

What We Really Need

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

March 2020 (1-28 March)



What do you really need?

As we enter **Lent** — the time of reflection in the Christian calendar in the days before Easter — we are going to consider some of the basic needs we all share:

- breathing
- shelter
- thirst
- belonging

Life is so complicated until it isn't — until it's just about the next breath, something to drink, somewhere to stay, or a community to belong to. That gasp of air, that cold glass of water, that roof, that place you can simply *be*. We started this year by exploring the external world with our theme [Making Sense of It All](#) alive to our senses, and then switched gear to consider the inner world of quietness, silence and absence in [A Quiet Life](#). Now as we continue *Lent* we will explore what happens when our inner needs meet the demands of the outside world.

This is the first part of a two theme sequence called [Beginning to Flourish](#). In Part 2 [My Father, The Gardener](#), we will explore what it means to thrive as well as survive. But this month we want to start with the basics — contemplating the fundamental necessities for living.

What do we learn about our God from breathing deeply? Or from catching our breath? How about when we quench our thirst? Or when we feel safe? Or from when we lose that sense of security? As Jesus fasted in the desert wilderness, surely a dry and unforgiving place, these needs would have been on his mind. He was fully divine but yet — incredibly — also fully human. Jesus speaks with authority in our lives as one who knows what it is to fight for breath, to long for water,

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to be without a permanent address, to find oneself forsaken, betrayed and abandoned. But he also knows what it is to laugh, to drink in celebration, to share hospitality, and form lasting friendships.

What can we discover about our God and ourselves when we strip things down to the basics and consider our most fundamental needs?

This is the first part of a two part theme sequence 'Beginning To Flourish'; Part 2, starting 29 March, is [My Father, The Gardener](#).

*The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [What We Really Need 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.***

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Part 1: A sudden intake of breath

Conversation Starter

In life saving, it is called the 'O Zone' when you enter cold water, get a fright and for a moment and struggle to get your breath. The shock of the cold on the body is enough to take the breath from us. There are other times when the opposite happens and a sudden intake of breath means that we struggle for the next.

Repeatedly through Scripture we are reminded that God is the giver of that breath. Reflect as a group on those times when through fear or excitement that sudden intake of breath has made God more real!

Read Genesis 2: 7

"...and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The man came alive – a living soul!" (The Message)

Is it possible to be spiritually dead? What does it mean to become alive spiritually? Is it possible to be spiritually smothered by the actions of well meaning people?

Read Acts 9: 1

In Acts 9 the conversion of Saul is described by Luke. Before that moment of conversion Luke describes the mouth of Saul "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's Disciples."

Can you think of a contemporary personality, famous or within your circle of friends who has undergone a similar "change of heart" like Paul did?

As a group, or individually, spend time in prayer for people you know who may feel bullied or afraid to share what they really think because they feel threatened and powerless.

Read Exodus 2: 23-25

How often do we use our breath to call out to God in prayer? Could a sigh or even a swear word be a prayer? For God's people Israel, it was groaning in their slavery; no doubt the groans included some swear words?

Can you recall a time when your prayer has been unconventional? Can you think of a time when at your "wits' end" a prayer has been answered?

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Part 2: Sheltering Together

Conversation Starter

What is shelter? To the soldier it is the back of an armoured vehicle, a basha in the field or a Colpro to protect from an incoming rocket attack. To a refugee it is a tent in a refugee camp. To the homeless it is a hostel bed or a doorway.

Share together your understanding of shelter. What characteristics should it have? What are the red lines you would not cross in the standard of shelter that you require? From those red lines, reflect on what are luxuries and what are essentials?

Take time to pray for those who are serving to provide the shelter and security that you enjoy – those deployed in forward operating bases on land, those hot bedding on the ships and boats of the Royal Navy and those on short notice to move in the air stations at high readiness.

Read Genesis 12: 1-4

Shelter provides a comfort zone for our protection and security. What if God called you like Abram to leave the comfort zones and the luxuries of your shelter to follow him. Abram was called from his country, his people and his family to follow a vision with no guarantee save that God would be with him.

Take time to share with others the places where you have lived and how it affected you? Could God have called you to these places? Where will be your next stop in God's schedule?

Read Psalm 27

Consider the positive statements about the provision of the Lord in the Psalm. How can we express thanks to God for the way he provides for us? What do you think it means to "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life"?

Read Isaiah 58: 4-12

So often the focus today is on ourselves and making sure that we are okay. Isaiah's challenge is not about self but about others. Identify in the passage the things we are challenged to share together rather than on our own. The Christian life is not an individual life but a collective life.

What resources could you share better with others, including shelter?

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Part 3: Thirsting after

Conversation Starter

Hunger and shelter feature highly in our needs but water is that basic need that is fundamental to our survival along with breath. Jesus illustrates the very human need of thirst in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. His human nature was very clearly displayed as he asked her for water but his divine nature was displayed when he offered himself to her as the living water every human needs to survive spiritually.

Discuss the feelings of physical thirst and the feelings related to spiritual thirst. How does thinking about our physical thirst help us to better understand our spiritual thirst?

Read Psalm 42: 1-2

"My soul thirsts for you, my God." What does your soul thirst for? What does it mean to thirst for the Lord?

Read John 4: 5-19

There are so many layers to this passage in John's Gospel. We see how Jesus needed to rest and quench his thirst. The cultural tension between a religious teacher and a woman whose faith and morality was suspect all adds to the inclusive way Jesus deals with people. He is not afraid to ask her for help. Reflect together on the different actions of Jesus and his use of water to bring about a very deep conversation about God his Father.

Where can you find help today if you feel spiritually thirsty? Spend some time thinking about the watering holes in your community where the human needs and the spiritual needs might be met and a thirst quenched.

Read John 4: 39-42

The most frustrating thing about a water leak in a house is trying to work out its source, because water travels, not in the most obvious route, but the direction of least resistance. We read in this passage that many Samaritans believed in God through the testimony of the woman.

Can you think of sometimes when the Lord has quenched your spiritual thirst or that of others? It many have been in the least expected way.

What opportunities exist for you to share the living water Jesus speaks of with others?

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Part 4: Really belonging

Conversation Starter

“This is belonging” is the strap line used in Army recruitment materials. “Born in X, made in the Royal Navy” draws on that sense of family and purpose and belonging.

In your group start thinking about what it means to belong and what different groups or organisations you belong to.

Belonging and being part of something is so important for us. We are not created to be on our own. We see this in the way Christians understand God. We talk of God as a Community of love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a challenging idea but worth discussing at least for a little while.

Read 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

So often we are identified in relation to someone else. ‘I am so and so’s brother’ or ‘I belong to such and such a family’ or ‘I am from such and such a place.’

Does God call each one of us individually for who we are to follow Him? Does God call everyone?

Read John 9: 1-41

The values we stand by shape the groups we often belong to and we are uncomfortable when those value systems are challenged or changed. The Pharisees were uncomfortable with what Jesus was doing. Their sense of belonging was being disrupted.

Have your Christian values disrupted your membership or sense of belonging to a community or organisation?

Read Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” The trinity is a most beautiful image of belonging with the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Take each part of this passage and use it to share and think about those who are lonely or isolated. Apart from praying how can we support those who struggle to keep warm through homelessness or displacement from conflict? How can we support and help those who are overpowered by others and have no ability to pick themselves up?