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moreton



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making disciples
growing disciples
being disciples

*OUR GOD IS
GREAT!*

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Jan / Feb 2018

Still the majority of people in our society say that they believe in God – but there is a bewildering array of different beliefs around about God. As his people, we need to make sure that our faith really is in the God who is there. But, as the writer Paul Tripp says in his book 'Awe', we have become awe amnesiacs. We all too easily forget how wonderful God is. We forget what an amazing privilege it is to know him – in fact to be his children.

Christians need to be people who know their God, and who are constantly amazed by how great he is. Of course, we will never know all that there is to know about God – he is far too wonderful for us to begin to comprehend. But in his word he has revealed himself to us, and over these 4 studies we will look at some of the things the Bible tells us about God; things which should fill us with wonder, love and praise. What better way to start 2018!

The diary for this term looks like this:

Week beginning 8 th January	Home Group 1
Week beginning 15 th January	Home Group 2
Week beginning 22 nd January	Home Group 3
Week beginning 29 th January	Home Group 4

Wednesday 7 th February	PRAYER MEETING
Wednesday 14 th February	Ash Wednesday Communion
Week beginning 19 th February	Start of Lent Groups

(Our Lent groups will then run for 5 weeks)

1. Our God is a great big God

WELCOME

Over the past few years we have seen that prayer is essential to being a disciple. We should be people who pray, and who expect answers to those prayers. And for this series of home groups, instead of starting with the usual 'ice-breaker' we are going to start with answers to prayer. So – to start this first session – has there been a time when God has answered a prayer of yours?

WORSHIP

Psalm 66 is a song of praise to the God who answers prayer (see verses 19-20). Use the psalm to praise him, then thank him for the answers to prayer you have received.

WORD

- A. W. Tozer wrote: "The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of him." But I suspect that from time to time most of us have unworthy thoughts about God—especially during times of stress or difficulty. Does God care? Has he given up on me? Can he really help me out of this mess?

- There are times for all of us when God seems distant or uncaring. How do you respond when God feels far away?

READ Isaiah 40:1-11

God's people had been going through a tough time – conquered and taken into exile because of their sin.

- What good news did Isaiah have for the people?

- The image of God being a shepherd is a common one in the Bible. In what ways does God act like a shepherd to his people?

READ Isaiah 40:12-26

But could God help his people? Isaiah's word to them was: "Your God is too small!" In this passage he challenges our puny thoughts, overwhelming us with the majesty, wisdom, grace and power of our incomparable God.

- How does verse 12 show us the greatness of God?

- Even small problems can seem overwhelming while we are experiencing them. How can the portrait of God in verse 12 encourage us at such times?

- What aspect of God's character is stressed in verses 13-14?

Israel had been conquered and the people taken off into exile in Babylon. Babylon was the super-power of the day – no-one could resist them.

- How do verses 15-17 help God's people in that situation?

- How might they apply to us today?

- Why is an idol a pitiful substitute for God (w. 18-20)?

- At what point do people or things become substitutes for God?

- Why do you think God challenges us to compare him to counsellors, nations, idols, princes and rulers?

- Israel complained that God seemed distant and uncaring (v. 27). How do verses 12-26 answer this charge?

READ Isaiah 40:27-31

- What encouragement does God give us when we feel weary and without strength (w. 28-31)?

- What does it mean to 'hope in the Lord'? (v.31)

WORK

Each week during the series, your work will be to share prayer request with one another, then to go away and pray faithfully about those things. Maybe you could meet in 2's or 3's during the week just to pray about them. At the start next time there will be time to share how God has answered those prayers.

2. God is so good

WELCOME

How has praying for one another been this week? How has God been at work in response to your prayers?

WORSHIP

Psalm 145 reminds us of many things that we have to praise God for, and encourages us to tell others of what he has done. Use the psalm together to lead you in to praise God for what he has done for you this week.

