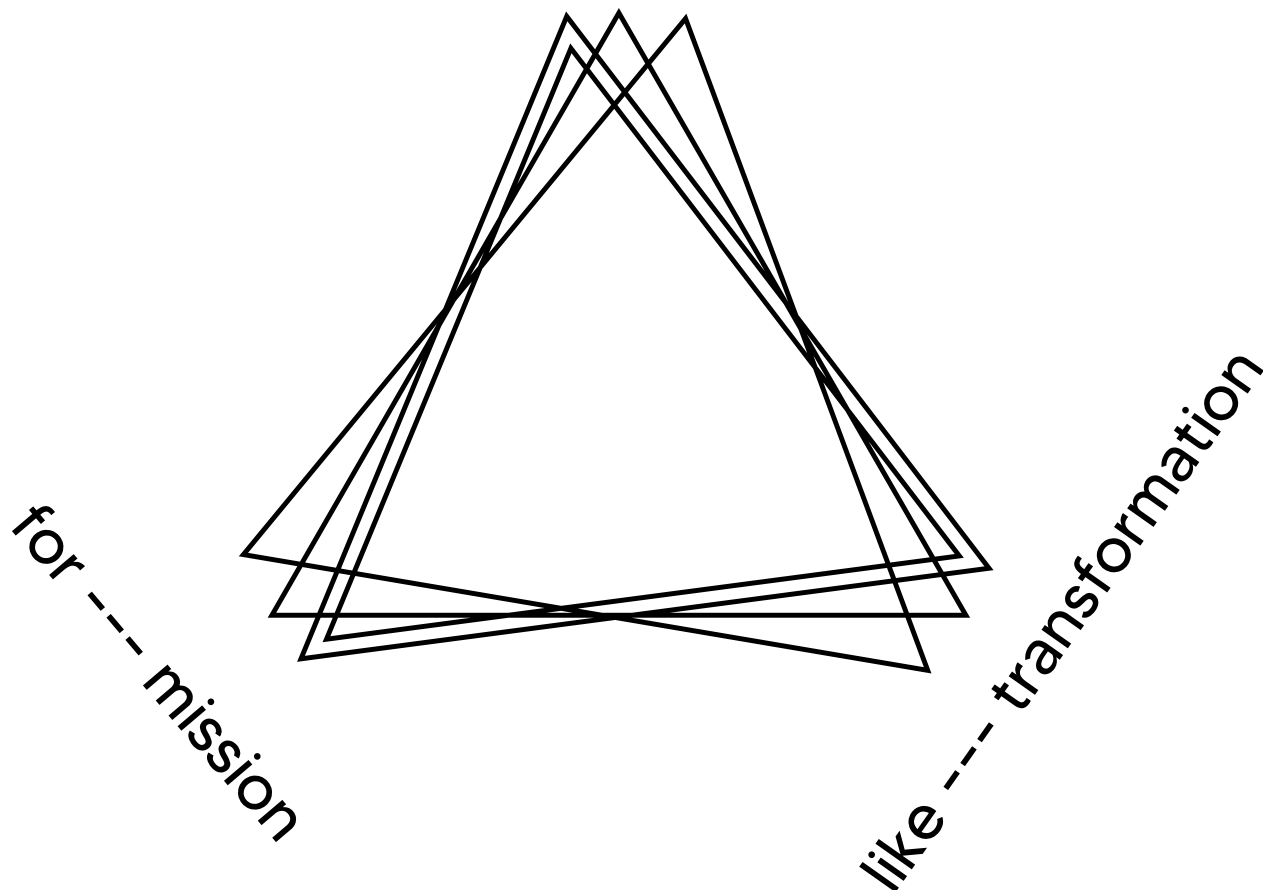


# VISION SERIES 2023

## COMMUNITY GUIDE

with --- encounter



# WELCOME

We are looking forward to journeying with you over Autumn as we unpack our church vision for 2023 in our Sunday teaching and in our mid-week All Saints Communities!

Each session will build up the previous one and will correlate closely to the Sunday teaching, so where possible, make sure you have access to the teaching, whether in person or as a recording on our website: [www.allsaints.church](http://www.allsaints.church).

There are a number of important terms or phrases that we will be looking at that you may be unfamiliar with, so we've included a glossary at the beginning of this guide that you can refer back to as and when you need to.

Our goal is that you be excited to go deeper with God and that you will be able to receive clarity about the direction that we are headed as a church. We also hope that you will be able to see where you fit in within the ongoing story of All Saints. We look forward to what God will do in and through us for the sake of our City and beyond as we open ourselves up to his Holy Spirit.

As this guide contains foundational terms and practices for us as a church, our hope is that you can refer to it time and time again as a resource for your own apprenticeship to Jesus.

Grace and peace.

Craig Gaudion

Tina Trevett

Amy Walker

(Community Guide Writers)

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# 1. APPRENTICESHIP TO JESUS – OUR THREE GOALS: LIVING WITH, LIKE AND FOR HIM.

## **LIVE WITH:**

Deepening personal relationship and connection to him. This is a life of 'encounter' with God through his Holy Spirit.

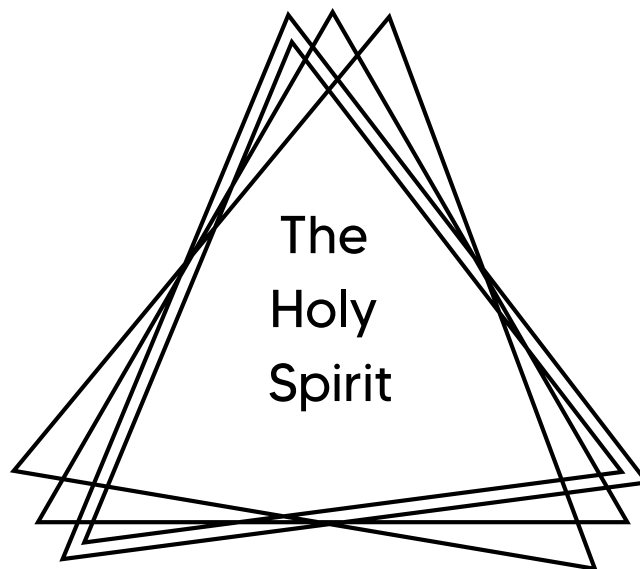
## **LIVE LIKE:**

Increasingly reflecting his character and lifestyle. This is a life of 'transformation' in the image of Jesus by his Holy Spirit.

