



# BEING DISCIPLES TODAY

CHRIST CHURCH  
HOME-GROUPS  
Spring 2009

# CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

2009

Just as you received Christ  
Jesus as Lord, continue to  
live in him, strengthened in  
the faith as you were  
taught, and overflowing  
with thankfulness.

*Colossians 2:6-7*

## 1. Receive Christ Jesus as Lord

### WELCOME

Would you rather spend a day with a celebrity chef, a celebrity gardener, or a celebrity house decorator?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 95 is one of the best known psalms, with its encouragement for us to know that *the Lord is the great God*. Use this psalm, not only to recognise how wonderful the Lord is, but also to be reminded of what it means for us to be his people.

### WORD

What comes into your mind when you hear the word 'Lord'? In our society it is an increasingly uncommon word – we have the House of Lords, but as we occasionally see, the Lords have no actual power – if the Commons decide to pass legislation ultimately the Lords cannot prevent it.

So the title 'Lord' is essentially a ceremonial one, a title of respect, maybe, but not one with any real clout. And because that is the situation in our society, it is all too easy to have the same attitude to Jesus. We call him 'Lord', but that can just be a title we give him that has no real content.

It would have been very different for the early Christians. They lived in a society where 'lords' had absolute power. To acknowledge

someone as your lord meant that you were their servant, or their slave. You did what they commanded. And our theme verse for this year begins by saying that if we are disciples of Jesus, that is our relationship with him. He is our Lord, therefore we are his servants.

### **Read Colossians 1:15-20**

This is one of the Bible's great descriptions of the majesty of Jesus Christ.

- Think back a couple of weeks to Christmas. How does what Paul writes here help us to understand who the baby born in Bethlehem really was?

In John 1:10-11, John writes *he was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

- How does what Paul writes in Colossians 1:15-20 help to explain that?

John goes on *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* The life of the disciple begins with receiving Jesus – *just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord.*

### **Read Mark 12:28-44**

Our relationship to Jesus as Lord is not a relationship of fear; we are not called to serve him because he forces us to (he doesn't force us to do anything) but out of love for him.

The instruction about loving God (taken from Deuteronomy 6:5) is, of course, very well known. It might be that talking of heart, soul,

mind and strength is just a way of saying 'all that you are', but in practical terms, what might it mean to love the Lord

- with all your heart?
- with all your soul?
- with all your mind?
- with all your strength?

In Deuteronomy 6:5 the original command is linked to there being only one God - *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.* So there is no-one else worthy of the absolute love and devotion which is due to God.

- How does what Jesus says in Mark 12:35-37 show that such love is also due to him?
- How does the action of the widow in Mark 12:41-44 show what it means to love the Lord?

## **WORK**

We sometimes sing: 'Jesus, all for Jesus, all I am and have and ever hope to be.' That is the right attitude of a servant to their Lord – but it is not always easy to sing such things with integrity. As you start this year, in what areas of your life are you most aware of the challenge of Jesus being Lord?

Jesus isn't our Lord solely as isolated individuals – he has given us one another, so that we can be disciples together. Are there ways in which as a group you can encourage one another in the areas of life where we struggle to receive Christ Jesus as Lord?

## 2. Continue to live in him

### WELCOME

Would you rather live in the city or the countryside? Why?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 62 is a reminder of the importance of maintaining our relationship with the Lord – when we drift away from him we lose the source of all that is good in life. Use this psalm together to thank God for the rest that we can have in him, and to ask him to keep us ‘in him’.

### WORD

Soon after we moved to Moreton, we began doing some work in the garden at the Rectory. I was getting carried away chopping down old shrubs, and managed to pretty well demolish one plant that we intended to keep. So I quickly stuck some branches into the ground, in the hope that they would grow. A few months later we were tidying up around that part of the garden, and there were the branches – all completely dead! Just bare sticks. They could not grow on their own. Unless they were connected to the parent tree, they were dead and useless. And from what I have read, it is the same with grape vines. Unless a branch is connected to the vine, it is dead.

### Read John 14:15-31

- What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus, and his love and presence in our lives?

