

SanctuaryFirst

Connect groups

The Bible

*Our Library,
our Sanctuary*



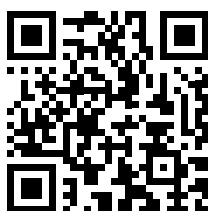
SanctuaryFirst

Ready to start
Your Daily Walk with God?

Let's dive into the Bible!



Download our App



Welcome to Connect!

A Connect Bible Study is a small group who meet regularly to explore faith and life, growing in the things of God together as we go. Anyone can host one using these materials and contact us for support and guidance. Online or in-person, our heart is that they offer a relaxed space for faith, friendship and fun. We hope the resources and discussion points encourage, inspire, and invigorate you on your walk with God.



It might be the conversation follows the discussion as laid out or heads in a different direction, both are wonderful and we hope the outline we offer here is flexible and supportive to engage with the Bible and our faith in fresh and vibrant ways as we make our way in the world as 21st century disciples exploring the wonders of life with Jesus!

We imagine the material for each week would work for 90 minute sessions but feel free to adapt to your group.

This booklet contains an 8 week Bible study, a short guide for running a Connect session, and a poem 'In This Wild World'.

Our thanks to Albert Bogle and James Cathcart for writing this study.

There are more songs, videos, podcasts and blogs linked to this theme on the Sanctuary First [website](#) and [app](#). Explore the [theme resource pack](#) for daily Bible readings and prompts.



Introduction to the Theme

The Bible is not a book.

It's not so much a thing we *read* — as a place we *go*.

The Bible is a library and a sanctuary, a meeting place — to discover who God is and learn who we are in the process. We have created this 8-part Bible study to introduce (or re-introduce) you to these ancient and yet ever-new, fascinating and life-changing words.

This introduction could be read aloud by the group leader at the first session to give an overview of the study.

Whatever you're feeling, whatever your history, you can find encouragement, wisdom, comfort, inspiration, challenge and wholeness in this place. The Bible is somewhere you can laugh and cry, praise and lament, rage and delight, celebrate and rest, hope and discover, and perhaps most powerfully of all — learn to forgive

We want to encourage a sense of expectancy when we come to the Bible — by thinking of it firstly as a place of encounter rather than just some old tome on a shelf. We believe heaven touches earth on a daily basis and we can experience the reality of God in our everyday lives when we come to the Bible with an open heart. The divine is not a fairytale and the Holy Spirit is closer than we know.

To learn about God we can't just read about God, we have to encounter God and not simply as individuals, but as communities. This is the reason why we encourage small groups to gather together to share and study in this amazing library. As we go we invite you to engage with and explore all your senses — how can music and art and nature help you to appreciate the Bible more deeply?

The Bible is a place to meet our ancestors but also our contemporaries, our friends but also our enemies, God but also ourselves. This life-giving library is not a static rulebook, but a multi-room archive of human experience. But this archive is a living archive, shaped to help us face real pressing issues, enabling us to have face-to-face conversations with God.

This series will introduce you to several of the vibrant, complex characters we meet in the Bible and the various genres it contains, and equip you to explore them. Over a season of two months we will come to the Bible from the perspective of how its stories and its wisdom speak directly into our 21st century lives and emotions. This in turn shapes our thoughts and actions, enabling us to be what Jesus would call salt and light in the world. The theme will also be shaping worship services, and multimedia resources across Sanctuary First and amongst the congregations that partner with us.

Are you ready to meet with God?

Read on for a brief introduction to the incredible William Tyndale (without whom we wouldn't be meeting like this and talking like this!) and eight weeks of discussion questions. These are designed for small group Bible study in local Connect Groups and to inspire sermon preparation and the development of worship resources. The material is open-ended; these are conversation starters to prompt you to go deeper and see where the Spirit leads you.

From the provided texts, we will explore how the Bible teaches us that God meets us wherever we are, even when perhaps we are on the run, restless searching for more, when things are falling apart, or we're failing in a moral sense to be honest with ourselves and others. In our readings, we discover God is often encountered amidst the ordinary highs and lows, victories and failures of our everyday lives, becoming a touching point for the eternal – for something more. We will see that God speaks through nature, people, and places, surprising the most unexpected people with grace and forgiveness. Within all these encounters, we will see the costliness of grace and therefore the depth of God's love.

So, are you ready to meet with God?

Step into the library, there's a seat waiting for you...

Sanctuary First

Thanks to James Cathcart and Albert Bogle for developing this material.



The Incredible William Tyndale

The Bible is not a book. It's a place we go — a sanctuary where we can come face to face with God. And the reason we can get there so easily is in so small way because of the courage and conviction of a man called William Tyndale. 500 years ago, in 1526, Tyndale threw open the doors to this sanctuary, translating the New Testament from Greek into the everyday language of hearth, heart, and home.

