

# Sermon Study Notes for Small Groups & Individuals: Autumn 2023

## Welcome Home

We exist to welcome each other home into God's radical, life-changing, saving love. To worship and enjoy God; being shaped, revived, challenged and nurtured. To be sent out joining God in great creative adventures which renew all things and call others home.

 Christ Church W4

Caption

## A note:

This term we are diving into our vision statement and then a series on worship. The notes below are designed to spring board from what we have listened to in the sermons on Sunday and aid with discussions and prayers. Our hope is that this makes all our groups accessible to those just beginning their journey in faith as we've all had a levelling chance to hear the sermon but also that they allow others to go deeper and study further.

Having growing Christian friendships really help us in our ongoing discipleship so do consider joining a small group or forming one with people in church you have met.

If you're leading a small group do clock that sometimes your group may miss a week to attend the HUNGRY prayer and praise evening or to have a social or a half-term break etc. So find a good rhythm and work with the notes below as appropriate. If you're leading a small group and want a resource to think about this again I'd encourage you to have a look at 'Sticky Church' by Larry Osborne.

## WELCOME HOME: Each Other – Luke 15.1-7

### WELCOME

What's the best 'welcome' you've ever received or heard about?

### WORSHIP

Listen to a song that expresses the Father Heart of God and thank God that he welcome us home.

### WORD: Read Luke 15.1-7

Who is telling the story? How does it related to what has happened in chapter 14? How does it fit alongside the other stories told in chapter 15?

What stood out to you from the passage and or anything that was explained in one of the sermons?

How can we focus on praying for folk and seeking to point folk home to their restoration with God? How do you keep this in mind in your daily life?

and go after the one that is lost,

until he finds it? And when he has found it,

he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he comes home,

He calls together his friends & neighbours

saying to them, 'Rejoice with me,

for I have found my sheep

that was lost.

LOST

FIND.

REJOICE

RESTORE

REJOICE

FIND

LOST

What has stood out most for you over the past few weeks, from one of the talks or looking at bot more at the vision statement?

WITNESS: Who will you pray for to come home in the lead up to Christmas?

## THE POWER OF PRAISE: Lift our Spirits – Psalm 42

### WELCOME:

Share a time when a bible verse, a point from a sermon, or a moment in worship helped you to be encouraged.

### WORD: Read Psalm 42

- As a Christian how do you cope with feeling, discouraged, overwhelmed and/or depressed? What can we learn from the way the Psalmist deals with these things?
- Where do people today look for 'hope'?
- What does it look like to hope in God? How can you practically place your hope in God the next time you face difficulty? See Romans 15:14, Romans 8:24-25; Psalm 46:2-3, Hebrews 11:1, Titus 1:1-2, 1 John 3:3.
- When it seems like God is silent (Psalm 28:1, Psalm 83:1, Job 30:20), what truths help you put one foot in front of the other?
- What has God given you to remember His work and presence in your life?
- Read Psalm 42:8. The psalmist talked about singing in the night. What worship songs have encouraged you recently and why?
- What is the role of the community of believers in helping someone who is discouraged? How does Psalm 42:4 inform your answer?
- Are you more accustomed to listening to yourself, or talking to yourself? What can you learn about self-counselling from Psalm 42? Consider the following diagnostic questions if you are struggling right now:

- Are my circumstances due to any known sin on my part (think about David in Psalm 32, 51)?
- Does God want me to do anything to change my circumstances or do I need to learn to wait until he acts (think about Elijah by the brook Cherith or Joseph in prison in Egypt)?
- If I can't change my circumstances, how does God want me to change my stance or perspective (think about Paul's reference to being an ambassador in chains instead of a mere prisoner)?
- How does knowing God's sovereign control of this situation bring a sense of comfort?

#### WORSHIP:

Put some quiet music on and encourage everyone to write / draw their own Psalm. Take it in turns to give people an opportunity to share anything they want from what they wrote or to 'pass'. Then all together and out loud pray Gods blessing for the person to the left of you.

#### WITNESS:

How could this Psalm help someone facing dark times? How could you point someone to God again or for the first time using this Psalm?

## THE POWER OF PRAISE: Presence of Peace – Psalm 140.13 & Philippians 4.4–9

WELCOME:

When have you felt at peace? What was it like?

WORD: Read the two passages.

