

Discussion questions

The Journey Back Home (Pilgrimage Part 2) 01 - 28 July

Being in community as God's people journeying together.

Having thought about the individual experience of pilgrimage in the first part of the theme in June, we are now expanding that to think about the pilgrimages we go on as a community, as society, as the human race.

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [The Journey Back Home](#) resource pack to help adapt the material for small group work. These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through all questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose what interests your group.

Part 1: Don't look back In anger		
<p>Read 2 Samuel 1: 1-27</p> <p>Did David treat the Amalekite fairly? After all Saul invited him to kill him as he was in great pain?</p> <p>So when, if ever, is it right to take someone else's life?</p> <p>Do you think David's funeral song could be viewed as hypocritical bearing in mind all that Saul did to harm him?</p> <p>Or was David seeking to refuse to look back with anger?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 130</p> <p>In this passage 'steadfast love' is paired with the 'power to redeem'.</p> <p>Can you name a situation (in wider society, or your local community) where inviting God's steadfast love could lead to redemption?</p> <p>How would it work? What would it look like?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 30</p> <p>This Psalm shows us that God is not static and unfeeling. God is not above all emotion. In verse 5 God is angry - but only for a moment.</p> <p>How do you think God experiences emotion? Can we even get our heads around it?</p> <p>What do you think angers God?</p> <p>What can we learn from God's approach to anger?</p>

Part 2: Love draws us unconditionally		
<p>Read 2 Samuel 5: 1-5</p> <p>The film <i>The Godfather Part III</i>, about an ageing gangster - the head of the Corleone crime family - had the tagline: "Real power can't be given. It must be taken."</p> <p>In the reading above we see power given to David as a gift, both from God and from the people.</p> <p>What's the difference between power that's been taken and power that's been given?</p> <p>The politician Tony Benn had 5 questions he asked people in positions of power</p> <p>"What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you use it? To whom are you accountable? How do we get rid of you?"</p> <p>Are Christians critical enough of people in positions of power?</p>	<p>Read 2 Samuel 5: 6-12</p> <p>Here is a story about how Jerusalem became the City of David.</p> <p>This is a city that has been fought over ever since. We are told to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Can there ever be peace without justice for the Palestinian people?</p> <p>The Kingship of Jesus is contrasted in the New Testament. Jesus invites a new understanding of power and authority that is based on love not fear.</p> <p>What is the difference between power and authority?</p>	<p>Read 2 Corinthians 12: 2-10</p> <p>The powerful in society are often very keen to portray themselves as without any weaknesses, frailties or flaws - only answering questions in a carefully stage managed way. Perhaps they fear any chink in their armour could be exploited.</p> <p>And yet Paul - a powerful figure on the stage of world history - owns his flaws. He finds strength and power in his weakness.</p> <p>Where do you see weakness in society?</p> <p>Now think about that weakness - how could it be a surprising source of strength?</p>

Part 3: Would you dance before the church this Sunday?		
<p>Read 2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12-19</p> <p>Have you ever danced 'with all your might'? If so, what did it feel like?</p> <p>Imagine if you saw your Prime Minister/First Minister/President/Chancellor on TV dancing with all their might in sheer spontaneous joy?</p> <p>What would your reaction be?</p> <p>How would wider society take it?</p> <p>What might it mean for you to do a similar thing, or a thing that made you look silly but spoke of God's grace to others?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 85: 8-13</p> <p>What would it look like for 'righteousness and peace to kiss' in our society, our community, our church, our street?</p>	<p>Read Mark 1: 21-28</p> <p>You could say, reading the above, that Jesus was somewhat of an unconventional worship leader. But he was still working within the synagogue system. He wasn't abandoning tradition, but he was revitalising it.</p> <p>Imagine if Jesus turned up in human form to lead worship in your local church on Sunday. What would the service be like?</p>

Part 4: God doesn't need our charity		
<p>Read 2 Samuel 7: 1-16</p> <p>David tries to fix God in one place but God reminds David that he is the God of the journeys. From Egypt to the wilderness.</p> <p>David wants to build a house for God. The question is, what is the motive behind the gesture? Is it more about David than God?</p> <p>How can we guard against gestures and offerings that have the wrong motive?</p> <p>Do we sometimes try to put God in a box of our own making?</p>	<p>Read Jeremiah 23:1-6</p> <p>The church, as an organisation of flawed humans has itself through history all too often been a bad shepherd who has 'scattered' the flock, and 'driven them away'.</p> <p>Should the church risk being vulnerable and ask for forgiveness from wider society for when it has let it down? If so, how?</p>	<p>Read Ephesians 2: 11-22</p> <p>God will choose where and when and how his presence will be felt and recognised and worshipped.</p> <p>God doesn't need our stamp of approval or the right postal code to be the one who calls the most unexpected of people to join the journey back home.</p> <p>As a thought experiment. Imagine if every single church building in the country collapsed in on itself tonight. Miraculously no one was hurt. What happens the next morning?</p>