## **LIVE FOR:**

Re-presenting his Good News, in the power of the Spirit, wherever we go. This is a life of 'mission', sent by the Holy Spirit.

live with --- encounter



live for --- mission

like like --- transformation

## **2. HOW TRANSFORMATION OCCURS:**

### **The Holy Spirit:**

Only the Holy Spirit can bring transformation to our lives. Our part is to provide the space for him to do what only he can do. (John 14v15-16; 15v1-4; 2 Corinthians 3v16-18). We do that through the three main ways below.

### **Receiving Teaching/Truth:**

In a world that wants to shape our life stories, we recognise that only God speaks true, life-giving reality into our lives. We receive this truth primarily through the Bible and primarily through the Good News of Jesus, which we believe is God's alive, powerful Word to us. Personal reading of Scripture and Scripture-based teaching within our Sunday services and other gatherings is essential to us. (Mark 1v14-15; 2 Timothy 2v2; 2 Timothy 3v14-17; James 1v22).

### **Putting into Practice:**

We believe apprentices are called to be practitioners. We don't just believe and receive God's reality and truth but we aim to put his words to us into practice (Matthew 7v24-27). We follow ancient practices that Jesus and his early Church held out to us as ways of doing this (e.g. reading scripture, prayer, fasting, community, generosity etc).

### **Living in Community:**

On earth, Jesus called a community of people to follow him and sent them out as family. We recognise that discipleship to Jesus is done primarily in community and not on our own. In a world of isolation and selfishness, we seek to serve, love, encourage and learn from each other. Our tightly drawn boundaries start to loosen as we open our lives to one another and those who don't yet know God. (Luke 10v1-3; John 17v20-21; Acts 2v42-47; Galatians 3v26-27; 1 Corinthians 12v13-14).

# **3. ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY:**

## **1. Welcome:**

**Whether people are new to God, to faith or simply to our church, they are met by a welcoming and hospitable culture and quickly feel like they belong.**

- Sunday services.
- Midweek ministries.
- Alpha Course.
- Welcome lunches.

## **2. Family:**

**People become part of God's family as they become Christians and seek to go deeper with God and learn how to be disciples in community.**

- Baptism / Confirmation.
- All Saints Communities.
- Discipleship courses.

## **3. Home:**

**When you feel at home, you make yourself at home. Everyone pitches in. We discover and grow in the gifts we have to share with our church family and the people and places we are called to serve outside the church walls.**

- Growing in spiritual gifts.
- Growing in our lifelong callings.
- Serving in a Team.
- Giving Financially.
- Growing in leadership.

## **4. Launch:**

**We believe the Good News of Jesus is for everyone within this parish, City and beyond. We are committed to multiply leaders, ministries and even churches to play our part in seeking God's renewal of this City.**

- New congregations
- New and growing leaders
- Multiplying Communities.
- Church planting.
- Resourcing and serving our parish and City.

# VISION SERIES 2023

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## Week 1: With, Like and For Jesus

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

To be a Christian is to be a follower/disciple of Jesus. Another word for this is apprentice - someone who is actively learning from a Master Teacher or instructor - not just in a class room, but in a hands-on experience. Jesus is Lord and Saviour but he is also the Master Teacher to whom we want to be with, like and for. Today, as we begin this series, we remember that our apprenticeship to Jesus, encountering him in a deepening relationship and being transformed into his character is not just for ourselves, or even our church, it's for the sake of the places and people who don't yet know Jesus.

### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three.

- Who are the people who have had the greatest influence on you and why?
- What do you think you have learned from them? This could be positive or negative.
- Which, if any followers of Jesus did you/ do you look up to? What is about them that you find inspiring?

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGE**

This passage comes right after Peter, an apprentice of Jesus, has declared his belief (on behalf of the twelve disciples) that Jesus is the 'Messiah', the long awaited King who was prophesied about in the Old Testament and whom God's people had been waiting for for hundreds of years. Many expected the Messiah to be a strong, military king who would sweep in and defeat Israel's enemies (remember at this time that Israel was occupied by the Romans). Jesus starts to unpack what his kingship will actually look like. Peter and the others certainly get a shock when he tells them where this will lead him and what it means to follow a king such as he!

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE: LUKE 9v18-27**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three. Have someone read the text twice, pausing in the middle of the two readings.

- Which words or phrases stand out to you?
- Why do you think Jesus sternly ordered his apprentices not to tell anyone who he was at that time?
- What most excites you about a life of apprenticeship to Jesus?
- What are the things in your life that can distract you from following Jesus?
- Find yourself in this story (you may want to read the passage again). What do you need to surrender in this season of your life so that you can take up your cross daily? How does that make you feel?

**Notes:**

## **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

Each one of us is a work in progress when it comes to living, with, like and for Jesus. Some of us are happiest in the space of 'encounter' (by this we mean our deepening relationship with God). Others are particularly fired up by being formed into the image of Jesus. Others are primarily passionate about reaching out in mission to those who don't yet know Jesus. (You might want to go back to the glossary on page 2 for a reminder of these terms). Even if we are passionate about all three we admit that each one of us is probably stronger or weaker in some areas than others.

This is normal and is part of the beauty of being part of a church - we get to encourage each other in areas we are weakest in.

Having said that, it also means that we get to learn from one another!

