

***Sydney University***

***Evangelical Union***

***Introductory  
Bible Studies***

***“Jesus is Lord”***

# 2000 edition About Sydney University Evangelical Union

## Introductory Bible Studies

### 1. What are the goals of the Introductory Bible studies?

Broadly, the goal of the Introductory Bible studies is to teach people the Christian gospel, lead people to Christ, and enable them to begin to path to maturity in Christ. They are for people who want to investigate the Christian faith, as well as for people who have become Christians recently. There are two strands – studies in Mark's gospel, and studies in some passages from Paul, under the heading, "Jesus is Lord". They are adapted from the First Year Bible studies, and you will need to adapt them to the person you are doing them with – however, don't be afraid to challenge people directly, both to become Christian, and to change their life in response to the word of God.

The studies are outcome oriented. That is, we ask the question, how do we want to have influenced people after having done these studies? What kind of people do we want them to be having been confronted by the gospel of Christ? And to that question we have come up with 4 parameters: we are looking for them to become

- evangelical at depth. This means having a right belief (orthodoxy); a right response or practice (orthopraxy); and a right heart, a love for God and a deep trust in Christ (orthocardia).
- ministry mindedness on campus. That is, a care of others which is outward looking, a readiness to use their gifts on campus, and a loyalty to and energy for the body of Christ at Uni.
- evangelistically oriented. In other words, be the sort of people who look and pray for opportunities to present Christ.
- integrated into a church and S.U.E.U., so that they own the objects as an expression of God's purposes at Sydney uni, value the Doctrinal Basis, and are convinced members, with a stake in the work.

## 2. The First Year Group study material program

### **The theme: “The Lord”**

The aim these Bible studies is to explore aspects of Christ’s lordship. Christ’s lordship is not merely an interesting theme in the New Testament but the very content of the gospel proclamation itself. Hence, grounding people, whether they be unbelievers searching for the truth, or new Christians, in this gospel is the surest foundation they can build their lives on.

**“Jesus is Lord” – Bible studies in Paul’s letters**

<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Phil 2.5– “Jesus is Lord” (Even of Sydney University)”</b>	To understand the story of the Lordship of Christ as expressed by the Apostle Paul.
<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Romans 5.12–21 “The Lord who has conquered sin”</b>	This study looks at the achievement of Christ the Lord - in his obedient life death and resurrection he has broken the tyranny of sin and death, and established the reign of grace. To encourage people to be sure they are in Christ.
<b>Study 3</b>	<b>Colossians 1.15–23 “Peace by the blood of the Lord”</b>	This study further focuses on the cross of Christ to see that in the Lord’s death God was making peace with his creation and reconciling his estranged creatures to himself.
<b>Study 4</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 15.20–28 “The once and future resurrected Lord”</b>	The purpose of this study is to show how Christ’s lordship unfolds over time and how we live between the crowning of Christ as Lord and the final defeat of his enemies, especially death. We will also be shown the purpose of Christ’s lordship, that God the Father may be all in all.
<b>Study 5</b>	<b>Rom 8.31–39 “The assurance of the Lord”</b>	We continue the them of Jesus’ Lordship by focussing on the empowering certainly of God’s unshakeable commitment to us. Assurance is an important platform from which we can bold live for Christ at Uni.
<b>Study 6</b>	<b>Col 3.1–17 “Seeking the things of the Lord”</b>	This study aims to stimulate the group members to grasp their new identity in Christ and be challenged to live lives consistent with it, or in Paul’s language “seek the things that are above.”
<b>Study 7</b>	<b>Eph 4.1–17 “The community of the Lord”</b>	This study aims to help people catch the very significant truth that the Christian faith is not just vertical. To have God as your father means you have others as brother and sisters!
<b>Study 8</b>	<b>2 Tim 3.10–17 “The teaching of the Lord”</b>	This study aims to strengthen people in their determination shaped by and soaked in the word of the Lord, particularly to understand better the nature and purposes of Scripture.
<b>Study 9</b>	<b>Phil 4.4–7 “Casting all your cares on the Lord”</b>	To turn faith (confidence in the Lord) into prayer and peace of mind.
<b>Study 10</b>	<b>2 Cor 4.1–6 “Proclaiming the Lord”</b>	

## Study 1 Philippians 2.5-11

# Jesus Christ is Lord (Even of Sydney University)

### A. Preparation Questions (for the leader)

Read Philippians 2.1-18.

If you can find more than one translation of the Bible (preferably NIV, NRSV or NASB), compare the translations of verses 5-7. What differences are there in the translations? After reading the various translations and reading the passage as a whole, write a paraphrase of what you think vv. 5-8 say.

What is the form of God that Christ Jesus was in? In contrast, what is the form of a slave, and in what ways is it similar to the form of a human?

Why did God exalt Jesus (v9)?

What does it mean that Jesus is 'given the name that is above every other name? Do you think it is an actually name (like 'Bob') or is it something else?

Has the section from v. 9 to v. 11 been fulfilled? How does it square with the current state of the world?

How can we understand this early Christian hymn (vv. 6-11) is an account of the Gospel.

## B. Notes on the passage(s)

This study raises a number of questions that will be addressed in subsequent studies: What does it mean that Christ Jesus is Lord? How does our Lord want us to serve him? What kind of Lord is he? In this study we take the first steps down the path of discovery—towards a Biblical understanding of what it is to live a life in which Jesus Christ is Lord.

### Philippians 2.5–11

This passage seems to be an early Christian hymn. The question for us is what insight the passage gives us into the Gospel. It must be said, however, that the passage is not mere theology, rather it is used by Paul to make a specific point in the context of the letter to the Philippians. We must be aware of this context, and verse 5 summarises it succinctly for us. Verse 5 reminds us that the gospel of Christ is more than a set of facts—it is also a model of humility and submission that we who confess Christ must follow. Paul is making essentially the same point that Jesus himself made in the washing of the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17), namely that in the kingdom of God, 'everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (Lk 18:14). The way in which Paul makes this point, however, (namely by quoting the hymn) is also a detailed and rich proclamation of the Gospel.

The phrase 'though he was in the form of God' (v6 NRSV) is difficult to interpret. The NIV renders the same phrase as 'being in very nature God' perhaps in an attempt to head off the inference that Jesus only *appeared* to be God. Indeed the English 'form' can often refer to merely external or incidental characteristics but here the idea seems to be that Jesus both expresses God and shares in his glory. The implication is that Jesus shares 'Godness' not just 'Godlikeness.' This interpretation is confirmed by the next phrase (v6) which talks about the *equality* with God that Jesus chose not to exploit.

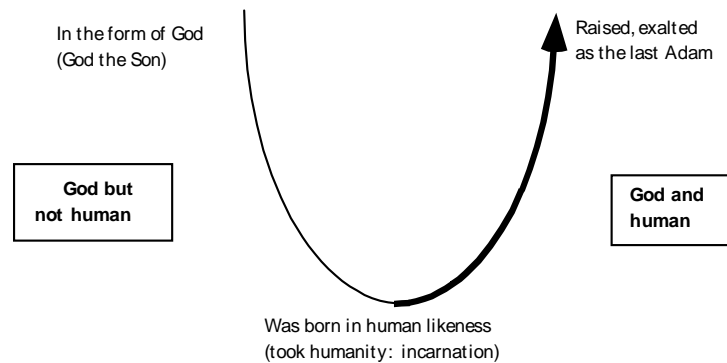
But how are we to understand the 'emptying' of verse 7? Does Jesus give up 'the form of God' (his 'Godness') to take 'the form of a slave'? Or does Jesus retain, say, the moral characteristics of God while 'emptying' himself of other characteristics like omnipotence, omniscience and immutability ('ontological' characteristics). Neither interpretation seems adequate. It seems that the primary 'emptying' here is *positional*, Jesus 'empties' himself of all the privileges of being equal with God and gives them up for a greater purpose. Jesus does not *exchange* 'the form of God' for 'the form of a slave,' but rather *manifests* 'the form of God' in 'the form of a slave.' Hence self-emptying, humbling obedience is not 'despite' his Godness (as the 'though' of the NRSV might imply), but rather is an expression of it (as the simple "being" of the NIV, literally translating the Greek, implies). Having equality with God, Jesus had to decide what to do with it. Jesus *chose* to empty himself by a) taking the form of a slave (v7), b) being born like other humans (v7), and c) humbling himself to the point of death (v8), and all this in obedience to his Father.

Verse 9 begins with a strong inferential phrase '*Therefore* God also highly exalted him ...'. The passage clearly states that it was in response to Christ's obedience that God exalted him. The exaltation of Christ should be seen therefore as a *vindication* of him. The crowds may have thought that Jesus was a massive flop, but by his resurrection and exaltation, God shows us otherwise.

God exalts Jesus to the highest station giving him the name above every other name, that is the name 'Lord.' Let us just take a moment to see how amazing this really is. In Isaiah 42.8 God says 'I am the Lord, that is *my* name' (i.e. it is mine alone) and in Isaiah 45.22–23: 'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."' The name stands for the person – in being given the name that is above every name, Jesus is established as being the person above every other person. What is that name – of course it is Lord.

And that name, that personal reality is bestowed on him by the Father, so that now all shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ... 'to the glory of God the Father' (v. 11). And this final phrase is not a mere theological flourish, but expresses the overarching purpose of God's grand plan, that '[Jesus] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet... [and w]hen all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all' (1 Cor 15:25, 28).

This can be expressed in the following “big dipper” – who was it that was in the form of God, and who is it that is given the name that is above every name – God but not human, incarnate, God and human.



Then use this in the study, perhaps with the final question, in what sense is this the gospel? The answer comes in the Isa 45 quote – in that context it is God who in establishing his name is debunking his rivals, demonstrating that their names/realities are not above his, overthrowing them, rescuing his people, returning to them and establishing his gracious and kind rule. All of that is there in at last the one who is given the name Lord at whose feet every knee should bend and every tongue confess. This is the gospel, the fulfilment of God’s salvation purposes.

And the point that Paul is making here is that it all revolves around Christ, and what God has done in him. That God has fulfilled his purposes at last, in that he has established the Lord Jesus Christ, defeating his enemies, returning to his people in Christ, and restoring them under his gracious rule in Christ.

## C. Suggestions for Study 1

**Aim:** To understand the story of the Lordship of Christ as expressed by the Apostle Paul.

Introduce the series of studies in Paul on key aspects of Christ’s achievement.

### **Getting started: Getting to know each other and expectations**

Here are some suggestions for the first part of your first meeting.

Ask some questions about how the person came to be doing Bible studies, what their past experience of Christian things has been and so on

Discuss their expectations: A good way may be to ask the question “What sort of things are you hoping to achieve/get out of this time together?”

**A. Look at the Gospel as we find it presented in Philippians 2:5-11.** The important idea to introduce here is that the centre of the Gospel is the declaration of Jesus Christ’s lordship.

(i) Read the passage as a group.

(ii) Draw a graph of what the passage is saying taking note of the height images as it is being slowly read a second time.

