



christ church
moreton

Just do it

Christ Church
Home Groups
Spring 2023

w/b Mon 2 January	Prayer meeting
w/b Mon 9 January	homegroup study 1
w/b Mon 16 January	free
w/b Mon 23 January	homegroup study 2
w/b Mon 30 January	Prayer meeting
w/b Mon 6 February	homegroup study 3
w/b Mon 13 February	free
w/b Mon 20 February	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion
w/b Mon 27 February	Prayer meeting
w/b Mon 6 March	homegroup study 4
w/b Mon 13 March	free
w/b Mon 20 March	homegroup study 5
w/b Mon 27 March	free
w/b Mon 3 April	Prayer meeting
April 9th	Easter Sunday

Just do it!

Christchurch home groups spring 2023

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10: 10)

Life to the full. This is very different from what society around us might think of.

First of all - life to the full is a life that is centred on Jesus - without him it is impossible to life as it is meant to be. We know that, and yet so often we fail to put it in practise. All too easily our hopes and desires are controlled by the society we live in, rather than by Jesus himself. All too easily we want the gifts and not the giver.

But having a passion for Jesus does not mean that we retreat into a kind of super spiritual ghetto. The Bible makes it clear that a passion for Jesus has to be lived out in the real world. And nowhere in the Bible is that clearer than in the letter of James.

Unlike most of Paul's letters in the New Testament, James doesn't specify a particular church he was writing to. His letter is "to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations." Although some have seen this as a reference to Jewish Christians, I think he is referring to whole of the church. In the Old Testament, the twelve tribes were the whole of Israel, God's people. But in New Testament times Paul could refer to the church as 'the Israel of God.' (Galatians 6:16)

So James' letter is for the whole church – which, of course includes, Christ Church. And his letter is very practical. It wasn't that he thought what people believe with unimportant - he

makes it clear that important. But his deepest concern was to teach others how Christians ought to live.

And it is that which makes James' letter a good one to look at as we continue to work out what it means for us to live the life that Jesus came to give us.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.'**

James 1:22

These notes are adapted from homegroup notes that Graham provided to us in 2007.

This time last year we worked through a sermon series on James. As we start another New Year in James, this time in our Home Groups, it is hoped that once again we can benefit from refocussing our hearts and minds on the one who gives us meaning and life.

At the end of each study, we would ask that you take some time to pray for the appointment of the new Rector. The topics given are based upon where we expect to be in the recruitment process, but at the time of writing that timetable has not yet been finalised. However, prayer is never wasted. We will keep the church updated as to where we are in the process.

1. In for the marathon?

WELCOME

What is the longest journey you have ever been on (either in terms of distance or of time)?

WORSHIP

1 Peter 5:7 tells us to 'cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.' Galatians 6:2 tells us that we should 'carry each other's burdens.'

The way that the Lord does show his care for us is often though one another. Praise God for the way he has used other Christians to help you.

WORD

I sometimes hear people say something along the lines of 'wouldn't it have been wonderful to have been alive in the days of the early church,' and when I do hear that, my response is – 'I'm not so sure!'. Certainly, as you read the Acts of the Apostles, you do see great things happening – many people being converted, and the church growing. I definitely would like to see that now.

But you also see problems and persecution. The first Christians faced hostility from the Jews as well as the Roman Empire. According to tradition, John was the only one of Jesus' disciples who didn't die a martyr's death. In fact, for many of the early Christians, turning to Christ brought them trouble that they didn't have before.

Today that kind of experience can easily drive people away from Christ. I've known several people over the years who have become Christians, but then when problems have come, or when God didn't do what they wanted him to, they gave up. Many others have felt like giving up – maybe you have at times. But the Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint, it demands perseverance and stamina.

