

Fullness of Life

“I have come so that they may have life,
and have it to the full”
John 10:10

What does it
mean to live a
full life in Christ?

- Presence
- Pain
- Progress
- Passion
- Power
- Proclamation

Stuart Huntley

A note for the Study :

Each week will follow the structure below:

- Introduction – verses that show the main point.
- We look at a character through a story to help get us thinking about the bible character as a real person in a relevant way and help us to imagine the scene and the details.
- Bible study based on Bible passages
- A look at how this relates to us. – Questions and discussion time
- Closing worship – choose something suitably reflective, either to sing together or to play on music player.
- Prayer time – Ask the Holy Spirit to be more real to you and to help you in the area covered today.

This course is also available to purchase as an ebook to use on a smartphone, PC tablet or Amazon Kindle

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Part 1

Presence





Week 1 - Presence

Aim: To think about what it means for Christ to be with us and to see this means that he will make a difference in our life. We live in Christ and will be transformed by him...

- *Introduction*

'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' John 10:10

Incarnation, Immanence, Immanuel

God could have saved mankind from sin in any way according to his desires – he chose to send his only son to live and dwell among us – why?

Jesus said "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:20

The presence of Christ, of God with us should make a difference to how we live our lives – we are not alone... We have not been left to our own devices to follow our own desires and to make up a way of life according to our ideas but we have Christ with us – present with us to show us and guide us.

- *Zac's Story*

I couldn't then tell you why I did it.

It wasn't that my life had come crashing down and despite the mutterings, I hadn't had a mid-life crisis. I was at the top of my game, I worked in taxation, I was my own boss and was raking it in. I had the big house and anything I wanted I could get. Friends were not a problem for me, they were always coming for one party or another.

I didn't even have a crisis of conscience, I wasn't bothered about the money I was making at other people's expense – well not then at any rate – but I just felt drawn to go and listen, to hear and see what this guy was all about. There was something pulling me, a seed from my youth perhaps, an idea or a thought. I just knew I should find out what he had to say. So I went to the edge of town to see him, I climbed up a tree to get above the crowds. I hated being stuck in the crowds - I shouldn't have to mingle with them. Obviously, I wouldn't normally resort to climbing trees but as I said I just needed to see him for myself.

And then it happened, Jesus looked up from the road, straight at me and called me by my name: 'Zac' he said 'I'll be coming to you tonight for dinner'. How did he know my name? But as he spoke, it was like a door opened and a whole new world opened up before me. My house, my stuff didn't matter in this new world, the only thing that mattered was that *he* knew me and accepted me for who I am, and he wanted to come and eat with me.

For the first time since I was child I saw clearly and when I thought of all that money I had made, I realised that I had cheated those around me. That pride that had made me lift myself above the crowds vanished too and I began to realise what life was really about.

That was a couple of months ago now, some of my friends think I've gone mad, but I can honestly tell you that I would never go back. My life is so much fuller now, I have real self respect. I don't need money to prove who I am – now I know what I'm worth and you know what, my life has been transformed.

Come and eat with me – the idea that Jesus wants to be with you – what if we were to really grasp this!

- *Bible study*

Luke 19

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

1. What do you know about the location of Jericho?
2. Why did Zacchaeus want to see Jesus
3. Do you think Zacchaeus was a lonely man or had a large group of friends? Why was he described by the crowd as a sinner.
4. What did Zacchaeus lack?
5. How did Zacchaeus react to Jesus inviting himself round?
6. Why did Zacchaeus’ life change?

Zacchaeus responded with gladness, and joy when he met Jesus and knew that Jesus had seen him as a friend. Jericho is at the bottom of a long road to Jerusalem the city of David – it was one of the main routes and a gateway for the journey. In this parable Zacchaeus starts his faith journey with Jesus and although he has a long way still to travel, his journey starts with joy and repentance.

- *Questions and discussion time*

1. What sort of people come to stay with us in our homes?
2. Who do we invite for dinner?
3. What's different about Jesus' invitation in this story
4. What is Jesus saying to you through this story?

We often think that repentance and saying sorry is a negative thing, admitting our past failures as a shameful act, however Zacchaeus combines his repentance with joy.

As we start this journey with Jesus together, be prepared to see areas of your life which you need to clear up and turn around from – let God's joy fill you as you let go of old baggage and free yourself to travel on the road to God's kingdom and His holy city.

5. Do you see yourself as if you are on a journey of discovery?
6. Who is there with you along the way?

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

Ask the Holy Spirit to be more real to you and to help you in the area covered today.

Let Christ into your life – and let him transform all that you are and all that you do.



Week 2 - Pain

Aim: To think about how we can respond to the problems of pain and suffering.

- *Introduction*

One of the most common questions people ask who are wrestling with the idea of believing in God, is to ask how can there be a God when there is all the suffering in the world and if there is a God, then what sort of God is he.

And you don't have to have been a Christian for long, for something to happen in your life, or to a friend or family member to make you wonder what God is doing in all this.

