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LIFEGROUP CURRICULUM

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LESSON 1

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BIBLE READING

Learner's objective:

→ To be equipped with skills to read bible passages on one's own.

Introduction

Knowing God's word does not necessarily require a lot of intelligence but it does require a lot of diligence. This lesson is a quick introduction to one of the ways your hard work can be channelled purposefully – the Inductive Bible Study. As we learn to master this simple systematic way of approaching God's word together, may we grow to delight in it as it comes alive in our lives.

A. Pick a translation

Before we even study the bible, we need to be clear about what bible we are studying. There are various translations and they can be located on a spectrum, as below.

Word for word		Thought for thought			Paraphrase		
NASB	KJV NKJV ESV	NRSV NAB	NIV	NLT NJB	CEV	TLB	MSG
CEV	Contemporary English Version	NIV	New International Version	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic)	KNJV	New King James Version
ESV	English Standard Version	NLT	New Living Translation	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	TLB	The Living Bible (Kenneth Taylor)
KJV	King James Version	MSG	The Message (Eugene Peterson)	NAB	New American Bible (Catholic)	NASB	New American Standard Bible

Word for word translations take the original words of the biblical text and convert them into the corresponding words in English.

Thought for thought translations take thought phrases of the biblical text and convert them into equivalents in English, in order to solve the problem of having to find single English words that could communicate the richness of the original.

Paraphrases merely capture the gist of the original biblical text.

DISCUSS

1. What bible translation do we use as individuals? What bible translation does our lifegroup use? Why?

B. Posture your heart

We need to treat God's word with humility, depending on the Holy Spirit as we read. This is why we should pray every time we read the bible. Remember that it is our position at the beginning that determines our outcome at the end.

¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, while tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves untruthful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. **Mark 4:14-20 (ESV)**

Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away. **Luke 8:18 (ESV)**

DISCUSS

2. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Why is depending on the Holy Spirit important?

3. Have there been times when we failed to read God's word with humility? What was the consequence?

C. Picture the context

To interpret any passage of the bible correctly, we need to pay attention to its context. Context refers to that which goes before and that which follow after. So whenever we study a passage of the bible, we should consult neighbouring verses and passages. It will also help to ask ourselves the following questions:

- **Author:** Who is it written by?
- **Audience:** To whom is it written?
- **Purpose:** Why was it written?
- **Genre/Form:** In what form was it written (e.g. historical narrative, parable, poetry, prophecy, letters/epistles)?

D. Observe

When faced with the passage, what do we see? We can start with the following list of questions as a guide:

- What is the important term and/or concept of the passage?
- What terms do you need to define to better understand the passage?
- Are there people or places you need to identify? What do you already know about these people or places?
- What are the main verbs? What are the tenses of those verbs?
- Are there any words/ideas that repeat themselves?
- What are the 'small words'/connectors that connect thoughts and ideas (e.g. but, and, so, thus)? Can you identify any cause-effect relationships in the passage?

E. Interpret

Now, why did the author write the passage? We must try to figure it out for ourselves, before turning to the secondary resources below for assistance. Note that the use of these secondary resources should never be a substitute for personal bible study. Instead, these resources should complement it.

Types of resources	Description	Use it to overcome...
Atlas E.g. Holman Bible Atlas	Collections of maps showing places mentioned in the text, and perhaps some description of their history and significance.	Geographic barriers.
Bible dictionary E.g. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary	Explain the origin, meaning and use of key words and terms in the text.	Language barriers.
Bible handbook E.g. Zondervan Handbook to the Bible	Present helpful information on subjects in the text.	Cultural barriers.
Commentary	Present a biblical scholar's study of the text.	Language, cultural and literary barriers.
Interlinear texts E.g. The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament	Translations with the Greek or Hebrew text positioned in between the lines for comparison.	Language barriers.

F. Apply

Unless we start to apply what we have learned, our bible study is just an intellectual exercise. Therefore, we must always ask ourselves, "What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this text?" and "What do I need to do as a result of hearing God through this text?"