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY):**

- Which of these elements of discipleship (with, like, for or encounter, transformation, mission) are you most drawn to or strongest in. Why?
- Which of these are you least drawn to or weakest in. Why?
- This time next year, how would you like to have grown in this area?
- Where would you like to see All Saints Hoole as a whole to have grown in this area by next year?



## **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**

## **PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: PERSONAL INVENTORY QUESTIONS.**

Set aside some time this week to answer some of these personal inventory questions. They are simply a prompt to get us reflecting upon what apprenticeship to Jesus is currently looking like in the nuts and bolts of our current life. There is no right or wrong answer. You can use the 'notes for practice' page at the end of this session to do this.

- Try and write out a response to at least one question in each category.
- If possible, include 'why' or 'why not' this may be the case. It always helps to be as specific and honest as you can here.
- At the end of your time finish by thanking God for the breakthroughs and things that are going well and ask for his love, grace and power to help you with the areas where there is struggle or challenge.

We believe Community is a key place to share our journeys, so if possible, come prepared to share one of your responses when you break into smaller groups next week.

## **Live with Jesus (Encounter)**

- Do I pursue intimacy with Jesus?
- Am I living in the power of the Spirit?
- Am I seeing personal revival?
- Do I feel a regular sense of joy?
- Am I living in a state of peace?
- Am I pursuing a life of prayer?
- Am I obedient to God's promptings?
- What is on my heart for intercession?

**Notes:**

## **Live like Jesus (Transformation)**

- Do I love my community?
- Is time a blessing or a curse?
- Am I resting enough?
- Am I experiencing intimacy in relationships?
- Do I feel a regular sense of joy?
- Am I living in a state of peace?
- How easy is it for me to trust people?
- Am I sleep/eating well?
- Am I making myself vulnerable to others?

**Notes:**

## Live for Jesus (Mission)

- Do I have a heart for those who don't know Jesus?
- How often do I share my faith?
- Do I know what my spiritual gifts are?
- Do I leave time for relationship with non-Christians?
- Am I a servant?
- Am I investing in others?
- Can I take (faith) risks?
- Am I confident of my calling/vocation?
- Am I looking after the least of these? (the poor, vulnerable, forgotten)

**Notes:**

## **END TODAY'S SESSION BY PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER.**

You could do this as one group or in smaller groups.

Inventory Questions adapted from [www.weare3dmovements.com](http://www.weare3dmovements.com)



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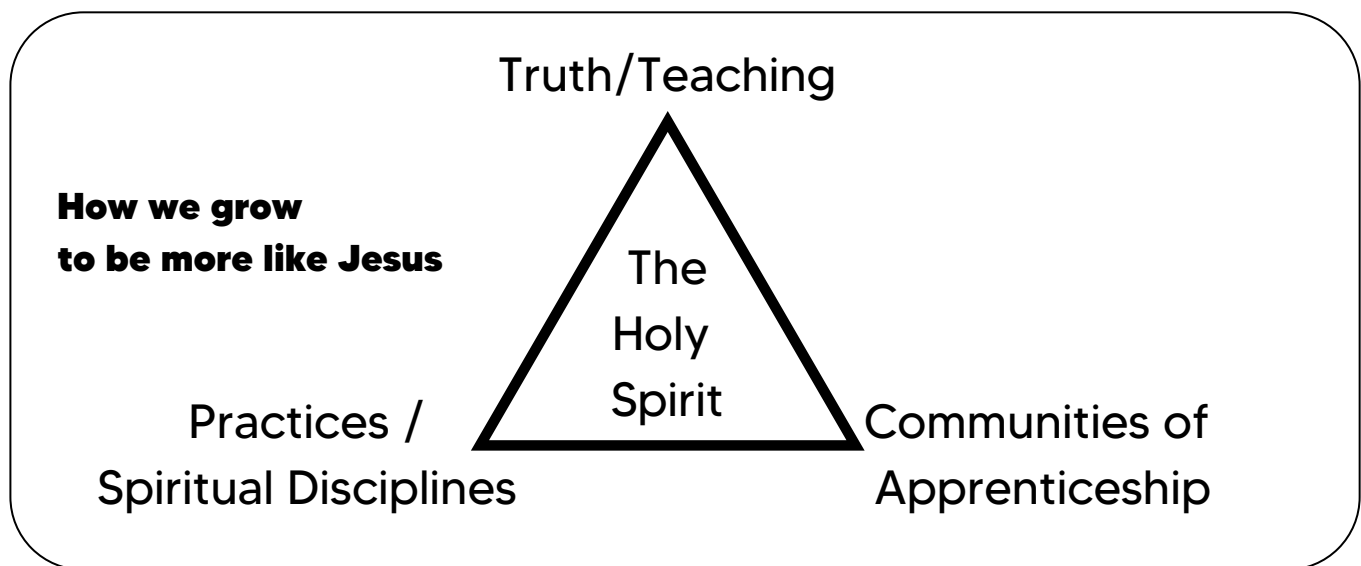
## Week 2: How Transformation Happens

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

Today we are going to focus on a model of how we, as a church, can grow in our apprenticeship to Jesus. We are going to unpack what each of the individual elements mean over the next few weeks, but for now here is a visual of the model, which we will refer to later.



We will also look at the proposed 'Discipleship Pathway' for All Saints that will steer us over the next couple of years as we seek to make disciples of Jesus who live with, like and for him.

### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three.

- Reflect on last week's personal inventory practice. How did you get on?
- What do you think are the most powerful forces in our world today that shape us or form us?
- Are there particular forces or influences that you personally find challenging? Why do you think this is?

