

## **Sermon Series Bible Study Questions for St Mary's Small Groups**

### **CORE BELIEFS**

#### **SAVED BY GRACE: Eph 2:1-10**

What do we mean when we say that we are 'saved by grace'? Why do we need saving and how does it happen?

Read the passage. Does anything stand out (something surprising/confusing/reassuring/challenging)? Discuss among yourselves.

What is the main message in this passage for you? How is that significant for you today? For e.g does it change how you think about yourself or what you do? In what way does it make you want to respond?

Compare v8-9 with James 2:14-17. How is it that these passages are compatible?

V10. How can we discern what the 'good works' are that God has 'prepared in advance for us to do'? Does anyone have an example of 'good works' from their own life?

Are there perhaps ways of doing life differently that would make our works 'good works'?

Pray: give thanks for God's awesome 'great love for us' and His merciful saving grace.

Personal Reflection: What is God asking me to do before we next meet? Pray for one another as you seek to make any changes.

#### **WHO AM I? Gal 3:26-4:13**

**Reflection time; Spend a few minutes** reflecting on your insights from the last group meeting. Does anyone want to share their experience of trying to apply our last session's insights (*saved by grace*)?

**Opening Activity:** In what ways do we tend to compare ourselves to others?

Read the passage slowly. Does anything stand out (something surprising/confusing/reassuring/challenging)?

How does God see us? Do you think He makes comparisons between any of his children?

V29. We are 'heirs according to the promise'. What is the promise and what therefore, through faith and God's saving grace, are we inheriting? See also Eph 1:3-8a,13-14.

V6. What difference does it make to real life having 'the Spirit of his Son' in our hearts? Are there things we can do or attitudes we can seek to change that might help us live so that it does make a difference?

V9. The Galatians are ‘turning back’ to their old ways from the time when they ‘did not know God’ (v8). What can we do to avoid *becoming complacent* about our adoption into God’s family and instead continue to live differently?

In what ways does this passage inspire both confidence and humility? How do we live our lives both confidently and with humility?

Pray: give thanks that we are each loved equally and each share equally in our inheritance.

Personal Reflection: in what ways is God urging me to be more confident and/or have greater humility? Invite one another to share together and pray for one another about this.

### **GOD KNOWS AND LOVES ME. Luke 19:1-10**

**Reflection time; Spend a few minutes** reflecting on your insights from the last group meeting. Does anyone want to share their experience of trying to apply our last session’s insights (*who am I?*)?

**Opening Activity;** Think of some key biblical people (e.g. Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, woman at well, Mary Magdalene) and recall a) how God used them for His redemptive purposes and b) the ways in which they were weak / sinful.

Read the passage. Describe the scene in this passage as you imagine it. Discuss why it is remarkable that Jesus notices Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus is described as a ‘sinner’ (v7) as well as ‘a chief tax collector and wealthy’ (v2). In what ways was Zacchaeus likely to have been a sinner? In what ways do we sin ‘in thought, word and deed, through negligence, through weakness and through our own deliberate fault’?(This question for general discussion, not specific confession).

How does Jesus react to Zacchaeus? How does Zacchaeus respond?

What is the relevance of this account to us? How might you respond to Jesus knowing us?

Pray: give thanks that God knows everything about us and loves us deeply – and like Abraham (& Moses, David, Peter, Paul....) He has a purpose for us.

Personal Reflection: What do I need to confess and repent of and how can I respond practically to God’s love and grace? Invite one another to briefly share anything for prayer and pray for one another.

### **THE WORD OF GOD. Neh 8**

**Reflection time; Spend a few minutes** reflecting on your insights from the last group meeting. Does anyone want to share their experience of trying to apply our last session’s insights (*God knows and loves me*)?

**Opening activity;** What are the reasons for which we read the bible? Discuss the value of the Word of God, both generally and in your daily lives. Is it given a high priority? If it isn't, why is this so?

Read vv1-6. What are the Israelites' attitudes towards the Book of the Law 'which God had commanded for Israel'? In what ways does Ezra respond to their request? Who is the Book of the Law for?

Read vv7-12. What is necessary for Scripture to be effective? (clue: interpretation and application). How might church in general and this group in particular help us in making scripture effective?

Read vv13-18. The Israelites apply the law. How do we interpret Scripture and apply it to our lives? Do we start with scripture and seek to apply it or start with our experience and seek to interpret scripture through it? How should we 'proclaim' and spread it throughout Stoke Bishop / the Mission Area?

Read 2Tim 3:16-17. Discuss how these verses challenge and encourage.

Pray: give thanks for the gift of the Word of God.

Personal Reflection: Do I need to increase the priority of the Word of God in my life and if so, how will I do this?

Invite one another to share your reflections, note any questions and pray for one another.

### **CHRIST THE KING IS FIRST. Eph 1:15-end**

**Reflection time; Spend a few minutes** reflecting on your insights from the last group meeting. Does anyone want to share their experience of trying to apply our last session's insights (*The Word of God*)?

**Opening Activity;** One of Christianity's core beliefs is that Christ is King. Discuss what you think this means spiritually and in practical terms.

Read the passage. What is Paul's prayer for those who have believed in the gospel of salvation and for what purpose does he pray it?

V19 God's power is 'incomparably great'. What example does Paul give of this power? In what way is it both spiritual and physical?

Compare v21-22a with Gen 1:26-30. Jesus, as the true representative Man, is hereby portrayed as a second Adam with the task of exercising dominion over everything. Why is this significant?

We cannot alter God's incomparable power, but we have free will - what are some of the ways in which we try to prevent God from using His incomparable power in our lives? How can we ensure that we submit to Christ's power over us and in us?

V22-23 can be rendered God 'gave him *as* head of all things *to* the church'. Who/what is the church? How is it the 'fulness of him'? What does that mean for us?

Christ is King – in what way is His kingdom here, on earth, now?

Pray: give thanks that Christ is alive and reigns now. Ask for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may know Him better, and for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened to better comprehend His incomparable power.

Personal reflection: How can I live in a way which gives Christ the power and authority, both spiritually and practically? In what way am I (or could I be) a part of the kingdom here on earth? What one thing am I prepared to change in the next few weeks in order to achieve this?

Invite one another to share your reflections and pray for one another.