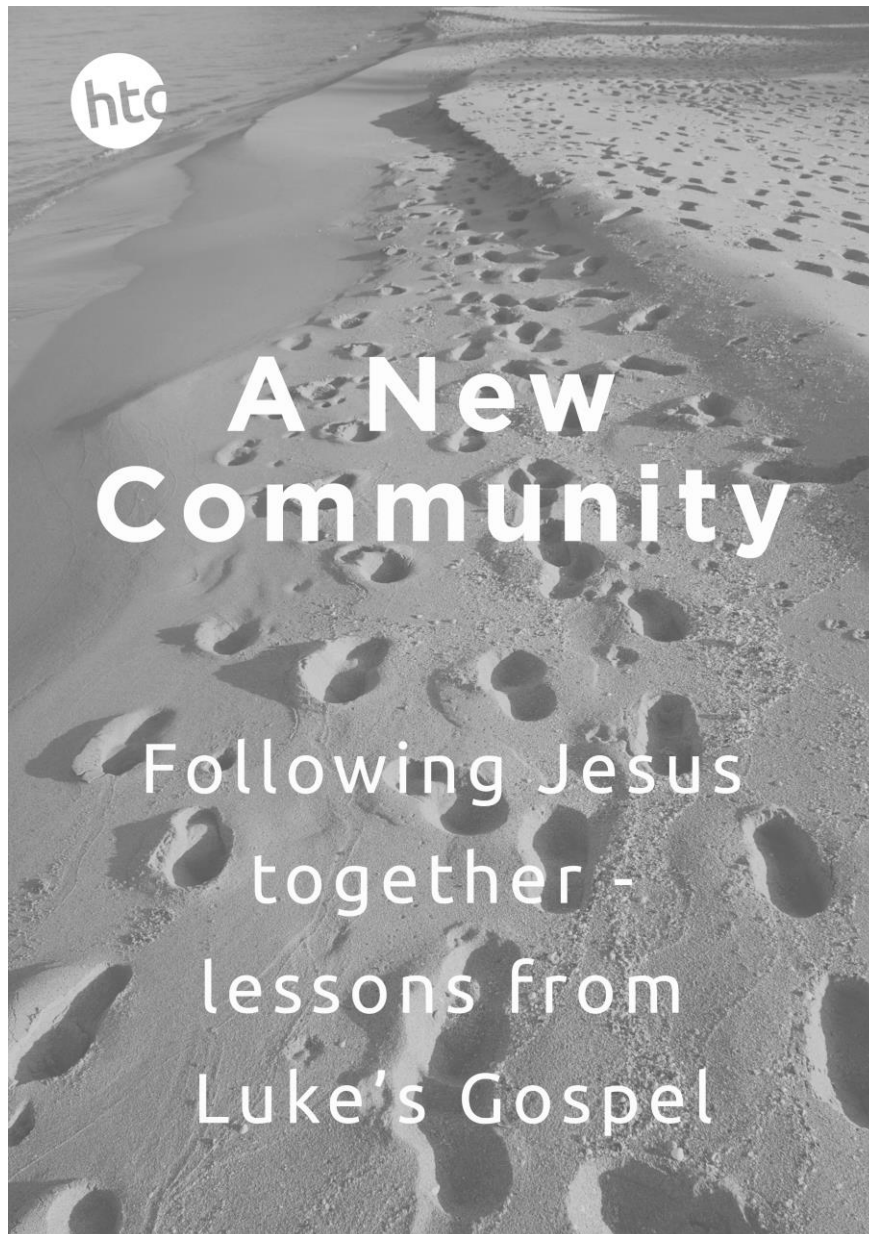


Holy Trinity Claygate



Small Group Study Material

Spring 2017

Study 1: Community Vision - John 13:35

Verse for the year

'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

John 13:35

Way in

Go around the group and share the best and worst things that happened to you over Christmas / New Year.

Introducing the Series

Our theme for this year at HTC is 'Loving Community', as we focus particularly on becoming 'Closer Followers of Jesus' as part of the HTC vision. During the year we will look at different aspects of being a loving community and how we can learn to love and serve one another better - individually, with our small groups, and all together.