In the deeply suspicious and controlling environment of England in the 16th century scripture was tightly controlled and largely only available in Latin. Tyndale's radical act to bring the Bible into the intimate place of our everyday lives cost him his life as he was martyred for it by an authoritarian regime worried about how the establishment would be undermined if people could read the radical words of Jesus in their own language. But before Tyndale was captured he released revised editions of his New Testament from exile and translated much of the Old Testament from Hebrew (a language he fell in love with) to English too, which were all smuggled back into England and beyond.

Tyndale, along with many other translators across the world and throughout history bravely worked to make the Bible phenomenally accessible to everyday people, when the powers that be preferred to control and limit access to it. Through the miracle of translation Christ speaks to you in your mother tongue — not mediated through a priest, through an ancient language, through mysterious inscrutable works of art. The Bible becomes in an instant not an artefact, but a place — a place you can get to!

In Melvyn Bragg's *William Tyndale, A Very Brief History* he describes a scene from Tyndale's life that articulates his mission. He quotes him as saying the following to a local learned clergyman,

“...if God spare my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost.” ... In those few words we have the essence of Tyndale — wholly unafraid to stick to his views and express them with public force. The choice of the ploughboy is an aspect of his genius. A ploughboy opened up the land to feed the people, a mundane marvel task like those of the apostles, in stories and in myths; he was an innocent. Above all, the ploughboy was illiterate. That was for him a key incentive. Tyndale would write a Bible to be read aloud so that everyone who had ears to hear would learn at last the messages in the Scriptures. In doing this he would employ a style so brilliantly adapted to his aim that it would be criticised as being artless, too simple, too common. In truth, it was constructed with mastery. He made a lasting new language from and for the common people of England...

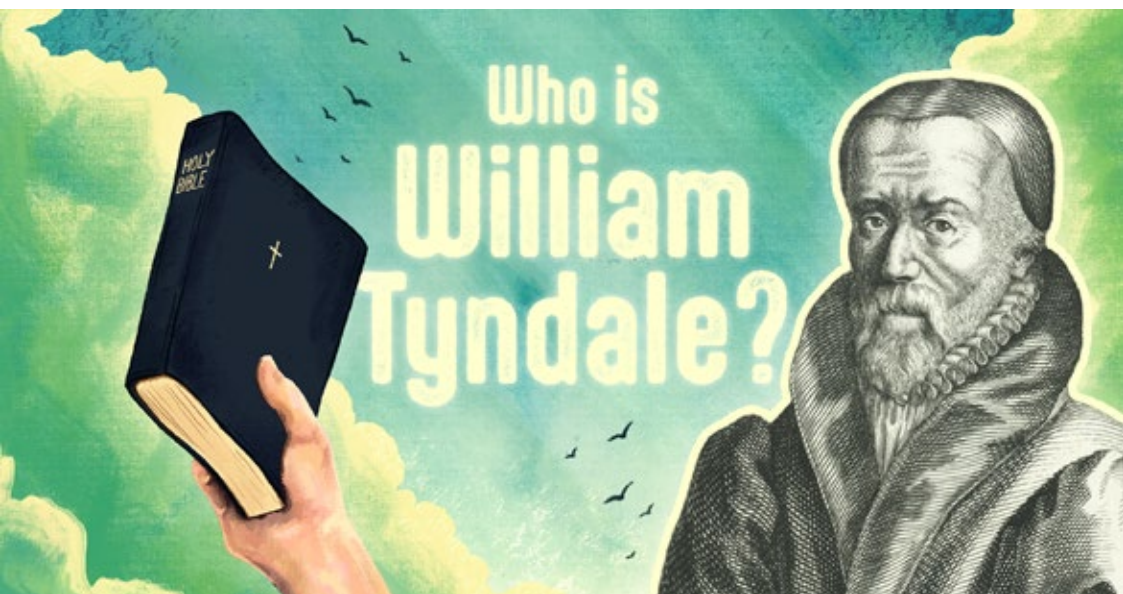
Suddenly the Bible is on the map. All at once signposts are up and justice, hope and transformation are in the language of the people. The humble, dedicated and steely Tyndale paid the price of his life for this text, but it would not be suppressed even with his death and less than 100 years later many of these words would form somewhere in the region of 80-90% of the King James Bible. Even if you have only ever heard snatches of the Bible, little idioms or phrases — it is likely you have read the words Tyndale wrote. What happened next was a spiritual, political and creative explosion of innovation, one we still feel now 400 years later. The English language would not be the English language without William Tyndale. And world culture would not be world culture without his groundbreaking translation.

