



christ church
moreton

Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

John 8:31-32

LIVE OUT THE TRUTH

The truth that will set us free is not just found in Jesus' actual words in the gospels, but in the whole of scripture – it is all God's word and as Paul wrote to Timothy it is all *useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* (2 Tim. 3:16)

This term we turn to Paul's letter to the Philippians, to find there more of the truth that will set us free. There are great truths of theology – who Jesus is and what he has done for us. And there are great practical truths as well – how to live as a disciple of Jesus when all around there will be pressures to live as the world lives.

But as with all of the great truths in God's word, they will do nothing for us if we just read them but fail to put them into practice. It is if we hold to Jesus' teaching – allowing it to shape our lives – that we will show ourselves to be his disciples. The big challenge each week as we study this letter is to ask ourselves how we will be different as a result of what we have read.

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Autumn 2011

1 Welcome to Philippi

The diary for this term looks like this:

Week beginning 10th October Home Group
Week beginning 17th October Home Group
Week beginning 24th October Home Group

Wednesday 2nd November **PRAYER MEETING**
Week beginning 7th November Home Group
Week beginning 14th November Home Group
Week beginning 21st November Home Group

WELCOME

What is your worst holiday experience?

WORSHIP

Psalm 23 is maybe the best loved of all the psalms. It speaks of God's care for us in times of peace and in times of trouble. Use the psalm together to express your trust in the Lord.

WORD

Wherever you travel in the country, to villages, towns or cities, you will find beautiful church buildings. Britain wouldn't be Britain without these wonderful buildings, even if they do cost an arm and a leg to maintain and heat. Even if our politicians often try to ignore it, the whole of British culture is wrapped up in Christianity. In fact – the whole of European culture. Cathedrals and choirs. Stained glass windows. Bach's B-minor mass. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope in Rome, the Orthodox patriarch in Moscow. There is something so ... European about Christianity. And to a lot of people Christianity is just a part of our culture.

So it can come as a bit of a shock to realise, or to be reminded, that Christianity was originally a non-European

religion, that was brought by missionaries to Europe. And that is what we see happening when the apostle Paul first crossed over from Turkey into Greece.

Read Acts 16:6-15

- What specific instructions and directions did Paul and his companions receive from the Holy Spirit?
- How do you see the Holy Spirit work through their obedience throughout this passage?
- What principles of guidance do you see in the experience of Paul and his companions?
- Have you ever experienced God guiding you in this way?

In verses 13-15 we were introduced to Lydia, the first convert in Philippi.

- How does this passage show both the human actions in this, and God's action?
- Look back to the time when you first became a Christian. In what ways can you see that God was at work? In what ways did it depend on other people?

Read Acts 16:16-40

- Why did Paul confront the slave girl?
- Why do you think the crowd joined in with the opposition to Paul and Silas?
- What does this tell you about why people today might oppose the gospel?
- Paul & Silas ended up in prison. They were there unjustly, so why do you think they didn't escape when the earthquake gave them the opportunity?
- Why do you think the jailer asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?"
- How does the response of the jailer compare to Lydia's response to the gospel?
- What does this tell you about the nature of the gospel?

And so a new church was born — and straightaway Paul had to leave. Some years later Paul wrote to that church — his letter to the Philippians.

2. Praise and Prayer

WORK

Think of the three individuals (Lydia, a business woman; the slave girl and the jailer) who probably became the core of the new Philippian church. How does Christ Church compare in terms of being a community for such different people? What can you do to strengthen the unity of Christ Church?

WELCOME

What would you most like to receive as a present from someone?

WORSHIP

In Psalm 63 David expresses his devotion to the Lord – he is the one David desired above everything else. Ask God to help you to use these words with integrity.

WORD

“I would like about £3 worth of gospel, please. Not too much – just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted. I don’t want so much gospel that I learn to really hate covetousness and lust, I certainly don’t want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture. I want ecstasy, not repentance; I want glory, to transformation. I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well behaved, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving enlarged. I would like about £3 worth of gospel, please.” *(Adapted from ‘Basics for believers’ by Don Carson)*

I guess that even if we wouldn't express it so honestly as this, most of us have been tempted to opt for a domesticated version of the gospel. But that is something which Paul's letter to the Philippians challenges head on

Read Philippians 1:1-11

- What are Paul's feelings towards the church in Philippi?
- How does that compare with your feelings towards Christ Church?
- What does Paul pray for for the Philippians?
- Why would each of these be essential to spiritual maturity?

Read Philippians 1:12-30

- What do you think Paul means when he says, 'For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain'?
- Could you say that?
- What does it mean to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel?

- How can we encourage one another do this?
- Paul says that it has been granted to these Christians not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him. (v.29) How can suffering for Christ be a gift? Is it a gift you would want?

WORK

It has been said that our love and concern for others can be measured by how much we pray for them. Using Paul's prayer for the Philippians, spend some time praying for each other.

3. Being like Jesus

WELCOME

Who in the world would you most like to be?

WORSHIP

Psalm 96 helps us to express the greatness of God and the praise he deserves from all of creation. Use these words together

WORD

Probably most people at some time or another have thought that they would like to be like someone else – maybe a great musician or sports person, maybe a film star or a famous Christian. But all of those ambitions are too small for us as Christians, our desire should be to be like Jesus.

Read Philippians 2:1-4

- What is the difference between humility and poor self-image?
- How should our experience of Christ and of the Holy Spirit affect our relationships?

- In what areas of your life are you most tempted to be conceited or selfishly ambitious?

Read Philippians 2:5-11

This is a wonderful picture of Jesus. But Paul gave it to us not just to tell us about Jesus, but so that Jesus can be an example for us.