Has God forgotten to be merciful?

Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" Psalm 77:9

There are two main ways we can look at the suffering and pain in the world. We can ask why would God allow this, or look to see how God responds to it.

The answer we see in the Bible and especially in the New Testament stories of Jesus is that God sees the pain and responds with compassion and always acts.

*'The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.' Psalm 103:8*

'When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.' Matthew 14:14

- *Jairus's Story* - An onlooker to Jairus and the widow

Look! There he is again – this preacher – see how the crowds flock to him – to listen to all his high and mighty statements – why do they bother? – don't they know he is only interested in getting them to follow him - all he wants are the rich, so he can eat and gorge and get drunk with them and take their money.

See! Here comes that hypocrite Jairus – I wonder what he wants – with all his money and wealth – just because he runs the synagogue everyone thinks he is such a good man, but I knew him when he was a kid, and he wasn't that good then.

Oh, so his daughter is ill is she, so what. So is mine and is Jesus coming running after her? No! – not that I would want him too anyway – I'd rather pay the extortionate fees the doctors charge then come to him – rather than asking a man who only cares for Jairus' sort.

See what I mean – there is old Joan – Jesus is in such a hurry to run after Jairus that he is going to ignore her – yet I know she has been bleeding down below – ever since she had that stillborn. No, he won't bother with her. Look she's fallen over and he's still going on.

But wait, what's he doing – he's stopped. Hah, that will annoy Jairus – he's so important he's always in a hurry. But hang on, he's talking to her, he's talking to Joan – he's holding her hands – why he's even helping her up – but she's unclean, even I won't go near her. Look at how he is looking at her, look at his eyes, look at his smile. What's that he's saying to her – I've got to get closer. Hey you get out of my way, I want to hear him.

'Daughter your faith has healed you, go in peace and be freed from your suffering.' She does look different now she's got up – I do believe she's changed. 'Hey Jesus, Jesus!' But he's gone – he's gone into Jairus' house.

I waited for him you know. It was something about the way he looked at Old Joan – there were rumours too that Jairus' daughter had died – but that Jesus brought her back to life. I managed to speak to him the next day and he came to my house too. My little Rachel was better as soon as he came near her. And you know, there really is something so amazing about that man – he knew me too, in a way I don't think I could explain. He said 'Ester, I heard you yesterday and I hear you today, and I'll hear you tomorrow.' And those eyes and that smile – I've never known such love in a look; such warmth, not even from my own father, not even from my mother. What love!

- Bible study

Mark 5

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³ He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

³⁶ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha kum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

1. What was Jesus doing at the start of this story? (You may wish to look at the previous verses in Mark's gospel)
2. Where is Jesus going now?
3. How many people were there to witness these events?
4. Why might the woman have not wanted to speak to Jesus?
5. What is the tone of Jesus' answer to the woman?
6. What is Jesus' tone to the friends of Jairus?
7. Did Jesus give up on the little girl?

- *Questions and discussion time*

1. What would you say is the outlook of the woman narrating the introductory story? Do you know anyone like that?
2. What changes the way she responds?
3. Do you believe these events to be true?
4. Reflecting on last week's session – do you think Jesus is with us?

We see Jesus' response to the pain and suffering of the old woman and the young girl. Jesus has compassion on them both and through his love and power he heals them. But this still leaves us with the question of why bad things still happen. And even when we do pray we don't seem to receive an answer to prayer as readily as it seems to occur on the bible.

However miracles and healings do still take place, often as a result of prayer. We can choose to wonder why this doesn't happen more often and blame God or we can choose to praise God every time it does and try to live more compassionate and caring lives ourselves in response to this, and seek to pray more and wait with an expectation that will see God respond.

5. Are you willing to pray with more expectation and hopefulness in faith?
6. What do you think might be the rewards of this approach?

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.' Colossians 3:12



Week 3 - Progress

Aim: To show that a life with Christ is a journey of transformation – we should not become stagnant but we should always be moving forward and growing more like Christ.

- *Introduction*

If we decide to take up a new sport and start getting lessons, we expect to get better at the sport and be able to play much better and take up new and bigger challenges. After a while we might decide we have got good enough, so we stop having lessons and start playing in earnest. If we stop playing regularly we won't get any better and will lose the finer points of the game, but if we keep playing harder and harder opponents we will get better and better.

The advantage we have with faith over sport is that we are not limited to our physical strength and fitness. Old age and infirmity is no hindrance and so our growth potential is limitless!

'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.' 2 Corinthians 3:18

The challenge we all have though, is whether we choose to keep on growing or whether we give up and settle for what we have now. This would be a pity as God has so much more to offer us and so much more he wants to show us!

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' 2 Corinthians 5:17

Today we will be looking at Peter's growth from an impetuous fisherman to leader of the early church.

- *Peter's Story*

I can still remember that night as clearly as if it was yesterday. It was the worst night of my life.