In the 21st century our phones once more throw the doors of the sanctuary open, taking the Bible across borders, into countless languages, finding homes in hearts worldwide. The Bible can be at our fingertips constantly. It's a library open 24/7 and is only ever a few taps away. It is our duty to the world to remind one another that this library is open! That the Bible remains what it has always been... a place for people to come, to find shelter, to meet others, and to encounter God.

We were inspired by the 500 year anniversary of Tyndale's New Testament to celebrate and rediscover how profoundly accessible the Bible is and promote the habit of reading it aloud together. In a turbulent, uncertain, often stressed and fearful world we can rediscover the Bible as a sanctuary — a place for us to cry and celebrate, rest and hope, discover and rage and... over time... learn to forgive and thereby change our lives and the world.

We owe it to Tyndale.

We owe it to ourselves.



Week 1: A Place to Meet

The Bible is a library and it contains many books from many different genres written in multiple languages and cultural backgrounds. Over the course of this theme we will explore teaching, narrative, poetry, prophecy, gospels and epistles. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch) is sometimes translated as 'The Law' but it could also be translated as 'The Teaching'. These fascinating books are the foundational texts of how humanity discovers God and it is where our study begins...

1. God is here – Genesis 28: 10–17 (Jacob at Bethel)

Theme: Recognising God's presence in the times when we least deserve it. Often in familiar places, we can encounter revelation.

Context: Jacob, often described as a cheat, was a fugitive running for his life, resting his head on a hard stone in the middle of nowhere, when he dreams of a stairway to heaven. He suddenly realises God is already in this place: God is here! Over time the people in the Bible discover that God is not remote, located far away, that we are closer to heaven than we realise. God meets us where we are in this moment, we don't have to trek to reach God.

Discussion Questions: As we meet Jacob, what words or phrases stand out to you in this reading? What do you make of his heaven-escalator? And what does his surprise teach us about how easily we miss God in the "here and now," pointing us to the beyond? Have you experienced an unexpected sense of God's presence during a very stressful, ordinary, mundane, or even difficult moment in your daily routine?

2. God speaks – Exodus 3:1–17 (Moses and the Burning Bush)

Theme: God speaking through nature – bursting into the middle of our lives.

Context: Moses, a disgraced leader and murderer, was simply doing routine work — tending sheep in a quiet desert — when God used a common feature of nature, a bush, to capture his attention and call an unlikely, aging fugitive into a massive mission. This dramatic scene tells us an everyday truth - that God surprises us by meeting us when we least expect it. And when we pray we can come ourselves to the burning bush, we can listen to God and unburden ourselves. Note also how the people we have met so far, Jacob and Moses, are not paragons of virtue, they are flawed fascinating characters who God still speaks to directly.

Discussion Questions: What “burning bush” moments—ordinary sights, sounds, or elements of the natural world — might God be using to get your attention today? What usually distracts us from “turning aside” to notice them? Notice how Moses communicates with God. Comment on the reason Moses gives as to why he was unsuitable for the task. Does it sound familiar?

3. Meeting Jesus – John 3: 1-2, 16-21 (Jesus teaches Nicodemus) and 4: 4-26 (The Woman at the Well)

Theme: God breaking boundaries to meet the most unexpected and marginalised people in daily life.

Context: In the first part, from chapter 3, we hear Jesus explaining to Nicodemus – a high status religious insider — about how God has crossed the boundary from heaven to earth — to come face to face with humanity. In the second Jesus intentionally crosses social, cultural, and religious barriers to have a meaningful spiritual conversation with an isolated outsider, a marginalised woman from a rival cultural group during a routine midday chore at a well. In the New Testament Jesus offers continuity with the tradition of the past while also radically expanding our understanding of it for the future. Jesus has come to earth to demonstrate divine love and forgiveness face to face and this relationship is for all humanity.

Discussion Questions: If Jesus were to meet you during your most ordinary daily chores or in places you feel overlooked, what might He reveal about Himself to you? What would He ask you for, and what do you need most that He would ask for in order to give you your heart’s desire? Furthermore, how does this encounter challenge us to look differently at the “unexpected” people through whom God might want to speak today?



Week 2: A Place for Lament

Building on last week's exploration of how God meets us unexpectedly in the ordinary, everyday moments of life, this week we shift our focus inward. If God is present in the "here and now," what happens when that present reality includes pain, loss, and grief?

Far from expecting us to put on a brave face, Scripture shows us that the Bible is a safe place to bring our rawest emotions. Here are some discussion questions designed to help discover that God does not shy away from our tears, but rather grieves with us in our lament. None of us are exempt from deep scars of hurt and rejection. We all face times of great disappointment and sorrow. For us there are rooms in this library where we can simply cry. A place of raw laments and heavy tears where masking your pain is unnecessary. In this place we encounter a God who wants us to know that he is with us through our fear, loneliness, abandonment, mourning and disappointment.