The following list of questions can be used as a guide:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorise?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

DISCUSS

4. After this lesson, how confident are we of reading the bible on our own? What can our lifegroup do to feel more confident?

LESSON 2

AN EXERCISE IN BIBLE READING (I) – A SINGLE SACRIFICE

Learner's objectives:

- To practice the skills learnt in Lesson 1.
- To acquire a basic biblical perspective on atonement.

Introduction

Before going further, revisit Lesson 1 briefly.

Now that we have some tools to read the bible at our disposal, it is time to practice putting them to use. Below is a passage taken from the bible. How might we approach it? Feel free to incorporate any other secondary material that may be useful.

The Letter to the Hebrews: Basic facts

- **Author:** Unknown
- **Audience:** Unknown, but likely to be Jewish Christians.
- **Purpose:** To urge readers to persevere in their Christian faith, and not return to Judaism.
- **Genre/Form:** Likely a written sermon

Hebrews 10:1-18 (ESV)

¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

*“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;*

⁶ *in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.*

⁷ *Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”*

⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ *“This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:*

I will put my laws on their hearts,

and write them on their minds,”

¹⁷ *then he adds,*

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸ *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*

DISCUSS

(Only after working through the passage)

1. How can we summarise the passage in a sentence?

2. As individuals, what will we commit to doing differently after reading this passage?

3. How can our lifegroup hold us to our commitments?

LESSON 3

THE BIG STORY (A) – TWO PERFECT WORLDS

Learner's objectives:

- To grasp a framework for understanding the entire bible.
- To better appreciate the work of Jesus, and the world that is to come because of Him.

Introduction: Why do a bible overview?

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)**

It is good for every one of us to be equipped with an overview of the bible, so that whenever we read a bible passage, we are immediately able to locate it within a larger story that God has told through His people. Of course, there is no one single way of outlining the bible. What is presented in this lesson is merely an example that we may find useful to start with.

A. The beginning and the end

The bible begins and ends with two perfect worlds. Read the following descriptions of them.

World 1

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." **Genesis 2:8-17 (NIV)**

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. **Genesis 2:25 (NIV)**

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. **Genesis 3:8 (NIV)**

² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." **Revelation 21:2-4 (NIV)**

⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. **Revelation 21:6-7 (NIV)**

⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **Revelation 21:9-14 (NIV)**

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. **Revelation 21:27 (NIV)**

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. **Revelation 22:1-5 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

1. With respect to the two worlds, fill in the table below.

	What are their similarities?	What are their differences?
Perfect people <i>Who inhabits the world?</i>	E.g. Made in the image of God	E.g. Those of the second world are victorious, having conquered sin
Perfect place <i>What are the world's features?</i>		
Perfect presence <i>How does God relate to the world?</i>		

2. Which world is better and why? How might our judgment affect the way we live our life now?

B. The middle

The bible presents a journey between the two perfect worlds. There are several stages to this journey:

- i) **Creation** (i.e. World 1) entrusted to one man
- ii) **De-creation** through the sin of one man
- iii) **Re-creation** (i.e. World 2) through the obedience of one man

Read the following passages on the second stage.

*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. **Genesis 3:7 (NIV)***

¹⁶ To the woman he said,
 "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
 with painful labour you will give birth to children.
 Your desire will be for your husband,
 and he will rule over you."

¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;
 through painful toil you will eat food from it
 all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
 and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
 you will eat your food
 until you return to the ground,
 since from it you were taken;
 for dust you are
 and to dust you will return."