(iii) Discuss. When you notice a description of station or change in height ask what point is being made. (eg. you might read ‘emptied himself’ as a descent—what sort of a descent is it? What did the descent involve, etc. You will probably find a height description implicit or explicit in every sub-paragraph.)

(iv) Focus on the final paragraph (starting ‘Therefore’) and ask why did God exalt Jesus?

(v) What does it mean for God's creation that Jesus has been given 'the name that is above every name'?

(vi) Check up Isaiah 45.22-23. By using this passage what is being said about Jesus?

**Wrapping up:** It would be helpful to point out how the series of studies ahead will help us think through the implications of Jesus' Lordship, by helping us get to know our Lord and the ways he wants us to serve him. Turn to the coming studies and note how we will be exploring aspects of Jesus Lordship.

Work Sheet for Study 1: Philippians 2.5-11

# Together Proclaiming Christ Jesus as Lord

## Philippians 2.5–11

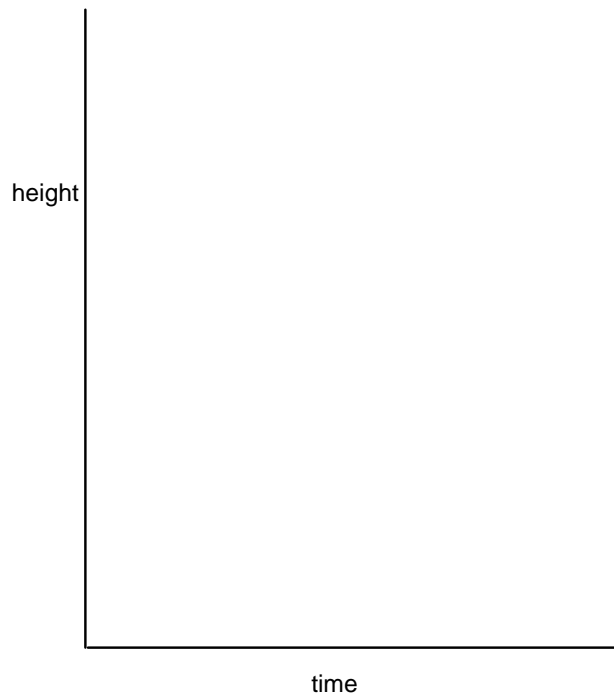
<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something  
to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.



**Study 2: Romans 5.12–21**

## The Lord who Has Conquered Sin

### A. Preparation Questions on Romans 5.12–21 (For the leader)

How does one man's sin lead to death for all?

Why wasn't sin taken into account/reckoned before the law?

How was Adam's sin different to the sins of other? Is this important?

What does it mean that Adam is a type of the one to come?

What is the free gift?

In what ways is it different to the trespass?

What is the one man's act of righteousness?

Why did trespass multiply because of the law?

Who receives the consequences/benefits of the two men's actions?

## B. Notes on the Passage: Romans 5.12–21

### **Its structure:**

This passage looks harder than it is because of the way Paul jumps around a bit. He wants to say at the one time that the two men, Adam and Christ, are very similar and yet also very different.

Paul starts by beginning to compare Adam and Christ, but only gets the Adam bit out (5.12) before he shifts to explain a point about sin before the law (5.13) and so never finishes the comparison. (You may like to speculate what was he going to say in the 5.13 that never was. Could it have been something like "... so righteousness came into the world by one man, and life through him...?")

Then in 5.15-17 Paul stresses that Christ and Adam are different in so many ways. He writes this so that the readers will not think Christ is merely another like Adam, (which they might have thought, if Paul had actually said what he was going to say in the 5.13 that never was.)

Only in 5.18 does Paul now come to his original and main point that "just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all." He says this to stress that Christ's one act will indeed save those who have faith in him, building on what he has stated in Romans 5.1–11.

We can summarise the structure of Romans 5.12-21 like this.

*Similar:* "Just as one man. . ." ("wait let me explain something") 5.12-14

*Different:* "But Adam is not like Christ in so many ways" 5.15-17

*Similar:* "Just as one man had such an effect so also does the other man Christ" 5.18-21

### **Its content:**

Romans 5.12 commences with the word 'therefore' which appears to refer to the previous passage (5.1-11) and in particular to the certainty of salvation that Christians have as a result of Christ's work on the cross. The main thrust of 5.12 is powerful effect of the one man in letting in sin and death. Sin comes into the world through one man, who is later identified as Adam (whose name means 'man'). Death then comes as a result of sin.

It is not clear whether Paul is talking about physical death or eternal death, although passages like Genesis 2:17 & 3:19 imply physical death. It is probable that when Paul uses the word death he has both concepts in mind, as the two are inextricably linked. Furthermore death spreads to all people because all have sinned, re-emphasising the fact that death comes as a result of sin.

The final question is in what sense have all people sinned. Paul does not say. However, there are three main viewpoints. Firstly, there is the personal sense, where everyone has committed sins in and of themselves. This seems like a natural reading of the verse, however it appears to ignore the corporate nature of sin implied in vv. 18-19 where Adam's sin leads to condemnation for all. The second viewpoint says that everyone sins 'in and with' Adam. When Adam sins, the guilt and responsibility is passed to the entire human race. The third view is called the middle view, and it says that Adam's sin results in a corruption of the human nature and a tendency or bias towards sin. Consequently, all do sin and so death spreads to all. Both the second and third view are compatible with the passage in its entirety, because Adam's sin leads to the condemnation of all, either directly (view 2) or indirectly through the corruption of the human nature which leads to sin (view 3).

In Romans 5.13-14 Paul breaks off the comparison of Adam with Christ that was apparently going to make, to explain the difficult area of the relationship between the law and sin. This is a difficult passage in which Paul seems to be saying that although sinners between Adam and the giving of God's law did not break a clear command of God as Adam had, (Their "transgression was not like the transgression of Adam") yet death still exercised dominion. In 5.14 Paul describes Adam as a 'type' of Christ. This Greek word means 'the impression made by striking something' and therefore means a form or pattern. In the remaining verses Paul sets out this similarity between Adam and Christ. The main point is that an act of each has determinative significance for those who belong to them, as Paul will finally get around to saying in 5.18–21.

5.15-16 show that despite the similarity between these two men, there are very important differences. The free gift refers to the actions of Christ in atoning for sin by his death and resurrection. The

distinction in verse 15 appears to be one of degree. The key words in the verse are “much more surely”; the free gift is not like the trespass because it is even more certain. Verse 16 draws two contrasts between the free gift and the trespass. Firstly there is a contrast between the outcomes of the two actions, one leading to condemnation and the other to justification. The other contrast is between the number of sins taken into account. Adam’s *one* sin leads to judgement, however the abundance of God’s grace is shown in the fact that the free gift is offered despite *many* sins, and leads to justification.

5.17 elaborates the contrast drawn in 5.16 between condemnation and justification, again pointing to the critical spiritual conditions that have been brought into effect by the actions of the two men. However, Paul breaks the parallel again by introducing the words “much more surely”, clearly demonstrating that Christ’s work supersedes and overcomes the dominion of death. The object is also different, as it is now those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness. Righteousness here is not used in the moral sense, but rather in the legal sense, that they are declared to be right. This is the only point in the passage where Paul indicates that it is only those who accept the gift that receive the benefits. The benefit is exercising dominion in life, which refers to the time when Christ returns and we have life in him but could also refer to Christians now as they have the gift of righteousness. It is clear however that these benefits come only through one man and that is Jesus Christ.

At last here in 5.18-21 Paul gives his main point the similarity of Adam and Christ. 5.18-19 are roughly parallel. There is a comparison drawn between Christ and Adam and the status that comes from being in them. In both cases the “one man” has effected the “all”.

You may be concerned that in 5.18 justification and life is described as ‘for all’. This has led some theologians to espouse universalism, that all are saved because of Christ’s work regardless of whether they have faith or not. This is incompatible with other biblical passages that clearly express the reality of judgement. Furthermore, throughout the current passage Paul has chosen terms that maintain a close parallelism between Adam and Christ, in 5.15 & 19 he uses ‘the many’ while in 5.18 he uses ‘all’. This does not mean that both groups are one and the same, rather it implies that Christ affects those that belong to him and likewise Adam those who belong to him. Paul is clear that everyone without exception is ‘in Adam’, but 5.17 shows that only those that receive the gift are ‘in Christ’. In 5.19 the obedient act of Christ could refer to his lifelong commitment to the Father’s will or specifically to his ultimate act of obedience, the cross. The fact that the last phrase of the verse is worded ‘will be made righteous’ could refer either to the future declaration at judgement that we are right, or could refer to the possibility of future Christians accepting the free gift and being declared righteous.

5.20 reintroduces the issue of the Law (of Moses) Paul’s point is that the Law is a sideline compared to the two men Adam and Christ. In fact the law only made things worse. But God is not defeated for “where sin increased grace abounded all the more”

5.21 draws the passage to a thrilling conclusion, summing up the main themes of the passage that ever Adam did Christ can and will do so much more, giving believers confidence in the Lordship of Christ.

## C. Suggestion for the Study on Romans 5.12–21

**Aim:** To look at the achievement of Christ the Lord - in his obedient life death and resurrection he has broken the tyranny of sin and death, and established the reign of grace. To encourage group members to be sure they are in Christ.

1. Read Romans 5:12-21. Fill in the following diagram with the words that the passage uses to describe the conditions that follow from Adam and Christ.

**ADAM** = death, condemnation, sin

**JESUS** = life, Justification, grace, righteousness, eternal life

You will need to spend some time discussing with the group, what each of these terms mean. This is a really worthwhile exercise. A lot of words may be familiar to them and roll off

the tongue but they might never really have grappled with the true meanings. Spend some on this because by discussing the terms they will be clarifying the distinction between the two conditions.

2. What events led to each of these conditions? (hint: you may need to refer back to vv.1-11)

The passage is quite clear that Adam's sin led to the first condition where death and condemnation reign. Don't spend too long on this. It is easy to get bogged down on the issue of original sin and this is not really the main aim of the study. More important is the event/events that led to the second spiritual state, the passage uses the terms 'act of obedience', 'free gift' and 'act of righteousness' but doesn't actually go into details. Refer back to vv.1-11 where it is spelt out that we are justified through Christ's blood. This is an important point, as it is through the cross that we come to enjoy, justification, life etc.

3. Who are affected by each of these conditions?

Again make sure that they refer to the passage to answer the question. It is spelt out that all are affected by Adam's sin. There may be some confusion about what the passage says about who is saved but the crux is v.17 where those who receive the free gift enjoy life and righteousness.

