

SMALL GROUP STUDIES LEADERS NOTES

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION BIBLE STUDIES



tearfund

Following Jesus where the need is greatest

Pictures of the Church

1 Peter 2:4-12

This series of bible studies are designed to be used in your small group, however they also contain additional 'Going Deeper' background notes at the end for a deeper understanding and for use as a sermon guide. The studies have been created from Tearfund's work around the world using the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) process.

CCM is Tearfund helping the local church work with its community, sharing a vision to address local needs using their own resources. Around the world it is an approach that has brought remarkable transformation to local churches and their communities

OVERVIEW

God's plan for affecting the world and seeing His influence grow has always been to have a people who will host his presence in such a way that others are drawn to Him. In the Old Testament God called Israel to fulfil this purpose, to be set apart for Him. At the heart of Israel's public life was the Temple which was regarded as the place where God lived and the place where he could be encountered. The priests who served in the temple had the role of bridge builders between God and people. They represented God to the world and offered sacrifice to take away the sin which ruined the lives of people, disrupting their relationship with God.

These unique symbols and motifs which nurtured Israel's sense of identity and calling, Peter now takes and applies to the Church of Jesus Christ. We are the community at whose heart is the presence of God. We are set apart by God to be His unique possession and to advance His Kingdom. We are chosen and blessed by Him for the benefit and blessing of others.

The objective of this Bible study is to help the Church understand more clearly our calling to be God's servants entrusted with responsibility for serving others on His behalf. To help us in this we reflect on some of the key pictures the Bible uses to help us grasp our unique role.

INTRODUCTION

Can you think of a time when you have been singled out for something nice e.g. chosen to do something, invited to go somewhere or to be part of an event/club etc.? How did it feel? Go round the group and ask everyone to respond.

STORY

Kenneth is an evangelist and has a passion to see people come to Christ. His methods have changed somewhat over time though. Years ago he used to go down to the bar in his village and preach hell, fire and damnation to those who sat drinking. He would tell them that they were like firewood - they were going to burn in hell. He smiles wryly when he tells you that he wasn't very successful in bringing people to faith in Christ!



When he did the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) Bible studies he was challenged about how the Church was called to love people rather than stand in judgement over them. He started going down to the bar and sitting with the people who were drinking. He would listen to them talk about their problems and offer to pray for them. Slowly people started responding and becoming Christians. Over time all those who were drinking came to faith and the bar became a church building. Today that church has planted 7 other churches that meet in different places in their area!



Kenneth has felt called to get involved with local politics and he now represents his local community in the wider area, advocating for the needs of the community and helping to draw down government resources to meet local needs.

DISCUSS

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12

- Q** In v9 Peter describes us as *'A people belonging to God, chosen by Him and set apart (Holy) for His work'*. How do these phrases help us understand what is God's purpose for His Church?

Central to God's plans and purposes; we exist for the benefit and blessing of others; we are called to be distinctive as Jesus was, yet equally available and engaged as he was; the Church is not an accidental collection of random believers, but rather exists because of the pleasure and purpose of God

In the Old Testament, the Priest's job was to be a bridge builder between God and the world. This involved bringing God's word to people, breaking down barriers between people and God through offering sacrifices on their behalf, and bringing people before God in prayer.

- Q** Peter describes (in vv 5 & 9) the Church as a *'Priesthood'*. What do you think it might mean for us to fulfil this role today?

Called to be God's representatives to others; called to pray for the needs of the world and particularly our own community; we stand in God's place for the sake of the world; we identify with our community and with its unique needs

- Q** In what ways might God want us to be bridge builders between Him and the people in our community? What might this involve for us?

- Q** The sacrifices offered by the priests were designed to set people free from the things which bound them. What are the things which bind people today and hinder them from enjoying God's good life? What might we do in order to help people experience true freedom?

What are the key issues in our community which prevent people from experiencing their full intended dignity as those created in God's image?

- Q** When Peter writes about stones and buildings (vv4-8) he has in mind the Temple, seen by the people before Jesus as the place where God's presence lived. The fellowship of believers is now the place where God truly lives. What does it mean for you to be described as a *living stone* in God's building?

Unique; positioned in my own place by God; joined to others; find my strength and solidity by being joined to others - we are better when we are interlocked with one another; Jesus is the cornerstone, the foundation on which we rest - it is only by resting on Him that we experience stability; the cornerstone also dictates the shape, the lines of the building - Jesus is the one who defines the shape of our life and service; we exist to make God's presence known and available to others

Q In what ways do these different pictures affect the way we see our role as the Church in this community?

Q How much, and in what ways, would our community miss us if our Church ceased to exist?

ACTION

Break into twos or threes:

Q What is the one thing above all I feel God is calling me to do as a result of this study? Or an action point(s)

- Encourage the twos or threes to feedback their responses. Challenge each individual to commit to their action. Talk about how you can support each other in it,

PRAY

Pray for one another, ask God to strengthen and empower us to do what he is asking of us.

GOING DEEPER

God's plan for affecting the world and seeing His influence grow has always been to have a people who will host his presence in such a way that others are drawn to Him. In the Old Testament God called Israel to fulfil this purpose, to be set apart for Him. At the heart of Israel's public life was the Temple which was regarded as the place where God lived and the place where he could be encountered. The priests who served in the temple had the role of bridge builders between God and people. They represented God to the world and offered sacrifice to take away the sin which ruined the lives of people, disrupting their relationship with God.

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'It is surely a fact of inexhaustible significance that what our Lord left behind him was not a book nor a creed nor a system of thought nor a rule of life but a visible community.' (Lesslie Newbigin - *The Household of God*)

Jesus, the Cornerstone, is the one who shapes and defines the Church. We are constantly challenged to make sure that our life is determined by the lines he draws as opposed to by some alternative plan of our own devising.

As living stones we each have our own unique appointment as part of God's Church, but our strength and effectiveness is always determined by our level of connectedness with others. We are designed to be a building rather than a rubble heap.

Priesthood is a helpful picture for the Church in that it speaks of our role as those called to:

- Praying especially for those in need of God's mercy and restoration;
- Removing barriers to people finding faith/facilitating encounter with God;
- Helping people find God's help with those issues which bind them and rob them of freedom, whether material or spiritual.

'When the Church is a movement, it becomes a place of refuge for an unbelieving world. The Church becomes the place where seekers finally find the God they were searching for. The Church becomes the place for the broken and the weary to find the healing and the help they've cried for. The Church becomes the place where the lonely and outcast are finally embraced and loved in the community of Christ. When the Church becomes a movement and not a monastery, she becomes a place of transformation for the very culture from which we run in fear.'

(Erwin McManus - Unstoppable Force)

We're Christians passionate about ending poverty. We go to the places of greatest need, responding to disasters and helping communities to see their own potential to overcome poverty. We won't stop until poverty stops.

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