- Think about the vision talk you heard on Sunday. What excited you most about the vision for HTC this year? Was there anything that you thought would be challenging for HTC / your small group / you personally?
- A loving community can mean two things: 1) A community where those who belong are loved, or 2) A community that loves and welcomes others. Which do you think is more important? What do you think it means to be a loving community?

Opening the Bible

Read John 13:34-35

- In verse 34 Jesus says we should love one another just as he loved us. How did Jesus love his disciples?
- How do you respond to Jesus' command to his disciples to love one another like he loved? How is it possible to show this kind of love?

- Love is much more than being nice to one another or a warm fuzzy feeling. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 13:1-11 which contains a description of Christian love for the church in Corinth. Does anything in the passage surprise you? Is anything not included that you think is missing?
- Our verse of the year (John 13:35) says '**By this** everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another'. '**By this**' at the start of the verse means 'by loving one another.' Does it surprise you that the verse says it is by loving one another that others will know we are Christians? Do you agree?
- Do you think people in Claygate who look at our church will know we are Jesus' disciples by our love for one another? What do we do well? Where could we do better?

Small group reflection and prayer

- As your small group start this 'loving community' journey together, discuss how good you are as a group at making time for one another and loving one another right now. What do you do well? What can you commit together to do better this term?
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session, and that God will help your group to grow in love for one another during this term.
- Personal prayer: ask God to help you to grow in your love of others. Maybe there is a particular person you struggle with, ask God to give you love for that person, and opportunities to show it.

Study 2: Community Called - Luke 5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16

Way in

Think of someone you look up to or admire. Share with your group what it is about them that makes you admire them.

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 5:1-11

- Jesus uses Simon Peter's boat as a platform to teach the crowd from. What is Simon Peter's reaction to Jesus using his boat and the request to go fishing?
- Simon Peter and the other fishermen were clearly amazed at the catch of fish. How important do you think the incredibly large catch of fish was in convincing the fishermen to follow Jesus?
- Have you ever done something begrudgingly (perhaps something God asked you to do) that later proved to be a great success? How did you feel afterwards?
- Is there anything in particular at the moment that you feel God is challenging you to do?

Read Luke 5:27-32 and 6:12-16

- Tax-collectors are never popular, but in Jesus' day it was worse; they would often extort money for themselves on top of working for the occupying Roman army. Were the officials right to make complaints about Jesus behaviour? - why / why not?

- Levi held a party so that his friends could meet Jesus. Do you find it easy to share your faith? What more could you do to help introduce your friends to Jesus?
- The twelve disciples were from a variety of backgrounds: fishermen, tax collectors, political revolutionaries and some unknown. What is the significance of Jesus' disciples coming from differing parts of society? Does our church / your small group reflect this?

Small group reflection and prayer

- Jesus chose a small group of people to share his life - the disciples learned, discussed, ate, laughed, argued and cried together. Share with one another what blessings you have received from belonging to your small group, and consider how you could extend these blessings to others.
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: both Simon and Levi left everything to follow Jesus (c.f. 5:11, 28). Consider prayerfully if there is anything that you are holding on to that God is calling you to leave behind.

Study 3: Community Living - Luke 6:27-42

Way in

Describe someone you know, or have heard about, who demonstrates in both word and action that they follow Christ. What is the difference between 'moral living' and Christian living?

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 6:27-36

- Jesus is speaking to his disciples at this point (c.f. verse 20). How does he teach the disciples to treat those who mistreat them? (verses 27-31) How easy or difficult do you find this teaching to follow?
- How are the disciples to be distinct from the world around them? What is their motivation for doing so? (vv32-36)
- In what ways did Jesus demonstrate this attitude of love to enemies in his own life? How does remembering that we are following his example help us to grow in this area ourselves?
- Can you think of an example where you have had to put this teaching about loving enemies into practice in your own life?

Read Luke 6:37-42

- How would you summarise the teaching in these verses, in just a sentence?

- We probably all find it easier to notice small imperfections in others than to see our own faults – but in what way have these verses brought home to you areas of your own life that you would like to change? How might you go about taking the next step in this area? How can you as a small group support each other in this?
- In what ways would life at HTC be different if we all adopted this attitude towards each other? Think big – and share ways in which you could each play your own part in this.