- How do we rejoice in the Lord?
- Why do you think Paul tells us to rejoice 'always', and how is this possible when life is tough?
- Why is gentleness important and 'being anxious for nothing'? How might this relate to earlier in the passage when two women in the church were arguing? In what ways does our anxiety and disunity impact our witness?
- How does praying bring peace? Why would prayers that bring peace need to be offered with thanksgiving?
- Why is it important to remember that 'the Lord is near'?
- What do our hearts or minds need guarding or protecting from?
- If we the church live out verse 8 what are the affects?
- Why does Paul place such an emphasis on the life of the mind in Philippians (1.27; 2.2; 2.5; 3.15; 3.19; 4.8)? How does the mind fit into our experience of God, or our ability to live a life worthy of the gospel?
- What sorts of things occupy your mind? How does your preoccupation with these things affect your relationship? How does it affect your joy in the Lord? How does it affect your peace or your relationship with the God of peace?
- Next time you feel anxious or down about anything how in the light of this study will you take it to God in prayer?

## WORSHIP:

Copy the pattern in Philippians 4 together: thanking God, presenting requests, and waiting on God – taking time to register that you have left your requests in the hands of an almighty and sovereign God.

## WITNESS:

Pray together for those you would love to come to know God.

## **THE POWER OF PRAISE: Changes Perspective – Psalm 121**

### WELCOME:

Share a time when your perspective on something has completely changed?

### WORD:

- Psalm 121 is one of the songs of ascent, songs likely sung by Hebrew pilgrims traveling up to Jerusalem for the great worship festivals. How would this psalm capture their mood and their experience together?
- What dangers or threats to the pilgrims are mentioned? What options are available to the travellers for getting help and protection?
- How does the LORD help those on this journey of faith? What form does God's protection take?
- What does this psalm reveal about God's character and God's ways? How does it shape your understanding of how God relates to you?
- How have you experienced the LORD watching over you in the past?

- In what ways does 'looking up' change our perspective? What things were helpful from the sermon on Sunday?
- Where in your life do you feel vulnerable now or in need of the LORD's protection and/or perspective? How can this psalm be a template and guide for your own prayers this week?

## WORSHIP: Celtic Night Prayer:

Leader: Shadows lengthen, darkness thickens.

The lights are lit and the day we have lived through comes to an end.

Leader: Let us worship the God who separated light from darkness

**All: Hallowed be his name**

Leader: Let us worship the God who ordered the birth of the stars

**All: Hallowed be his name**

Leader: Who watches over us, unsleeping, night and day

**All: Hallowed be his name**

**All: Through our nights and days  
 Through our sleeping and waking  
 Through our resting and working  
 Keep us mindful of your presence, holy God.  
 Through places of darkness When we cannot see  
 When we stumble  
 Keep us faithful of your love.  
 When evil threatens  
 Deceiving and unnerving us  
 Masquerading as light  
 Keep us mindful of your strong protection.**

Leader: Let us pray: We call to mind those whose work is just beginning and those who are dreading this night.

**All: Lord have mercy**

We call to mind those who will have no shelter or adequate accommodation; those for whom the comfort of sleep does not come and whose minds cannot rest.

**All: Lord have mercy**

We call to mind those who are ill or in pain, for whom the night will drag: for the anxious, lonely and forgotten who have no one to be with them.

**All: Lord have mercy.**



Leader: Keep us and those for whom we pray safe, O Lord, in the darkness of this night.

**All: Amen.**

Hymn:

**Before the ending of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
That you, with steadfast love, would keep Your watch around us while we sleep.  
From evil dreams defend our sight, From fears and terrors of the night; Tread  
underfoot our deadly foe  
That we no sinful thought may know.  
O Father, that we ask be done  
Through Jesus Christ, your only Son;  
And Holy Spirit, by whose breath  
Our souls are raised to life from death. Amen.**

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 121: I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;

<sup>4</sup> indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord watches over you—  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

<sup>6</sup> the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;

<sup>8</sup> the Lord will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.

Quietly reflect as you listen to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g4eqKDkDiw>

Leader: We will lie down in peace and take our rest

**All: for it is you, Lord, who makes us dwell in safety.**

Leader: I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

**All: My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

**All: Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

Leader: The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

**All: The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

Leader: The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

**All: The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.**

Leader: We will lie down in peace and take our rest

**All: for it is you, Lord, who makes us dwell in safety.**

Leader: Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit

**All: For you have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.**

Leader: May we do the will of God, sharing in the death of Christ

**All: and rise in the light of heaven.**

Leader: May we rest safely this night, sleep in perfect peace

**All: and rise with the morning light.**

Leader: May the Father watch over our beds, Christ fill our dreams

**All: and the angels guard our souls.**

Leader: May the peace of the Spirit be ours this night, May the peace of the Son be ours this night, May the peace of the Father be ours this night, Each morning, each evening, and for evermore.