Read James 1:1-18

- In v2, James refers to 'trials of many kinds'. What kind of trials do you think about when you read these verses?
- What is James' reaction to these trials? Is that how you react to them?
- Why should our attitude to the trials of life be different to that of the society around us?
- How does James say that trials can help us grow as Christians?
- Have you ever found that to be true?
- Look at verses 13-15. Do you ever feel tempted to blame God when things go wrong?
- What happens if we do start blaming God?
- How is God described in v5? How should this encourage us in our relationship with God?

Read Luke 6:17-26

- What is the problem with being rich, well fed, happy and popular?
- In a society which would see these things as the most important things in life, how can we live differently without seeming completely out of touch?

- In James 1:1, the word translated 'scattered' implies those who are absent from their homeland, strangers in a strange land. The early Christians certainly thought of themselves as 'strangers and pilgrims on earth' (Hebrews 11:13).
- Do you think that Christians today in Britain feel too much 'at home' in this world?
- How might setting our sights on 'the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him' (verse 12) help us to live our lives now?

WORK

'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.' But as we remember in our worship when Christians do face trials they need their brothers and sisters to help them.

Are there Christians that you know of at present who are facing 'trials of many kinds'? They may be people known to you personally, or people you have only read about. They might be local, or could be Christians in other countries who are suffering persecution for their faith, or enduring extreme poverty.

Of course, it is always right to pray for such people, but what could you do **practically** to help?

'Don't just be hearers of the word ... Do what it says.' But, of course, in order to do what the word says, we first of all have to be listening to it. That's why the Bible is so important, and why our sermons are important – they help us to understand what God is saying in his word so that we can put it into practice. If you have missed sermons, or would like to hear them again, you can view them on tube:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/ChristChurchMoreton>

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

Pray for the newly-appointed parish representatives, that they might be blessed with wisdom, discernment and unity.

Pray too as we re-advertise for a new Rector. That the right people will see the advert and apply for the post.

Pray for those who have taken on additional responsibilities during vacancy that they feel refreshed and re-energized to continue.

Pray for our wardens and PCC

2. Living to Please God?

WELCOME

What is the most boring thing you have ever done?

WORSHIP

Micha 6:8 says: 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.'

Praise God for his justice and mercy – and pray that he will help you to become more like him.

WORD

Year ago, when I worked in a research laboratory, there were fairly strict rules designed to ensure safety in the lab. One of the senior lab staff would explain all these safety rule to new staff – 'you must always wear safety goggles and gloves when handling acids' etc.

The problem was, as soon as they had told the new member of staff these things, they immediately went off and ignored the rules themselves. The rules were there, but no-one actually obeyed them! [*]

But, of course, that sort of thing happens so much in life. Everyone has read about the dangers of smoking, but many people still do it. We seem to be in a society which reads things and then goes off and does whatever we had planned to do anyway.

And it happens with the Bible. How many Christians there must be who has read in the Bible that God wants us to do this, or not

do that and have then gone off and, almost without thinking, ignored what they have read?

Read Psalm 1

- The opening verse describe actions to be avoided/ What significance do you see in the progression from **walk to stand to sit**?
- **Blessed** (verse 1) is not a word which we use very often in ordinary speech. But it could equally well be translated **deeply happy**. Why should avoiding those things in verse 1 make us happy.
- In practice are there things that 'sinners' so which we secretly think would make us happy, rather than the reverse?
- In contrast to the way of sinners, the psalmist describes the person who delights in God's law (verse 2). What is your response to scripture (not what you **believe** about it, but how you **feel** about it)?

Read James 1:19-27

- What things make you angry?
- In view of what James says here, do you think that anger is ever justifiable?
- Why do you think that James puts such an emphasis on our tongues?
- Why should we be 'quick to listen, slow to speak' (verse 19)?
- Have there been times in your life when you have read something in the Bible, but not put it into practice?
- What stopped you?
- What does it mean for us to 'look intently' into God's perfect law?

- How does obeying God's perfect law set you free?

WORK

'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after widows and orphans in their distress...'

Last time you were encouraged to think of those who might need your help. Have you been able to do anything for them?

What still needs to be done?