- How did each of Christ's actions illustrate humility and a concern for the interests of others?
- How can God's response to Jesus help us when we are tempted to be self-centred rather than humble?

Read Philippians 2:12-18

In our first study we looked at the way in which both God and people were at work in the origin of the church at Philippi. Now Paul tells the Christians there to 'work out your salvation', and that it is 'God who works in you'. How important is it to you to know that God is at work in you?

- How seriously do you take the discipline of working out your own salvation?

4. New Ambitions

- In what ways does Paul want us to be different from the society in which we live?
- How can we be distinctive without being considered 'odd'?

WORK

Pray for each other:

- To become more like Jesus (particularly pray for any areas of life in which you find it difficult being like Jesus).
- To be able to 'hold out the word of life' to the people you meet with at home, work, leisure.

WELCOME

If you could go back to being a teenager, and could do anything you wanted, what career would you choose?

WORSHIP

Psalms 116 helps us to remember God's goodness to us in salvation, and to respond to him. As you use it, ask God to help you appreciate all that he has done for you in Jesus.

WORD

Some people have huge self-confidence. The writer George Bernard Shaw said, 'My speciality is being right when other people are wrong.' There are other people whose confidence lays in the money they have, or their education, or their family background.

On the other hand, some people have very low self-confidence. They just can't believe that anything they try has anything to offer to others.

I think the apostle Paul would see a problem with each of those. Because he would want us to be confident in what Jesus has done, rather than in what we have or do not have.

Read Philippians 2:19-30

- How is Timothy an example of the Christ-like attitude we thought about last time?
- It would be wonderful to have Timothy come to visit us at Christ Church. But since he won't be coming, what are some of the practical ways in which you could follow his example?
- How is Christ's attitude evident in the relationships among Paul, Epaphroditus and the Philippians?

Read Philippians 3:1-11

- How do you think rejoicing in the Lord (verse 1) is different from other reasons for joy?
- What sort of things do people today put their religious confidence in?

- Have you ever placed your confidence in something, thinking it would bring you closer to God, which you now consider to be worthless?
- In verse 6 Paul speaks of 'legalistic righteousness'. What 'rules' are we pressured to keep today as Christians?
- How can we resist allowing these rules to dominate our lives, whilst at the same time avoiding just doing whatever we want?

WORK

In the coming week, in what ways can you serve each other and serve the community here?

5. Run the Race

WELCOME

Would you rather climb a mountain, swim across a lake, or sit in the garden?

WORSHIP

Psalm 31 expresses confidence in the Lord, even when faced with troubles. Use these words to tell the Lord of your trust in him.

WORD

At the start of Study 3 we thought about the way in which most of us at some time have people we would like to be. There is something about them that we admire and would like to copy. But how would you feel if this was the other way round, and someone told you that they really admired you and that you were their role model? What would you say to them?

Read Philippians 3:10— 16

- In verses 12-14 Paul compares himself to an athlete who is running a race. Why is this such an appropriate description of the Christian life?

- What goal do you think Paul is straining for?
- How important is this to you?
- How can each of the things in verses 10-11 help us to know Christ better?

Read Philippians 3:17 — 4:1

Paul contrasts Christians with those who live as 'enemies of the cross'.

- What is it that characterises these 'enemies'?
- In what ways might you be tempted to live as an enemy of the cross?
- In verse 17 Paul asks us to follow his example (and he does this again in chapter 4). Looking back over Philippians so far, in what ways is Paul a good example for us?
- In verse 16, Paul urges us to 'live up to what we have already attained.' And in 4:1, Paul says, 'this is how you should stand firm in the Lord.'

- Do you think your stand in the Lord is firmer or weaker than it was a year ago?
- What has made the difference?

WORK

What practical things can you do to help each other to stand firm and not slip back?

6. Don't worry!

WELCOME

What is your happiest memory?

WORSHIP

Psalm 100 encourages us to shout for joy to the Lord, and reminds us of some of the reasons we have to be joyful in him. Use these words together

WORD

I wonder what word first comes into your mind when you think of what it means to be a Christian. Salvation? Hope? Faith? Love? All good words. But as we come towards the end of Paul's letter to the Philippians, I think we have enough evidence to suggest that he would add another word: JOY. This short letter is full of Paul talking about his own joy and encouraging the Christians in Philippi to rejoice.

Yet as Paul wrote these words, he was in chains in prison – hardly the sort of environment you would expect to lead to joy. But Paul's joy was rooted in something deeper than his physical hardships – it was rooted in the Lord Jesus himself.

Read Philippians 4:2-9

- What experiences in your life have brought you greatest joy?
- What experiences have you had which have drawn your attention away from Jesus?
- In verse 2 Paul pleads with Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Why do you think he is so concerned about their relationship?
- What should your response be to disagreements within Christ Church or within your Home Group?
- Does knowing that you belong to Jesus make you feel like rejoicing?
- What things have you been anxious about recently?
- How can the promises and commands listed in verses 4-7 help you to rejoice and to know peace?
- How can improper thoughts rob us of the peace God desires for us?
- How can we make sure we think about things that are noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy?

Read Philippians 4:10-23

Many people believe that they can only be content if they have enough money.

- What is the secret of contentment for Paul?
- How can we cultivate this attitude ourselves?
- How had the Philippians helped Paul both in the past and the present?
- What opportunities do we have to support those who need special support?

WORK

In the introduction to this series I said that “The big challenge each week as we study this letter is to ask ourselves how we will be different as a result of what we have read.”

So, as we end the series, what one thing will you make sure is different in your life as a result of what we have studied? How can other members of your group help you to keep the change up?

CHRIST CHURCH, MORFETON

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*