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGE**

The passage we are about to read comes 10 days after the resurrected Jesus has gone back to heaven. During a major Jewish festival (Pentecost), 120 of Jesus' closest followers were praying when God, fulfilling ancient promises from the Bible, pours his own personal presence, the Holy Spirit upon these apprentices. The amazing signs of fire resting on their heads, of a great rushing wind and of an ability to speak in different languages draws a crowd from those around. Some onlookers write this off as drunkenness, which results in Peter preaching the Good News of Jesus. Our reading begins towards the end of his sermon and ends with transformed lives!

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE: ACTS 2:32-47**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three. Have someone read the text twice, pausing in the middle of the two readings.

- Which words or phrases stand out to you?
- Are there particular thoughts or emotions that come to mind for you as you reflect on this passage? What are they?
- What elements from our model of transformation above (teaching, community, practice, the Holy Spirit) can you find within the passage?
- Do you think it is important that a church community has all these elements? Why might this be?
- What might the challenges be for All Saints to consider as we seek to live out this kind of life together? How could we face these challenges?

**Notes:**

# ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

## WELCOME:

Whether people are new to God, to faith or simply to our church, they are met by a welcoming and hospitable culture and quickly feel like they belong.

- Sunday services.
- Midweek ministries.
- Alpha Course.
- Welcome lunches.

## FAMILY:

People become part of God's family as they become Christians and seek to go deeper with God and learn how to be disciples in community.

- Baptism / Confirmation.
- All Saints Communities.
- Discipleship courses.

# ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP

## PATHWAY

### HOME:

We discover and grow in the gifts we have to share with our church family and the people and places we are called to serve outside the church walls.

- Growing in spiritual gifts.
- Growing in our lifelong callings.
- Serving in a Team.
- Giving Financially.
- Growing in leadership.

3

### LAUNCH:

The Good News of Jesus is for everyone. We are committed to play our part in seeking God's renewal of this City.

- New congregations
- New and growing leaders
- Multiplying Communities.
- Church planting.
- Serving our parish and City.

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## **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

The discipleship pathway in the preceding pages is an invitation over the next couple of years to be intentional about walking with one another and those who don't yet know Jesus to get to know him, become more like him and live for him. Our hope is that all of us, whatever point we are on the pathway, continue to grow, discover our gifts and develop ways that we can serve and lead in the power of the Holy Spirit to play our part as a church family in seeing God's kingdom come in Chester and beyond.

As we start and develop this pathway, our hope is that prayer will continue to be at the heartbeat of everything that happens. With that in mind, you are now invited in your Community, as a whole or in smaller groups to pray for the next season.

## **PRAYER TOPICS (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY):**

- Welcome - Spend some time praying for those, if possible by name, who either don't know Jesus or are new to faith.
- Family - Pray for our Communities and that those who are not yet in one will be stirred to join one. Pray that God would grow new Community leaders.
- Home - Pray for those who serve on teams at church and that God would continue to grow current and new fruitful ministries.
- Launch - Pray that we would have wisdom to know how to encourage each other to serve and lead both within the church walls, but more importantly outside, wherever we find ourselves.

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you to do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**

**PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.**

As part of your daily pray time you are invited to make one, a few, or all these topics a prayer focus for the week. You may want to finish with the Lord's prayer or to begin and end your time with silence before moving on to the next thing. We encourage you to use the 'notes for practice' page to jot anything down.

- Welcome - Spend some time praying for those, if possibly, by name, who either don't know Jesus or are new to faith.
- Home - Pray for those who serve on teams at church and that God would continue to grow current and new fruitful ministries.
- Family - Pray for our Communities and that those who are not yet in one will be stirred to join one. Pray that God would grow new Community leaders.
- Launch - Pray that we would have wisdom to know how to encourage each other to serve and lead both within the church walls, but more importantly outside, wherever we find ourselves.

**END TODAY'S SESSION BY PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER.**

You could do this as one group or in smaller groups.



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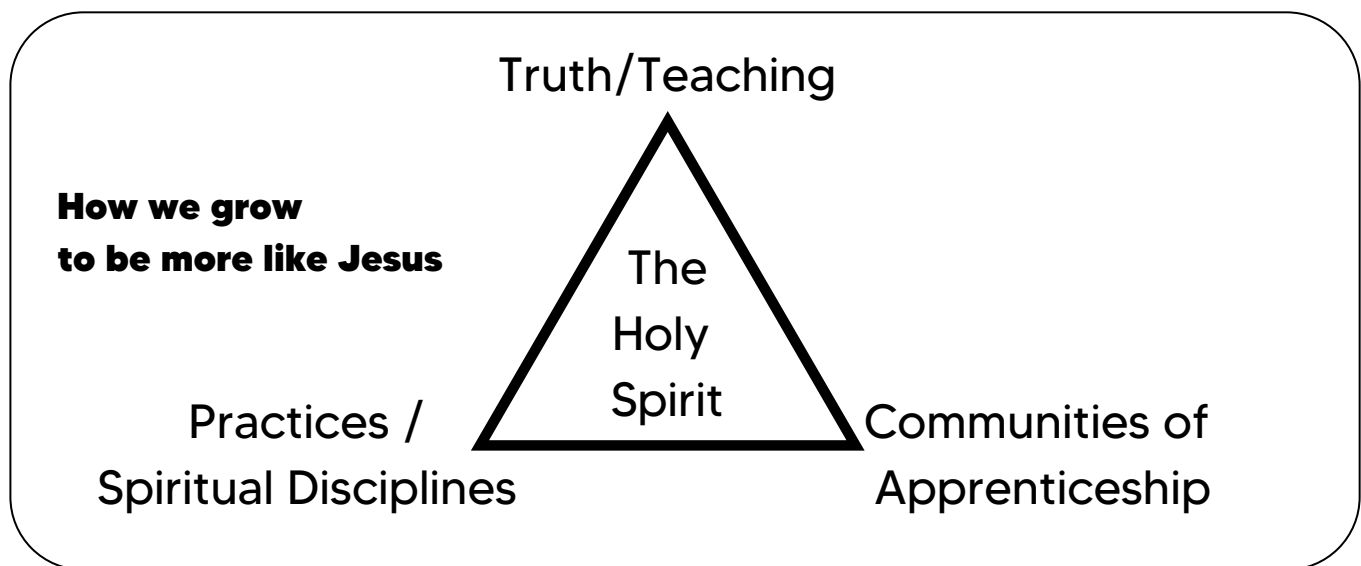
## Week 3: Transformation: The Holy Spirit (part 1)

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

Today we dig deeper into our model of transformation to become and live like Jesus. Central to this is the work of the Holy Spirit who transforms us, over a lifetime, to increasingly reflect the inner life of Jesus.



### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three.

- How did you get on with last weeks practice of 'praying the discipleship pathway?' What, if anything, came up for you?
- What is it about Jesus' life and character that you find most compelling? Why?
- Why do you think transformation is so hard?

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGES:**

The passages that you are about to read are taken from three letters that one of the earliest church-planter, Paul, wrote to three different churches (Galatia, Corinth, Rome) at three different times within his ministry. As you go through these passages in smaller groups, explore together the specific emphasis on transformation that Paul is making to that particular church. You may want to split into smaller groups and tackle a passage each and briefly report back to the wider group.

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE(S)**

+ GALATIANS 5v13-26

+ 2 CORINTHIANS 3v17-18

+ ROMANS 8v1-9

- Which words, phrases or images stand out to you from the reading(s)?
- Did you notice any specific emphases or distinctives in your passage / or between the passages in terms of the Holy Spirit's work?
- What do you think is our part in this transforming work, according to Paul?

**Notes:**

## **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

Another way of talking about transformation is what the Bible calls 'holiness.' The word 'holy' means: set apart, unlike, other than. The Bible says that God is holy - there is no other like him. He is completely good, pure, truthful and powerful. What's staggering is that when we become apprentices of Jesus and because of the work of Jesus' cross and resurrection, the Holy Spirit makes us 'holy'. We are given a new identity as holy and set apart - all our mistakes, guilt and shame are wiped away. However, it takes a lifetime to, as one modern writer says, 'become what we are'. We are called to grow in holiness by partnering with the Holy Spirit.

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY)**

- What excites you about living a life of holiness and becoming like Jesus?
- What are the specific blockages or distractions in your life that can get in the way of this?
- What could be one thing you could change to provide more space for the Holy Spirit to help you grow in holiness? Could we (the Community) help?

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**

## **PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.**

This week you're invited to use the below prayer as a 'gateway' into allowing God to do the work of transformation in your life each and every day. Record any insights or reflection throughout the week on the 'notes for practice' page.

Tips:

- We recommend you find a quiet, distraction-free place.
- Put away electronic devices.
- Spend a minute in silence, asking that God would meet you in this place.
- After you pray the prayer slowly, line by line, finish your time by asking God to make you aware of his presence throughout the day.

## **Trinitarian Prayer by John Stott, 'Basic Christian: The Story of John Stott'**

*Good morning heavenly Father,  
good morning Lord Jesus,  
good morning Holy Spirit.*

***Heavenly Father**, I worship you as the creator and sustainer of the universe.  
**Lord Jesus**, I worship you, Saviour and Lord of the world.  
**Holy Spirit**, I worship you, sanctifier of the people of God.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.*

***Heavenly Father**, I pray that I may live this day in your presence  
and please you more and more.*

***Lord Jesus**, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you.*

***Holy Spirit**, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your  
fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

*Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God,  
have mercy upon me. **Amen.***

### **CLOSING PRAYERS:**

You may want to spend some time before you end, praying that the Holy Spirit would each other with his life and goodness for the coming week.





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## Week 4: Transformation: The Holy Spirit (part 2)

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

Last week we looked at how the Holy Spirit brings transformation to our inner life, helping us to mature to reflect the characteristics of Jesus. This week we focus on what the overflow of such a life can look like. What does it mean for us that we are sent by the Holy Spirit in 'mission' to see transformation in the world?

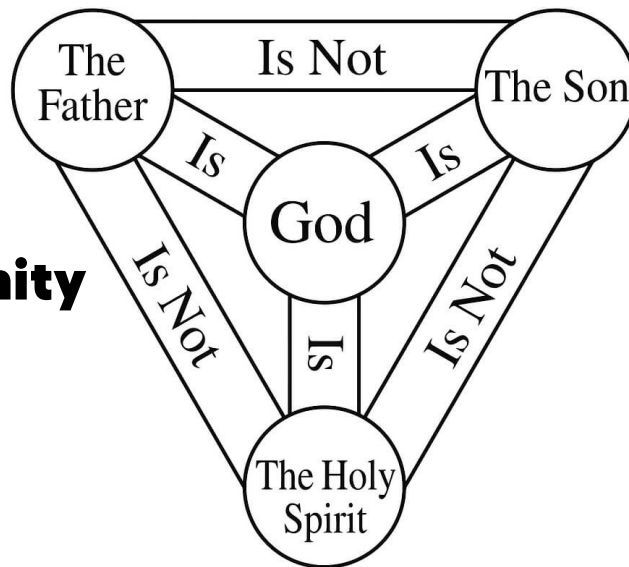
### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three.

- How did you get on with last week's practice of praying the 'Trinitarian prayer' by John Stott. Where there any insights or questions that you would like to share?
- Do you know anyone who has been an overseas missionary? If so, where did they go, what did they do? How did it go?
- What kind of thoughts and feelings does the word 'mission' provoke in you?