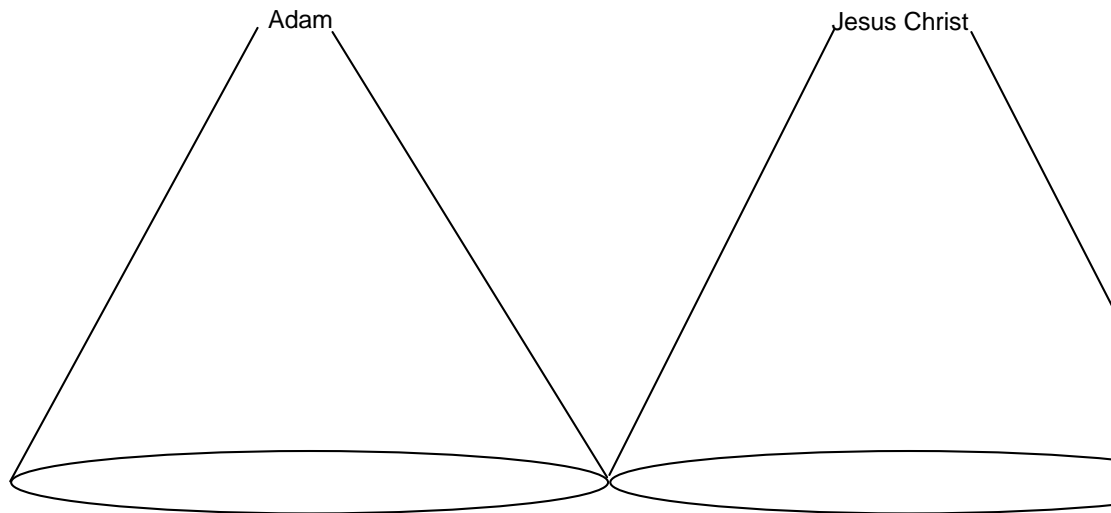
4. Everyone starts in Adam. But have you received the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness in Christ?

*This could be a confrontational question and needs to be handled carefully. However it may lead a very valuable discussion.*

Worksheet for Study 2 Romans 5.12–21

# The Lord who Has Conquered Sin

1. Read Romans 5:12-21. Fill in the following diagram with the words that the passage uses to describe the conditions that follow from Adam and Christ.



2. What events led to each of these conditions?

3. Who are affected by each of these conditions?

4. Everyone starts in the Adam. But have you received the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness in Christ?

### Study 3: Colossians 1.15–23

## Peace by the Blood of the Lord

### A. Preparation questions on Colossians 1.15–23 (For the leader)

In what sense is Jesus ‘the image of the invisible God’? (Read Gen. 1.1 & 1.26-27)

Compare Ps 89.19-27 with Col 1.15. What do you think ‘firstborn of all creation’ means here?

What relationship did Christ have to the world before his incarnation?

In what does Christ have ‘first place’? Make a list from the passage Col. 1.15-20.

What was God doing through Christ’s death? If the world already belongs to God, why did he need to win it back?

What is the significance of the phrase ‘the blood of his cross’ (v20)?

What was God’s goal for us in Christ’s sacrificial death (v22)? Does this mean we are now sinless?

Look at verse 23. What is the boundary marker for who has peace with God? What does it look like in real life to fulfil this?

## B. Notes on the Passage

Colossians 1.15-20 is one of those New Testament passages overflowing with meaning because of its deep roots in the Jewish tradition. Paul takes a number of major threads in the Old Testament literature and weaves them to paint a magisterial portrait of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 15. Who is Jesus? He is the image of the invisible God. Humankind was made in the image of God and was meant to reflect the character of its creator, but humankind and subsequently Israel fell drastically short in their calling to be image bearers of the creator God. But Jesus is the true image bearer. He is, then, the true human and the truth about God. And he is the firstborn of all creation. In Pals 89 the Lord's king is called the 'firstborn' because all God's world is his dominion, he is 'the highest of the kings of the earth' (v27). Therefore no human is greater than the Lord Jesus.

And why does he hold this supreme position over the creation? Because all things were created through him and for him (v16). And in him all things hold together (v17). He is the agent of God's active and intimate involvement in his creation. He is God's wisdom of Proverbs 8. But if this is the true identify of the Lord Jesus, then we can see why it is totally fitting that he should be God's agent for the recreation of the world and the spearhead for God's plan to win back his rebellious people.

This is precisely where Paul's description (poem) takes us next. 'He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead' (v18). Hear the overtones again of Genesis. Just as Christ was present and active in the creation, so he is at the centre of God's work of recreation and reconciliation. And so Christ has the first place in everything. And the centre of the centre of God's work is the cross. More specifically Paul mentions the 'blood' of his cross.

But what does this mean? What was going on when Christ submitted to death? The passage tells us that God was reconciling all things to himself by making peace through a sacrifice. The blood shed was the blood of a sacrifice. That is to say, just as sin was dealt with in the temple by a sacrifice, so here sin was being dealt with on the cross. God was reconciling 'all things, whether on earth or in heaven'. Every inch of this rebellious cosmos has had peace with God won for it by Christ' death. And that includes us.

Though the Colossians were once estranged from God and hostile towards him, doing evil deeds, they had been reconciled by Christ's death so that they may be 'holy, blameless and irreproachable before him' (v22). And we too are reconciled with our creator and will stand before him blameless provided that we continue in the faith, not shifting from the hope promised. Reconciliation is not automatic, but only belongs to those who are faithful to Christ. Knowing his superiority to all other so called gods and so called lords, and knowing that we will stand with him on the day he returns, we would be utterly foolish not to maintain a faithful trust in and allegiance to Christ for all our lives.

## C. Study Suggestion

**Teaching aim:** This study further focuses on the cross of Christ to see that in the Lord's death God was making peace with his creation and reconciling his estranged creatures to himself.

**Life change goal:** To know that we have peace with our heavenly Father by trust in the one through whom we were created and now first is in everything.

### Opening activity

Ask the group members fill in the relationship with God scale on the top of the page. Do not talk about this yet!

### Who died on the cross?

From verses 15-17, what do we learn about Christ's relationship to...

- God?

*He has always shared in God's work and when we see Christ we see what God is like.*

- The creation?

*The whole universe (even the rebellious bits) exists only at the pleasure of Christ and continues to exist because of his faithfulness.*

- Humankind?

*Christ is the creator of all people, and therefore greater than all those who would set themselves up against him – whether Caesar or Mohammed.*

### Why did he die?

From verses 18-20, what do we learn about the meaning of the cross?

*You will need to talk about reconciliation, but particularly about sacrifice (because it is the fundamental metaphor here). You may like to point out the scope of the reconciliation, namely 'all things' and discuss what this might mean. The main point is that the cross was part of God's plan to make peace with his rebellious world.*

Does it make sense that the one described as the 'firstborn of all creation' should die on a cross?

*This is a question for genuine discussion. On one hand it is totally incongruous that the one who is the inheritor of all the creation should become suffer the humiliation of death as a creature. But on the other hand, it is fitting that the one through whom the world was created should lead the work of restoration.*

### What does this mean for us?

From 1.21-23, what did the death of Christ mean for the Colossians' relationship with God?

*Discuss what they were, how it has changed and on what basis*

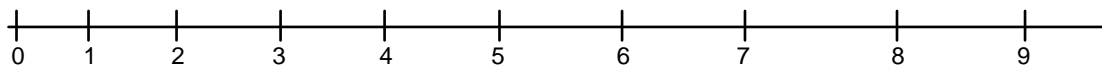
### Finally...

Ask "Now review your answer you gave at the beginning in the relationship with God scale"

*The answer is 10! Of course it is "provided you continue..." but this doesn't change the 10, just means we only have this relationship in Christ not in ourselves.*

### Worksheet for study 3: Colossians 1.15-23

## Peace by the Blood of the Lord



Rate your relationship with God

<sup>15</sup>He is the image

of the invisible God  
the firstborn of all creation;

<sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,  
things visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers –  
all things have been created through him and for him.

<sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things,  
and in him all things hold together.

<sup>18</sup>He is the head  
of the body, the church;

He is the beginning,  
the firstborn from the dead,  
so that he might come to have the first place in everything.

<sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

<sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,  
whether on earth or in heaven,

by making peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup>And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

<sup>22</sup>he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy,  
blameless and irreproachable before him—<sup>23</sup>provided that you continue securely  
established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the  
gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

### Who died on the cross?

From verses 15-17, what do we learn about Christ's relationship to...

• God?

• The creation?

• Humankind?

### Why did he die?

From verses 18-20, what do we learn about the meaning of the cross?

Does it make sense that the one described as the 'firstborn of all creation' should die on a cross?

### What does this mean for us?

From verses 21-23, what did the death of Christ mean for the Colossians?

**Finally...**

**Study 4: 1 Corinthians 15.20-28**

## The Once and Future Resurrected Lord

### A. Preparation Questions on 1 Corinthians 15.20–28

What is the proper order of events in 1 Corinthians 15.23-28? In the passage, why is this an appropriate order? Where are we now in this order of events?

When does “the end” happen? What happens at “the end”?

What will be put under Christ’s feet? What does this mean? Why must he reign until this happens?

Look up Psalm 110 and Psalm 8. How are they alluded to in verses 23-28? What is the significance of the links?

In what sense is death still the last enemy to be defeated? Is it defeated now?

In what way is Christ’s rule complete now? In what way is it incomplete now?

What is the overall purpose of all this? What does it mean for God to be all in all? Isn’t this the case already?

What is the link between Jesus’ resurrection and the end times in this passage?

## B. Notes on the Passage: 1 Corinthians 15.20–28

In the last study we concentrated on a particular aspect of Jesus' resurrection rule—his fulfilment of God's purposes for humanity. In this study we look at the bigger picture of God's cosmic purposes in Christ and where we stand in them.

Remember the main point that Paul is making in this chapter is that the dead are raised in opposition to the assertion that they are not by some in the Corinthian church. Having established that Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection of the dead in vv. 20-23, Paul then takes his readers forward to the future day of Christ's return—the great day of the resurrection of the dead of which Christ's resurrection is a guarantee.

His point in 15.24-28 is that for the goal of Jesus' reign to be reached, dead believers must be raised. The verses are set out below to show the logic of the argument.

But each in its own order:

1. the first fruits, Christ
2. Then at his coming,  
those who belong to him
3. Then the end (= "the goal")
  - a. When he hands over the kingdom to God the Father
  - b. When he has destroyed every rule, authority and power.

(Ö)

When all things are subjected to him

the Son will also be subjected to the one who has put all things in subjection under

him

SO THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL

15.23–24: First comes the first fruits: Christ. His resurrection guarantees the rest (see study 3).

Then his "parousia" (a term often used in the political sphere for the arrival of a ruler), when those who belong to him are raised.

Then the "end" (ie. goal/fulfilment/climax), which involves handing over the kingdom or reign to the Father, having destroyed "every ruler, authority and power" (ie any physical or spiritual rivals and would-be challengers to God's sovereignty).

15.25: Why does the end involve this handing over authority after defeating rivals? Because Christ must reign until all his enemies are "under his feet"—a metaphorical way of speaking about defeating them and putting them under his authority. He then goes on to expound this theme of subjection under feet and the necessity of it.