WORD

In September 8, 1860, the steamer The Lady Elgin sank in Lake Michigan. A young student for the ordained ministry named Edward Spencer dived repeatedly into the icy waters and rescued seventeen people. The prolonged exposure permanently damaged his health, however, and he was unable to complete his studies. Some years later at his funeral it was noted that not one of the seventeen people he saved ever returned to thank him.

Thankfulness is basic to godliness. As we recognise God's goodness, it should lead us to thank him for all that he has done for us in the past and the present.

READ Psalm 107

This psalm shows us how much it means to say that God is good, and calls us to thank him for his goodness to us in the past and the present.

- How do verses 1-3 provide the theme and tone of the psalm?

The psalmist describes four different incidents in verses 4-9, 10-16, 17-22 and 23-32.

- What brief title would you give to each incident?

- What elements do they have in common?

- How is God's unfailing love demonstrated in each of these situations?

Each scene begins by describing a calamity and a cry for help.

- Do you think it is true that we often have to hit bottom before we cry out to God?

- Why is this?

- Is there any situation in your life at present for which you need the Lord's help? What sort of help do you need?

Each scene end by describing God's salvation and by calling us to give thanks for his unfailing love.

- Why do we often forget to thank God for answered prayers?

- What prayers has God answered recently for which you are thankful?

Verse 43 states that if we are wise we will "heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord."

- What things does the psalmist want us to heed?

WORK

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3. Every step I take

WELCOME

How has praying for one another been this week? How has God been at work in response to your prayers?

WORSHIP

Romans 8:28 tells us that God works for the good of those who love him. But that doesn't mean he will always do just what we want him to. Ask him to help you see the ways in which he has been at work for your good this week, then praise him for what he has done.

WORD

One of the contradictory things about us as humans is how we relate to other people. On the one hand, we long for relationship – others to share our lives with. We were made to love and be loved. On the other hand, we often want to keep our distance – we can maybe relate to Jean-Paul Sartre's famous saying that 'hell is other people'.

We want other people in our lives, but we also want to maintain our personal space. And I suspect that what is often true in human relationships is true of our relationship with God. The thought that God loves us is one which most people

are drawn to. The thought that God is with us constantly might be less appealing to some people.

But that is part of the wonder of God. He is not distant and remote, but close and personal. And that is described most fully in what has to be one of the best loved psalms – Psalm 139

READ Psalm 139:1-12

- Put into your own words the specific things that God knows about you from Psalm 139:1-5.
- How does David feel about God's total knowledge of him? 139:6
- How do you feel about God's total knowledge of you? Why?
- Which of the statements in 139:1-5 do you find most comforting? Why?
- Do any make you feel uncomfortable? Why?

In verse 7 the writer asks '*where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*'

- What are some reasons why a person might want to get away from God?

- Have you ever tried to get away from God? Why?
- Even if we know we cannot get away from God, what do we sometimes do to hold God at a distance?
- Think of a time you felt all alone. Did it help (or would it have helped) to know that God was with you? Why or why not?

READ Psalm 139:13-18

- Why does David thankfully praise God in 138:14? How could this help someone who was unhappy with the way they are?

Verses 17-18 are difficult to translate. The writer might be saying how precious God’s thoughts are generally, or how precious are God’s thoughts about him. It seems to me that the latter makes most sense in the context of the psalm.

- Why would God’s thoughts about us be precious?
- What does God know about your future and what impact do you think this has on your ability to make choices?

READ Psalm 139:19-24

- How does the writer describe the people who choose not to acknowledge the truths presented in this Psalm? (139:19-22)

- Is he right to have such negative feelings towards them?
- Why is David’s prayer in 139:23-24 an appropriate response the wonderful truths of this Psalm?

One article I read said “The power of Psalm 139 is not in knowing what it says, but in believing what it says. Look back over this Psalm put into your own words five facts about God and his relationship to you. Choose facts that are meaningful for you!”