Genesis 3:16-19 (NIV)

²² And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. **Genesis 3:22-24 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

3. Based on the above passages, fill in the table below.

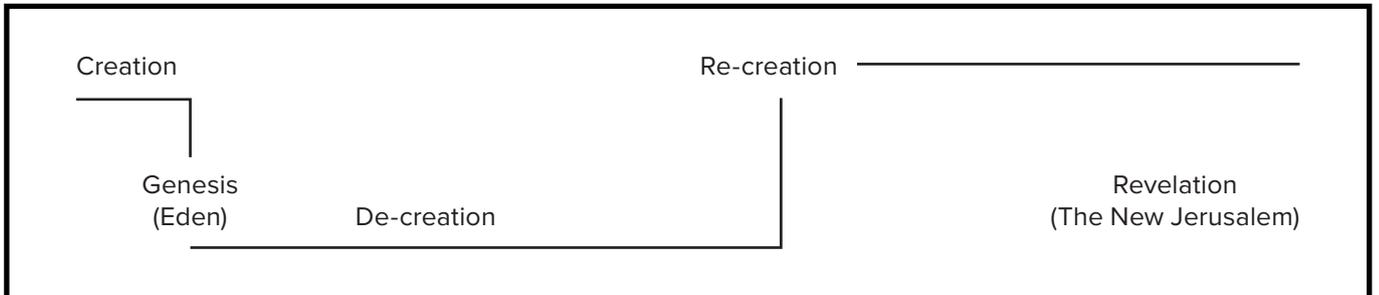
After sin...	
What happened to the perfect people ?	E.g. Experienced shame when they saw their nakedness
What happened to the perfect place ?	
What happened to God's presence ?	

4. Read Genesis 7:17-23. Notice that the sin of humankind had led to a destruction of the world parallel to how it was created (i.e. no land nor living thing; only water). The bible emphasises that sin disorders the world. Are there instances in our lives when we forget this fact? How might we remember this daily?

Finally, the main story of the bible leads up to Jesus. He does not merely restore creation to what it was, but is essential to the creation of something better.

¹⁸ *Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.* ¹⁹ *For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.* **Romans 5:18-19 (NIV)**

The diagram below helps to summarise our framework thus far:



LESSON 4

THE BIG STORY (B) – ONE PERFECT MAN

Learner's objectives:

- To grasp a framework for understanding the entire bible.
- To better appreciate the faithfulness and constancy of God, especially for the present and future church.

Introduction: What about the bits in between?

With the pattern of 'creation → de-creation → re-creation,' everything in the bible gains a different texture of meaning. First, we can observe that God conducts the same plan of action at least twice, via the stories of Israel. Second, as a result, our appreciation of what the church is meant to do is enhanced.

A. The story of Israel (I)

i) The promise to Abraham

⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸ The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." **Genesis 17:4-8 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

1. Based on the above passage, fill in the table below. Notice how it compares with elements of the perfect worlds described in Lesson 3.

What did God promise to do with regard to...	
His people ?	E.g. Make them into nations, with kings coming from them
Their place ?	
His presence ?	

ii) A deviation through Egypt (see Exodus to Joshua)

²⁰ The Lord replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, ²² not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times – ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. **Numbers 14:20-23 (NIV)**

³³ Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies

lies in the wilderness. ³⁴ For forty years – one year for each of the forty days you explored the land – you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you. **Numbers 14:33-34 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

2. It took time for God's promise to Abraham to come to pass, because of the sins of Israel. Read Hebrews 3:7-13. How does the author use Israel's journey in the wilderness to talk about the Christian life today? What might this mean for us?

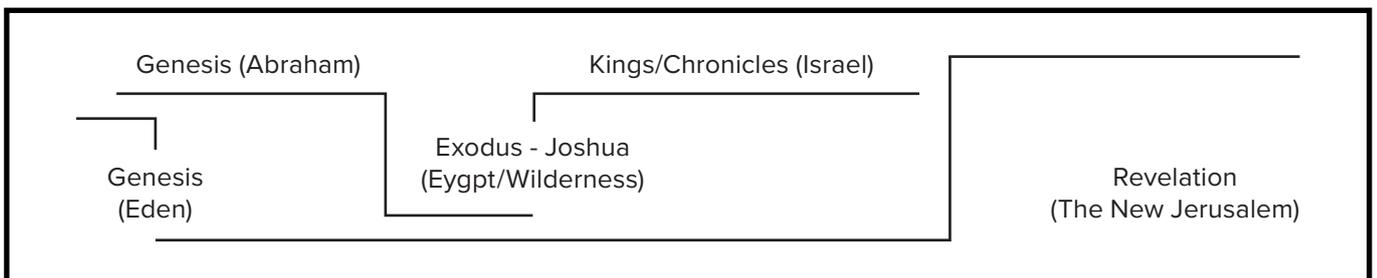
iii) The promise fulfilled (see Joshua to 1 Kings)