The phrase, "under his feet", picks up the language of Psalm 110. This is a psalm about the LORD giving the king a place of authority until the Lord makes all the king's enemies a "footstool" for the king. It goes on to speak of the God-established king receiving great loyalty from his subjects and executing judgement on rival kings and nations. This says three things:

- a. Christ is God's chosen Messiah in fulfilment of Ps 110. Jesus himself makes this link between the king of Ps 110 and the Messiah in Matthew 22.41-45. His rule until he defeats his enemies is therefore necessary in the sense that it fulfils Scripture.
- b. Christ is reigning now—the period after his resurrection and before his coming is the time of his rule.
- c. The goal of Christ's reign is the defeat of his (& therefore God's) enemies.

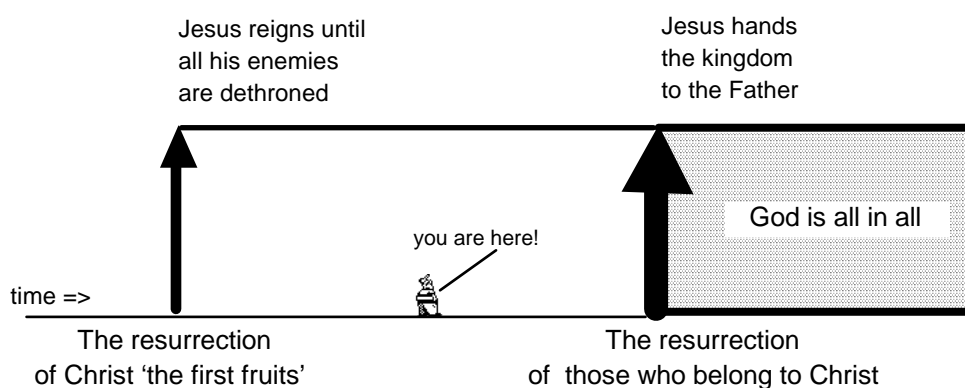
15.26: "The last enemy to be defeated is death". While Christ reigns now, the fact that some Christians have "fallen asleep" ie. died, remains a challenge to his rule. Is death one realm which will have the final say? No! says Paul. It has been defeated in Christ's resurrection but will be finally and completely defeated when believers are resurrected.

15.27: Paul quotes Psalm 8 to further expound the idea that it is necessary for Christ to reign until all his enemies put under his feet. As a meditation on Genesis 1-2, Psalm 8 speaks of God's sovereignty in creation and of humanity's place in that creation. God's original purpose was to give humans dominion over his works and to put all things under their feet. They were made in his image to be his co-rulers in his world. However, as we saw in study 3, Adam's sin overturned that order and sin, death and struggle became man's lot instead of dominion. However, by ruling over all things, Christ is the true man of Psalm 8, fulfilling

God's purpose for Adam in Genesis 1-2. Again he fulfils the Scriptures.

Notice how v. 27 also expands some of the ideas of vv. 24-26. "All things" are subjected which is broader in scope than just his enemies in verse 25. It also emphasises that Christ's victory is not one he achieves alone. God is very much a part of it. It is God who puts all things under his feet. This is backed up by the second half of verse 27 where Paul makes it clear that the "all things" does not include God himself, as if Christ had taken God's place or something like that. Verse 28 also emphasises the agency of God in the subjection. Even Christ himself is subjected to God, another way of saying he hands over the kingdom to the Father as in verse 24. Therefore the ultimate conclusion of the whole process is appropriate: God is "all in all". "All in all" at least refers to the sovereignty of God over all things. The outcome of the resurrection harvest of which Christ is the guarantee is that God is universally acknowledged as the source and goal of all there is.

By way of summary, the passage may be represented this way:



We therefore stand between the two great resurrections. The first was Jesus' resurrection when he was vindicated as God's promised Messiah—the eternal king. He reigns now and yet there is still a sense of incompleteness to his rule. It is not universally acknowledged and Christ's people still die. But Christ's resurrection guarantees the second resurrection, when believers who have died will join in Christ's resurrection. This resurrection will be the completion of Christ's victory over all his enemies—the goal of his reign. He will then have fulfilled his role as Messiah and True Human and will give his reign to the Father who will then be universally acknowledged as the goal and source of all things.

How are we to think of this time? There are two dangers to avoid:

- a. Underplay the reality of Christ's reign now so that Christ's resurrection makes little difference—his enemies have unfettered power and will triumph.
- b. Underplay the incompleteness of Christ's reign as if we have it all now and there is no future final victory. It seems this is what the Corinthians had done in their super-spirituality.

What should we do? Paul's exhortation in the light of these truths is in 1Cor 15.58:  
"Therefore my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain"

## C. Suggestions for the Study on 1 Corinthians 15.20–28

**Teaching goal:** The purpose of this study is to show how Christ's lordship unfolds over time and how we live between the crowning of Christ as Lord and the final defeat of his enemies, especially death. We will also be shown the purpose of Christ's lordship, that God the Father may be all in all.

**A life change goal:** To stand firm, submitting to Jesus' lordship in every area of life in a world where not all the enemies are finally defeated, waiting in confidence for his final victory and vindication.

1. Talk about the challenges to belief in Jesus' Lordship at Sydney University and in our

lives. What do others think of the idea that Jesus rules now and why do they think it?

2. Read the passage. Ask members to draw a timeline of the order of events described in vv. 23-28. What is the final outcome of these events? What would it be like for God to be “all in all”?

3. Talk about where we are on the timeline.

What do we know has happened? What did that achieve for the world and for us? [Talk about how big and important Jesus’ death and resurrection is.] If there was nothing more to happen ie no return or resurrection of the dead, what effect would that have on our faith?

What is still to happen? What would be the effect on our life as Christians if the only “cash value” of faith were what we would receive in the future?

How do the truths in 1Cor 15.20-28 help us to face the ambiguity of our situation between the two resurrections eg suffering, death, Christ ridiculed, struggle with sin?

4. In what way is Jesus Lord now at Sydney Uni?

- in “every area of our lives”: studies, relationships, time.

- of those around us and what happens here?

Worksheet Study 4: 1 Corinthians 15.20-28

# The Once and Future Resurrected Lord

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Time

In what way is Jesus Lord now at Sydney Uni?

- in “every area of our lives”: studies, relationships, time.

- of those around us and what happens here?

**Study 5: Romans 8.31–39**

## The Assurance of the Lord

### A. Preparation Questions on Romans 8.31–39

What are the 'these things' in v.31?

What are the answers to the two questions in v.31?

In what way is God 'for us'?

What is the 'everything else' that God will give us?

Who or what is God's elect?

What are the answers to the questions in vv.33-34? What is the connection between the question and the statement in each of these verses?

What does it mean that Jesus is at the right hand of God? How is He interceding for us?

What are the answers to the two questions in v.35?

What do each of the terms (hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, & sword) mean?

Read Psalm 44. In Ps 44:22 who is 'your' and 'we' referring to? Who does it refer to in Romans 8? Why did Paul include this quote here?

'In all these things' v.37 is referring to which specific things?

What does it mean to be a 'more than conqueror'?

What are each of the terms (rulers, powers, height, depth) referring to?

## B. Notes on the Passage

*This is a great passage which celebrates the security that believers have in Christ. It is a response to the many blessings Paul has listed in the preceding chapters of Romans. For this reason, many people consider this passage to be the climax of the letter to this point.*

**V.31** 'These things' could refer back to vv.28-30, or to all of chapter 8, or to all that is contained in chapters 5-8. It is not necessary to pinpoint exactly which of these options is the correct one. It is clear that Paul's aim is to focus the reader's attention on the things that God has done for them and to draw conclusions about the certainty they have as a result of this. The statement 'God is for us' suggests that God is on our side, he is working 'for' us. If this is the case then who can be against us? This does not mean that nobody will, in fact, oppose us. Rather Paul is saying that nobody and no 'thing' can ultimately harm, or stand in the way of the one that God is 'for'.

**V.32** God has demonstrated that he is for us by sending his own Son to die for us. This leaves us in no doubt of his commitment to us! The fact that God 'gave him up' reminds us of the active part that God took in the crucifixion. Furthermore it is for 'all of us', meaning at least all believers. The argument of the verse indicates that since God has already given his Son then he is not going to hold back anything else. 'Everything else' (NRSV) or 'All things' (NIV) could be alluding to the fact that we will share in Christ's sovereignty over all creation. However since the focus of the passage seems to be on salvation it is more likely to be all things necessary (both spiritually and materially) to bring us to that final salvation.

**V.33** 'Bring a charge' is the first example of the legal terminology that is prevalent in this passage. Since the verb is in the future tense, Paul is probably thinking particularly of the last judgement. Again charges may be brought against us by Satan (the accuser), by our enemies, and even by our own sins but they will not be successful. There are two reasons for this. The first is given in the question itself, because we are God's elect. The second is because God is the one who justifies. If God declares us right then that's the final word on the matter. There is no court of appeal.

**V.34** This verse seems to be translated differently in every version. Moo points out that there are at least six ways to translate vv.33-34. Comparing the NIV and NRSV shows two different renderings. The NIV has "Who is he that condemns?" implying that the answer is Jesus, who died for us and is interceding for us. The NRSV has "Who is to condemn?" implying that the answer is nobody because Jesus died for us and is interceding for us. The NRSV seems to better fit the sense of the passage because 'condemn' is a natural contrast to 'justify' that immediately precedes it. Furthermore, the answer to all the rhetorical 'who' questions in the passage seems to be, 'nobody.' The reason that nobody is to condemn is because Jesus has died, risen, and sits at the right hand of God. This sequence goes in ascending order, finishing with a reminder that Jesus is the Lord who sits at the right hand of God. This Lord is interceding for us, so what chance goes anybody have of condemning us?

**V.35** The verse begins with another 'who' question and again the answer is 'nobody', although some may make an attempt. This line of thought is picked up later in vv.38-39 where Paul explicitly states that nothing can separate us from God's love. Paul then completes the verse with another question, which is answered in v.37. The list given by Paul is reasonably self-explanatory, nakedness refers to the removing of all our possessions (even our clothes), and sword means death by execution.

**V.36** This is an interruption in the flow of thought. The quote comes from Psalm 44:22 and emphasises the reality of persecution. Paul shows that it happened in Old Testament times, and we should not be surprised that it happens now.

**V.37** This verse actually answers the question asked at the end of v.35. This list of things won't separate us from the love of Christ; in fact we are 'more than conquerors.' Rob uses the word 'super-conquerors' here. This is a superlative that shows how much assurance we can have. We won't be separated from Christ. We won't simply conquer. We will super-conquer! But this is not our victory or because we are anything special, it is 'through him who loved us.'

**Vv.38-39** Paul closes with his personal conviction of the certainty Christians have. He includes a comprehensive list of things that won't be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. Neither death nor life, which doesn't leave much room! Angels and rulers probably refer to the

spirit world with angels referring to 'good' spirits and rulers referring to demons or 'bad' spirits. Rulers could also mean secular authorities. Things now and things to come emphasise that the believer has nothing to worry about now or in the future. Powers probably refers again to spiritual forces. Height and Depth are the most controversial terms but it seems that there are two main options. The first option is that it is again a reference to spiritual powers because they were thought to exist above and beneath the horizon. However, these terms are never used in this sense in the NT. The second option, that they are spatial terms, seems more likely. The intention is that these terms embrace the entire universe; everything above and everything below. In case Paul has left anything out he concludes with the statement 'or anything else in all creation.' What great assurance it is to know that nothing can separate us from God's love!