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS OUT:**

One of the core truths that is discovered in the Bible and the teaching of Jesus in person, by those early disciples, is that God is One (there is no other god), but is three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). This is a huge mystery in one sense (as you'd expect when we talk about God!). Today we don't have time to get into this foundational Christian belief in much detail. What we want to emphasise, however, is that 'mission' doesn't begin with the Church, but with God. Look at the diagram on the next page:



## The Holy Trinity

This is a limited attempt to explain the tri (threeness) and unity (oneness) of God, which is where we get the word 'Trinity' from. The witness of 2000 years of Church belief and action is that God is a God of 'mission' and that the three persons of the Trinity have different roles within this mission. The Father 'Sent' the Son to the world to rescue it (John 3v16), The Son sent the Holy Spirit to be with and empower the Church and the Spirit sends the Church to the world to share the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Let's look at a few passages from Scripture to start exploring what it is to be sent in mission.

### **CONSIDER DIVIDING INTO SMALLER GROUPS AND ASK SOMEONE TO READ A COUPLE OF THESE PASSAGE(S):**

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| + MATTHEW 28v16-20 | 1 Peter 4v7-11        |
| + JOHN 20v19-23    | 1 Corinthians 12v4-11 |
| + ACTS 1v4-8       | Hebrews 13:1-3        |

- Which words, phrases or images stand out to you from the reading(s)?
- Why is it important to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for mission?
- Do you have any examples of being empowered by the Spirit for mission  
If so, please discuss.

**Notes:**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

Take some time to think about what God might be stirring up for you in terms of your being empowered by the Spirit into mission as an individual and as a Community. Are there any people or places where you think God might be calling you? Spend some time on this and then discuss in smaller groups.

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>God may be sending me to...</b>	<b>God may want our Community to reach out to....</b>
	<b>God may be sending me to...</b>	<b>God may want our Community to reach out to....</b>
<b>PLACES</b>		

**PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.**  
**COMMUNITY MISSION AUDIT**

Mission can be expressed in many different ways. Using your personal reflection from the previous page, add to these four areas below any idea, Bible passages, prayer, Words, where God may be prompting you and your Community to develop a missional presence, project or posture. In the thought bubble in the middle, see if you can come up with ONE missional idea that God may be sending you towards. Discuss at your next Community gathering to see if there are overlaps! This is just a start so don't worry about having anything fully formed.

Our invitation will be to consider something termly or monthly in the new year.

**JUSTICE**

e.g. Luke 4v18-19

**HOSPITALITY**

e.g. Hebrews 13v1-13

**WORK**

e.g. Colossians 3v17

**ANNOUNCING THE GOSPEL**

e.g. 1 Peter 3v15



## Week 5: Transformation: Receiving Truth / Teaching.

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

In a world that wants to shape our life stories, we recognise that only God speaks true, life-giving reality into our lives. We receive this truth primarily through the Bible and primarily through the Good News of Jesus, which we believe is God's alive, powerful Word to us. Personal and corporate engaging with Scripture and Scripture-based teaching within our Sunday services and other gatherings is essential to us. You might like to refer back to the diagram in week 2, on p10 of the previous study guide.

### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

As a whole Community group:

- Reflect on last week's Community Mission Audit practice (pp26-7). Share your reflections which each other for around 10 mins to see if a missional posture, project or presence is starting to form. You don't need to have something fully formed at this point, but some ideas and reflections would be great to share.
- It would be helpful to have someone write up your joint reflections on a piece of paper or device for you to refer back to over the coming weeks.
- Round this time off with prayer.

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGE:**

The passage we are about to read is written by Paul as he is imprisoned in Rome knowing he is about to be executed. He writes to Timothy, 'my true son in the faith', to encourage him in his work of leading the church at Ephesus. The church there was facing opposition and was being infiltrated by false teaching. Paul's purpose is to remind Timothy of the necessity of holding onto the truth he has taught him in the face of opposition both from the competing worldviews which shaped the life of the society in Ephesus and from the false teachers who were within the church: 'for the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears long to hear.' (2 Tim. 4:3)

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE: 2 TIMOTHY 3v14-17**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three. Have someone read the text twice, pausing in the middle of the two readings.

- Which words or phrases stand out to you?
- ·What is your response to Paul's claims in these verses?
- ·What do we understand when Paul says 'All Scripture?' Does that present any particular problems for us? \*\*
- ·What might All Saints do to help every member of the church family - new, young or old - to grow in our understanding of 'All Scripture.'

\*\* If you want to find out more about how the OT relates to our understanding of the NT, we recommend as a good starting point: 'God's Big Picture: A Bible Overview' - Vaughan Roberts

### **Notes:**

## **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

Christians in the West have lived for many centuries in a society that, at the very least, paid lip service to Christian values. Our society not only no longer does that but is one which actively opposes Christian values. It is a society which denies and ridicules the truth claims of Christianity whilst failing to see the irony of its own position which refuses debate but insists on the truth of its own opinions.

You might find it helpful to pause and read 2 Tim. 4:2-4 at this point.

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY)**

- What are the challenges these passages might present for us within our culture?
- Where or when have you found tensions in your own life and experience between the views of the world and the teaching of Scripture?

- How might we encourage one another to grow in our knowledge and understanding of scripture so that we can discern what God's will is for our responses and actions in our intolerant, disagreement averse society?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**

**PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.  
INTERNALISING TRUTH THROUGH SCRIPTURE READING:**

Many of us will have a favoured approach to regular, daily Bible reading but it can be helpful to try a different approach from time to time. There is no right or wrong way but we might like to think about whether there are approaches which will help us go deeper both in our understanding and in our openness and receptiveness to how God's word is encouraging or challenging us. Below is one suggestion which you might like to practice.



## **1. Choose a book of the Bible you are not familiar with.**

- Set aside a time daily when you are free of distractions and read through the whole book. If it's a short book maybe you can read it through in one sitting: most of the NT letters were originally written to be read out in this way. The gospels or longer OT books will be best appreciated read in shorter chunks. The OT often falls naturally into chunks: e.g. If you are reading Genesis or Exodus the narrative forms into natural stories based around key events.
- If you are reading an unfamiliar book it might be helpful to use a commentary to help explain the background. There are lots of resources online and most Study Bibles (a great investment if you are serious about Bible study) have helpful introductory sections.
- Tom Wright's 'New Testament for Everyone' series is a good, accessible resource. These combine explanation with application and he seems to have an apt story for every occasion. John Goldingay has written a similar 'OT for Everyone' series.
- Remember, we are not just reading for information but for transformation so spend a few moments at the end of your reading to reflect on what has stood out for you.