Small group reflection and prayer

- Consider together as a group how you might be able to grow in showing this attitude of unconditional love and acceptance to each other, in a way that is distinctive from others in the world around us. How might this be a way of witnessing to our shared faith to non-Christian friends?
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: ‘Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful’ (v36). Spend some time in prayer thanking God for his mercy to you. You might also want to repent of any ways in which you have not shown mercy to others, and ask for the Holy Spirit’s help where you are aware of things you would like to change.

Study 4: Community Care - Luke 7:11-17

Way in

Share with one another a time when either someone helped you, or you helped someone else, even though help wasn't requested. How did it turn out?

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 7:11-17

- Immediately before this story Jesus has just healed a centurion's servant from illness from a distance (see verses 1-10). What are the main differences between these two stories? What do they tell us about Jesus?

Jesus was able to do incredible miracles, that are not part of our normal experience - but we are able to learn from, and imitate, his attitude towards others. Keep this in mind as you answer the following questions!

- What do you think it means that '[Jesus] saw her, and his heart went out to her'? (verse 13)
- The widow doesn't ask for Jesus' help, yet he sees what has happened and acts. Should we help people even if they don't ask for help?
- What do you think is the difference between interfering in other people's lives and helping others? How can you discern the difference in your own experience?
- After Jesus raises the dead boy to life, he simply gives the boy back to his mother and utters no further words. Does this say anything more about Jesus motivation for helping the widow?

- Do you find it easy to help others without expecting anything in return? Why or why not?
- After Jesus performed this 'caring' miracle news about him spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. How important do you think caring acts are for HTC and small groups in spreading the news of Jesus?

Small group reflection and prayer

- After Jesus had raised the widow's son from the dead, the people declared, 'God has come to help his people' (verse 16b). Think about your small group and the care you give one another. What do you do well? What can you do better? How could you extend this care to others?
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: Jesus' heart went out to the widow in need and he acted. Prayerfully consider these two things this week:
 - What situation is your heart going out to at the moment? Commit to pray for that situation every day this week.
 - What words could you say, or what action could you take, to show God's care in that situation?

Study 5: Community Forgiveness - Luke 7:36-50

Way in

How does it feel when someone forgives you a wrong – or when you are wronged and need to forgive someone else? Share examples from your own life if you can – or stories you have seen or read elsewhere.

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 7:36-50

- How would you describe Simon the Pharisee's attitude to Jesus? (see verses 36-39 and also 44-46)
- How would you describe the woman's attitude to Jesus? In what ways does she differ from Simon in her actions, and in her regard for the opinions of others?
- What is the point of the story Jesus tells in verses 40-43? How does the woman embody this story?
- What is significant about Jesus' words in verse 48? What is he implicitly claiming about his own identity? How do the other guests respond?
- With which person in this story do you most identify, and why?
- This woman was excluded from society, yet welcomed by Jesus. How might this challenge us to be more inclusive as a church / small group? In what ways might we be able to put this into practice?

Small group reflection and prayer

- Jesus calls us to be a community of forgiven sinners, saved by grace through faith in him. Consider together as a group how you could collectively respond in love to his grace, in a way that reaches out to others and might cause them to begin to ask questions about who Jesus is.
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: spend some time in prayer, reflecting on the amazing grace God has lavished on you through Jesus' death on the cross. Pray through your own response to the forgiveness you have received and any ways in which you have personally been challenged by this study.

Study 6: Community Mission - Luke 10:1-24

Way in

If you were about to go on a mission visit to the Ukraine for 10 days, what preparations would you make? What would you put in your suitcase? (be creative - airline baggage restrictions do not apply!)

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 10:1-16

- What instructions does Jesus give to the 72 disciples as he prepares to send them out? (verses 1-12) What does this communicate about the urgency of the task they are given?
- How are the disciples to deal with rejection? (verse 16)
- In what ways is God calling us to engage in mission in our own lives / communities? Is mission more than just sharing our faith?
- Sometimes we might be held back from sharing our faith with others out of a fear of rejection. In what ways might Jesus' words here give us greater confidence in speaking to others about him?