1. Hannah's Tears Spill Over — 1 Samuel 1: 9–18

Theme: Pouring out raw, unfiltered sorrow before God without shame.

Context: Hannah publicly weeping from her deep soul-ache for a child. This sensitive reading shows a woman literally on the periphery of her society, in a tentative, tenuous position — being written off as a drunk and disturber of the peace. Where the world sees an awkward, inconvenient character — God sees someone worthy of love and dignity. Even when the world misunderstands our pain, God listens. Hannah brought her bitter grief and heartfelt tears right into the sanctuary, refusing to hide her pain even when she was misunderstood by others.



Discussion Questions:

When we experience deep personal loss, what tends to keep us from sharing our feelings with others? How many of us bring our grief and emotions directly to God in prayer? Hannah's vulnerability gives us insight into how a person can be mistakenly judged. Can fear of judgment by others be a barrier to seeking help?

2. The Depths — Psalm 42

Theme: Honest lament and giving voice to emotional low points.

Context: The writer of Psalm 42 doesn't offer hollow spiritual platitudes; they openly acknowledge their soul is downcast and that "deep calls to deep" in overwhelming despair. The Bible does not simply soar the highs, it also plumbs the depths of human emotion, and even shows us how the two can be inextricably linked.

Discussion Questions: How does this psalm challenge the common pressure to "keep a stiff upper lip" or fake being fine (even and perhaps especially in religious spaces)? Why is giving voice to our emotional depths a vital and faithful part of our relationship with God?

3. When Words Can't Express — Romans 8:18–27

Theme: Divine empathy and the Spirit groaning with us in our pain.

Context: Paul reminds us that when we are broken beyond words, the Holy Spirit doesn't stand at a distance — He intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words, effectively grieving with us. Last week we saw God meeting us in unexpected places; this passage shows God meeting us in our wordless agony. The Bible is a place not only to encounter words about God and from God, but it takes us to the place beyond words.

Discussion Questions: How does knowing that God's Spirit aches alongside us change the way you picture God's presence during your darkest seasons of loss? Is there a hint of the famous footprints poem to be found here? In the poem the pair of footprints in the sand become one during life's hardest moments, not because God abandons us, but because God is carrying us.



Week 3: A Place to Celebrate

This week we open up a vital and often overlooked dimension of our faith: Celebration. If the Bible is a place where we can meet God in our darkest moments (as we explored last week), it is equally a place where God invites us into the light of laughter, feasting, and communal joy. Celebration isn't an escape from reality; it is a sacred act of defiance that declares God's goodness is greater than our brokenness.

We hope these discussion questions will help study groups explore how laughter and joy are woven into the human narrative —and why we should expect to meet God in our celebrations. Hospitality and sharing food together is absolutely central to Christianity. The Bible is fundamentally a shared place where the lines between past and future, us and them, here and there blur. Do we read the Bible in a hospitable way? In a welcoming way? In a social way that invites others to join us?

1. A Place to Celebrate — Nehemiah 8: 9–12

Theme: Shifting from sorrow to shared joy, recognising that “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Context: This reading links holiness and food. Fulfilment and nourishment. When the people of Israel listened to God's word, their immediate reaction was regret for a lost age expressed with grief and weeping, but Nehemiah and Ezra redirected them, saying, “*Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*” Instead of mourning, they were commanded to eat, drink, and celebrate together.



Discussion Questions: What words or phrases stand out to you in this reading? What choice foods and drinks come to your mind? How can sharing a meal and collective joy together act as a source of strength for our spiritual lives? Is it to celebrate that we got away with something? Or is it something much more profound: the kindness of God's costly grace? Finally, who could we send food to this week?

2. Space to eat, space to return — Luke 15: 11–32

Theme: God's lavish, welcoming heart that calls for a feast upon our return.

Context: In the parable of the man with two sons (often called 'the prodigal son') the father's reaction to his returning child isn't a lecture, a probation period, or a scolding, but an immediate command for music, dancing, a fine robe, and a massive feast.

Discussion Questions: How does Jesus' picture of God as a parent who throws a party challenge our natural tendency to project our own stern or begrudging mindset onto God? What does it look like for us to truly accept that God wants to celebrate us out of His extravagant love?

3. A Place to Rejoice — 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

Theme: Celebration and gratitude as a continuous rhythm of a life anchored in God.

Context: A list of community commands as relevant now as they were then: rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances. Paul tells the early church to "rejoice always," not because life is always easy, but because it is God's will for us, tightly linked with unceasing prayer and thankfulness.

Discussion Questions: Looking back at our journey over the last three weeks — meeting God in the ordinary (Week 1), in our tears (Week 2), and now in our laughter — how can celebration become a spiritual anchor? What have you learned or recognised about the importance of making room for thanksgiving and celebration in your life? Why do we celebrate?