- 1. Have you learned anything new from the passage and commentaries?**
- 2. What does the passage tell you about God?**
- 3. What does the passage tell me about people or myself?**
- 4. Is there something in the passage that God wants to challenge me about? If so, what steps do I need to take to respond to this?**

- Maybe you will find it helpful to make a short note or written response before bringing any challenges to God in prayer asking for the help of the Holy Spirit as you take appropriate steps to respond to them.
- Once you have read it through in one sitting and used other resources to explore the background to the book, return to it over the next few days and read shorter sections using the Lectio Divina approach (see next page). (See below for a reminder of this which we explored in our Bible Reading series last autumn)

## **2. Lectio Divina**

### **1. Read:**

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read the passage slowly, pausing on any words or phrases that seem to stand out to you.

### **2. Reflect:**

Read the passage again slowly asking God what it is He wants to say to you through the passage.

### **3. Respond:**

Speak to God about any thoughts or questions that have arisen.

### **4. Rest:**

Stay in a quiet posture before God, thanking Him for any thoughts etc. that you have had before moving on with the next part of your day.

Come prepared to share you insights and reflections next week.

## **END TODAY'S SESSION BY PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER.**

You could do this as one group or in smaller groups.



## Week 6: Transformation: Putting into Practice

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

IWe believe apprentices are called to be practitioners. We don't just believe and receive God's reality and truth but we aim to put his words to us into practice. We follow ancient practices that Jesus and his early Church held out to us as ways of doing this: Sabbath, scripture, prayer, fasting, community, solitude, generosity, service and witness. These are not duties we perform to get God's favour, rather they are a means to open up and rearranging our lives to give space to the Holy Spirit to transform us into the image of Jesus (Colossians 3v9-10).

### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three.

- How did you get on with the Scripture practice from last week?
- We have already looked at some of these practices in previous studies and sermon series (Scripture, Sabbath & Prayer)
- Which of the nine practices listed above do you practice most regularly?
- Are there any you don't practise and why do you think that is? (P.s. we are aware Sabbath is still a controversial practice for some, so we will stay away from debating this today.

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGE:**

It is likely that James, the author of this epistle, was the brother of Jesus and is the same James referred to in Acts 15 as the leader of the Council of Jerusalem. The letter is addressed to 'the twelve tribes scattered among the nations' which suggests it was written to the Jewish Christians who had been scattered from Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). Martin Luther famously dismissed the letter of James as 'an epistle of straw' saying that it did not agree with Paul's doctrine of salvation by faith but placed too much emphasis on works. However, a careful reading of this letter shows that James's concern was that the scattered communities of Christians continued to live out their faith in their daily lives.

## **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE: JAMES 1v22-27**

If in a larger Community, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three. Have someone read the text twice, pausing in the middle of the two readings.

- What words or phrases stand out for you?
- How can we make sure we become doers of the word and not merely listeners? What practices have helped you in this?
- Why do you think James focuses on 'the tongue' in verse 26?
- What does James mean in verse 27 when he says that 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world'?

### **Notes:**

## **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

These verses give a fourfold challenge:

- 1.They challenge us on how we read and respond to Scripture
- 2.They challenge us on aspects of our personal behaviour: James mentions how we use our tongue but we should read this as an example which focuses on interpersonal relationships of which our speech is often the key indicator.
- 3.They challenge us on our generosity and how we treat others who, according to the standards of James's day, would have been powerless and often lacking in means to support themselves.
- 4.They challenge us on remaining holy in an unholy world.

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY)**

- What do you think it means in 21st century Britain to 'keep oneself from being polluted by the world'?
- How can we do this whilst living in our communities as salt and light, bringing good news when our good news so often appears as intolerance and judgmentalism?

- We have increasing numbers of homeless people coming into the church café and to Sunday lunches. Are there any ways you think we might be able to offer support to this group?
- Are there other groups in our geographic community who we might be able to offer practical support to?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**



**PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.**

**GOING DEEPER IN PRACTICING BIBLICAL TRUTH**

We have been focusing for the past two weeks on Receiving God’s truth and putting it into practice. God speaks through every part of his word and will speak to each of us in different ways at different times in our lives, whether to comfort and encourage, challenge, guide our decisions or rebuke our behaviour.

Maybe, whether you are continuing with your usual Bible reading practices or are using a different method following last week's suggested practice, you could use the questions listed below as an aid to your reflection on your daily reading.

- Is there something in my reading today which speaks to my personal situation? An encouragement; a word of comfort; a challenge to some personal behaviour or attitude?
- What do I need to do to respond to this? Is there someone I need to share this with for encouragement or support?

We encourage you to use the following prayer in during your week and write down any insights that God may be giving to you.

### **BRENDAN THE EXPLORER (486-575AD): IN EXPLORATION OF A VISION**

Brendan is caught by a vision; called to move out beyond his present shores. He climbs the mountain alone to search his heart to test the truth of what he feels and then sets sail in response to the call of God.

Brendan's example speaks to each of us:

Have I the courage to leave the familiar and journey into the unknown?

To journey beyond the way I have prayed, the life I have lived, the sensible and the secure?

To trust God to take me beyond these familiar shores?

## **BRENDAN'S PRAYER**

Lord, I will trust you, help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with you. Christ of the mysteries, can I trust you to be stronger in each storm in me?

Do I still yearn for your glory to lighten on me?

I will show others the care you have given me.

I determine amidst all uncertainty always to trust.

I choose to live beyond regret and let you recreate my life.