Read Luke 10:17-24

- Encouraging results in mission can be very exciting – but what does Jesus say is an even greater source of joy? (verse 20) How does this help us to have the right priorities and perspective?
- What does the final section of the passage (verses 21-24) teach about the balance between God's part in bringing people to faith and our own responsibility? How does this encourage us in sharing our own faith?

- Jesus calls us all to pray for workers in the harvest field (verse 2). How much do you know about HTC's mission partners? How could you as a small group commit to supporting the mission of the church? – perhaps by praying regularly for one of the mission partners, or by signing up to serve as a group on a mission visit, or service project. Contact Katherine in the office if you would like to find out more!

Small group reflection and prayer

- Jesus does not send his followers out to engage in mission alone, but in community. As a small group, discuss ways in which you could support each other as a community in mission. One idea is to share with the group the name of one friend who you are praying for to come to know Jesus, and to ask the group to commit to pray for this person regularly, and to pray for you as you take opportunities to share your faith.
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: Consider prayerfully if there is anything stopping you speaking to others about your faith, and bring this to God in prayer now.

Study 7: Community Humility - Luke 14:1-14

Way in

Think of a time when you were a guest at a wedding, and were treated well - what was special about the experience? Have you ever been treated badly as a wedding guest? - describe this occasion.

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 14:1-14

The parable of the wedding feast (verses 7-11) is one of the less well known parables. Sitting close to the head of the table was a public sign of your importance and status. Those at the head of the table would also get first choice of food which was then passed down the table. Those sitting at the bottom of the table would get whatever was left over after everyone else had helped themselves.

- The passage starts with Luke telling us that Jesus 'was being carefully watched'. What is the significance of this statement to the events and parable that follow?
- Do you think that non Christians watch the actions of Christians more closely than they watch others outside the church? Why / why not? and does this matter?
- What do you think Jesus means in the parable when he says 'take the lowest seat'? Is this something you find easy or hard to do?
- 'Humility is not thinking of yourself as a fool and thinking everyone else is better than you. It is using your gifts to your best without seeking honour from others.' What do you think about this definition? Do you have a better one?

- How important are the opinions of others to you? Are there any parts of your life where you worry what other people think about you?
- In verses 12-14 Jesus gives instructions to the Pharisee not to share fellowship just with his friends and social equals but with those who he wouldn't normally invite. How easy do you find it to spend time and fellowship with people who are different from you? How could you grow in this?
- What does Christian hospitality look like? How is this different from social entertaining?

Small group reflection and prayer

- How good is your small group at honouring one another? Is there anything you could do to improve this aspect of your small group? What would a small group with great humility look like?
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: ask God to reveal to you this week any place where you seeking honour and prestige at the cost of others. Ask for forgiveness and ask the Holy Spirit to come and help you serve others and not use them.

Study 8: Transformed Community - Luke 19:1-9

Way in

Describe a time when you were on the receiving end of an act of generosity from someone else. How did it feel?

Opening the Bible

Read Luke 19:1-9

- How would you describe Zaccheus? How do you think Jews in Jericho would have viewed him?

- How does he respond to Jesus? What does this reveal about his heart?

- How do you feel about Zaccheus' attitude of open-handed generosity to his community, in response to his encounter with Jesus? Does this challenge you personally in any way?

- In what ways have you given or received generosity within HTC, or within your small group? Are there ways in which you as a group could collectively grow in this area? – and how might this transform our church community?

- As you look back over this term's studies, in what ways has God particularly spoken to you about:
 - your own life?

 - the community of your small group?

 - the community of HTC?

Small group reflection and prayer

- Zaccheus' generous actions show that his heart was transformed by meeting Jesus. Discuss together as a group how you could show generosity to others outside your small group as a way of witnessing to your faith in action rather than in words.
- At the start of term, in Study 1, you evaluated how good you were as a group at making time for each other. Look back now to what you committed to doing better - has anything changed during this term?
- Spend time in prayer together sharing any personal needs or things to give thanks for. Also spend time giving thanks and praying for your small group and all you have discussed during this session.
- Personal prayer: Spend some time thanking God for all that he has given you – material possessions, family and friends, time, and so on. Now ask God if there are any ways in which he is calling you to be more generous to others with your possessions / time / ..., and pray through your response.