Week 4: A Place to Rest

The Bible is a place where we can find shelter, draw breath, and take time to rest from the pressures of life. Its timeless wisdom and poetry continue to speak to generation after generation. There are well trodden paths in the Bible for people looking for comfort, inspiration, catharsis, guidance and restoration. Are there places you regularly visit when you open the Bible?

As we journey through these weeks of Bible study, we have discovered God in the ordinary and unexpected (Week 1), brought our raw emotions to Him in Week 2, and learned to open our hearts to His joy in celebration (Week 3). Now, in Week 4, we arrive at a vital sanctuary: Rest.

We live in a culture that glorifies busyness, where burnout can appear to some as a badge of honour, but the truth is the pressures of 21st-century life too often leave us depleted. Yet, the Bible offers a timeless refuge — a place where we rest our frantic pace.

In this week's study, we see how the poetry of the Psalms and the urgency of the Prophets are once again revealed beautifully in the Gospels, offering a much-needed invitation to rest, take stock, and let go.

1. Poetry: sanctuary and taking stock — Psalm 23

Theme: Finding soul-rest and the courage to pause in God's green pastures.

Context: The poetry of Psalm 23 paints a picture of a God who actively makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside quiet waters to “restore our soul.”



Discussion Questions: In a 24/7 news world that treats stillness as a waste of time, what makes it so difficult for us to “take stock” and accept God’s invitation to slow down? How can viewing Psalm 23 help us quiet our minds and find shelter from life’s pressures today? What is it about water, sheep, and the idea of pasture that somehow speaks to the insanely restless heart?

2. The Prophets: letting go of frantic control — Isaiah 30: 15–18

Theme: The prophetic call to quietness, trust, and abandoning self-reliance.

Context: God offers a counter-cultural strategy to a panicked nation. Through the prophet Isaiah, God issues a stark warning: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” Instead, they chose to rely on their own frantic speed and control.

Discussion Questions: What are the hidden “chariots” or coping mechanisms we turn to and rely on when life gets overwhelming — instead of turning to God for rest? What do we need to let go of in order to heed this prophetic call to quiet trust? What are the hidden material distractions we involve ourselves in to rid ourselves of the feeling of restlessness?

3. The Gospels: the culmination of rest in Christ — Matthew 11: 28–30

Theme: Jesus drawing together the poetry and prophecy of rest to offer a cure for 21st century burnout.

Context: Here, Jesus echoes the comforting heart of the Psalms and the urgent rescue of the Prophets, crying out: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” He invites us to exchange our heavy, self-imposed yokes for His gentle one.

Discussion Questions: Looking across all four weeks of our journey — meeting God in the ordinary, our tears, our celebrations, and now our exhaustion — what does it practically look like to lay down our heavy burdens at Jesus’ feet today? What do we need to let go of and let Jesus carry for a while? Discuss together the issues and the challenges in dropping out of the so-called ‘rat-race’. How does Jesus’ invitation give modern, weary people a renewed reason to hope? (Perhaps look at Matthew 5: 1–12.)



Week 5: A Place to Hope

As we continue our integrated journey — moving from encountering God in the ordinary (Week 1), bringing our tears to Him (Week 2), celebrating in His presence (Week 3), and finding shelter and rest (Week 4) — we arrive at Week 5: A Place to Hope.

In a 21st-century world often gripped by cynicism and despair, hope can feel like a rare commodity. Interestingly, even modern politicians and secular thinkers have begun to borrow theological phrasing from theologians like Tillich and Moltmann, speaking of “the courage to hope” when facing societal crises. But biblical hope is far more than positive thinking; it is anchored in trust that is found entirely in God.

Across the Prophets, Epistles, and Gospels, Scripture presents a seamless, continuous thread: hope as the ultimate catalyst for the renewal of our vision for humanity.

1. The Prophets: The Promise of Deep Belonging — Jeremiah 31: 31–34

Theme: An unbreakable covenant and a heart rooted in God’s faithfulness.

Context: God speaks to a broken, exiled culture, promising a future hope and a whole new kind of belonging. Through Jeremiah, God promises a radical new covenant where His law is written not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts, offering a deep, secure sense of belonging (“I will be their God, and they will be my people”). The intimacy between God and humanity is striking. God and humanity belong together.

Discussion Questions: What does it mean to you to belong to God? In a culture where so many people struggle with isolation and a longing to belong, discuss together how Jeremiah’s prophetic promise provides insight into Paul’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life makes us new creations (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). How does this change our outlook when we realise our ultimate security is anchored not in our action but in God’s personal initiative in creating a new creation?



2. The Epistles: A “Living Hope” for Trial-Filled Days — 1 Peter 1:3–9

Theme: An unshakeable future inheritance that transforms our present endurance.