The evening had started so well, we were all together and ready to celebrate. It had been a good year, so much had happened, only the week before the crowds had gathered to see us enter the city. We were ready for the great feast, the room was amazing, the best I had ever seen and there was this great smell when you entered of the lamb roasting away, we had plenty of wine and we had this sense that the night was going to be long – as it turned out it was a long night, but not in any way like I expected.

I woke in a start – I hadn't even realised I'd been sleeping – I could hear them before I could see them, the rattle of body armour, the whispered voice of a soldier tripping on a stone and then I saw the torches. They were coming for us. We had left dinner earlier than I expected – we had had some more wine and sung a few hymns and then Jesus said he wanted to go out into the garden to pray – he'd asked us to pray with him, but we must have slept and now we'd been caught off guard and there were these men spoiling the night time peace and quiet. I was so angry, I could feel the rage burning inside me – nothing and no one would get to my Lord. I rushed forward and got to Jesus just as the men were about to put their dirty hands on him. I could feel this great shout of 'NO' inside me and before I knew it I had drawn my large fishing knife, the metal feeling even colder against my hot and sweaty hand, and I slashed at the man holding Jesus. The knife glanced off his helmet and I felt the blood on my arm, as it cut through his ear. I was about to strike again, when Jesus calmly touched me on my shoulder and told me to put down my sword.

The darkened faces were all around me now, and as Jesus turned his attention to the soldier, I took my chance, and turned and ran away out into the darkness, sobbing under my breath. For three years I had been following Jesus – and I thought I was getting somewhere, I had put on this mask, I was a changed man, no longer the impulsive and brash youth I was, but someone who would pray and listen. I had walked on water but now I was sinking back into the deep pit of despair. How could I have come so close to real peace and freedom, but now I was more likely to be arrested and killed as an insurgent. I thought I had better run back all the way the Galilee, the guilt and the despair was so strong. But as I stood panting, exhausted out of breath behind an ancient olive tree, I remembered what Jesus had said earlier, that tonight I would deny him three times – never! I resolved then and then to follow him and see what I could do to help him.

But by the early hours of the morning as I had hung around outside the house where they had taken him, I still had not thought of anything to help. Then, just as they were leading Jesus away, I saw my chance. If only I could get along side the guards I could cause a disturbance and set him free, then this woman grabbed my coat –

you're with him aren't you. I tried to shrug her off and denied it of course; this was my chance I didn't want to miss it.

The way he looked at me, the way his eyes seemed to see right into my soul, the love and the sadness – he didn't need to say anything – his look gave it all away – Peter my friend, Jesus seemed to say, the cock has just crowed – my kingdom will never be won by your strong arms but by truth and love...

For three days I retreated into myself – I had failed again. Mary came and said that Jesus was gone, we went to the tomb and she was right he wasn't there – another failure – even dead I couldn't stop them from taking him. There was nothing more I could do, the dream was over, I thought I could be a better person, I could be a big man in this new order but it was all over now. I went back to Galilee, to my boats, picked up the ropes and nets and went fishing. The adventure was over.

But the adventure wasn't over, it was just beginning. What a day! - Jesus was alive! He met us out on the beach while we were fishing. I had given up and gone back to my old ways – but Jesus came to me and asked me this one question, over and over again – and as it did so I could feel the hope being restored, I could feel my guilt falling away like my wet fishing coat I had thrown off when I recognised him. His question was simple – 'Do you love me', he had asked.

It was only then that I understood. When I finally realised that following Jesus and living in his Kingdom wasn't about what I could do, but was about living in God's love and power and journeying with him. I was a strong young man and I had tried to be better but it took this deep change of heart for me to really make the change from observer to follower, from disciple to leader. It was a bit like being in my fishing boat - I could row as hard as I liked – but I would never go as fast or as far as when I hosted the sail and let the wind take me. So much has changed within me since that dark night, I am not as physically strong as I was then but I have a much more powerful strength now, you would scarcely believe the distances I've travelled and the places I've been since the wind of the Holy Spirit has taken hold of my sails.

- *Bible study*

Introduction:

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1:16-17

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:15-16

‘After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.’ Mark 14:70-72

Following Jesus Resurrection:

John 21:15

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

1. What was Peter doing when he first met Jesus? (Mark 1)
2. Peter quickly shows he believes in Jesus but what happens shortly after these verses from Matthew 16?
3. What do you think is Peter’s place in the group of disciples?
4. Peter exhibited confidence that he had the strength to follow Jesus whatever the circumstances – but what happens when Jesus is arrested? (Mark 14)
5. When Jesus meets Peter at the lake – why is Peter fishing again?
6. What emotions do we see in Peter in this story in John.
7. This encounter with the Resurrected Jesus transforms Peter and when we see him in Acts he is a changed man. Have a look at the account in Acts 2 and describe what sort of man you see there.

Acts 2:14

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

You can see more of the transformation in Peter by following his story in Acts.