## C. Suggestions for the Study

Aim:

We begin the second semester by focussing on the empowering certainly of God's unshakeable commitment to us. Assurance is an important platform from which we can bold live for Christ at Uni. This study aims to develop a greater confidence in God's unshakeable love in Christ.

*Take out the first semester Jesus is Lord diagram. Start by reminding the students about the studies that they did last semester, which were on the kingdom of God and the fact that Jesus has been made Lord. Emphasise the fact that those who have accepted Christ live under his Lordship and are part of the kingdom of God. This semester the studies focus on living in the Kingdom. They talk about what life is like in the Kingdom and how we should live, given that Jesus is Lord.*

Now ask "What are the key components of the fruitful Christian life?"

*The group comes up with a list, like prayer, evangelism etc. These are basically the subjects of the next studies! However what is commonly left out is the topic of assurance, the topic for today.*

1. Read Romans 8:31-39. In pairs complete the following table.

Verse	Question	Answer	Reason	Verse
v.31b	If God is for us, who is against us?	Nobody	He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us	v.32
v.33	Who will bring any charge against God's elect?	Nobody	It is God who justifies.	v.33
v.34	Who is to condemn?	Nobody	It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.	v.34
v.35a	Who will separate us from the love of Christ?	Nobody	Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.	vv.38-39
v.35b	Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?	No	We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.	v.37

2. Does this mean that nobody will oppose us, or bring a charge against us, or attempt to *condemn us*? *No it does not. As pointed out in the notes, Satan and our enemies will attempt all of these things but they will not succeed. The point of the passage is not that we will enjoy a trouble free life but will prevail because God is for us*

3. Who is the 'us' in the passage?

*Don't immediately accept the standard answers, get them to look over the passage first and see what is in it. The only reference other than 'us' is to 'God's elect'. Resist the temptation to talk about predestination. Get them to look at Romans 8:1-2. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This should ring bells from last semester about being 'in Christ'.*

4. Look at the reasons that you listed in the table. Circle the things we do and underline the things God does. Who is the active party? Why is this important?

*It is clear that God is the active party. All the references are to what God has done for us. Push them as to why this is important. The passage is all about assurance, but we can only*

**Worksheet for study 5: romans 8.31-39**  
**the assurance of the Lord**

1. Read Romans 8:31-39. In pairs complete the following table.

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Verse</b>
v.31b	If God is for us, who is against us?			
v.33	Who will bring any charge against God's elect?			
v.34	Who is to condemn?			
v.35a	Who will separate us from the love of Christ?			
v.35b	Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?			

2. Does this mean that nobody will oppose us, or bring a charge against us, or attempt to condemn us?

3. Who is the 'us' in the passage?

4. Look at the reasons that you listed in the table. Circle the things we do and underline the things God does. Who is the active party? Why is this important?

## Study 6: Colossians 3.1-17

# Seeking the Things of the Lord

## A. Preparation Questions

Read Col 2.20–3.4. When did you die with Christ? When were you raised with Christ?

How is my life 'hidden with Christ in God' (v. 3)?

Why should we 'put to death... whatever is earthly' (v. 5)?

Why do we need to stop lying (etc.) if we have already 'stripped off the old self with its practices' (v. 9)?

And why do we need to 'clothe' ourselves (v. 12) if we have already 'clothed' ourselves (v. 10)?

List each of the virtues mentioned in vv. 12-17. Think about how Jesus embodied each one.

What does it mean to 'do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus' (v. 17)?

Having looked through the passage, what ideas do you think will be new for your small group members? How will this affect the way you give the study?

## B. Notes on the Passage

At Colossians 3 verse 1 we pick up Paul's train of thought halfway through an argument that began at 2.20 with the phrase if with Christ you have died. Then at the beginning of chapter 3 we read if you have been raised with Christ, which parallels the previous phrase. Paul is pointing to past events to ground his description of the new life we live in Christ.

The immediate question is exactly which past events he is referring to. On one hand he seems to be talking about the death and resurrection of Christ. But on the other hand, the readers are the ones who have experienced death and resurrection (you died—you have been raised). The most plausible reading of this is that Paul has in mind that time when the readers came to Christ. In their case, as was common in the New Testament church, this was at their baptism. He is asking his readers to think back to their baptism. Weren't you identifying yourself with Christ's death? Weren't you identifying yourself with Christ's resurrection? This reading is confirmed by Paul's use of this same argument in his letter to the Romans (6.1-11). In this parallel passage in Romans we find explicit reference to baptism as well as the same language of dying and being raised with Christ.

So Chapter 3 begins with a description of the reader's state in Christ, namely, your life is hidden with Christ in God (v3) Their whole life is now tied up with Christ. Their identity is so bound up with Christ that somehow when Christ is hidden, they too are hidden. When Christ is revealed, they also will be revealed with him. And so, given that their new life is dedicated to Christ and intimately bound up with him, shouldn't they be seeking the things that are above and setting their minds on these things? In other words, shouldn't they be praying for Christ's return and living for it? Shouldn't they be remembering that Christ is indeed enthroned at the right hand of God and will come again in glory (v1 and 4).

Paul continues Put to death, therefore (v5). The argument of vv1-4 is, to Paul's mind, the key to the Christian's new character. The one who belongs to Christ has died and been raised with him, and must live in a way appropriate to their new identity. 'The new life, to be revealed fully on the last day, is to let itself be seen in advance, in the present time, in Christian behaviour' (N.T. Wright).

Now, the desire and work of our King is to put sin to death, and we who are his subjects are to work towards the same goal, at least in our own lives (v. 6). How terrible it would be if we who claim to be his subjects are found harbouring sin and defending it. We would be fighting for the other team, and we would make ourselves enemies of God as we used to be (v. 7).

So we must rid ourselves of fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry), anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language (vv. 5, 7). We must treat these things like intruders in our house – they have no right to be there, and certainly having no right to give orders. It is as if Paul is saying 'let the old self which is already dead in baptism remain dead' (Martin). Or to change the metaphor: when you were baptised, you took off your old clothes and jumped in the water. When you came out, you put on new clothes to match your new life. Don't start going back to your old dirty clothes again when you are just starting to look more and more like your creator himself! (vv. 9, 10).

We are *God's chosen ones, holy and beloved* (v. 12). What sort of clothes should we put on then? Answer: Christlike ones. Paul mentions compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love and peace (vv. 12–15). Add to these thankfulness, gratitude and praise (vv. 15–16). Notice that these are all virtues that have to do with relationships. The result is unity and peace in the kingdom, *pax Christiana*, as every member of the body submits to Christ's loving and wise rule (v15).

Then Paul sums up the new life in the following words, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (v. 17). This verse is a fitting conclusion to Paul's argument which has focussed on our identity in Christ. We exist in and for the Lord Jesus to glorify God. We exist under the authority of Christ. This is what we committed ourselves to at our baptism. And in seeking after Christlikeness in character, the Christian is simply 'making good his baptismal allegiance by placing the totality of his life under Christ's lordship' (Martin).

## C. Suggestions for the Study

Aim: This study aims to stimulate the group members to grasp their new identity in Christ and be challenged to live lives consistent with it, or in Paul's language "seek the things that are above."

You need: The worksheet

Read Colossians 3.1–4. Paul grounds his instructions to his readers on an appeal to who they are in Christ. What phrases does he use to describe the identity of the believer? (It may help to look back to 2.20 as well).

*This is a comprehension question to get them to read this difficult little section a bit more closely.*

2. Compare Colossians 2.20 to 3.3. To whom do we belong?

*It is not said explicitly, but the clear indication is that we no longer belong to the world but to Christ with whom our lives are hidden.*

3. What is the future for those who belong to Christ (v4)? What does this mean?

*You may like to discuss this verse for a couple of minutes. The precise meaning of the verse is not that clear, but the fact that our identity, hope and future is so closely bound up with Christ is striking.*

4. Read vv. 5–11. Fill in the left hand side of the table. Then answer the first question under the table: 'What reasons does Paul give in verses 5-11 for the 'putting to death'? How do these things relate to verses 1-4?'

*They should see that Paul is always appealing to our identity as Christ's people to ground his description of the Christian life. We are called to live out who we already are.*

Read vv. 12–16. Fill in the right hand side of the table. Then answer the second question under the table: 'What reasons does Paul give in verses 12–16 for the 'clothing yourselves'? How do these things relate to verses 1–4?'

*Again the basis of Paul's appeal should be clear from the emphasis on our identity as God's chosen ones, those the Lord has forgiven, the ones he has called, etc. You may like to stress that the qualities of life we are instructed to put on are the qualities of Christlikeness. That is to say, living in service to our Lord will mean imitating him.*

How does verse 17 encapsulate the whole passage?

*The key here is to explain the phrase 'do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus'. If you are familiar with Rob's famous Poison Gas Company analogy, it might be useful in explaining this concept.*

Does verse 17 encapsulate your whole life? What areas of your life aren't in step with who you really are in Christ?

*The question here is: Can you say of your life that whatever you do, in word or deed, you do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus? Give them time to think and write something in the box. It is up to you as to whether you want to talk through these things or let them reflect on their own*

**Worksheet for study 6: Colossians 3.1-17**

## Seeking the things of the Lord

Read Colossians 3.1-4. Paul grounds his instructions to his readers on an appeal to who they are in Christ. What phrases does he use to describe the identity of the believer? (It may help to look back to 2.20 as well).

Compare Colossians 2.20 to 3.3. To whom do we belong?

What is the future for those who belong to Christ (v4)? What does this mean?

Put to death, therefore Ö	Clothe yourselves with Ö

What reasons does Paul give in verses 5-11 for the 'putting to death'? How do these things relate to verses 1-4?

What reasons does Paul give in verses 12-16 for the 'clothing yourselves'? How do these things relate to verses 1-4?

How does verse 17 encapsulate the whole passage?

Does verse 17 encapsulate your whole life? What areas of your life aren't in step with who you really are in Christ?

## Study 7: Ephesians 4.1–16

# The Lord's Community

## A. Preparation Questions

[CJA will do these]

What does it mean for Paul to be a prisoner of the Lord?

What are the marks of living a life worthy of the Lord?

What are the marks of unity? why is this so significant to the Christian community?

“each of us were given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift” (7). Come up with a working definition of grace. Does measure suggest limitation of Christ's gift?

What insights does vs 7-10 give us into the incarnation?

Do we still have apostles?

Do we still have prophets?

What is the purpose of these gifts?

Trace the unity language through this passage?

What does it mean to speak the truth in love? What is the context here with Paul?

How does Paul's body metaphor help us to understand the church body?

Having looked through the passage, what ideas do you think will be new for your small group members? How will this affect the way you give the study?