Context: Writing to scattered believers facing intense trials, Peter bursts into praise for a “living hope” born through the resurrection of Jesus Christ—an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Discussion Questions: Our inheritance can never perish, spoil or fade - how does that make you feel? When life feels heavy and despair creeps in, what steps can we take to encourage belief in a “living” hope rather than a passive wish? How can this be more than just looking forward to this ultimate renewal? What advice would you give to a Christian friend looking for courage to persevere through current hardships without losing heart?

3. The Gospels: The Radical Ethics of Hope — Luke 6: 27–31

Theme: Living out the future Kingdom of God through active love in a broken present.

Context: Jesus’ golden rule: to do to others as you would have them do to you, is positively formed. Our very lives are to speak of hope as we share the sparks of Christ’s love. When we don’t return hate with hate or violence with violence, but instead respond creatively and compassionately we make space for hope! Jesus calls His followers to an extraordinary standard — loving enemies, doing good to those who hate, and blessing those who curse — actions that are utterly impossible without a radical vision of a better reality.

Discussion Questions: Connecting back to the prophetic promise and the Epistles’ living hope, how does Jesus’ teaching here act as an expression of hope in action? How does having a renewed vision of God’s future give us the “courage to hope” and change the way we respond to conflict and division in the world today?



Week 6: A Place to Discover

The Bible meets us where we are and then invites us to move into a place of discovery and adventure — to discover ourselves through the context of our relationship with God and one another. This awareness of the other is the work of the Holy Spirit, the presence of God who reminds us we are made in His image — made to be in communion with God and with others, to love our neighbour as ourselves. The Bible is a spiritual platform full of radical paradigm shifts in human understanding of God.

Looking at Genesis 1 as a mirror, then going to Ezekiel 37 for the discovery of vision in the midst of death, and finally to Philippians 4 to encounter the peace that comes from self-awareness and hope for the future, we will discover the progression of the integrated message running through the various genres of Scripture. Namely, we are made in the image of God in order to enjoy living to bring glory to God and be part of that enjoyment forever.

1. The Teaching: The Mirror of Creation — Genesis 1: 1–5, 26–31

Theme: Finding our true identity and design in the image of our Creator.

Context: Genesis presents the creation of humanity as God's masterpiece, crafted in His image, designed for intimate communion with Him and one another. Our familiarity with these words can distract us from the radical truth that all humans bear the divine image — we look like God!

Discussion Questions:

When we look into the “mirror” of God's word, how does knowing we are made in His image challenge the false identities, comparisons, or labels the world tries to place on us? Why is true self-discovery impossible apart from understanding who God is?



2. The Prophets: Vision in the Midst of Death — Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Theme: The life-giving breath of the Spirit awakening us from stagnation to divine purpose.

Context: In the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel faces a scene of total hopelessness. Then the breath of God (the Holy Spirit) sweeps in, breathing life into the valley of death, bringing a vision that was dead back to life.

Discussion Questions: Do you believe the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit can awaken us to a deeper self-awareness and remind us of the vibrant purpose God has for us? Does this just happen, or do we need to seek after it? Where do we long to see God's transformative power in our local communities?

3. The Epistles: Peace, Self-Awareness, and Future Hope — Philippians 4: 4-9

Theme: Guarding our hearts and minds to live out our ultimate design of joy and glory.

Context: Paul urges believers to focus their minds on what is true, noble, and pure, promising that the "God of peace will be with you." The picture of peace offered in these verses is not so much about the absence of negatives (such as conflict or hardship) but about presence of positive things.

Discussion Questions: How does experiencing God's peace give us the self-awareness and hope needed to truly enjoy living? What is one way you can step further into that joy and bring glory to God this week?



Week 7: A Place to Rage

This week, building seamlessly on our journey, we confront a raw reality: The more we discover about God's heart for justice, love, and human dignity, the more we will find rage and holy anger bubbling up as a natural response to the brokenness of the world.

Far from being unspiritual, the Bible gives sacred space to our anger. Scripture shows us that holy rage is not a denial of faith, but often a proof of it. Across the Law/Histories, Prophets, and Epistles, we see a spectrum of righteous responses: Nehemiah's systemic shaking of corrupt structures, Habakkuk's agonising screaming at the silence of God, and the Epistles' call to turn that passion into the godly grace of reconciliation.

More widely the Bible does not shy away from intense emotion or rhetoric — it is a vivid document that depicts humanity discovering itself and God. And it gets messy sometimes. And Angry. It is okay to experience a range of emotions (both in the Bible and in our response to it). For instance apocalyptic literature in the Bible give us a wide canvass to express our critique of injustice and oppression. The Bible can be a place to vent our anger at injustice and also a place where we can leave our fury on the table.