- *Questions and discussion time*

We have looked at one man's story in Peter's journey of faith. He starts out sceptical but optimistic, quickly becomes a leading figure in the disciples and has a clear and concise faith and believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God. However there is still a long road for Peter, a lifelong journey of transformation – always growing and being challenged.

We can not and should not expect our life of faith to be any different. If we believed in God as a child we should expect our beliefs to be challenged and strengthened as we have grown into adults, parents, grand parents and so on.

Psychologists looking at the human character have charted people's maturity and plotted stages of growth – not everyone gets through all the levels and some great grandparents might still be little more than teenagers in their emotional maturity – whereas other people who have learned from and reflected on their life experiences have matured and grown and see the world and other people differently than they did as young adults.

There are similar scales that are used to describe the growth in faith and spiritual maturity. Like Peter we should expect to have grown in wisdom and understanding!

1. When did you first believe in God?
2. When did you first believe that Jesus really existed?
3. Have you ever been challenged by others to the extent where you have had to think long and hard on what you believe?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, think honestly about how much your faith informs your everyday thinking; at home, with your children, at work, in your hobbies.
5. When was the last time you were really challenged on an aspect of your faith?
6. When was the last time you changed your thinking about an aspect of faith?
7. Do you feel loved by God? Do you feel like the Holy Spirit is with you and guiding you?

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.' Romans 12:2

'But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.' 2 Peter 3:18

Part 2

Passion





Week 4 - Passion

Aim: To see the other major part of God's plan:
God sent his only son that he should die for us...

- *Introduction*

In week 1 we thought about what it means for God to be with us. The Incarnation – of God being with us, not distant, but present is essential in our understanding of a personal loving relationship with God our creator.

But it is equally essential to begin to understand how Jesus' death on the cross was not an unfortunate incident in history but was also part of God's loving plan to restore the whole of his creation, to free us from death, curses and sins and to release a passion within us – a love and a thankfulness for how God has restored us to all that we are meant to be.

'From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'
Matthew 16:21

Jesus said 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'
John 15:13

- *Mary's Story*

It was like I could feel a cold rush of blood running down my body as the steel blade plunged deep in my chest. Only the agony didn't stop and I didn't die. The cold tight pain just gripped me, and I was stood there transfixed and still and silent. The screams I wanted to make were trapped deep inside and I just looked and stared and wept. My son, my first born son, the light of my life and the joy of my heart was hanging there, naked as the day I bore him, covered in blood, his matted hair falling limply across his beautiful face. His chest was so stretched; I could see he could barely breathe. If the others were not standing there beside me I would have thought this was some terrible dream. How could they do this to my son?

It was then that I looked at his hands, curled up like bark peeling from a tree. His finger nails were broken, and his fingers stained with the dried blood, contorted around the dark iron nail, lifeless and dead. I just wanted to tear him down and cup those gentle hands around my face and kiss them, like I'd kissed him when he was a boy, when he had hit them with hammer whilst helping Joseph. I wanted to see him gesture with his hands as he did when teaching the crowds and reach them out to pray for healing, but they were just stuck there on that rough beam, twitching.

I forced myself to look into his eyes, to see my boy. I could hardly bear to see the suffering on his face - drained and cold. Where was my animated, passionate son? Then he fixed his eyes on mine and although his lips barely moved, I could see him smile as he moved his gaze to John standing next to me; 'look after her' he breathed.

He had said that this would happen. He had said it many times, but I never thought he meant it literally. Jesus was only just over a month old when the old man Simeon said that this day was going to come, that Jesus was born to be the salvation of all men, but that on that day it would be like a sword piercing my heart. I had thought about what he meant so many times, but in all my years I never thought it would end this way. And my boy warned me only this week that he was to die but I still thought he was speaking in parables – he said he had to die for love, he said it was his destiny to die and be raised again – he even said he was going to be crucified – but I never once thought he meant it literally. Oh, my darling, why have you put yourself in this situation?

I could see he was getting weaker. I could see the remaining colour seeping from his face, his eyes were tightly shut and a battle seemed to be raging within him, then in a burst of strength he cried out 'It is completed'. I thought for a second that he was going to somehow get down off that cross, but then he just sank onto those nails and down onto the timbers and was terribly still. I rushed forward, but John held me back and I collapsed onto the floor, the sword finally piercing my soul.

- *Bible study*

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

³² As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). ³⁴ There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵ When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁸ Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴ In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

⁴⁵ From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

Matthew 27:27-52

1. In your own words discuss what happened to Jesus on the cross. Who was there? (also look at John 19:25)
2. When Jesus died the curtain in the temple splitting in two is significant. Why is this recorded? Why is this significant?
3. Why does Matthew include verse 52?
4. What did Jesus cry out on the cross? Do you know where this verse comes from?
5. In John 19:30, Jesus’ last words are recorded as ‘It is finished’. Where else are these words recorded?

6. Jesus' death is horrific but a very real event. John also records that to ensure that he was dead one of the soldiers drove a spear into Jesus' side. There was no doubt he was dead. Do you think that this was the outcome Jesus expected?