⁴³ So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. ⁴⁴ The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵ Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled." **Joshua 21:43-45 (NIV)**

*Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. **1 Kings 8:56 (NIV)***

God never gave up on the promise He gave to Abraham. Abraham's descendants eventually received a kingdom of their own, and all it entailed, not as a reward but as a gift that demonstrated God's faithfulness.

We can now add to our initial framework of the bible:



B. The story of Israel (II)

i) Creation of the kingdom/The promise to David

⁸ "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." **2 Samuel 7:8-16 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

3. Based on the passage above, fill in the table below. Pay special attention to new details not mentioned in earlier promises.

What did God promise to do with regard to...	
His people ?	E.g. Given an everlasting kingdom
Their place ?	
His presence ?	

ii) De-creation of the kingdom

Just as we have seen previously, God's creation was disrupted by the sins of His people, particularly of Israel's king who is God's anointed one.

³ Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, ⁴ including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive. **2 Kings 24:3-4 (NIV)**

The consequences of sin are thus:

→ The loss of a kingly **people**

⁶ and he was captured.

He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. ⁷ They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. **2 Kings 25:6-7 (NIV)**

→ The loss of the promised **place**

²¹ There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed. So Judah went into captivity, away from her land. **2 Kings 25:21 (NIV)**

At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians. **2 Kings 25:26 (NIV)**

→ The loss of God's **presence**

¹³ The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the Lord and they carried the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁵ The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver. **2 Kings 25:13-15 (NIV)**

iii) Re-creation of the kingdom/The promise fulfilled

Still, God never gave up on the promise He gave to David. Through the prophets, He promised:

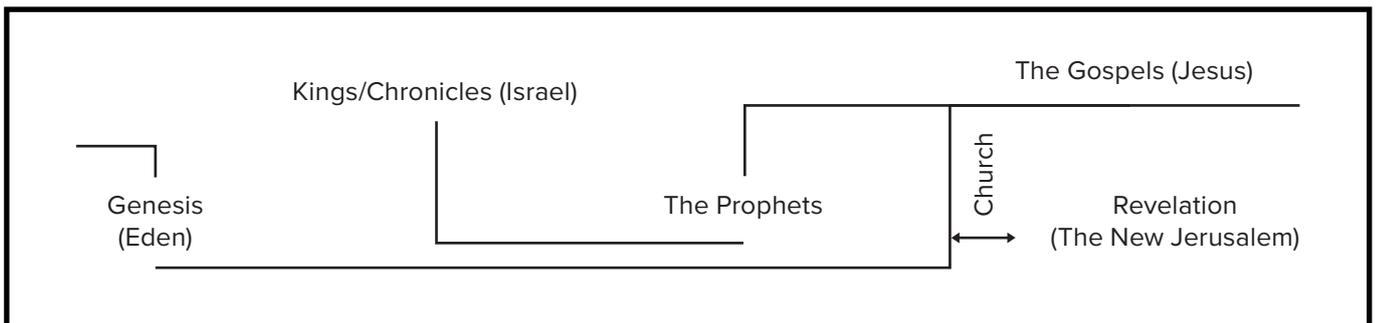
- A new **people** with a restored land (Isaiah 49:5-6; Ezekiel 36:8-11, 36:37-38)
- A **place** of prosperity (Isaiah 65:17-25; Amos 9:11-15)
- God Himself **present** as king (Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 36:28; Zechariah 9:9-10)
- A new nature and heart, and hence lasting forgiveness (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27)

All of these are fulfilled through Jesus. He completes the promise of the kingdom.

*Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. **Matthew 1:17 (NIV)***

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." **Matthew 4:17 (NIV)***

Here is how the second half of Israel's story looks, via the lens of our framework:



DISCUSS

4. What does the consistent failure of Israel to fulfil God's promises on its own tell us? Does it mean that God made mistakes?

5. Read Luke 2:25-35. Think about the years that it took for the people of Israel to see God's promises fulfilled through Jesus. How difficult is it for us to see Jesus with the same joy that people like Simeon had? What might it mean for us to experience that joy today?

Epilogue: What about the church today?

The church stands after the death of Jesus and before the complete establishment of God's second perfect world. It serves, then, to mark the certainty of His kingdom now, and to point the present world to His kingdom that is not yet here. The Holy Spirit was given to sustain the church in its mission, whilst making sure that each individual is ready for their place in the kingdom.

*He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 1:8 (NIV)***

¹³ *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory. **Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV)***

³ *At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. **Titus 3:3-7 (NIV)***

LESSON 5

APPRECIATE YOUR FREEDOM

Learner's objective:

→ To acquire a basic biblical perspective on healing.

Introduction

Jesus' place in the bible's overarching story is to re-introduce the Kingdom of God on earth. A fundamental part of His mission is to give us a new nature and a new heart, such that we do not fall away from the Kingdom. In this lesson, we will gain a richer understanding of an aspect of what this means, paying attention to our God as Healer.

A. What is it that Jesus came to heal?

¹ *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion –
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

Isaiah 61:1-3 (ESV)

DISCUSS

1. Read Luke 4:16-21. In the Gospel of Luke, this is reported as Jesus' first sermon, a declaration of His mission on earth. Which groups of people does Jesus want to reach? What is the ultimate purpose of His work?

B. How are we to be healed?

When we become Christians, we come to God as we are, in all our imperfection. We carry our difficult histories with us, and the scars that they leave on our body, soul, and spirit. We may feel trapped with low self-esteem, or unhealthy emotional habits. What then?

i) Know who we are in God's sight

³⁵ *And Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.* ³⁶ *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* **Matthew 9:35-36 (ESV)**

ii) Trust in the will of God

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV)

² And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:2-3 (ESV)

²⁰ And behold, a woman who has suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹ for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. **Matthew 9:20-22 (ESV)**

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you."

³⁰ And their eyes were opened. **Matthew 9:27-30a (ESV)**

iii) Surrender to Jesus' authority

²⁸ Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-29 (ESV)

DISCUSS

2. What burdens or scars are we carrying today, and why might they be hard to release to God? How can we be praying for and with each other going forward?

C. What if we are not healed?

i) God can still engage with our hurt for His purposes, dealing with it in His time.

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. [...] ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." **John 11:1-15 (ESV)**

ii) In God's infinite wisdom, He may choose to be silent to give us a greater appreciation of His power and to shape us to be better instruments of His will.

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **James 1:2-4 (ESV)**

iii) Ultimately, we are to worship God in all circumstances, trusting that He knows best and will sustain us to the very end.

Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? **Exodus 4:11 (ESV)**

See now that I, even I, am he,
and there is no god beside me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Deuteronomy 32:39 (ESV)

²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." **Job 1:21-22 (ESV)**

DISCUSS

3. How should we react when our prayers of healing are not immediately answered? How will our relationship with God be affected?

LESSON 6

KNOW YOUR SHAPE

Learner's objective:

- To know the reasons for serving in God's church.
- To become aware of one's ability to serve.
- To start serving in church.

Introduction

By this time, we should already be aware that all of us are called to be servants in God's Kingdom. In this lesson, we will gain some insight as to how we can start serving, by discovering a little of who God made us to be.