**All: Amen**

**WITNESS:**

Prayer together for God's help to be God's witness in the world. To be God's light in your home, workplace, rest places and social spaces. This could be done by the leader in the worship above.

## **THE POWER OF PRAISE: Reveals Solutions – Psalm 73.1-17**

**WELCOME:**

When did you last learn something new and what was it?

**WORSHIP:**

If someone plays or sings well, have a time of sung worship. Or listen to some live worship online and join in.

**WORD:** Read Psalm 73.1-17

- How are we just like the writer of this psalm?

- How do you usually feel when you see bad people succeed and good people fail?
- Why do you think God allows sinful people to succeed or get rich?
- What should be our response when we see sinful people succeed?
- How should you react when you experience failure in your life?
- When has God guided you through a difficult problem?
- What new perspective does this passage give you about your own circumstances?
- How can we have God's perspective when we feel confused or upset about the way our world is? 30. What have you learned about the role of worship in our lives?

WITNESS:

Pray for the roads around, for our neighbourhoods, that many people will be reached by upcoming Christmas services.

## **THE POWER OF PRAISE: Reminds us of Blessings - Psalm 105**

WELCOME:

What things are blessings in your life?

WORSHIP: The leader of the group prays a prayer of blessing on everyone. Then in either twos or threes set a timer on a phone and for 2 minutes pray slightly for one person, when the two minutes are up bless them by telling them the things you felt led to pray for - if you had any pictures or bible verses that came to mind share them as an encouragement. Take it in turns so the other person is then prayed for.

Then as a whole group spend time calling out all the blessings we have in life – keep going around until you can't think of anything else to thank God for.

WORD: Read Psalm 105

1. What did you learn from the sermons on Sunday? Take it in turns to share.
2. What does Israel's history teach us about God? What victories did He grant Israel? What victories has He given you recently?
3. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was due entirely to God's grace and mercy. Why was that important for the people to remember? In what ways do you need to rely more on God's grace and mercy?

WITNESS: What could you do this week to remember that God is with you and brings us blessings. We can pray that people will ask us about how our faith helps us and that we have opportunities to share.

## **THE POWER OF PRAISE: Brings Protection – 2**

### **Chronicles 20.20–30**

WELCOME:

Maybe take some time to play a game of some sort – something fun and ice-breaking. You could try 'Herd Mentality'

WORD:

- Why is praise and declaration of God's greatness so crucial during such critical times?

- The Lord challenges our faith and gives us something to do as we seek His wisdom. Can you share some experiences, either dramatic or typical of daily life, that fit into this way the Lord deals with His people?
- What did the king and the Israelites do? What did they see from the lookout? How did it compare to what God promised?
- What did they call that valley? What does it mean, and why do you think they have called it that?
- Are there other examples of unique places with names to remind a person of God's mighty work? How about in your life? List the benefits of obedience. What did they do on the fourth day?
- What wonderful statement did Jahaziel tell Jehoshaphat? (Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.)
- Why is that a good thing for us to remember today?
- Why is it important to let God lead in our lives?

WORSHIP & WITNESS: May use compline - you can find this online and take sometime to pray for the world and for our protection.

## **THE POWER OF PRAISE: Sets us Free - Acts 16.22-40**

WELCOME:

Today is the last study in this series. What have you learnt most? What are you applying most?

WORD:

- What was the outcome of the girls unsolicited deliverance?  
Acts 16:20-24

- What was Paul and Silas reaction to the negative (persecution) reaction?
- Do you remember to thank God in the mist of negative circumstances? James 1:1-4
- Why did the jailer turn to God? (16:27-30)?
- What were the results of the talk Paul and Silas had with the jailer? (16:31-34)
- Why did the magistrates change their minds about Paul and Silas? (16:35-36)
- Why did Paul respond the way he did to the officers? (16:37)
- What did Paul and Silas do after their release from prison? (16:40)
- . How might Paul have been helping the cause of the Philippian church when he asserted his rights?
- What can a Christian do to be prepared for persecution?
- When in your experience has the Lord provided a happy ending to a bad turn of events?
- When should Christians stand up for justice?
- When should Christians give up their legal rights for the sake of Christ?
- What can you pray about this week to put a check on evil in your place of work, neighbourhood, or community?

- What songs and prayers of praise can you offer God today?  
How can we be free in praise whatever our circumstances?

#### WITNESS & WORSHIP:

To finish this series leave a chunk of time accompanied by worship music and take it in turns to spiritually 'hot-seat' each member of your group. Spending time to pray over them as well as praying to words, images and prophecies for them, and finish by commissioning them into the world equipped with the wisdom gained from this series.