I believe you will make a way for me and provide for me, if only I trust you and obey.

will trust in the darkness and know that my times are still in your hand. I will believe you for my future, chapter by chapter, until all the story is written.

Focus my mind and my heart upon you, my attention always on you without alteration.

Strengthen me with your blessing and appoint to me the task.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.

Tune my spirit to the music of heaven.

Feed me, and somehow, make my obedience count for you.

*Celtic Daily Prayer, p197-199*

## **END TODAY'S SESSION BY PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER.**

You could do this as one group or in smaller groups.





# VISION SERIES 2023

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## Week 7: Transformation: Living in Community

### **OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:**

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

### **HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:**

Last session, we explored the ways in which we are transformed by the Holy Spirit as we put our faith into practice. This week, we are looking at how we can be transformed as we live in community. On earth, Jesus called people into relationship with himself and others. We recognise that discipleship to Jesus is done primarily in community and not on our own. In our growing church, the primary vehicle for intimate community is through our mid-week All Saints Communities.

### **INTRO QUESTIONS:**

If in a larger Community it may be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three:

- Share together how you got on with last week's practice of practicing biblical truth and your praying of 'Brendan's prayer.'
- What examples do we have of great community in our world today? What do these communities do well?
- What are some of the challenges for us, as All Saints family, in increasingly becoming a community of deep fellowship?

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THIS INTRO TO THE PASSAGE:**

The passages you are about to read have a similar theme. Split into smaller groups with each group taking a passage to read. Share a summary of your passage with the wider group. How can all three passages be summarised?

### **ASK SOMEONE TO READ THE PASSAGE(S):**

11 Corinthians 12v13-14

John 17 v 20-21

Romans 12v9-16

Galatians 3v26-27

- What words or phrases stand out to you? What do we learn about how to create depth of fellowship in community?
- Briefly revisit Acts 2 v 42-47 (which we focused on in Week 2- How Transformation Happens) and compare it with Romans 12 v 9-16. What is emphasised in both passages?
- How do you think we can develop deep, genuine, we're family, through thick or thin, sincere kind of love within our community? (Romans 12 v 9-10)
- What would it look like for us to serve one another zealously? (v11)

**Notes:**

**HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS OUT:**

God invites us to share life with others which is a privilege. God wants to make us, his children, a family and has purposes for us as his body. As a Community, we can have intimacy in relationships, share deep fellowship and be known.

In 'The Deeply Formed Life', Rich Villodas reminds us that Jesus prioritised living well in community so we should too. "Jesus experienced intimacy, connection, and vulnerability throughout his life. He gathered disciples around him, feasted at parties, received love, confessed weakness. Revealed intimate details about himself..."

Hospitality

Hospitality is central to individuals feeling known and connected. It creates space for vulnerability. Henri Nouwen explained that offering hospitality '...is not to change people...but to offer them space where change can take place.'  
Hospitality is different to entertainment.

Devotion

Committed. Devoted. Rooted. Through choosing to keep investing over time, where we are, we become genuine family to one another. "...we've forgotten how to sacrifice in order to live well in a group....We've forgotten how to fearlessly and disruptively love." (Notes on Love by Lauren Windle)

## **DISCUSS TOGETHER (IN SMALLER GROUPS IF NECESSARY)**

- How does Henri Nouwen's quote help us to reframe what hospitality could look like (beyond a dinner party)?
- What could being devoted to our community, with a sacrificial love, look like?

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTION:**

(Take 5 minutes to respond to this question in a journal or in the space provided on the next page)

- What do you sense God inviting you do in light of the Bible passage and your discussions today? After writing, if you feel comfortable to do so, would you like to share with your Community so they can support, encourage and pray for you for this week?

*Leaders allow at least 5 mins, giving people space to think, write, reflect and then where necessary to allow for sharing from those who would like this. Silence is to be encouraged at this point!*

**Notes:**

### **PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: LEADERS TO EXPLAIN.**

This week, ask God to show you what small next step you can take to...

- show greater vulnerability within your Community (by being Honest Open, Transparent)?
- show greater hospitality to your Community?
- show greater devotion to your Community?

Ask God to show you any barriers to you taking these next steps and for his guidance, wisdom and empowerment to overcome these. You may want to find a time to share any barriers with your Community leaders.

We encourage you to use the 'notes for practice' page to jot any thoughts down.

**END TODAY'S SESSION BY PRAYING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY ALL TOGETHER**



# FURTHER RESOURCES FOR GOING DEEPER

## BOOKS ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### **God Inside Out**

Simon Ponsonby

### **The Pursuit of the Holy**

Simon Ponsonby

### **Unbreakable**

Andrew Wilson

### **Eat this Book**

Eugene Peterson

### **Sacred Rhythms**

Ruth Haley Barton

### **The Deeply Formed Life**

Rich Villodas

### **Renovation of the Heart**

Dallas Willard

### **The Gospel Comes with a House Key**

Rosaria Butterfield

### **Beautiful Resistance**

Jon Tyson

### **Scattered Servants**

Alan Scott

# **BOOKS ON BEING FORMED BY SCRIPTURE**

## **Can We Trust the Gospels?**

Peter Williams

## **God Stories**

Andrew Wilson

## **How to Read the Bible for all it's Worth**

Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart

## **Read the Bible for a Change**

Ray Lubeck

## **Scripture and the Authority of God**

N.T. Wright

## **Shaped by the Word M.**

Robert Mulholland Jr

## **Unbreakable: What the Son of God said about the Word of God**

Andrew Wilson

## **BIBLE COMMENTARIES:**

For Everyone Series (Old / New Testament) (Easy)

NIV Application Commentaries (Intermediate)

Word Biblical Commentaries (Advanced)

## **WEBSITES AND APPS:**

lectio365 - app

practicingtheway.org - website and podcast

bibleproject.com - app, website and podcast