A. Why should we be involved in ministry i.e. service?

i) Because we were purposed for it

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. **Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)***

ii) Because we are to be prepared for it

*¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **Ephesians 4:11-13 (NASB)***

iii) Because we will profit from it

*His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." **Matthew 25:21 (NASB)***

*²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. **Colossians 3:23-24 (NASB)***

DISCUSS

1. What are some reasons people give for not being involved in ministry? Are these good reasons? Why or why not?

B. How do we discover our area of service?

i) Dedicate ourselves to God

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. **Romans 12:1 (NASB)***

ii) Renew our minds through a knowledge of God

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. **Romans 12:2 (NASB)***

iii) Evaluate ourselves with the standard of God

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. **Romans 12:3 (NASB)**

iv) Cooperate with the house of God

⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **Romans 12:4-5 (NASB)**

¹² For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body is not one part, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has arranged the parts, each one of them in the body, just as He desired. [...] ²⁶ And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honored, all the parts rejoice with it. **1 Corinthians 12:12-18, 26 (NASB)**

DISCUSS

2. Thus far, which of the steps do we find most challenging? What can we do as a lifegroup to encourage each other?

v) Activate the gifts of God

⁶ However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one's faith; ⁷ if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; ⁸ or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **Romans 12:6-8 (NASB)**

C. What factors influence our area of service?

i) Spiritual Gifts

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. **1 Corinthians 7:7 (NASB)**

ii) Hearth

He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works. **Psalms 33:15 (NASB)**

iii) Abilities

³ And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, ⁴ to create artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵ and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, so that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. **Exodus 31:3-5 (NASB)**

iv) Personality

For who among people knows the thoughts of a person except the spirit of the person that is in him? So also the thoughts of God no one knows, except the Spirit of God. **1 Corinthians 2:11 (NASB)**

v) Experiences

*Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life. **Proverbs 4:13 (NASB)***

*who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **2 Corinthians 1:4 (NASB)***

*But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to distinguish between good and evil. **Hebrews 5:14 (NASB)***

DISCUSS

3. How are we serving the church today? Supposing we know our 'SHAPE,' how will we begin to serve the church better?

LESSON 7

PLAY YOUR PART

Learner's objective:

- To know the reasons for and functions of small groups in church.
- To start serving in small groups.

Introduction

Only when we serve each other as Christians can we truly belong. The small group or lifegroup is an arena where we can practice serving others, and by so doing, learn to belong to the family of God at large. Let us therefore find out what Christian service within small groups or lifegroups entails, in order that we might grow better together.

A. The principle of care

Recall that one of the purposes of the church is to minister to the saints. There are two possible ways it can be done: (1) the pastor ministers to everyone, or (2) everyone ministers to each other.

¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain – and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make you load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³ If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." **Exodus 18:17-23 (NIV)**

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." **Acts 6:1-4 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

1. Based on the above passages, how does the bible describe the organisation of God's people? What do they tell us about the role of smaller communities within the church e.g. lifegroups?

B. The dimensions of care

The following is a non-exhaustive list of what care within Christian communities entails:

i) Sharing of physical and spiritual food; feeding and praying for one another

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [...] ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. **Acts 2:42, 46-47a (NIV)**

ii) Sharing of possessions; giving to one another

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **Acts 2:44-45 (NIV)**

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. **Acts 4:32-35 (NIV)**

iii) Sharing honestly; encouraging and disciplining one another

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." **Hebrews 3:12-13 (NIV)**

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)**

¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. ¹⁶ See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. **Hebrews 12:15-16 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

2. Take notice of how Acts 2:47 ends. The early church grew as it learned to care for each other. What might this tell us about how open the early church was to outsiders, and hence about the type of care that it demonstrated?

3. Along which dimension of care can our lifegroup be improved? How can we as individuals help in the process of improvement?

C. Beyond care

Remember that another purpose of the church is to minister to the world. Our lifegroups can thus be platforms for evangelism as well. After all, it was what the original small group, i.e. Jesus' twelve disciples, was first called to do.

² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. **Matthew 10:2-8 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

4. When was the last time our lifegroup welcomed new visitors? How can we do better?

LESSON 8

AN EXERCISE IN BIBLE READING (II) – THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Learner's objective:

- To practice the skills learnt in Lesson 1.
- To acquire a basic biblical perspective on the fruit of the Spirit.

Introduction

Before going further, revisit Lesson 1 briefly.

'Gifts' show our ministry. 'Fruit' shows our maturity. If we have been following the previous lessons carefully, we already have some idea of what our 'gifts' are. It is therefore time to learn what 'fruit' we can expect, as the Holy Spirit works in us to make us better followers of Jesus Christ.

The Letter to the Galatians: Basic Facts

- **Author:** Paul
- **Audience:** The churches in Galatia (cf. Galatians 1:2)
- **Purpose:** To turn the churches away from "a different gospel" (cf. Galatians 1:6-9), one which stressed a strict adherence to rules and ritual (cf. Galatians 3:1-5, 6:12-15)
- **Genre/Form:** A letter

Galatians 5:16-26 (ESV)

¹⁶ *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

¹⁹ *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

DISCUSS

1. What is the primary contrast that the apostle Paul, the author of the letter to the Galatians, describes in the passage? What does Paul compare the "fruit of the Spirit" against?
2. Read Romans 8:1-17. What does Paul mean by "law"? Why is it that "if [we] are led by the Spirit, [we] are not under the law"?
3. Why are we able to "live by the Spirit"? What is the result of "living by the Spirit"?

LESSON 9

LIVING AS EXILES

Learner's objective:

→ To acquire a basic Biblical perspective on how Christians are to interact with the wider world

Introduction

As Christians, we are not to isolate ourselves from the wider world. Practically speaking, it is also nearly impossible for most of us to do so. Yet, how we are to interact with the wider world needs to be unpacked, for what the bible says about the matter is not as straightforward as we might believe.

A. An exilic community

The writers of the New Testament tell us that as Christians, we are not to be at ease within this world. Instead, we are to long for a new world, the new Jerusalem where we will be perfected in our relationship with God and His creation. Thus, a common illustration within Christian tradition of how we are supposed to see ourselves is the exile or the refugee, an outcast people who desire to return home.

*13 But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. **John 17:13-19 (NASB)***

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." **Romans 8:18-23 (NASB)***

*18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even as I weep, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who have their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **Philippians 3:18-20 (NASB)***

*For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. **Hebrews 13:14 (NASB)***

DISCUSS

1. What is challenging about seeing ourselves as exiles or refugees? How might we be too comfortable living lives in this world?

B. Guidelines for exiles

What, then, are we to do with the present world? An overarching principle comes from Israel's own experience in exile, as declared by the prophet Jeremiah:

⁴ *"This is what the Lord of armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:* ⁵ *"Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.* ⁶ *Take wives and father sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may give birth to sons and daughters; and grow in numbers there and do not decrease.* ⁷ *Seek the prosperity of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity will be your prosperity."* **Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NASB)**

DISCUSS

2. How might we summarise Jeremiah's principle in a sentence?

3. How often do we pray for the world, and what do we pray for? What steps can our lifegroup take to ensure that we pray for the world regularly?

We are therefore not to be indifferent to the world, but to be willing to engage with it positively. Our ability to engage well will increase as we allow ourselves to be changed by God's holiness. Some of the characteristics of the good we are to pursue for the world are described in the following ways:

i) We submit to people placed over us

¹⁵ *Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. [...] ¹⁷ "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."* **Matthew 22:15, 17-21 (NASB)**

¹ *Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. [...] ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.* **Romans 13:1-2, 6-7 (NASB)**

¹³ *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.* **1 Peter 2:13-15 (NASB)**

ii) We work peacefully with people alongside us

¹⁴ *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Never repay evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all people. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* **Romans 12:14-21 (NASB)**

⁸ To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. **1 Peter 3:8-9 (NASB)**

iii) We point people to the goodness of God

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. **Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB)**

²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” **John 17:22-23 (NASB)**

Keep your behaviour excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. **1 Peter 2:12 (NASB)**

DISCUSS

4. How are we currently engaging with the world? As a lifegroup, list the different contexts in which we interact with the world. For each context, think about (a) who the people placed over us are, (b) who the people alongside us are, and (c) what it may mean to show them the goodness of God. Dedicate our future actions to God in prayer.