## B. Notes on the passage

Verses 1–6

This is a key passage in a letter that challenges us to look at God's and Christ's unifying purpose for the world, precisely in the church. It comes after a section of thanksgiving and celebration of God's great purposes and prayer. Chapter four begins a section of encouragement to live out the reality of Christ's Lordship which brings reconciliation and unity.

Paul writes from prison in Rome probably around AD 61-62. He introduces himself as a prisoner of the Lord, possibly implying the very sort of commitment that he is asking of fellow Christians as it is because of his passion for unity that he is imprisoned. Paul's first appeal is to live in a way that is worthy of God's calling which is in verse 13, 'until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ'. Maturity is not a quality we attain here (eg through learning), its end point is being brought into Christ's riches on the last day, sharing in his rule over creation. Ephesians 1.20–22 and 2.6 also speak of our calling to share in his kingdom. So the point here is to stay, keep, maintain the faith.

However, we do not do this alone. God has not called us alone. Others share in the same calling to maturity and Paul is urging us to help each other live this way. Paul wants to instill in us a sense of affinity with those who have the same hope in God. This affinity is brought to us through the Spirit, and Paul warns us that it is a bond that may be broken through selfishness, pride and arrogance which he addresses later in the chapter (4:17-5:14). In verses 4-7 there is a repetition of the word 'one' seven times. Paul is reminding us of what our common hope is, what it is that is unifying us.

Verses 7-16.

We find in verse 7 that everyone has a part in bringing about the ultimate goal, union with Christ, through the grace given to us. What is this grace? Dealing with or taking captive the powers that bound us and bestowing on us the victors gifts. Verses 9-10 can be taken in a few different ways.

- He who ascended also descended into Hades: the + reference to this being the earthly regions exclude this option.
- The one who ascended also re descended in the spirit to give gifts to mankind: this option also seems to be excluded since verse 10 states that he fills the universe from heaven - not re descending to bring gifts
- The one who ascended is the one who earlier descended to incarnation and humiliation on the cross: this is preferable, the one who ascended now and gives gifts to us of blessings and peace, is the one who descended to humility and death for us.

We then move on to examples of these gifts. It's important to note that this is not an exhaustive list! These gifts, being the ones that reveal, declare and teach are possibly emphasised for the role they play in shaping the churches' unified growth. It might be helpful to think about what else builds up the church (eg hospitality, church cleaning ...)

The rest of the passage speaks of the purposes of these gifts.

- To equip or prepare Gods people to serve the churches' needs in order to build up the body of Christ

This should address our tendency to be overly concerned about what our individual gifts are or what our specific role is in the body. Instead we are to have the goal of union with Christ as our goal for our community and thus seek to do whatever it is that will serve that purpose. It would not be helpful to all be musicians. So much would be left to do. So it may mean doing something that is at first uncomfortable in order to meet needs. Paul's summary puts everything in perspective. He reminds us that the body's growth comes from Christ but it grows as we exercise our diversity.

## C. Suggestions for the Study

This study aims to help people catch the very significant truth that the Christian faith is not just vertical. To have God as your father means you have others as brother and sisters!

- Which diagram best describes what you think a Christian is?

*These diagrams can mean whatever they want them to mean with the exception of the crown - that represents God. This question is to get them thinking about what are important features in their faith eg- does the Lordship of Christ enter into their thinking? How much they are they dependant on and responsible for other Christians? Read Ephesians 4 v 1- 16 You may do this in subgroups*

- Which verse most captures the main point Paul is making?

*The real aim here is to have them engaged with the passage and discuss its meaning. You may do this by subgroups working out what they think and then sharing the results.*

- What do you think Paul holds as the goal of the Christian life?

*Here we're looking for the concept that God is calling his people to maturity and that we each have a part to play in this process. The key is to recognise that maturity has its end point in the coming of Christ when he brings us into his glory. The goal - to stay in Christ under his Lordship for the rest of our lives.*

- What does Paul say about our differences as Christians?

*Here we move on to our part. We are to speak the truth to one another - in love , that we may grow up into Christ v 15. We are to do what leads people to Christ. As everyone encourages each other and serves the churches' needs the Church is built up. Different gifts are given for this reason. Here we are challenged to think of others needs rather than what we're comfortable doing (we can't all be eyes, to maintain the body metaphor).*

- Identify as many arguments as possible (with the help of the Ephesians passage and Stott) for Christians to enter into relationship with other Christians.

*Discuss the relevance of the Stott quote. Points such as isolation , loneliness, highlight the advantages of relying on the Christian community. In addition, ideas from Ephesians such as diversity serving a variety of needs and encouragement to live in Christ.*

- What might lead a person separate their personal allegiance to Christ from their membership to the Christian community? Are you ever tempted to do this?

*Break the question down if necessary. Have you ever thought it was just about you and God and gone solo? Or to present the opposite problem - Can the Christian community be treated as merely a social club and God be ignored? Listen to peoples experiences. You may find that the issue of EU vs Church is raised. The Christian response is to identify yourself with God's people wherever you are. And then work out individual priorities. EU is not a replacement for church. It is union for mission.*

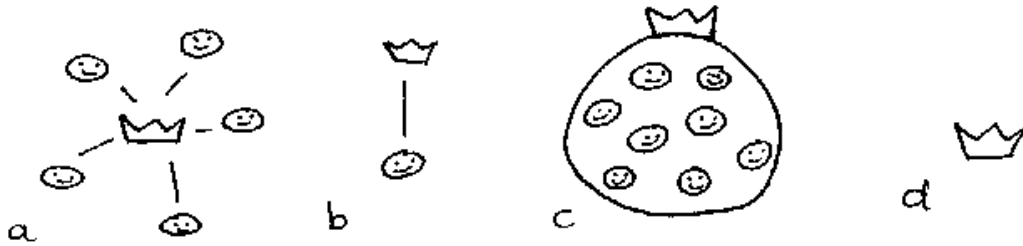
- What is involved in Christian relationships, both at church and as fellow Christians at uni?

*This is really a key part to the study - it brings it together. We need to be reminding each other of the goal of maturity and to actively seek ways to serve that purpose. It would be great if the group could be practical here. It may mean discussing the group's needs and how they can serve each other or you may like to draw on some insights regarding how your church is doing.*

worksheet for study 7: Ephesians 4.1-16

## The Lord's Community

- Which diagram best describes what you think a Christian is



Read Ephesians 4.1-16

- Which verse most captures the main point Paul is making?
- What do you think Paul holds as the goal of the Christian life?
- What does Paul say about our differences as Christians?

'The very purpose of his self giving on the cross was not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate their loneliness, but to create a new community whose members would belong to him, love one another and eagerly serve the world. And from the day of Pentecost onwards that conversion to Christ means conversion to the community of Christ as people turn from themselves to him, and from this 'corrupt generation' to the alternative society which he is gathering around himself. These two transfers of personal allegiance and social membership cannot be separated'.

John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 255

- Identify as many arguments as possible (with the help of the Ephesians passage and Stott) for Christians to enter into relationship with other Christians.

- What might lead a person separate their personal allegiance to Christ from their membership to the Christian community? Are you ever tempted to do this?

- What is involved in Christian relationships, both at church and as fellow Christians at uni?

- How can I be praying for other Christians I know?

## Study 8: 2 Timothy 3.10-17

# The Teaching of the Lord

## A. Preparation Questions

What are the various things that Timothy has observed in Paul? What does Paul create this list of things? What is his purpose in telling him of his own experience? What is the general principle with which Paul concludes?

What is the purpose of going on to mention that people from whom he learned it – what is this supposed to do for Timothy?

What is the relationship between the sacred writings and the people/examples that Paul has so far mentioned? How is that different for us living this side of the completion of the Bible?

What is the overall purpose of those writings? How is this achieved?

What is the source of the writings/Scriptures? What does it mean to say that something is inspired by God? What things exactly are inspired?

What do the Scriptures do to/for us? Again, how do they do these things? What are all the contexts in which this happens for you? What are the implications of this understanding of the Scriptures as a means to another end?

What is your goal with regard to the Scriptures?

## B. Notes on the Passage

Paul's second letter to Timothy is one of those 'passing the baton' moments. Paul is squarely facing the end of his life (2 Tim 4.6), and as he looks over the impact of his ministry, he sees difficulties, defections and dangers (2 Tim 1.15, 2.16–17, 3.1–9), with the real possibility of significant failure. Timothy, left at Ephesus by Paul (1 Tim 1.3) to strengthen and pastor the church, is a young and timid man of God, and so in the climate of crisis, Paul writes to him to "guard the good treasure" of the gospel (2 Tim 1.14). It is in this context, and specifically in the context of those who would oppose the progress of the gospel being "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim 3.2, 4–5), that Paul indicates to Timothy how and on what ground he is to maintain his way, and live a godly life in Christ Jesus. And what he takes him to is the word of the Lord, lived out and written by those Timothy trusts, and in doing so, speaks to us of how we, by the light of the Scriptures, are to live under the Lordship of Christ.

In this paragraph Paul makes two points, the first, made in verses 10–14, might be surprising to our ears, but is apparent on reflection. Here Paul appeals to Timothy's community of faith and the context in which he was formed in the word of God. This is, if you like the word of God embodied, and Timothy is encouraged to remember the example of those who taught him, especially those who prove faithful to Christ in the midst of suffering and pain over a long period of time. For Timothy, this included both his mother and grandmother (3.14 – see also 1.5) and also the Apostle Paul himself (note that the role of the Apostle changes for us, who are not his contemporaries). The goal of this reminder is clear, if unstated: to encourage Timothy to stick closely to their good example of faithfulness to Christ under even intense pressure. We will draw two conclusions from this in the study: first, those who were brought up as believers often regret the fact that they can't point to a definitive conversion experience, and feel that this somehow makes their Christian conviction inferior – on the contrary, Paul here sees it as a distinct positive. Second, and more importantly, this point reinforces the study on the corporate nature of Christian living, and encourages people to think more broadly than their personal private Bible reading/quiet times about the way in which their lives reflect a pattern of hearing and living the word of God, leading to a recognition of the significance of such things as church, Bible reading/teaching experiences in S.U.E.U., small group Bible studies and so on.

Second, verses 15–17 articulate the prime importance of the Scriptures, which in the context referred to what we call the Old Testament. (but which for us now includes the Apostle's "teaching, conduct, aim in life" etc) about which two things are said. On the one hand, he speaks of their source, indicating that they are God-breathed, and we will spend some time looking at what this claim of inspiration entails and doesn't entail, and where it leaves us as evangelicals. On the other hand, Paul speaks of their purpose, initially in terms of instructing you for salvation, which is then explained as teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, thus equipping those who belong to God for every good work. We will explore the significance of recognising that the Scriptures are a means rather than an end, including the fact that the Scriptures now include the New Testament, and will finish by praying some wonderful old prayers which ask to work in us by the Scriptures and his Spirit.

As regards the text, there is no great difficulty in understanding what Paul is getting at.

