?

Do you think there are different types of evangelism?

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian answers some of those questions and shows us some of the fundamental attitudes behind evangelism. Read Acts 8:26-40 together.

Looking at verses 26-29, how and why do Philip and the Ethiopian meet?

Philip and the Ethiopian were both travelling. The spirit was at work in both of them before they had even met. Several times, the Spirit asked Philip to do things without explanation - he didn't see all the details.



What phrase is repeated in verses 27 and 28? What might this say about where evangelism often takes place?

'On the way'; be prepared! Philip met the Ethiopian where he was, not where Philip was necessarily comfortable. What does this mean for our evangelism?

Focus in on the 2 questions in verses 30 and 31. What do they show us about evangelism?

Philip's question is open-ended, supportive. He doesn't go immediately to an explanation of faith - he's inviting a conversation. An invited guest rather than an unwelcome intruder. The Ethiopian's reply is eye-opening. He understands that at the heart of evangelism is an act of sharing. He is willing to learn. How many people do you think are willing to hear the good news?

In verses 32-35 what strikes you about what Philip does and says?

Philip uses this passage to 'tell him the good news of Jesus'. Christ is at the heart of His evangelism.

How comfortable has this message made you feel so far?

Verses 36-40 show us two ways evangelism can transform not only our lives but the lives of people we meet. Discuss.

The Ethiopian's baptism and Philip's future mission and identity. And 'he gave orders to stop the chariot' - a symbol of his authority and luxury - transformation!

Philip's life and mission is not mentioned again until Acts 21 where Luke tells us that Philip is now known as 'Philip the Evangelist'. This single event defined him and how God would use him for the rest of his life.

What has this passage shown about your own heart for evangelism?

Talk about at least one attitude of evangelism you want to start displaying in your life.

Are there any particular people and/or situations you can think about sharing the good news of Jesus with?



CHALLENGED BY THE BIBLE

by Zoe Mathias

There are two sides to study. On one hand, study matters because we need facts about our faith. On the other study matters because it should transform how we look at the world.

What was the last TV show or film or book that you got obsessed with?

The challenge to us is: are we as obsessed to studying the Bible as much are we obsessed with these things?

Read Matthew 11:25-30 together.

Why does Jesus say: 'you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children'? What does it mean? How does it make us feel?

We need to know that studying cannot ever be about just knowing lots of stuff

What does verse 27 mean?

Jesus Christ is our key to understanding

What is meant when Jesus says 'I will give you rest'.

Knowing Jesus Christ more fully is a good thing because we find our rest in God, the more we understand fully the more we can find ourselves in God.

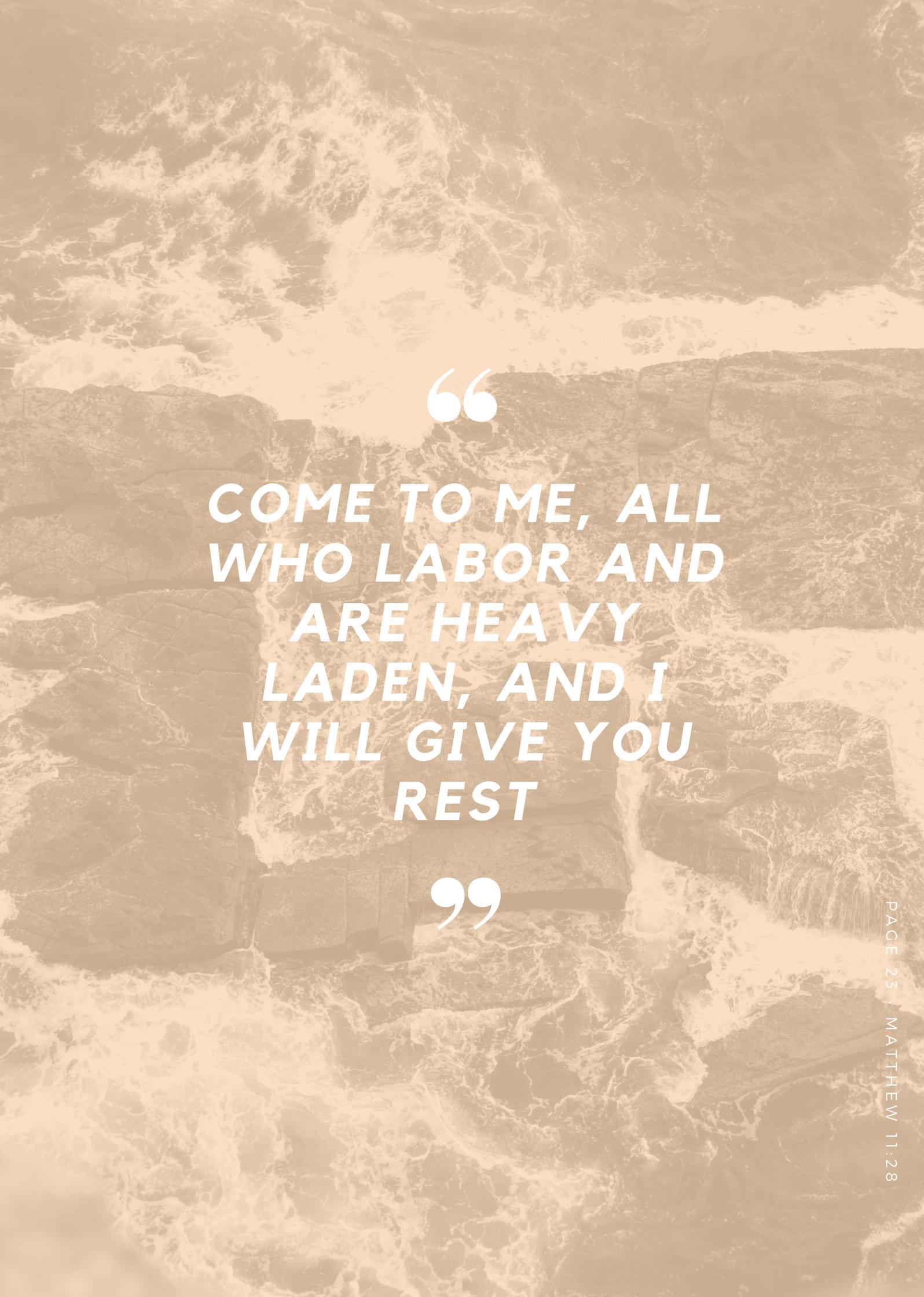
Read Matthew 12:1-14 together.

Reflect on the passage as a group,. Is there anything that surprises you? is there anything encouraging, is there anything that you find difficult to accept, is there anything that you don't understand?

Note Jesus' use of the Old Testament, His dynamic personal reading and His call to action.

Studying God's word is an important thing for us too. This can include a knowledge of the Bible, a dynamic personal reading, and a call to action. We need a robust knowledge of the Bible, to have a dynamic personal reading by letting the Holy Spirit challenge us and our reading needs to have a call to action.





“

**COME TO ME, ALL
WHO LABOR AND
ARE HEAVY
LADEN, AND I
WILL GIVE YOU
REST**

”