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WORK

Each week during the series, your work will be to share prayer request with one another, then to go away and pray faithfully about those thing. It would be good to pray that the things you have learn from Psalm 139 will take root deeply in your lives. Maybe you could meet in 2’s or 3’s during the week just to pray about them. At the start next time there will be time to share how God has answered those prayers.

4. All you need is Love

WELCOME

How has praying for one another been this week? How has God been at work in response to your prayers?

WORSHIP

'This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' (John 4:10)
Praise God for his love for you.

WORD

Love. Where would we be without it? It dominates our songs, poems, movies and novels. We value it above every virtue. We long to find it and fight to keep it. Everyone has an opinion about it, but no one seems to have enough of it.

- Why do you think love dominates music, movies, literature and so many other aspects of our lives?

Love is central to the Apostle John's first letter. He helps us to understand its nature and its significance for our lives as Christians. Most importantly, John enables us to see what the often-quoted statement "God is love" really means.

READ 1 John 4:7-5:5.

- What does John mean when he says, God is love (verses 7 & 16)?

There are many times in the Bible where we are told that God loves. But these are the only 2 times in the whole Bible that we read 'God is love.'

- Why is it important not just that God loves, but that God is love?
- Where in the Bible do you see most clearly that God is love?
- How do verses 9-10 emphasize the nature and depth of God's love?

It can be difficult to understand God's love, as 'no-one has ever seen God.' (v.12)

- How is our love for each other supposed to make the invisible God visible?
- If our lives are characterized by love, why can we be confident rather than fearful on the day of judgment (w. 17-18)?
- Children usually resemble their parents. How does this principle relate to those who claim to be God's children (v 7-8)

- Does this mean that everyone who loves is God's child, regardless of his or her beliefs? If not, what does it mean?

It certainly seems possible in theory that we could love God and yet hate one of our brothers and sisters.

- According to John, why is this impossible (v 19-21)?

At the start of chapter 5, John lists some of the things that are true for those who are Christians. But I guess that most of us know that we fall short in one way or another.

- If some of these things are not true, does that mean a person is not a Christian? If not, what does John mean here?

READ Romans 8:28-39

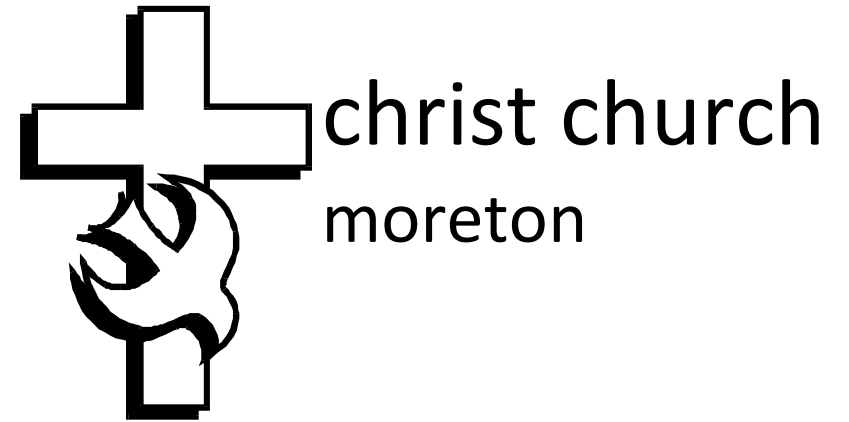
Paul says that in every situation God is working for our good.

- Have there been times when you have found this hard to believe?
- Many first century Christians, and many today, experienced many of the hardships described in verses 35-36. How could they continue to trust in God's love for them despite their suffering?
- Verse 38-39 are among the best loved in the Bible. How can we be sure that nothing can separate us from God's love?

WORK

This short set of studies is complete, but the challenge to go on praying for each other and expecting God to answer those prayers continues.

Have you experienced answers to prayer which could be an encouragement to the rest of Christ Church? If so, would you be willing to share them?



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