

The Sacred Is Calling

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

November 2021 (31 October - 27 November)



When does something become sacred? When does a place, or a sign, or an action, or a gesture, or an object, or a sound temporarily become something more... something that points us to something bigger, a glimpse of divine justice, mercy and grace?

This month we are searching for the sacred. Where do we find it? How do we recognise it? How do we cherish it? And how are we changed by encountering it?

There are moments in our lives that have special value and meaning because they give us profound insights into God's eternal reality. Jesus spoke about 'the kingdom' as a way of describing God's ongoing divine project of peace and restoration for creation. In a sense the Kingdom has already arrived and yet it is still emerging and growing – coming alongside us to show us that another way of harmony and dignity and love is possible. As disciples of Jesus we follow in the footsteps of the Kingdom speaking sacred words and doing sacred things to remind one another of our calling to be part of God's renewed creation.

We find the sacred in familiar places: in the words of the Bible and the actions of the sacraments, but the sacred also catches us off guard in a careless moment; for the Holy Spirit is always moving and transforming everyday life into lines of poetry or colour that speak of God's endless love.

The sacred is something that is set apart from the normal run of things, something that bursts into everyday existence pointing the way to God's Kingdom of perfect mercy, justice and grace. It is not an escape from reality – it is an invitation to, and a deeper revelation of, reality as God has always created and intended it to be.

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The sacred is calling out to us.

Our desire for transcendent truth, to experience the sacred, is not limited to a select club of Sunday morning worshippers. It is a heartfelt human desire that we all feel in our hearts, a deep longing for meaning and worth – for a way of making sense of it all. Without necessarily using the word 'sacred', this call is longed for and heard across humanity by people wanting to feel alive, connected, and valued.

So this month may we open our eyes, hearts, and souls wide as we search for, recognise, cherish and reflect on those moments when we encounter the sacred, that draw us evermore into God's embrace.

These discussion questions adapt our monthly themes for small Connect Groups or personal Bible study (look up the [The Sacred Is Calling You Resource Pack PDF](#) for more information on this month's theme). The questions are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme. They are offered as 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 you or your group.

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Part 1: A Sacred Sequence

Conversation Starter

What do you think of when you hear the word 'sacred'?

Read Ruth 1: 1-18

Ruth makes a sacred bond to go with Naomi. What can we learn from Ruth's declaration in verses 16-17 that we can apply to the commitments we make to God and one another in our own lives?

Read Hebrews 9: 11-14

We are swept up, washed up, brushed up — and sanctified to serve!

What are three things can we do this week in our lives to serve the Living God?

Read Mark 12: 28-34

What do you think was going on in the scribe's mind when he asked Jesus this question and in his subsequent response? Do you think he was testing Jesus or himself? Do you think he was surprised by Jesus's answer?

And how do you think he felt after hearing Jesus tell him he wasn't far from the kingdom of God?

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Part 2: Sites of the Sacred

Conversation Starter

Do you have any favourite 'sacred places' where you like to be?

Read Ruth 3:1-5 and 4:13-17 (If you have time read all of chapters 3-4 or indeed all of Ruth, if meeting as a group perhaps asking people to read individually before the session)

The book of Ruth begins with death and loss and ends with new life and restoration. In between there is the resourcefulness of two women trying to negotiate strange and traumatic circumstances. It's a compelling story and partly that's because it has the highest ratio of dialogue to narrative of any of the books in the Old Testament — perhaps giving us particular insight into the characters.

Looking at her story where do you see signs of the sacred in and amongst the heartache, confusion and strangeness?

Read 1 Kings 17: 8-16

A little sacred jug that just does not fail...

What are other examples of ordinary, unassuming objects becoming sites of the sacred? These could be moments from your own life, from the Bible, or from the history of the church or the community you live in.

Read Mark 12: 38-44

Let's retell this parable in a contemporary setting. Instead of robes and copper coins how would you tell this story as if it was something that happened where you live in 2021?

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Part 3: Sacred Surprises

Conversation Starter

What are your favourite genres of music?

Read 1 Samuel 1: 9-20

Sometimes you're in the middle of writing somebody off and then suddenly you have to stop writing...

Eli is going to write Hannah off, send her packing, when something makes him stop — Hannah herself! She checks him and reminds her to treat him with dignity. In our lives we have these sacred moments when we're in the middle of dismissing someone out of hand and then something makes us stop and realise their dignity and our own folly.

Have you ever found yourself in Eli's position — judging someone harshly and then suddenly stopping — if so what made you stop?

Read 1 Samuel 2: 1-10

Picture the scene. Hannah plugs in the amplifier. She switches up the gain to full, throws down a few power chords as the waves of feedback screech back and so begins her punk praise. Hannah's language and sentiments are vehement, passionate and personal. A sacred punk moment from millennia ago.

In your mind, what is 'sacred music'? Is there a particular passage of music or line of lyrics that has particularly moved you?

Read Hebrews 10: 19-25

Being sanctified signs for others.

How can we — as sanctified sinners in the process of being made holy — be signs for others spurring them on toward love and good deeds?

How can our lives be signifiers of God's Kingdom?

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Part 4: Sacred Seasons

Conversation Starter

What are your favourite seasons, festivals, or celebrations in the church calendar?

Read Daniel 3: 13-28

Sometimes when you think all is lost and ruined, about to be burnt up, a 'fourth man' shows up and things go a different way...

Can you think of sacred moments in your life, or in the history of the world, where an additional person has turned up and changed the course of where things were going?

Read Romans 12: 1-2

As we tune into the sacred, season after season, we are transformed.

How have you changed over the years? And how do you think has God has worked in your life over that time?

Read Revelation 1: 4-8

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, in this expression we see that God is in all and through all.

Are there any sacred moments of beginning and ending that you cherish in your life? When God was with you at the start of something or at the end of something?