LESSON 10

MARKED TO MAGNIFY

Learner's objective:

- To acquire a basic biblical perspective on discipleship.
- To start being involved in discipleship relationships.

Introduction

On top of everything we have learned so far, we must know that the goal for us as a church is to make disciples who make disciples. Discipleship cannot be left to a select few, the most committed of the committed, nor those who are 'specially anointed' by God. It has to become central to who we are and what we do, to each and every one of us. We are to live missionally. If we do it right, we will impact generations to come.

A. What is discipleship?

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." **Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)**

Jesus can be said to have defined discipleship in The Great Commission.

i) "Go"

Remember that 'go' in the original language functions in the continuous form, meaning 'as you are going'. The main verb is to **'make'** disciples. So above everything else, what we should be doing as a community of believers is making disciples. We are called to make disciples as we go.

ii) "Baptising"

In the New Testament, it is evident that new believers were baptised as soon as possible after their decision to follow Christ. When we are baptised, we identify ourselves with a new set of guidelines; kingdom truths and laws that we abide by and live by. Making a disciple is thus inviting someone to make a personal decision to leave the old way of life and to embrace the life that Christ has for us.

iii) "Teaching"

Bible teaching is not difficult to find today, but it is one thing to be taught the word, and another to be taught to **obey**. In discipleship, the focus is not just on the instructing. It is on the obeying. Know too that its aim is for the entire body of Christ to be built up together.

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all 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. **Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)**

DISCUSS

1. Apart from our relationship with Christ, identify any discipleship relationship that we are currently involved in.

- a. If we are not currently involved in any, what obstacles are hindering us?
- b. If we are involved in at least one, how can our relationship(s) be better in helping us to obey the Word of God?

B. Who is a disciple?

*“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” **Matthew 4:19 (NIV)***

Jesus can also be said to have revealed the components of being a disciple.

i) “Follow me” – One who knows and follows Christ

The starting point of being a disciple is the decision to follow Christ. To be a follower of Christ is to subject and surrender our will to God’s will. This comes at a cost.

*34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in His Father’s glory with the holy angels.” **Mark 8:34-38 (NIV)***

ii) “I will” – One who is being changed by Christ

A disciple is one who is being transformed and being changed into the image of Christ, not through his or her own effort but through Jesus Himself. If we are to be transformed to the image of Christ, we are to spend time with the Lord, and learn to hear His voice so that we learn to subject our will to His will.

iii) “Fish for people” – One who is committed to the mission of Christ

Seeking people to follow Jesus requires the same care, dedication, and skill used in fishing. If we are to be effective fishermen, then we need to go where the fish are and we need to find the best ways to catch them. Different baits and hooks for different fish. But once the fish is caught, it needs to be cleaned and prepared so that it can be useful.

DISCUSS

2. To what extent do you see yourself as a disciple of Christ? How are you “taking up your cross”? What obstacles or challenges do you face?

C. What are the components of a discipleship process?

i) A driver: Jesus was an intentional leader

- An intentional leader drives the discipleship process
- An intentional leader relates personally to those being discipled
- An intentional leader follows a plan and process to bring disciples to maturity.

ii) A vehicle: Jesus did disciple-making in a relational environment

- Relational environments are small
- Relational environments are safe
- Relational environments are transparent and authentic
- Relational environments have accountability
- Relational environments are built on encouragement
- Relational environments thrive on regularity
- Relational environments are caring and others-focused

iii) A map: Jesus followed a reproducible process

- Go to the unChurched and unConnected
- Assemble the Crew
- Build the Committed
- Send the Core

DISCUSS

3. Which part of the 'GABS' process do we have most trouble with? How can our lifegroup help us deal with those difficulties?