In the first point (vv. 10–14) Paul highlights the word of God embodied in two sets of people – first himself (vv. 10–13), and second "those from whom [Timothy] learned", namely his grandmother and mother, already mentioned. The key implicit encouragement (if you could call it that) to Timothy here is that of v. 12: "all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Therefore, it should come as no surprise to Timothy of this is, or does in the future, happen to him, and he should stand firm in it. And it is precisely the example of standing firm that he has seen in people he knows and trusts that should strengthen him in this – Paul, who regards Timothy as his "loyal child in the faith" (1 Tim 1.2) and his "beloved child" (2 Tim 1.2), and his own family. He has learnt from personally observing Paul's teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love, steadfastness; and also from his family learned and firmly believed the gospel. As well Timothy has what Paul calls "Scripture" which is probably what we today call the Old Testament. However Paul is convinced that understood properly they are "able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ".

He goes on to make two points about these Scriptures: their source lies in God, and their use/purpose is to equip “everyone who belongs to God”. They do this by teaching, reproof, correcting and training in righteousness, which are probably not four entirely distinct things, but shade into one another. Notice that Timothy’s teaching derives from Paul, from his family and ultimately from the Scriptures.

For us, the Scriptures now include the writings of the Apostles – this is no surprise, since Paul has very closely identified his word and the gospel throughout this letter (2 Tim 1.8, 11, 13; 2.8–10). That is, although the configuration is different, the reality is the same for us. On the other hand we now have no independent access to Paul’s example and teaching (or that of Jesus or the other apostles, other than through these Christian scriptures).

## C. Suggestions for the Study

**Aim:** to strengthen people in their determination shaped by and soaked in the word of the Lord, particularly to understand better the nature and purposes of Scripture.

### Introductory question

Ask about how each group member’s bible study is going.

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none            miserable            not bad            good            ripping            scholar

Ask what they base the assessment on. Note that typically this question is only answered in terms of private individual reading. But (hopefully) they hear the Bible in many other contexts as well!

The question is why do we treat the Bible as central?

### (1) Introducing Timothy: man of the moment:

Tell the group something about the situation in Ephesus, and the need for Timothy to stand up and be counted – ask if people know anything about the situation toward the end of Paul’s life, and take them very briefly through the material at the start of the notes.

#### • The resources Timothy had been given

In facing difficulties Timothy has a number of resources. Ask them to identify them from these texts

- 1) 1.13–14 *The gospel personally handed to Timothy from the apostle Paul. And the Holy Spirit dwelling in Timothy.*
- 2) 3.10–14 *Paul’s example to Timothy of holding to the truth and living the Christian life*
- 3) 3.15–17 *The sacred writings or scripture. In Timothy’s case this is a reference to what we call the Old Testament.*

#### • What resources do we have today

Ask: What is the same and different from Timothy’s time?

*We still have the gospel and even the example of Apostles. But they are only available to us as part of the third resource, the Scriptures, which are now expanded to include the writings of the apostles and the story of Jesus. The best example of this is the very letter 2 Timothy we are reading now!*

### (2) The Scriptures or Bible

#### • The nature of the Scriptures

What do you think the main is making by calling the Scriptures “inspired”(NRSV) “God-breathed” (NIV)?

*(The word Scriptures have both God and human authors, but that ultimately, it is God who stands behind the them. As Herman Ridderbos puts it:*

Inspiration consists in this, that God makes the words of men the instrument of his Word, that he uses human words for his divine purposes. As such the human words stand in the service of God and participate in the authority and infallibility of the word of God, answer perfectly God’s purpose, in short, function as the word of God and therefore can be so called. But this remains a human instrument in the hands of God. And it is not up to us, it is up to the free pleasure of God to decide

what kind of effect divine inspiration should have in the mind, knowledge, memory, accuracy of those whom he has used in his service in order that their words really can be accepted and trusted as the inspired word of God.

H. Ridderbos *Studies in Scripture and its Authority* Page

25-26

*At this point the question of the canon might be raised in your group, that is, why is what is in the bible in the bible?*

*Simple answer (1) we believe that God guided the early Christians to recognise what they should be treated as Scripture.*

*Less simple answer (2) our Scripture today includes what was already authoritative for Timothy namely Paul's teaching and example. Except that for us they are now only in Paul's letters which we recognise as part of the expanded Christian Scriptures. This is the principle of the New Testament. They are the written form of the Apostolic testimony.*

#### • **The attitude of the Christian to Scripture**

What is the attitude the believer should have to the Scriptures?

How adequate is John Stott's summary of the appropriate attitude?

"The hallmark of Evangelicals is not so much an impeccable set of words as a submissive spirit, namely their a priori resolve to believe and obey whatever Scripture may be shown to teach. They are committed to Scripture in advance, whatever it may later be shown to say. They claim no liberty to lay down their own terms for belief and behaviour. They see this humble and obedient stance as an essential implication of Christ's lordship over them."

John Stott *Essentials* (1988)

p.104

Since they come from God ultimately, therefore they are authoritative above any other source of wisdom, instruction. The key is to maintain the supremacy of Scripture without denying the existence reality of other significant influences on our lives and thoughts, and makes sure we submit those other authorities to the authority of the Scriptures.

#### • **The purpose of the Scriptures**

Ask about the purpose Paul says the Scriptures are given for. What does he mean? What is included and excluded?

The question about the Scriptures as a means: the Bible is there to be used, not simply read and understood for its own sake. The alternative view is somewhat akin to saying that a menu at a restaurant is what you eat – no it points to what you eat, and the menu is Christ. There is a danger for us evangelicals in our high view of Scripture (which, if we have this problem, turns out to be not so high after all!). Do you see this in people?

Spend some time talking about what helps and hinders the proper use of Scripture.

• Given this, what will it be like for the Scriptures to have their proper place our personal lives?

Compare this to your experience.

(Note in (b) that we must not restrict the work of Bible simply to personal Bible reading but to all the different the occasions where the Bible is read taught sung about alluded to and so on.)

worksheet for study 8: 2 timothy 3.10-17

# The teaching of the Lord

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none      miserable      not bad      good      ripping      scholar

**1. Introducing Timothy: man of the moment:**

• **The resources Timothy had been given**

Facing difficulties Timothy has a number of resources. Identify them from these texts

1) 1.13-14

2) 3.110-14

3) 3.15-17

• **What resources do we have in today**

What is the same and different from Timothy's time?

**(2) The Scriptures or Bible**

• **The nature of the Scriptures**

What do you think the main is making by calling the Scriptures "inspired"(NRSV) "God-breathed" (NIV)?

• **The attitude of the Christian to Scripture**

What is the attitude the believer should have to the Scriptures?

How adequate is John Stott's summary of the appropriate attitude?

"The hallmark of Evangelicals is not so much an impeccable set of words as a submissive spirit, namely their a priori resolve to believe and obey whatever Scripture may be shown to teach. They are committed to Scripture in advance, whatever it may later be shown to say. They claim no liberty to lay down their own terms for belief and behaviour. They see this humble and obedient stance as an essential implication of Christ's lordship over them."

John Stott *Essentials* (1988)

p.104

• **The purpose of the Scriptures**

Given this, what will it be like for the Scriptures to have their proper place in our personal lives?

## Study 9: Philippians 4.4–7

# Casting all your cares on the Lord

## A. Preparation Questions

Read Phil. 4.4–7. Why is Paul commanding his readers to rejoice?

How is the first half of v. 5 related to v. 4?

How is the first half of v. 5 related to the second half of v. 5?

How can Paul command us not to worry? Is he saying our problems don't matter?

What attitude are we to have towards God (vv. 4, 6)?

Why do you think Paul stresses the importance of thanksgiving?

What do you think v. 7 means? What is the peace of God guarding? What is added by the clause in Christ Jesus?

Where do you think your group are at with their prayer-lives? What do you think have to learn from this passage?

## B. Notes on the passage

Paul is bringing his letter to the Philippians to a close. It is time to give a series of sharp exhortations to focus us on what life is like in Christ. In short, Paul is urging us to express our faith in confident joy and in prayer. And as people who live under the sovereign reign of Jesus, we every reason to rejoice and to pray.

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice* (v. 4). In the Lord Jesus we have a wise king, a just king, a powerful king, a protective king, a loving king, a humble king. And so we rejoice in the privilege of serving him and belonging to him. Despite the trouble Paul experienced, he affirms his confidence in his king and he urges his readers to share his confidence.

*Let your gentleness be known to everyone* (v. 5a). Knowing the care our Lord has for us, we are able to focus beyond self-protection towards our purpose in the world, namely, to show forth Christ. Here 'gentleness' has the sense of forbearance, or graciousness, that is, a confidence that allows us to forgo retaliation and not stand on our rights. This, of course, is a quality preeminently seen in our Lord (2 Cor. 10.1, 1 Peter 2.21–25, et al.).

*The Lord is near* (v. 5b). Paul may have in mind the nearness of Christ's return in time, or the nearness of Christ in spirit. The former seems more likely given that the previous sentence implicitly relies on the imminent return of Christ and the subsequent vindication of his people (the two events are almost synonymous). The nearness of Christ's return is a powerful incentive to heed Paul's instructions and a good reason to call on the name of the Lord for salvation and for provision.

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God* (v. 6). Having reminded us of the imminent return of Christ, Paul draws the comforting conclusion that we need not worry about anything. Paul is echoing Christ's words recorded in Matthew 6.25ff. We have assurance of God's care for us and so we must express our trust in him by not worrying. When we face difficulties, the action to take is not worry, but prayer. 'The way to be anxious about nothing is to pray about everything' (Rainy).

Specific petitions are to be made to God, but they must be made with thanksgiving in all circumstances. To be able to thank God even in this situation means the end of all anxiety. We can see how this injunction to pray is rooted so deeply in a dependence on Christ and a faith in him.

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (v. 7). The promised consequence of our prayer is not that every whim we ask for will be granted. No, rather, we have a better promise. Our promise is that Christ will stand guard like a garrison of soldiers around our 'hearts and minds' bringing God's peace. 'Hearts and minds' here encompasses our 'emotions, volition, and thoughts' (O'Brien).

The phrase, which is translated, *which surpasses all understanding* in the NRSV is ambiguous. It could mean that the peace of God, i) is beyond human understanding, or ii) that it achieves greater results than man's schemes could, or iii) that it achieves greater peace of mind than any intellectual reasoning could. Which ever is correct, it is clear that God's divine protection is assured us through prayer.

So what is life like in Christ according to this short passage? It is a life of vital dependence. And it is in that dependence that we have security and hope. Prayer, then is about resting on the strength of our mighty king.

Oh, Jesus, how sweet the name  
Oh, Jesus, such a powerful name  
That name, Jesus, it will make a difference  
I dare not fail to call Your name.

Varn Michael McKay

## C. Suggestion for the Study

Aim: To turn faith (confidence in our Lord) into prayer and peace of mind.

You need: The worksheet

Write out an “anxiety list” of all the kinds of things that members of the groups (or if that is to confrontation, their “friends”) are typically anxious about.

Read Philippians 4.4–7. Why do you think Paul is so confident?