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

- How does the peace that Jesus gives differ from the peace offered by the world?
- Have you any experience of the peace that Jesus gives helping you to conquer something of which you were afraid?

### Read John 15:1-17

Jesus’ instruction to his disciples in this passage revolves around three symbols – the vine, the gardener and the branches.

- Why does Jesus call himself the vine?
- What does it mean for us to be branches?

Instead of commanding us to bear fruit, why is Jesus’ only command ‘Remain in me’?

- What does it mean to remain in Christ?
- What are the things that can work to prevent us from remaining in him?

The fruit produced by the branch is sometimes viewed as referring to new converts. But branches produce grapes, not other branches.

- What other possible meanings are there for the fruit?

- What is the relationship between remaining in Jesus, and effective prayer?

The Father prunes fruitful branches to make them more fruitful. In what ways does God prune us?

- Have you had experience of the Father's 'pruning' in your life?
- What were the results?

## WORK

We each have a responsibility to do what we can to *continue to live in him*. But as with so much in the Christian life, we need one another to help us. Without Christian fellowship it is almost impossible to maintain our discipleship.

James writes *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.* (James 5:19-20) Are there people you know who have wandered from the truth? What steps could you take to help them return?

## 3. Rooted and built up in him

### WELCOME

What is the most impressive building you have ever visited?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 27 encourages us to focus our eyes on the greatness of the Lord (v.4) Use the psalm together, asking that in this study you will all see Jesus more clearly.

### WORD

For a couple of years I worked on a research project involving a new form of building block. Over that time we had to do many different experiments; testing how much load walls built with the blocks could take, what would happen if they got too cold, or too wet and so on. It was all necessary, because it could be disastrous to build a house out of something that wasn't satisfactory.

And the same is true, of course, of the foundations that a building has. No matter how good the material used in building, if the foundations are not deep enough, or secure enough, the whole building is in danger of collapse.

No one with any sense would think of building a house with little or no foundations. No one would think of using inadequate material for the walls. And yet, when it comes to building our lives, so many people do just that. And even as Christians, there can be a temptation to cut corners on foundations, or to put too much weight on things

that were never meant to support it. No less than any other building, our lives as disciples need to have the right foundations, and be built in the right way. We need to be *rooted and built up in him*.

### **Read Matthew 7:13-27**

The Christian life begins by entering through the narrow gate – accepting that challenge of receiving Jesus as Lord. But having done that, there are many temptations to build in the wrong way.

- How can we tell a false prophet from a true one?
  
- You would think that prophecy, casting out demons, and miracles (v.22) were pretty impressive fruit! Why do you think that Jesus could call some who did such things false prophets?

I don't believe that Jesus was saying that it is wrong to prophesy or to cast out demons, or to perform miracles – after all, he did all of those! But there is something more important than these things.

- What is it (v.21)?
  
- How does Jesus famous parable of the wise and foolish builders help explain what it means to do God's will?

The life of discipleship is rooted and built up in Jesus. Before anything else we need to know who he is; we need to understand what he has done for us. And essentially, that is what the whole Bible is about. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, and *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself*. (Luke 24:27)

### **Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

This passage was written centuries before Jesus was born, but it is still about him. What do each of these sections tell you about Jesus:

- Isaiah 52:13-15
  
- Isaiah 53:1-3
  
- Isaiah 53:4-6
  
- Isaiah 53:7-9
  
- Isaiah 53:10-12

Some Christians seem to think that all we need is really the New Testament. But passages like this one are vital if we are to really grasp who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

### **WORK**

We all need help and encouragement if we are to grow in our knowledge and love of Jesus. Is there a book you've read, or something you've seen on television or the internet, which you can recommend to the rest of your group as a way of learning more about the Lord Jesus?

## 4. Strengthened in the faith

### WELCOME

If you were given an extra hour each day of the coming week, what would you spend it doing?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 116 is a response to all that God has done for us. Use the psalm together, to express your love for the Lord.

### WORD

Over Christmas ‘The World’s Strongest Man’ competition was on television. There were men doing things that ought to be impossible! Pulling trucks along a roadway. Hurling barrels over a high bar. Lifting weights that it makes your eyes water just to think about! How did they do it?