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

That the advertisement when it goes out later this month will draw the best possible candidates to the vacancy

That God will be preparing the hearts and minds of those he is calling to apply

Continue to pray for our Wardens, PCC and leaders across the whole life of Christ Church.

[*] I would like to reassure you that safety has progressed hugely in recent years and that, nowadays, no one would consider ignoring any safety procedures. In themselves or their colleagues. Safety always comes first.

3. A welcoming Church?

WELCOME

Where would you most like to visit?

WORSHIP

God welcomes us into his family, not because we are special, but because He loves us unconditionally. Spend some time praising God for accepting you and making you part of His family.

WORD

Several year ago, whilst on holiday in France, I went to the local church. I had been attracted to go because the day before, while I was looking around the building, I saw that they had welcome leaflets with details of that Sunday's services and readings. Not only in French, but also in two or three other languages, including English.

As I arrived, I was welcomed at the door, given a service book and found a seat. The service started (though I understood little of it, my French is not up to that standard!) But what amazed me was the conclusion of the service. As soon as the service was finished, the minister left, and so did the sixty of seventy people in the congregation. Within two minutes I was the only person left in the building!

Another time, on holiday in this country, we again went to the local church. At the end of the service, rather than rushing off, everyone stayed for coffee. There must has been over a hundred people there – but not one of them talked to us. We hung around for then minutes, then left.

I wouldn't have called either church welcoming! But it was the second one which made me feel most out of place. Here were people who obviously were 'church', yet they seemed blind to anyone who was not one of them.

Read Isaiah 1:10-17

- Why should the way we treat other people have such an effect on the acceptability to God of our prayers and worship?
- Do you think these words apply to us today? Are there things we should be doing during the week if we want the Lord to accept our praise on Sunday?

Read James 2:1-13

- Do you respond differently to people according to how they are dressed?
- Why?
- Do you show favouritism towards some people at church?
- What is the difference between showing favouritism and having particular friendships?
- James is particularly strong in what he says about those who insult the poor. Are there ways in which we could be guilty of doing this?
- How could oppressing the poor be equated with slandering God's name?
- Verse 10 seems to suggest that all the commandments are of equal importance. Do you think this is what James meant?
- Do you think that some commandments are more important than others?

Read Micah 6:6-8 again (from Study 2).

- What might this mean in practice for us today?

WORK

One of our aims at Christ Church is to be a 'Welcoming Church'. This affects the way we treat visitors and newcomers to the church – for example our "Warm Hub" project is a powerful form of welcome.

But I don't think that welcome is restricted to those who come to Christ Church for the first time. I guess that all of us have people who we usually speak to when we are at church and others who we never speak to. So - the next time you are church, speak to someone you've not spoken to before!

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- That the advertisement will draw the best possible candidates to the vacancy
- That God will be preparing the hearts and minds of those he is calling to apply
- Continue to pray for our Wardens, PCC and leaders across the whole life of Christ Church.

4. Sure I believe. So what?

WELCOME

Have you ever got lost on a journey? What happened?

WORSHIP

'God is love' (1 John 4:7 & 16) Praise God for the love he has shown you. Especially thank him for Jesus – 'This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only son into the world that we might love through him.' (1 John 4:9)

WORD

Several years ago I worked with someone who was a member of the Institute of Accountants (or whatever their professional body is called!) He had passed his exams, he paid his membership fee each year, and so he was entitled to call himself an accountant. Which was strange, really, because he was a vicar! He never had anything to do with accountancy, and hadn't done for several years.

I guess that he still had the necessary knowledge to be an accountant if he wanted to – but it didn't really mean anything. It is a reminder that just having a qualification, on its own, is only the start. You have to put it into practice if it is to mean anything.

Read James 2:14-26

- What is it that makes us Christians?
(there's a clue in James 2:1)

- What is the relationship between 'faith' (what we believe) and 'works' (what we do)?
- What sort of deeds should faith produce?
- What would you say to someone who said 'I can't be a Christian because I keep doing the wrong things'?
- Why is getting the relationship between our faith and works so important for our witness?
- James refers to Rahab's faith.