- *Questions and discussion time*

Jesus willingly took himself to the cross, in fulfilment of God's plan to restore humanity and the world and so that we could finally be freed from all those sins that bind us to death, and to conquer death once and for all. This was God's plan to restore us and in love for us Jesus gave up everything. This is why Jesus death is referred to as his passion.

We are called to follow God, and fortunately most of us are not called to lay down our physical lives for others, but we are all called to lay down our selfishness and in love start to live our lives for other people. This should not feel like a chore, or a bind, but as we are filled with God's love, this love for others will overflow through us. Our passion will become the love of other people and a self sacrificing life.

Jesus said 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' John 13:34

1. Can you think of a time or a situation where you had to give up something very important to you?
2. Were you confident of a good outcome or was it a step into the dark?
3. Jesus exhibited confidence in God and took a massive step of faith – being prepared to be killed for us. What smaller preparatory sacrifices did he make before this?
4. Who might you be willing to die for?
5. What first steps of self sacrifice and sacrificial generosity have you made that might prepare you for greater passion and greater service?
6. When you've done this in the past – how did you feel? Did you find your love decreased or increase?
7. What practical ways might you demonstrate selfless love in your family, your church and your community?

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

'We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.' 2 Thessalonians 1:3



Week 5 - Power

Aim: We have the Holy Spirit, we have the power of Christ in us - but do we live in this truth? Do we heal, perform miracles and is God's power setting us free!

- *Introduction*

'Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'" Luke 10:18-20

In the verse above, Jesus is speaking to his 72 followers who had just returned from spreading the message of the kingdom of God. Jesus had also sent out the 12 apostles but on this occasion he sent out 72 other followers to do the same thing. Through this story and through the story of Acts we see that the power to do wonders in the name of Jesus is not reserved for a chosen few but for all people who go out to spread the good news of God. That includes you! For all baptised believers are called to proclaim the kingdom. It follows then that we should also expect to see God acting in power.

John wrote to the early churches that Jesus is a more powerful force than the devil in this world: *'Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world'* 1 John 4:4 Jesus told the disciples that after his death and resurrection, he would send his Holy Spirit to them to lead them and to give them this power.

We see from the early church in the books of Acts and in the letters that make up the rest of the New Testament examples of the disciples and followers living in this new power and experiencing this power in healings, miracles and transformed lives.

There is nothing in the Bible to say that this power of the Holy Spirit would diminish or that it would no longer be available to followers of Christ – quite the contrary. We are given the power to live freely, the power to live in Joy no matter the circumstances, the power to live for others, the power to preach, the power to make a difference and the power to be transformed.

- *Silas's Story*

I could feel the tingling in my hands when I closed my eyes to pray, I knew then that God was going to do something special, maybe not as powerful as that night in Philippi but I could sense the Spirit was going to act again.

That was the night when I first really felt the power of God at work. I was already highly regarded by the brothers in Jerusalem and had been a follower of the way of Christ for many years when I was chosen to accompany Paul on his next trip. I had seen miracles happen before but until then I had never been part of one. On that night as Paul and I were lying exhausted and battered after we had been arrested and beaten, Paul said to me 'Silas, you must remember that Jesus promises that we can do everything through Christ who gives us strength'. As I rubbed the open wound that was my ankle and tried to move the heavy iron ring somewhere on my leg where I didn't feel such a sharp stabbing pain, I was tempted to retort that I didn't have any strength left. But Paul started to sing: 'We have heard with our ears O God, our Fathers have told us what you did in their days long ago. With your hand you drove out the nations and made our fathers flourish'. There was something about the trust he had in the words of the old psalm, that old familiar tune and the hope that he had. Even there in that dark, cold, cell, Paul had such confidence in God's power, so I started to sing along with him. As we sang, I could feel this peace growing within me and this strength rising up. As we got to the end of the song, and as we sang 'Rise up and help us, redeem us because of your unfailing love' I thought I must have been dreaming. The ground started to move under us and dust started to fall from the stones above our heads; and then, where there was a ceiling above us I could now see the stars. The chains around our hands and feet were broken and the way was clear for us to just stand up and walk straight out of the prison.

What had begun with a small gesture of faith, of starting to sing with confidence, ended with a certainty of trust in my Saviour Jesus Christ. He was real, he would act. He was with me, and through him, I could begin to know the power of the almighty God. This was a power that could not only break down mountains, but transform lives. The jailer that night saw what happened and that very night (can you believe it!) with the prison in ruins around us, Paul baptised him into the faith.

So this time, when I closed my eyes to pray, I knew what Jesus was capable of doing. I could sense that God was now about to show some more of his awesome power, and I knew this, because on that night I took that first step of faith and I started to really believe that he is my God, my fortress and my strength. I started to really trust that he is my dwelling place and will one day actually raise me from the dead. So that no matter what happens I can trust that no harm will eventually come against me and that I would see with my own eyes Christ doing the impossible. So, as I prayed I knew that whether the person was going to be healed or not; that Christ Jesus was about to send the power of his Holy Spirit to change another life for good, because I had seen him do it so many times before.