Explore these three passages using the discussion questions below, designed to open up different dimensions of rage, anger, and redemption.

1. The Law/History: The Outrage and the Shaking — Nehemiah 5: 1–13

Theme: Moral indignation against the exploitation of the vulnerable and demanding systemic accountability.

Context: Nehemiah gets intensely angry when he uncovers wealthy leaders exploiting and bankrupting their poor neighbours. He is shaking with anger. But he didn't just feel mad; he used his influence to restructure the system and demand accountability.

Discussion Questions: How can we channel our righteous anger against injustice into constructive action rather than letting it burn out or turn into exhaustion? What needs to be shaken up in our lives, our churches and our nations to challenge exploitation and oppression?



2. The Prophets: The Screaming and the Wrestling — Habakkuk 1:1–4, 12–13

Theme: The sacred honesty of lament, wrestling with God, and refusing to accept unpunished evil.

Context: Here and throughout the Bible this complaint still leaps off the page - good things still happen to bad people, there is still injustice! This challenge and critique of God's authority is not hidden away, an inconvenient truth to be swept aside. In fact it's a prominent theme throughout the Bible, of people bringing their honest and raw complaints to God. The Honesty of Complaint: Habakkuk outright screams and complains to God, demanding to know why evil goes unpunished and why God seems silent in the face of suffering. The Tension of Faith: Habakkuk's rage stems from a deep, unshakable belief in God's absolute holiness, which makes the reality of worldly injustice so painful to witness. Waiting on the Watchtower: After screaming his complaints, Habakkuk stations himself on the watchtower to see how God will answer (Habakkuk 2:1).

Discussion Questions: Why are we often afraid to bring our raw, angry questions about the state of the world directly to God? How does Habakkuk give us permission to voice our anguish rather than suppress our doubts? How can your passion for God actually fuel your anger over the brokenness you see around you? When our anger over global or personal injustice feels unanswered, what does it look like to wait faithfully on God without losing our moral edge or growing numb?

3. The Epistles: The Grace of Reconciling — Ephesians 4:26–32

Theme: Guarding our hearts, managing righteous anger, and transforming rage into a ministry of grace.

Context: Righteous vs. Destructive Anger: Paul writes, "In your anger do not sin," acknowledging that anger itself is a natural human emotion, but warning against letting it curdle into malice. The Danger of Unresolved Rage: Paul warns against letting the sun go down on your anger, lest it give a foothold to darkness. Moving to Gospel Reconciliation: The ultimate trajectory of Ephesians is not just managing anger, but putting away bitterness to embrace a life marked by forgiveness, active love, and reconciliation.

Discussion Questions: What is the fine line between holy, passion-driven anger for justice and destructive, flesh-driven anger that harms others? How does unaddressed, festering rage poison our own souls and communities if it isn't dealt with constructively? How does the heart of the Gospel provide the ultimate blueprint for transforming our collective rage into a powerful force for healing and grace?

Week 8: A Place to Forgive

As we arrive at the culmination of our integrated journey — moving from encountering God in the ordinary, through our pain, joy, rest, hope, self-discovery, and righteous rage — we reach the very heart of the biblical narrative: Forgiveness.

The radical message of the Bible is that in meeting God, we meet forgiveness, a reality brought to its ultimate conclusion in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our forgiven faults, our forgiven selves, and a forgiving community — shaped by a costly, redeeming grace — are the ultimate hallmarks of the power of God at work in the world.

The Bible is big enough and deep enough to take all the emotions we can throw at it. There is space for multiple interpretations and viewpoints. The Bible is life changing and world changing, we should never be complacent with it but always have humility and accept we are always learning and must trust God's guidance. In this spirit of openness we explore what it means to learn to forgive ourselves and one another.

Here are three discussion questions, one for each final passage designed to gather together and crown everything we have explored over these past weeks.

1. Our forgiven faults — Psalm 103: 8–14

Theme: God's boundless mercy and tender compassion that removes our transgressions as far as the east is from the west.

Context: A song celebrating that God does not nurse anger, but removes our faults as far as the east is from the west. When we manage to forgive others we are able to do so because God is big enough and compassionate enough to forgive us too.

Discussion Questions: What do we learn about the nature of God in these verses? What words or phrases stand out to you? Looking back over our entire journey — from meeting God in our ordinary flaws (Week 1) to bringing our deepest shame and pain to Him (Week 2) — how does the radical, east-to-west mercy described in Psalm 103 reshape the way we view our forgiven faults? Why is truly accepting God's compassion, rather than punishing ourselves, often the hardest part of our spiritual walk?



2. Our forgiven selves — Micah 7: 18–20

Theme: A God who delights in steadfast love, sweeping away our sins into the depths of the sea.

