

Holy Trinity Claygate



Life in all its Fullness

Small Groups Study Material
Spring 2015

Study 1: Vision Sunday / Grace: A Model of Grace - 2 Corinthians 8:7-9

Introduction

In this study the aim is to reflect on some of the key messages from Vision Sunday, looking back with thanks and forwards with hope.

Looking back

- share as a group:
 - one answered prayer in your life in 2014
 - one way in which God was at work in / through your small group in 2014
 - one reason to give thanks for God's work at / through HTC in 2014
 - one reflection on what Philip spoke about on Vision Sunday

Looking forward

- read out the Verse for the Year (1 John 3:1a - see below) and the verses from Vision Sunday (2 Cor 8:7-9). What is the common theme here? Which word / phrase speaks to you most?
'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God!' - 1 John 3:1a
- how does reflecting on God's grace to us in Jesus Christ help us:
 - prepare for our individual journeys with God in 2015?
 - prepare for our Life to the Full mission?
 - prepare for reviewing our own giving to God's mission?
- how do you think 2015 might build our faith as a church?

Sharing with others

- "what's this word 'grace' about? how does it change anything?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

Pray together as a group:

- for the role Life to the Full will play in the work of Holy Trinity in 2015
- for the final planning details, the publicity campaign and the people who will come
- that we will be responsive to God's plans for Life to the Full, that we will welcome people from the local community and reflect God's love
- that Holy Trinity will be a safe place where people can ask questions, explore who God is and come closer to an encounter with him
- that we will be individually motivated to be involved in serving at and praying for Life to the Full

Study 2: Life to the Full launch / Grace: A Gospel of Grace - Ephesians 2:1-10

Introduction

In this study we look at the good news of grace, and also reflect on some of the key messages from Life to the Full Launch Sunday.

- reflect together on what Mike Barton spoke about at the Life to the Full launch on Sunday 18 Jan:
 - share one thing that excites you
 - share one thing that you feel challenged by
 - discuss together what you (as a small group, as individuals or with other friends from church) are planning for Taste Week

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

- how does Paul describe the state that his readers were in before they became Christians? (vv1-3)
 - in what ways do any of these phrases resonate with your own experience?
- how does he describe what God did for them - and why? (vv4-6)
 - in what ways have you experienced these works of God in your own life?
- why do you think Paul uses the past tense in v6, when we have not yet fully experienced God raising us up with Christ and seating us with him in heaven?
- how should we respond to God's amazing grace? (vv8-10)
 - what would this response look like for you?

Sharing with others

- "I'm fine as I am without Jesus in my life, aren't I?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

see overleaf

a) Place three unlit candles on a table in the centre of the room.

Sit quietly for a minute or two, and ask God to guide you as you think of three specific friends. If you recently took part in the Telling Our Story course you may already have three friends in mind. If not, prayerfully consider who God is prompting you to pray for in the run up to Life to the Full, who you might invite to an event.

As the first candle is lit, pray silently for the first person.

As the second candle is lit, pray silently for the second person.

As the third candle is lit, pray silently for the third person.

(Note to leaders - please allow a few minutes between lighting each candle to give group members time to pray specifically for each person).

As you pray, consider which of the Life to the Full events God wants you to invite those people to, pray that you will have courage in your invitations, that the Holy Spirit will be preparing their hearts, for their personal circumstances, and that even now, God might begin to move in their lives.

b) Pray together as a group:

- for your plans for Taste Week and for any Taste Week events your group or individuals in your group are running
- for the people you plan to invite
- that this will be an exciting step in their exploration of faith
- for yourself - that you will have courage and boldness in inviting people, and in taking opportunities to share your own story

Study 3: Abundance: Wine - John 2:1-11

Introduction

In this study we look at our February theme of abundance through the story of Jesus turning water into wine.

- what's the most memorable party you have ever attended?

Read John 2:1-11

- think about why John mentions the following details:
 - the exchange between Jesus and his mother (vv3-5)
 - what the stone jars were normally used for (v6)
 - the size of the jars (v6)
 - the quality of the wine drawn from the jars (vv9-10)
- think about the different characters in the story. How much do they understand of what is going on?
- what does this passage tell us about:
 - who Jesus is?
 - what Jesus offers? (cf John 7:37-39)
 - what response he seeks?
- which image or picture speaks to you most from this story?

Sharing with others

- "Is Jesus going to spoil my life?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

see overleaf

a) Give each group member three small pieces of modelling clay or plasticine and a cocktail stick.

Think of the three friends who you prayed for in the previous study - or three other people who you would like to pray for in the run up to Life to the Full.

In silence, mould each piece of clay into the shape of a heart. As you soften each piece of clay in your hands, and as you mould it, pray that the heart of the person you are praying for will be softened and that it will be open to the fullness of life that only Jesus can offer. When you have made your hearts, use the cocktail stick to write the name or initials of the people you are praying for on it.