*Paul's confidence rests on the nature of the Lord on whom we call. He is sovereign, with all authority in heaven and earth. You may like to look back to Phil 2.6-11. You may also like to point to v4: Rejoice in the Lord.*

Focus on verse 6. What are we commanded to do?

*This is essentially a comprehension question. You may like to follow it up with a question as to what strikes them about the verse, but the meat of the study is in the next question.*

What does Paul allow us to worry about? What does he command us to pray about?

*Nothing and Everything respectively. The starkness of this contrast should bring its own power. Then you will need to explain the spiritual dynamic of this verse (as represented on the dial) – where prayer increases, worry decreases and visa versa. You may like to point out that this is all about trust in our Lord and expressing that faith in calling on his name. This is a resting-in-Christ-through-faith dial.*

Read verse 7. Are we promised that we will get everything we ask for? What is promised?

*See the commentary. You may like to follow this up with a question about which is the better promise.*

What stops us praying like Paul says we should? What should be done about them?

*This is the important step of dealing with the application of what is really a fairly simple text.*

Some typical answers

- (1) “God is only interested in the big things.”
- (2) “Praying about something I don't want to think about is scary.”
- (3) “As I pray (especially over and over again) I worry more.”
- (4) “I forgot to pray”

In light of the passage: When a curious friend asks you why you pray, what would you tell them?

*You may like to get them to spend a minute thinking and write down an answer before you share. This is a question to help them synthesise what they have learned.*

Worksheet for Study 9: Philippians 4.4-7

# Casting Your Cares on the Lord

Anxiety list

Read Philippians 4.4-7. Why do you think Paul is so confident?

Focus on verse 6. What are we commanded to do?

**DO NOT** \_\_\_\_\_ ,

**BUT** \_\_\_\_\_

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What does Paul allow us to worry about?

What does he command us to pray about?

BAROMETER IN HERE

Read verse 7. Are we promised that we will get everything we ask for? What is promised?

What stops us praying like Paul says we should? What should be done about them?

What do think about these typical answers

- (1) "God is only interested in the big things."
- (2) "Praying about something I don't want to think about is scary."
- (3) "As I pray (especially over and over again) I worry more."
- (4) "I forgot to pray"

In light of the passage: When a curious friend asks you why you pray, what would you tell them?

## Study 10: 2 Corinthians 4.1–6

# Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord

## A. Preparation Questions

From 2 Cor 3.18 (and the whole of that chapter), what is the ministry that Paul is engaged in, and why does he not lose heart in it? What shape might losing heart take?

How does Paul's determination to not lose heart effect his actions negatively and positively? What does he mean when he says that his 'open statement of the truth commends himself to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God'?

How effective do you think Paul was as an proclaimer of Christ? How effective do you think the Corinthians thought Paul was as an proclaimer of Christ? How does Paul explain his apparent failure to reach some people with the gospel of the glory of Christ? How does this help him, and what further problems does it raise?

What do you think of Paul's description of the gospel?

Why does he need to say that it is Christ that he proclaims as the Lord and himself as a slave?

What is the link Paul draws between the God of creation (who brought light) and the God of new creation (who brings new light)? Who do you think he is referring to when he says "our"?

How does the description of the light that God brings reflect the description of the gospel from v. 4? What is the significance of this?

What kind of face did Jesus have, that it should display the glory of God?

## B. Notes on the passage

In 2 Corinthians 1-7, Paul is stuck between a rock and a hard place!

On the one hand is the rock of needing to defend himself against all manner of attacks on his ministry, especially by some who he terms 'super-apostles' (2 Cor 12.11) and 'ministers of Satan' (2 Cor 11.14–15); on the other hand, he mustn't appear to be self commendatory, since that is exactly the accusation that he levels against his opponents. It is with great skill and spiritual insight that throughout these chapters he makes this non-pushy defence, and in the process outlines the essence of apostolic ministry.

The paragraph where this comes to a head is 4.1–6, which picks up and draws conclusions from the previous chapter. Having outlined the glorious ministry of the new covenant, in which his own role is no less than analogous to the great Moses, he concludes (3.18) where he began (3.3) by speaking in terms of the ministry of the Spirit, through whom people are wonderfully transformed into the image of God. And because he has precisely this ministry, he does not lose heart, despite the painful and sustained opposition and hardship that he faces (see 2 Cor 6.3–10, 11.23–33 for an idea of the extent of this).

And what not losing heart looks like is spelt out in terms of two things, the first negative and the second positive, which are basically the flip side of one another.

First, (introduced with an un-translated "but" – v. 2) he renounces shameful things the one hides. This is of course the sort of thing one is tempted to do when you lose heart – cut corners, look for easy way out, and which evoke shame if they are discovered. The two manifestations of this that he mentions here concern his relationships with people and his relationship to the message. With respect to people, he is not cunning, or deceitful or full of guile, he is not manipulative or abusive; and in relation to the message, he does not falsify or corrupt it. And it is easy to imagine how one would be tempted to do either or both of these things in the face of opposition or perceived failure.

Second, and positively when it comes to not losing heart, he makes open statement of the truth, that is the truth of the gospel. The statement is open and therefore hidden or leading to shame; and it is a statement of the truth, that is the un-falsified word of God. In essence, this is his defence of his ministry, and it leads to the fact that people ought to recognise him as commendable, not condemnable (as the Corinthians thought).

Therefore, if there is any lack of effectiveness, if there are people who do not understand or respond to the gospel, it is not a result of inadequate ministry on his part, it is a result of the fact that they are perishing (see also 1 Cor 1.18). In their case, as unbelievers their minds have been blinded by the god of this age, which certainly is a reference to Satan – responsibility for their unbelief lies in his diabolical court, not Paul's supposedly weak ministry. In so blinding them, they are unable to perceive the light of the gospel. Notice the similar themes in 2 Cor 2.15–17, where the apostolic proclamation is for some, for those who are perishing, the stench of death to death – and this is entirely consistent with a ministry which is not a mere peddling of God's word, but done with sincerity in God's sight.

That gospel is then defined in as about Christ, who is the image of God. This reference to image echoes 2 Cor 3.18, and clarifies that the image into which we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another is the image of Christ. But more basic still, Christ himself "is the image of God", a phrase which brings with it the whole creation story – the purpose of God for humanity as his image bearers, now fulfilled in Christ and those who in him are being transformed into the same glorious image.

Therefore, Paul does not proclaim himself, but the one in whom the purposes of God are fulfilled, Christ Jesus as Lord. At the same time, far from being Lord, Paul sets himself as the slave of the Corinthians for Jesus' sake. This may be in critique to those who opposed Paul in Corinth, who he describes as enslaving the Corinthians (2 Cor 11.20).

What's more, this apostolic task of proclaiming Christ and being enslaved to others is a result of the powerful work of God in his own life. God has illumined his heart so that he now knows the glory of God – it is found in the face of Jesus Christ. And this is not a mere act of enlightenment – in it's

glory, this illumination is like the first illumination, when God said, “Let light shine out of darkness”. In other words, as God addresses the darkness of human sin and chaos, revealing himself as he has acted to make Christ Lord, it is nothing less than a mini-version of the initial chaos-dispelling act of God in creation. This is powerful motivation to not lose heart, being involved in the (new) creative act of God (see 2 Cor 5.16–18).

## C. Suggestion for the Study

Aim: To inspire people to the servant-work of proclaiming Christ in such a way that they persevere faithfully even in the face of rejection.

Within that to establish some attitudes towards proclaiming Christ – that the response to apparent failure in proclaiming Christ is never to fiddle with the message; that the work of proclaiming Christ is a privilege which can only be described in terms equivalent to what God did in creation – bringing light to the world, and therefore is something to be gloried in. What helps him stay straight is that he does it in the sight of God.

You need: The worksheet, as every week.

There are 3 sections to the study:

1. We start with people’s experience of proclaiming Christ and compare it with Paul.

What is proclaiming Christ

2. Energy for proclaiming Christ, especially when it’s hard – what gets you doing it, what to do, and what not to do when it’s difficult

3. Proclaiming Christ in the E.U. context.

The study begins by asking people to reflect on their experience of being disheartened or disappointed in evangelism, and think about possible inadequate responses to that – the idea is to bring out responses which act improperly toward the hearer (manipulation, pressure etc) and responses which act improperly towards the gospel (distortion, corner cutting etc). From there, go to the table, which takes you back to vv. 1–2, and look at how Paul responded to difficulties in those two areas. In dealing with the question about motivation to keep going, make sure you go back to the text, especially v. 3–4, 6 (since the problem lies not with the gospel but with the god of this world, it is still worth proclaiming, because the God who said “Let light shine out of darkness) is much stronger); also the wonderful privilege of being involved in an illumination that is akin to the illumination of creation is powerful incentive to keep going.

The second section of the study clarifies what proclaiming Christ is and asks what are the consequences of this proclamation. Look at vs 3-4. The point of this question is to highlight that fact that with regard to the unbeliever, sometimes they will be converted, which in this paragraph is described in wonderful terms (seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ; shining into the hearts of people the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ); however, sometimes they will not be converted, and are blind to the message. At this point it is worth referring to 2 Cor 2.14–17, which has many of the same themes, and describes the outcome of evangelism as the aroma of Christ to God – from life to life amongst those who are being saved, and from death to death to those who are perishing. This then leads to some potential consequences for the proclaimer – that of losing heart, and the second section.

The third section is designed to make all this concrete in the E.U. context, and especially push the idea of TIP – testify, invite, pray – as the basic goal for everyone in proclaiming Christ. Under the opportunities questions, talk about the importance of relationship as the context for testimony, and the need to keep Christ rather than themselves at the center of their testimony; the various evangelistic events (opportunity weeks, interactive forums, dialogue dinners) to which they can invite friends; and the prayer meeting, prayer triplets, the small group.

The tip about TIP is as follows: proclaiming Christ is part of a process – leading someone to Christ – and so in a sense proclaiming Christ is in itself inadequate. The real issue is leading someone to Christ, in which proclaiming Christ is an essential part. One of the real challenges in leading someone to Christ is turning isolated events (meetings the person goes to, conversations they have with you and others) into an ongoing process which ends in faith. We therefore need to understand the process of coming to Christ, where the person is up to in the process and what contribution you are making to

the process, and how to push them onto the next part of the process, while understanding that people can't be boxed into neat processes!

worksheet for study 10: 2 Corinthians 4.1-6

# Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord

## Facing difficulties in proclaiming Christ!

What are some of the things that cause you to lose heart in proclaiming Christ? How do you respond to these difficulties? How adequate are these?

In vv. 1-2 Paul affirms his response to the difficulties he faced – fill in the table below, including how you have experienced the same sort of things.

Things Paul won't do	Things Paul will do
Concrete examples from my experience:	<i>Concrete examples from my experience:</i>

## Consequences of proclaiming Christ

What are the consequences of proclaiming Christ, for the proclaimer, and those to whom Christ is proclaimed? (Vs 3-4)

What motivations are suggested by Paul for keeping going?

## Proclaiming Christ in the E.U. context: T.I.P.

Opportunities to testify:

Opportunities to invite:

Opportunities to pray:

A tip about T.I.P.!