Read Joshua 2

- How did Rahab show her faith? What would have happened to her if she hadn't done so?

James is especially concerned that Christians should meet each other's needs (verse 15).

- Do you think that this is still important? What sort of needs should we be able (and willing) to meet?

Read Acts 4:32-37

The idea of the practical love which James talks of, and which is seen in the sharing of possessions here in the early church can seem quite threatening. Why was it so important in this context that the believer were 'one in heart and mind.' (verse 32)?

- What can we do to become more united, not only in what we do, but also in what we believe?

These first Christians, who came from a Jewish background, would have been used to generosity – already in the Old Testament there was a strong tradition of care for the poor, and the Israelites were to give a tenth of their produce 'to the

Levites, the alien, the fatherless and the widow' (Deuteronomy 26: 12) The needs then, and among the early Christians, were mainly financial. What are the greatest needs Christians have today?

- How can we begin to address these as a Church?

WORK

'As the body without spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead'. We have been thinking about how we can respond to the needs of other Christians. But, of course, the deeds which faith leads to are not just physical. The challenge is to be doing things that will help others to meet with Lord Jesus themselves.

- We are called to be good news for our society. What could you do to put that into practice?

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- That God will enable the selection panel to choose the right candidates for interview.
- That God is preparing the hearts and minds of both panel and candidates for the roles he has given them, and the ministry he is calling them too.
- Pray for the panel as they formulate their questions for the candidates
- Continue to pray for unity within the Church, and for growth in discipleship and outreach as we wait on God.

5. Wise Words?

WELCOME

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

WORSHIP

Have someone read Psalm 19:7-14 slowly.

Thank God for the Bible. Tell him why it is important to you. (If you are stuck for ideas, look at Psalm 119!)

WORD

I guess that for any car owner, one of the most worrying times of the year is the M.O.T. You take the car to the garage – it looks O.K., it seems to be running O.K. – but what will the mechanic find when he really examines it? It's so frustrating – a car can look fine on the outside, but still have problems that make it dangerous.

However much we might not like them, car's need to have M.O.T.'s. Merely looking O.K. on the outside isn't enough. And I think that as Christians, we need to have a sort of spiritual M.O.T. We might look fine on the outside, be doing all the right things, but is everything really good in our spiritual lives? I wonder – what would we look at to find out about the state of our discipleship, our relationship with the Lord Jesus?

Read Matthew 12:33-37

- How do our words show what our heart is like?
- Why are the things we say (and think) such a good indicator of our relationship with the Lord?

Read James 3:1-12

- James returns to a theme he introduced in chapter 1 – the tongue. Look through the illustrations which James gives of the power of the tongue. What point is he making?
- Why do you think James calls the tongue a ‘world of evil among the parts of the body’?
- Is this a fair assessment of the tongue?
- Do you agree that the tongue is uncontrollable?
- How do our words show the state of our hearts?
- And what can we do about it if we realise that our words show that our hearts are in a bit of a mess?

Read James 3:13-18

- How does James define a wise and understanding person?
- Is this what our society would normally think of as ‘wisdom’?
- Do you think what James says about what makes a person wise is a good way of identifying wisdom?
- How does what James says here about wisdom relate to what he has just said about the tongue?

WORK

We haven’t chosen a theme verse for 2023. Why not take a verse from James that has particularly spoken to you over the past several weeks, memorize it and keep coming back to it prayerfully over the course of the year. Take note of what God says to you through the verse across the year, and whether or not its meaning changes for you.

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- Pray for the candidates as they prepare for interview.
- Pray for the interview process and for wisdom and unity amongst the panel as they make their decisions.
- Pray for the welcome day (date to be announced) that those involved are able to answer all the candidates’ questions honestly and portray Christ Church wisely and well.
- Continue to pray for unity within the Church, and for growth in discipleship and outreach as we wait on God.