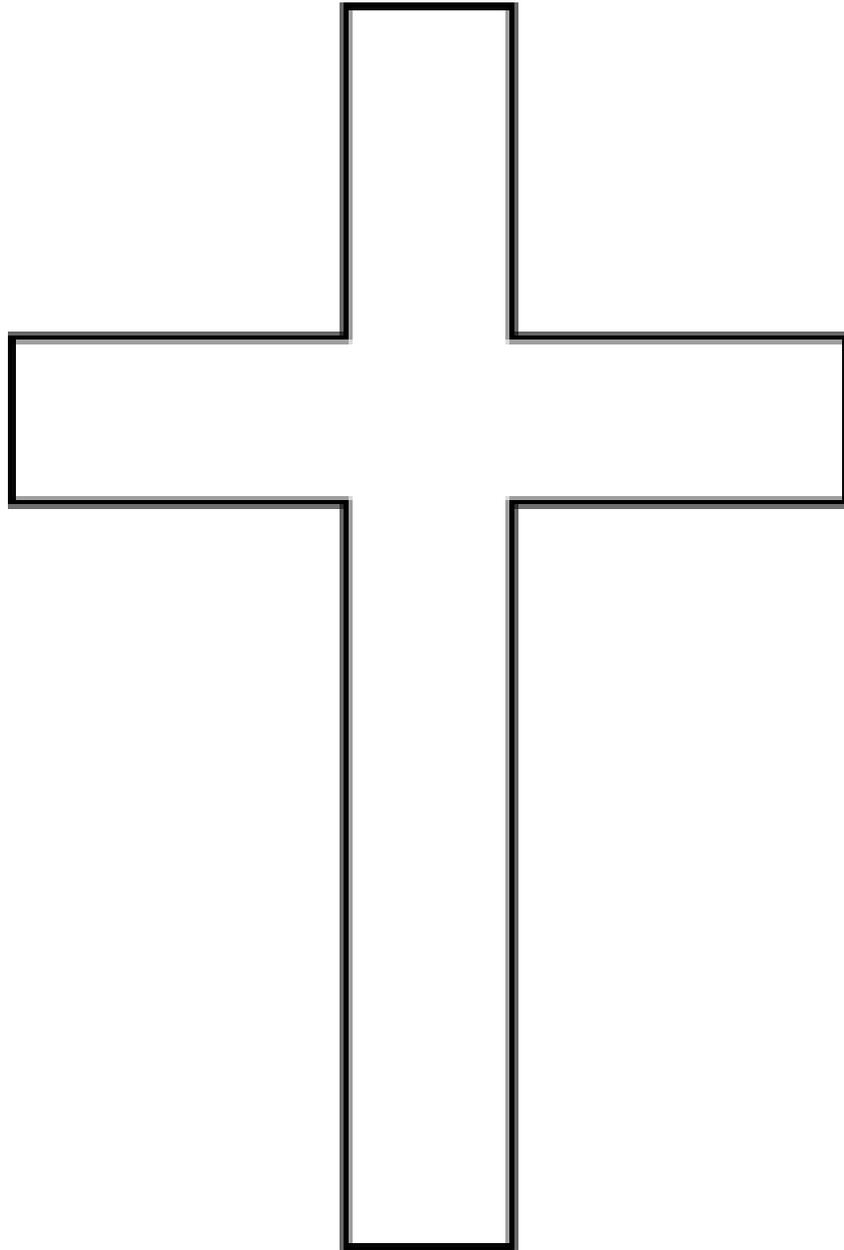
When you have made all three of your hearts, place them at the foot of the picture of the cross (see next page). As you put each heart down, prayerfully placing them at the foot of the cross, listen to 'O Lord Hear My Prayer' (see links below) or another song of worship.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f51n-yb11dY>

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/album/songs-taize-o-lord-hear-my/id558488287>

b) Pray together as a group:

- for specific parts of Life to the Full - maybe an event you plan to bring someone to, an event you are planning to serve at, or an event that particularly resonates with you
- for the planning and logistics
- for the speaker and the supporting team
- for the guests, that the event will be a catalyst and the beginning of an incredible journey for individuals



Study 4: Abundance: Bread - John 6:1-15

Introduction

In this study we continue to look at the theme of abundance, through the story of Jesus feeding the 5000.

- what is the largest group of people you have ever shared a meal with? Describe the experience.