- *Bible study*

Paul and Silas in Prison

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

³⁵ When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” ³⁶ The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

³⁷ But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.”

³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. ³⁹ They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ After Paul and

Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

Acts 16

1. What spiritual forces are present here?
2. What motivated the slave owners?
3. What motivated Paul and Silas?
4. Discuss why Paul appears so calm.
5. What lead to the jailer's conversion?
6. How was the jailer rewarded?

- *Questions and discussion time*

This is a powerful story which starts with Paul preaching the message and then performing a miracle of deliverance, leads to a riot, a time in prison, an earthquake, a conversion, and finally with the church in Philippi being strengthened and encouraged.

1. When people rely on faith – the kingdom of God is strengthened, people come to faith and others are encouraged. Think about this story and discuss in what ways the characters in the story grew.
2. Praise is powerful – in what ways have you been strengthened and encouraged by praising God?

God is Holy – Paul delivered the woman from the demon because she was undermining God's holiness – to be truly free we have to follow God and rid ourselves of all idolatry. This will release the real power of God, not a cheap counterfeit.

3. In the Introductory story, Silas described an occasion which helped his faith to grow and how he began to really trust God. Discuss occasions in your life which have helped your faith to grow.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the power of God is less available for us today than it was for Paul and Silas. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forever.

4. What stops you from praying with real faith? And with an expectation that God will act as he will act?
5. How might you grow in your expectation of God's power in your life and in the life of your church community?
6. How might you increase your chances of being part of a God's miraculous kingdom, and how might this empower you in mission?

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

*'You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.
Praise be to God! ' Psalm 68:35*



Week 6 - Proclamation

Aim: We have the Holy Spirit; therefore we should teach and preach...

- *Introduction*

The old saying goes ‘Those who can do, those who can’t teach.’ However one of my old ministers once said to me, ‘if you want to learn about something, then set about teaching it, for nothing else concentrates your mind like preparing to teach something.’ I have since found this to be absolutely true, and not only do I gain in understanding by wrestling with a subject but I get great joy out of seeing others learn from this too.

It doesn’t matter who we are, we are all called to speak out about Jesus; this is part of what it means to be a Christian – whether we are explaining our faith to a neighbour, or discussing Jesus with fellow Christians or teaching our children about God, Jesus promised us the power to speak out and teach others with authority and confidence. We do not do this alone – but with Jesus present with us in his Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

We live in a sophisticated age where everyone has had a good education, yet for some people the story of Jesus and the story of Jesus in our lives will not make any sense and they will refuse to listen to the message we give. However we can be confident that every time we speak out two things will happen. Firstly we will grow in our knowledge and in our faith. Secondly, the seeds we plant have a chance to grow, and some of them will grow spectacularly.

- *Paul's Story*

I'd heard a lot about this man Paul, so I thought I'd give him a chance, and decided to go to the lecture that afternoon.

He started well, he'd obviously done his homework and he knew about us and our city. He even seemed to have grasped some of the finer points about Science and History. I was quite impressed by his style, and he argued well. His points made good logical sense and I was beginning to warm to him. I could listen to him for longer, but then he seemed to lose the plot. What he said just didn't make sense – obviously we all know the stories about the gods but we aren't supposed to take them literally are we. I thought that he was just using the stories as analogies, as illustrations like all good teachers do, but then he said that we were to actually believe that this man came alive from the dead! I mean we know that doesn't happen in real life. And what's more, he said that the same would happen to us and that we needed to make some decisions about what we believe. Well, I've been a thinker for 30 years and studied all the different ideas – they all have some merits – it just isn't rational to think that there is one answer to it all – the important thing is to think about it, to question and to probe the truths, not to stop thinking and just accept that something is right. Where would that leave us! I ask you!

He was due to speak again on the next weekend and I went away that week thinking about what he said. I did tell you that I am scientist – thinking is my game you know. Well I just kept thinking, what if it were true? – how would I go about proving it? I thought there is no proof, he'd said it himself, that this man that came alive went off up into the clouds and is no longer with us, so I can't prove it can I. I could ask all the people who said they had seen him, but they were obviously all delusional too. But what if, and this was the strange thought I had, what if I actually just told myself that it was true and believed it – obviously if I was doing this as an experiment I would have to really believe it not just pretend to believe it or it would be a false test – No I would have to actually make the cast iron commitment to believing that what this man Paul said and told us was true and then try to live in that truth – that would prove it either way – either it would be true and I would be changed forever, or I would not and I would have proved it to be false. Yes, that would do it...

But am I willing to put myself into my own experiment and try to experience this? Now that is the real question.

- *Bible study*

Acts 17

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

²⁹ "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." ³³ At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

1. Discuss what Athens was like in the first century.

2. What do you know about Paul's education?
3. Why was Paul in Athens?
4. What does Paul guided by the Holy Spirit start to do?
5. What are the responses of the listeners? What made them sneer?