Listening to some of them interviewed, it was obvious that they spent hours each day training, building their muscles, developing their strength. If in a previous competition one of them had failed at one of the events, he would put in extra work on the particular muscles used in that event. It was only by exercising their muscles, by pushing themselves beyond what anyone else would think were their limits, that they became so strong.

The life of the disciple involves being *strengthened in the faith as you were taught*. Teaching is vital – unless we are being taught

through Bible study, through preaching, through home-groups etc. we won’t have the raw material for being strengthened. Moses told the children of Israel that *man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord*. (Deuteronomy 8:3) God’s word, the Bible, is our essential food as Christians. But having eaten, we need to work, otherwise that food will just produce spiritual flab in our lives.

### Read Matthew 14:22-33

- Why do you think Peter wanted Jesus to tell him to walk on the water? (v.28)
- Why did he start sinking?
- What does that tell you about the relationship between being rooted and built up in Jesus, and being strengthened in the faith?
- How do you think the experience changed Peter?
- Have you ever taken on some new work in the church, or some area of Christian service in the community, and grown through it?
- What might stop you from doing so now?

In ‘If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat’. John Ortberg writes: ‘When you take on a challenge, it builds the core of who you are, even if you don’t perform flawlessly.’

### Read Matthew 25:14-30

I guess we all know this parable – but why was it that the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant hid his talent?

- Was he lazy? Or was there some other reason?
- Do you feel that way about Jesus?
- What reasons today might Christians have for not using the gifts they have been given?
- Are any of these reasons valid?

### WORK

We grow as disciples when we step out. That is a challenge for each person in your group. What gifts do you think each other have, that they are not using at present? Is there something that you could do as a group to use those gifts – even if it means stepping outside your comfort zone?

## 5. Overflowing with thankfulness

### WELCOME

We often think of what the best gift we have received might be. But what do you think is the best gift you have ever given?

### WORSHIP

The psalms are full of encouragements to give thanks to the Lord. Psalm 100 does this – use the psalm together, and then take time to thank God for something he has given you / done for you.

### WORD

As I write this it is just after Christmas, and I am still enjoying the gifts I received. It seems to me that when it comes to receiving gifts, there are 2 kinds of people. There are those who when you give them a gift, straight away say ‘thank you’ for it – even before they have opened it! I’m sure their motivation for this is good – but it does sometimes seem that it would be better to be like the other kind, who wait till they know what the gift is before saying ‘thank you.’ (Of course, there is the third kind of person, who doesn’t say ‘thank you’ at all! But we know we shouldn’t be like that.)

Whilst thankfulness is always a good attitude, we are bound to be more realistically thankful when we recognise what it is that we are thankful for. And that has to be true in our lives as disciples of Jesus. We might look at the world around us, and at what we have materially, and that should make us thankful to God. But as we realise what God has done for us in Jesus, our thankfulness should

increase. And the more we know of grace – how much God has done for us, and how little we deserve it, and the times when we step out in faith, and find God working through us, enabling us to do what we never thought was possible – should leave us *overflowing with thankfulness*.

### **Read Ephesians 2:1-10**

Although Paul doesn't actually use the word 'thanks' in this passage, it is full of reasons why we should be grateful to God. Go through the passage and list as many reasons as you can.

- Which of these makes you feel most grateful?
- Are there any that you don't really feel grateful for because you don't understand them?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

What is the link here between the actions Paul looks for from the Corinthians Christians and the thanks given to God?

- Have there been occasions when the actions of another Christian has resulted in you *overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God*.(v.12)?

Paul ends *thanks be to God for his indescribable gift*.

- What is Paul talking about there?

### **Read Colossians 3:15-17**

- How will letting *the word of Christ* (i.e. the Bible) *dwell in you richly* (v.16) encourage you to be thankful?
- How can our worship (hymns, psalms and spiritual songs) not only express gratitude, but help us to be grateful?
- What does Paul mean when he says that we should do everything *in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*.

### **WORK**

This coming Sunday, what can you do to help others at Christ Church overflow with thankfulness to God?

# CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

*Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him*

an **E**vangelising Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear the  
Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one  
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples, and  
disciples must always be learners*