Read John 6:1-15

- why do the crowds follow Jesus ? (v2) How does he respond? (vv3, 5)
- looking through the story of the miracle, what does Jesus do? What does he ask the disciples to do?
 - how is this same principle (God's part and ours) relevant to us today?
- how does this story illustrate the abundance of Jesus' provision for the people?
 - in what ways have you experienced this abundance in your own life?
- how do the people respond to Jesus ? (v14) What is Jesus' reaction to this?
 - what different responses to Jesus do we see in today's world / amongst our friends?
- what does this passage show about who Jesus is?

Sharing with others

- "Jesus was just a good moral teacher, wasn't he?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

see overleaf

Study 5: Abundance: Life - John 6:25-37

Introduction

In this passage we build on the previous study of the feeding of the 5000, and see how Jesus explains it to the crowd that follow him across the Sea of Galilee.

- who is the most memorable / captivating person you have ever met / heard?

Read John 6:25-37

- why are the people gathering round Jesus? (v26) How do they see him?
 - in what way do people show the same tendency today?
- what do the people want Jesus to do for them? (vv30-31, 34)
 - what do you think of this request in the light of Jesus' prior miracle in vv1-14?
- how does Jesus seek to refocus the people's hearts and minds? (vv27, 29, 33)
 - how are these words relevant today?
- what do you think Jesus means by his offer and promise in v35?
 - how does this tally with your experience of the life which Jesus offers?

Sharing with others

- "what sort of life does Jesus offer?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

If your group is doing Study 5 before Life to the Full:

- Using a Life to the Full leaflet as a prompt, pray for each of the people named on the leaflet. Pray that God will protect their health, that God will protect their schedules, that God will encourage them personally during the next few weeks. Pray that they will be open to God's guidance as they prepare for Life to the Full.
- Pray for Michael and Rosemary Green and the team from Oxford who will be supporting us during Life to the Full week.
- Pray for all the HTC staff and volunteers who are involved in Life to the Full in any way. Pray for all those who are serving at the events. Thank God for those who will be praying during Life to the Full.

see over for prayer suggestions if your group is doing this study after Life to the Full.

If your group is doing Study 5 after Life to the Full:

- Thank God for the speakers, staff and volunteers who took part in Life to the Full. Pray that they will be encouraged and rested.
- Pray for all those who came to the Life to the Full events, that they will continue to consider fullness of life, and that they will continue to explore what faith offers.
- Pray for HTC - that we will be welcoming to new people, that we will be open to God's leading, that we will celebrate more followers of Jesus.
- Pray for HTC - that as a result of Life to the Full, we will all know what it is to grow deeper and closer as followers of Jesus.

Study 6: Life: Life to the Full - John 10:1-10

Introduction

In this study we look at the theme of Life and Jesus' offer of Life to the Full.

- at what times in your life have you most truly felt alive, and that you were 'living life to the full'?

Read John 10:1-10

In vv1-6, the imagery is of Jesus as the shepherd, and his people as the sheep.

- what characteristics of Jesus as shepherd are seen in these verses?
 - how have we experienced Jesus as shepherd in our own lives?
- in contrast, Jesus mentions other 'false shepherds'. How are they described? (vv1, 8)
 - look at Ezekiel 34:1-6 for a fuller description of their characteristics
 - are you aware (by reputation or from personal experience) of any such 'false shepherds' in today's world?

In vv7-10, the imagery changes, and Jesus describes himself as the gate for the sheep.

- in what way is Jesus like a gate? (v9)
- how does Jesus describe the life that he offers? (vv9-10) How does this contrast with what is offered by the 'false shepherds'?
 - in what ways have we experienced that life for ourselves?

Sharing with others

- "don't all religions lead to God?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

Continue to pray for those who came to Life to the Full, and for members of HTC who have further opportunities to share their stories and pray with people who may be discovering relationship with Jesus for the first time.

Study 7: Hope: Hoping for a better future - John 12:12-19

Introduction

In this passage we look at what the Jewish people at the time of Jesus were hoping for, and how Jesus was providing a different sort of hope.

- think back to a time when you were really looking forward to something. What was the scenario and how did you feel?

Read John 12:12-19

- think about what it was like for the Jewish people to be living under Roman rule. What must it have felt like? What would they have wanted to happen?
- what does 'the Feast' (v12) refer to? (see v1) What echoes does this have of getting rid of a hated ruler?
- what do the actions and words of the crowd (v13) suggest about who they thought Jesus was and what he was going to do?
- how does Jesus' mode of transport (vv14-15) suggest that he is a different sort of king?
- how does the reference to the raising of Lazarus (v17) give a clue about the real hope Jesus was bringing?

Sharing with others

- "is Jesus going to give us a better future?"
How would you answer this question from a friend using insights from today's study?

Life to the Full - prayer

Pray that in the approach to Easter, HTC will be prepared for more opportunities to meet with new people, and with those who might be coming back for the first time since Life to the Full.

Thank God for stories you have heard of people who have responded to God since Life to the Full.