Context: The prophet Micah marvels at a God who does not stay angry forever, but instead hurls our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Discussion Questions: Connecting this with our discoveries of true identity and hope (Weeks 5 and 7), how does knowing we are forgiven, completely unburdened by our past, release us to live fully, freely, and joyfully in the present? Explore how this changes our relationships with both the past and the future.

3. A Forgiving Community — Colossians 3: 12–15

Theme: Clothed in compassion, bearing with one another, we are shaped by a costly, Christ-like grace.

Context: Paul outlines the ultimate community guideline: bear with each other and forgive just as the Lord forgave you. He urges the Colossians to ‘clothe’ themselves in mercy, patience, and forgiveness, letting the peace of Christ rule in their hearts “just as the Lord forgave you.”

Discussion Questions: As we look at the ultimate hallmark of God redeeming the world — a forgiving community shaped by costly grace — what does this look like practically in our relationships, and how does it crown everything we have explored together over these past weeks? Reflect on the power of knowing the presence of God in shaping our present and future lives together.

Conclusion: This entire theme has explored how the Bible is more than a book – it is a place we can go. As we draw to a close we find the Bible is not only a sanctuary and a library, it is also a wardrobe – a place to dress ourselves for the world. At the end of this series what are you taking from the wardrobe and going to wear out into the world?!



Running A Connect Group

Follow the Spirit and do what works for your group!

Our Connect material is intended to be flexible and you are encouraged to adapt it to suit your needs and where the Holy Spirit takes you. Below is a completely optional rough outline of how we envision the material could be used in a 90 or 60 minute weekly session. As a leader you are free to shake things up (either as you prepare, or on the fly) responding to the discussion as it unfolds. Our experience of small groups is often the fascinating stuff happens 'off topic' when a group has gone on a tangent and ended up somewhere new. Go as the Spirit leads you and don't feel like you have to cover every reading or topic in each session.

If you are a pre-existing group/community you may have already have a format that works for you. Perhaps you always begin with a song, maybe you read a short liturgy aloud, share a meal together, have an informal catch up before diving into the reading, break for tea and coffee in middle and so on. If so that's great, just weave our material into that.

Optional outline for running a session:

1. Welcome — introducing yourself as the group leader and asking others to do the same, you could share briefly what interests you/draws you to the theme this month/week
2. Brief summary of the overall theme and Sanctuary First/and or specific organisation running individual group
3. An opening prayer, inviting God to travel with us as we explore the Bible
4. Introducing the theme of the week — reading the theme introduction aloud and/or tailoring to your group context, allow space for comments and initial impressions if any
5. Point to videos, podcasts, Daily Worship etc on the Sanctuary First site that links in (there is a short video to accompany each week in the Connect section)

6. The group leader reads the Context to set up this week's discussion before inviting a volunteer to read the first Bible reading.
7. The group leader then reads the Discussion Questions section. You could pause after each one to throw it open to the group. As a leader you may wish to adapt/expand/edit the material, in advance or on the fly. The discussion prompts are designed to go in a number of directions. It can be helpful to ask general questions about what stood out for people in the reading, what questions, insights or personal responses do they have to the text? And then you can link those responses to the topics in the material.
8. A closing prayer led by the leader or the group leaving space for intercessory prayer as the group develops and gets to know one another
9. Telling people about the next session's topic and pointing them to Connect resources on the Sanctuary First website.



In This Wild World

By James Cathcart

In this wild world
let us make an arbour
A pocket in the fabric of time
Where we can treasure lost things
Where we can be together

In this broken moment
Let us make a shelter
and take shelter
under a canopy of all we can be
Where we can be together.

At our feet, sacred quiet,
where the miraculous goes unsaid
where promises grow and tears are shed
— seeds fly and trees fall into the sky
And we can be together.

In this commitment
this fledgling frescoed framework
a little alcove in the uncertainty
of what could be
we take a seat and take heart
And we can be together.

In this bond between us
we catch our breath and our courage
discovering who we can be in the dappled
light of nurture
sheltered, cherished, loved, a simple place
Where we can be together.



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We are grateful to the Drummond Trust for helping to sponsor the printing and production of this month's material.

SanctuaryFirst

Your Daily Walk with God

Sanctuary First is a vibrant, online worshipping community. We are passionate about exploring new ways for people to connect with God, the spirit, and one another as a digital community.

In a busy, overwhelming digital world, we want to give you the opportunity to pause and draw breath - to take a moment...

We are excited to explore creative ways of using the internet to wrestle with and grow in our faith — to learn, celebrate, and find solace.

We aim to be a resource for the wider church and a fresh way to engage with Christianity for those who are unfamiliar or unused to church.

Everybody is welcome. Whoever you are, wherever you have come from, we hope you can find a little Sanctuary here.

Find out more:
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SanctuaryFirst

Your Daily Walk with God

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