



During the month of November we are going to think about the importance of inheritance in relation to our identity and how we view ourselves — and how we behave because of what we have inherited. The story of the history of the people of Israel is based on a belief that God longs to bless all the people of the earth including his creation. The small, seemingly insignificant, tribal community of Israel being God's choice to be the light bearer for all the peoples of the world.

God chooses those who have nothing, and are thought of by others as having nothing, to be his agents. Throughout scripture it is the humble, and insignificant, he raises up to become the gift bearers to the world. Everyone now has the promise of an inheritance that goes beyond time into eternity. This is the inheritance story of the Old Testament.

In our readings of scripture this month God is tempted to turn his face away from his creation. Yet his great love for us has meant that he has implemented his redemption plan thought out before the world was created.

The Old Testament readings are centred on the story of Israel's disobedience and God's mercy. While the New Testament readings seek to explain the nature of God's grace towards his creation and the legacy of the death and resurrection of Jesus for all believers.

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [An Inheritance of Love Resource Pack](#) to help adapt the material for small group work. They are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme.

These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests your group.

An Inheritance of Love

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: Inheritance is what you give away to others in life rather than what you leave in death

Conversation Starter

This month our theme explores the idea of **inheritance**. As we read the Bible we want to consider the divine legacy that has been left us and the divine promise which stretches out before us into eternity.

What have you inherited in your life? Not necessarily material things like money or possessions — but perhaps personality traits, or outlooks, or habits? Have you got your grandma's nose? Your great grandpa's laugh? Do you sigh in the same way that an old teacher of yours used to?

What about the Bible and the church through history — have you inherited anything from any Biblical or historical figures? David's creativity? Peter's impetuosity?

Read Psalm 50

This psalm is intense. The wicked are being held to account. Verse 22 in the NRSVA is: 'Mark this, then, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.' How do we square the vehemence of this text with the inheritance of gracious forgiveness that we are heirs to? God in this psalm seems especially angry with those who squander their inheritance. Verses 16 and 17 underline God's anger with hypocrisy — with those who claim to speak on God's behalf while actively going against divine judgement. It's not just that these people are wicked — it's that they are representing God as they do it.

Could God be seeking to safeguard the inheritance of love, grace and faith so that it is not stolen and usurped by people and activities that promote self destruction? Why is the language so strong?

Read Acts 24:10-23

Christian faith is all about a journey of discovery. Our inheritance is not given to us as a lump sum at one point in time, rather it is gradually revealed to us on the way (as people of The Way) as Paul discovered. Paul saw himself as part of a long running tradition. He embraced the inheritance of the "God of our ancestors", the law, and the prophets and didn't want to sweep all that away. Being people of 'The Way' implies movement, not being static in one place — moving forward but with the ability to look back, always on a journey, mindful of those who have gone before and go ahead.

In what way is our faith today 'on the way' **to** and **from** somewhere? Where have we been and where are we going? How can we look back on our inheritance but, like Paul, follow faithfully in our own day and age?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 2: A promised presence

Read Psalm 98

Music is part of the Christian inheritance. We often read of God inviting his people to make a joyful noise. While we take time to remember all those who lost their lives in the two World Wars and also in many theatres of conflict since then, today's reading invites us to sing a new song to the Lord. The inheritance of war can be hate and revenge or we can create a new song with a new tune to influence a new generation to see the futility of guns and bombs.

If you were writing a new song for the Lord what would it be about? What genre would it be? What music would inspire you to work for a better tomorrow?

Read Zechariah 8: 1-13

We see here a compelling vision of restoration and peace. The old men and women sitting on the streets with the children playing is a deeply resonant image in any age. At times of conflict it is often the young and the elderly that are the most vulnerable and suffer the most.

Where you live — can old people sit comfortably and happily in the streets? Can children play in the streets? If so, where? How can we ensure that they can continue to? If not, why not? And what can we do to help peace blossom so that all of society from the youngest to the oldest feels included and safe and happy?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1

The Thessalonians are held up as an exemplary of a faithful and loving community. Not only that, but one that is increasingly faithful and loving. And yet they are suffering. There are persecutions and trials. As bearers of God's inheritance our life is not always easy; loving, humble, kind communities can suffer outrageous calamities while the selfish and arrogant can accrue wealth and prestige.

Why does our inheritance not protect us from the storms of life? Why do the faithful and humble suffer? Not just in 'small character-building' ways but in 'messy catastrophic' ways? This is not an easy question and you don't need to reach for an easy answer. These questions — about why bad things happen to good people — have puzzled humanity for thousands of years. This reading argues that suffering *now* will be paid back in the *future* and that others will be punished. But is that a satisfying answer? Why let the good suffer at all? Or as badly as they do? We do have a promised inheritance but is that enough to blot out all current suffering?

Is it in fact wrong to think of suffering as having a 'point' at all? Or at least one that we're able to grasp in this lifetime? Discuss...

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 3: Purpose and character

Exploring the inheritance of character that we have received and pass on.

Read Psalm 141

Having an inheritance is not the same as living up to one. We can find ourselves, like the psalmist, worrying about our behaviour and conduct. *Do we stack up? Am I good enough?*

How would you describe the mental and emotional state of someone speaking the words of this psalm?

How can we be mindful of what we say and how we behave — without becoming paranoid and anxious about continually slipping up?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

How can we do the everyday things of life, like eating and drinking and socialising, for the glory of God, mindful not just of how they affect us — but how they affect others? How does it change how we eat, drink and interact with others?

Read Luke 18:15-17

Thinking about our how our personal behaviour and character stacks up in the context of our divine inheritance and the example set by Jesus can feel like a lot of pressure... How can we always say and do the right things? For ourselves and for the sake of others? Well... in that context this particular passage is quite reassuring! Jesus' example of a role model for those who receive the Kingdom of God... is not a sober, stuffy middle aged judge... it's a little child — something that literally all of us have experience of being.

Think back to your childhood. Are these aspects of your personality from back then that you would like to rediscover in your life now? Perhaps a confidence, or a sense of adventure or something else? What traits do children have that make them so suited for receiving the Kingdom of God?

You may wish to conclude by (as a group) praying that God can help you rediscover these parts of yourself in your life today.

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Part 4: A majestic inheritance

This week we anticipate Advent — the period of preparation in the church calendar ahead of Christmas Day. We think about confession, celebration and carrying on the flame!

Read Daniel 9:15-19

This passage shows us an example of corporate confession. This is not an individual confessing but a whole group.

As we look forward to Christmas we are about to embark on the time of reflection that comes during Advent. Self-reflection doesn't always have to be individual, we can also reflect on where we are as a society. What are the things that we — as a wider society — have to confess and ask God for forgiveness for?

Read Jeremiah 30:18-21

Let's think about the merrymaking in verse 19. What are your favourite ways of showing merriment, happiness and delight? Do you like to sing? To dance? To run? To sit quietly? Eat a lovely meal? Brainstorm as a group your favourite ways of celebrating and being merry.

As we anticipate the celebrations of the festival period let's think — how can we celebrate more in our lives throughout the year?

Read Hebrews 11: 1-7

Keeping the faith can be a hard thing to do. This passage reminds us we are part of a long chain of faith that we are inheritors of today.

Can you think of examples in your life of role models that have helped you in your faith? These may be friends, colleagues or family members, or perhaps figures from history, or from the Bible?

What is it about them that helps you 'keep the faith'?

You may wish to conclude by, as a group, praying a prayer of thanks for these role models. Like the following:

Dear God, thank you for all these saints that have gone before us and help us to play our part in inspiring those who come after us. Amen.