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, some people sneered then too, but also 3000 was saved that day after hearing the message.

6. Does Paul give up or keep on preaching and proclaiming?
7. What is the difference between preaching and proclamation?
8. What is our society like, how are we similar? How are we different?

- *Questions and discussion time*

Athens was a place where thinkers and philosophers would meet and people would question the meanings of the universe. Today, however most people are led to believe that science has all the answers and we don't like to think we will trust anything without proof. God however has a message and will speak to all generations at all times, and we are his vessels in spreading the kingdom.

1. What is our message? What is your message?
2. Can you share with others a time when you tried to explain your faith?
3. When you look back at this – how do you feel the occasion went?
4. New Christians are often the most enthusiastic about sharing the good news they have heard. What might make us stop telling others? How do we overcome this?
5. What sort of story seems to move people the most? Which stories have the most power?
6. What do you think is the most important factor in speaking about your faith?
7. How can you make the message you give resonate more and connect more with those you are telling it to?

The more we speak with one another about our faith, and the more we grow and step out in faith, the more we will recognise the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the more naturally we will speak about Jesus, and what he means in our lives.

Only the Holy Spirit can convince someone to believe. We do not have to win any arguments or prove any points. Talking about faith isn't about trying to squeeze God and the Church into our discussions, but about regularly, naturally and authentically talking honestly, without leaving our faith *out* of our conversations.

Then those we talk to will begin to notice that *faith is important to us* and begin to wonder for themselves.

'But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.' Matthew 13:23

- *Closing worship*

- *Prayer time*

Pray for wisdom and discernment. Pray for opportunities to tell your story authentically with others and to speak naturally about Jesus and what he means to you.

Pray that you will sow seeds, and that the seeds you sow will bear fruit.

'In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ *Even on my servants, both men and women,*

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.' Acts 2:17-18

- *Closing thoughts:*

This course is not intended to be exhaustive but to be an introduction to each of the subjects.

It is the author's intention simply to open up the way of life lived in Christ – to open up the idea that walking with God is life changing, and that the life lived to the full is about a life-time's transformation.

This journey is never fully completed because there is always more to learn and more to explore and discover. These six weeks are a foretaste to the rest of your life lived in exploration and discovery of the ever increasing richness of a life of faith in Christ.

'I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.' Ephesians 3:18-21

Some further notes for each Session for Study Leaders:

Week 1 – Presence

Aim: what it means for Christ to be with us

Bible Study questions:

1 – Jericho – If you have a bible atlas or map use this to show how Jericho was the way in to the Promised land after the Exodus from Egypt and the route up to Jerusalem for many people in Jesus' day – especially for the Passover festival.

Think about where Jericho is mentioned elsewhere in the gospels – what is the significance to the people who meet Jesus in those stories too.

Discussion questions:

Let people think around each question – there is no right or wrong answer – the important thing is that people try to connect the Bible stories to their own experience so the characters come alive.

Most people will go out to meet acquaintances, will invite friends to dinner, but close friends and family to stay. Jesus invites himself to stay with Zacchaeus – making himself a close friend or family. Transformation starts when we are in the presence of Christ.

Music suggestions:

More traditional: Amazing Grace, In Heavenly Love Abiding, Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine

More modern: Lord Reign in Me, To be in your Presence (Noel Richards); Faithful One (Robin Mark)

Week 2 – Pain

Aim: To think about how we can respond to the problems of pain and suffering.

Bible Study Questions:

3 – The Crowd would be made up of lots of different people who were there for various reasons and would not all have been positive towards Jesus.

4 – Under Old Testament law, bleeding meant you were unclean and this woman would have been unable to take part in many of the communities' activities and may even have been an outcast. It would have been unusual for a man to speak so kindly to a woman in her condition and certainly very odd to touch her and hold her hands.

7 – Jesus had time for both the widow and the little girl – his love is available to all.

Discussion Questions:

Feel free to expand on these questions to discuss the reactions different people have to pain and suffering and to think why some people might be cynical and what might change their outlook.

We do not pray expecting God to act according to our desires, but we can pray with expectation and hope – knowing that whatever happens prayer is positive. Healing can be spiritual, emotional or physical.

Music suggestions:

More traditional: In Heavenly Love Abiding

More modern: When Silence Falls (Tim Hughes)

Week 3 – Progress

Aim: To show that a life with Christ is a journey of transformation – we should not become stagnant but we should always be moving forward and growing more like Christ.

Bible Study Questions:

2 - See how Jesus gives a new name to Simon – Peter the rock – he sees Simon Peter as he will be eternally – not just how he is now. Jesus sees the potential and the transformation.

Discussion Questions:

We are told to 'Love the Lord our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength'. Our faith is total commitment. Hopefully by now the group are beginning to engage more with the bible and are seeing that the Bible can inform their thinking in all areas of their lives.

Music suggestions:

More traditional: Fight the Good Fight, Christ is made the Sure Foundation

More modern: Lord Reign in Me, Amazing Grace

Week 4 – Passion

Aim: To see the other major part of God's plan – God sent his only son that he should die... for us...

Bible Study Questions:

Jesus fully man, and fully God – his humanity. Real death...

Question 4 - look at Psalm 22 up till verse 18 – what references are there to Jesus Crucifixion.

Question 5 – look at Psalm 22 from verse 19 – see how the tone changes to trust in God, Look at the last verse, and from 19 to the end, and compare the tone of it with Jesus' it is finished/it has been done/completed.

Discuss whether Jesus might have been reciting the whole of this psalm and how this may have given him comfort or strength to carry this burden. Think about Jesus' humanity – and how he chose to endure actual death because he trusted in God.

Dead come out of their graves – see 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and Ezekiel 37:13 An eternal consequence. Jesus died for our sins, and death was conquered.

Discussion Questions:

The situation of sacrifice need not have anything to do with faith – just an example of how we can let go.

Be affirming and encouraging. Try to show that as we take up the cross, the rewards far outweigh our sacrifices. Faith informs life and Christ's passion becomes our passion.

Music suggestions:

More traditional: My hope is Built on Nothing Less, My Song is Love Unknown

More modern: In Christ Alone, Love Never Fails (Brandon Heath)

Week 5 - Power

Aim: We have the Holy Spirit, we have the power of Christ in us - but do we live in this truth? Do we heal, perform miracles and is God's power setting us free!

Hopefully, by now the members of the group will have moved towards an understanding that if *God is with us* (Presence) and if *God died to save us* (passion) then our lives should start to look different and we should begin to have a radical outlook on the world – one that will influence us and influence others.

Bible Study Questions:

1 – The slave girl is possessed by an evil spirit that although it may appear useful and is saying some truth 'these men are servants of the Most High God...' the purpose of the spirit was to discredit Paul and disrupt their ministry. Paul and Silas are filled with the Holy Spirit.

4 – Paul has faced many challenges before see 2 Corinthians 11, Phil 4:11.

Discussion Questions:

See if you can encourage someone with some personal testimonies. This module is not about being charismatic but about having open eyes to the possibilities God puts in front of us – having expectation – for nothing is impossible with God!

We grow in faith when we take step after step – when we look back we have come a long way – if we don't step out we won't go anywhere!

Music suggestions:

More traditional: I cannot tell

More modern: Everlasting God (Brenton Brown); Show Me Your Glory (Third Day)

Week 6 – Proclamation

Aim: We have the Holy Spirit; therefore we should teach and preach...and make disciples ourselves...

Bible Study Questions:

1 - Athens was a centre for thinking and the seat of the Greek Empire, which the Roman Empire was built upon. Greek was the language for thinking and still an official language in the Roman world until later in Rome's history. The New Testament was written in Greek. The classical ideas and beliefs in the Greek Gods and stories was still the major influence in the culture.

Greek philosophy is about ideas and logic, Jewish philosophy is about shared story.

5 – The resurrection of the Dead is uniquely Judeo-Christian.

7 – Paul never gives up on preaching. Churches grow all over the Mediterranean world.

Discussion Questions:

Some people may have never shared their faith and might find this module challenging.

Evangelism can seem to be discouraging to some, because the results are not down to us alone. If you read a book from the 19th century or listen to a mid 20th century politician, faith words are part of their language – the assumption was that people had the same outlook. This is not true today in the post-modern world, so we can find it more difficult to naturally speak about our faith.

Try and listen to the group's experience and encourage them just to let one person know what is important to them. Even telling someone that they are coming on this course and it is helping them think differently might be enough to open an honest conversation about faith that will sow seeds for the future.

Music suggestions:

More traditional: Tell out my soul Stand up, Stand up for Jesus

More modern: How Great is our God (Chris Tomlin)

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Fullness of Life

- 1. Presence**
- 2. Pain**
- 3. Progress**

- 4. Passion**
- 5. Power**
- 6. Proclamation**

Over the next few weeks we are going to look at different characters from the Bible to see what it means to live a full life in Christ.

We will look at what it means for Christ to be with us.

We will explore FULLNESS of LIFE by looking at what it meant for God's son to be born among us as we look at his PRESENCE, we will then think about the problems of PAIN and suffering in the world and how God reveals his compassion, and move on to how God being with us should spur us on to PROGRESS in our walk of faith.

In week 4, we will look at Christ's PASSION and contemplate on the love that took Jesus to the cross and consider our own passion towards God and our neighbours. Before Jesus ascended into heaven he promised us the Holy Spirit and we will look at how the Spirit equips us to fully live out joyous and free lives in the POWER of God and Jesus encourages us to PROCLAIM the good news of the kingdom of God and help others to have a life lived fully.

We will look at the stories of Zacchaeus, Jairus, Peter, Paul, Silas and Mary as well as our own.

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.