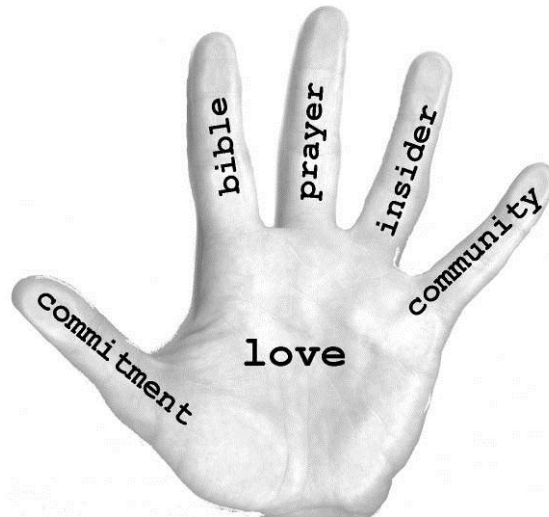


# *what we do*



Jesus came to earth like an explosion of love. He lived, he died, and he rose again, leaving behind a group of people to carry on his way of love.

But for those of us who try to follow in his footsteps, we find it is not that easy...we need help!

God gives us that help in the form of a partnership. God through his Spirit lives in us to help us on the way. But we also have some practical things **we** can do that will really aid us in this partnership – things that God uses in our lives to keep us in step with Jesus.

This series, “**what we do**”, looks at a **handful** of crucial things that we need to be doing in order to keep nurturing our faith and following Jesus.

It includes the following...

1. **love** - *the foundational characteristic upon which all else must be built*
2. **prayer** - *a connection with God as important as a lamp to an electrical plug.*
3. **insider** - *living bringing the good news to life right where we are amongst the people we know*
4. **community** - *supporting each other because we're not meant to go alone*
5. **bible** - *an important means by which God communicates with us*
6. **commitment** - *Jesus offers us life, but the cost is our life*

Don't work through this alone. Doing it with someone else will make the world of difference. Take your time with it and take it seriously – and as you do something with it, you may just find your life changing... for the better ☺



# 1. Love

## what is love?

Love is the defining characteristic of followers of Jesus. It sums up God’s attitude and actions toward us, and we are called to let it define our attitude and actions toward others – God’s love *in for* others. It is absolutely basic to everything we do. It is absolutely crucial!

## from the bible

God’s love for people is a thread that runs right through the bible. It’s not just a ‘nice feeling’ type of love – this love involves the emotions, it includes serious commitment and it works its way out into costly actions. God’s love for us is relentless and his generosity to us is reckless; this is core to who God is. And as we join the family of God, we will increasingly take on this primary family likeness as we relate to those in our world.

Below are some key passages on ‘love’ and why it’s important and how we should love. But don’t take our word for it – **read these passages yourself!** and listen to what God says to you through it...

<p><b>Key passages</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mat 22:36-40</li> <li>• Mat 5:38-48</li> <li>• Luke 10:25-37</li> <li>• John 13</li> <li>• 1Cor 13</li> <li>• 1John 4:7-21</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is LOVE important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mat 22:36-40</b> love, the rule for life</li> <li>• <b>Jn 13:34-35</b> love, <u>the</u> defining attribute of a follower of Jesus</li> <li>• <b>1Peter 4:8</b> love overcomes failings in others</li> <li>• <b>1John 4:7-21</b> if we love, we know God is at work in us (see also <b>Gal 5:22-23</b>)</li> <li>• <b>1Jn 4:12</b> as we love one another the invisible God becomes visible</li> </ul>
<p><b>How should we LOVE?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1John 3:18</b> love involves action, not just theory</li> <li>• <b>Lk 10:25-37</b> who we love: our neighbours/those we encounter</li> <li>• <b>Mat 5:38-48, Lk 6:27-35</b> - negatively, love means foregoing revenge; positively, love means doing good to those who don’t deserve it</li> <li>• <b>Mat 25: 31-46</b> love is simple &amp; practical; everyone can do it.</li> <li>• <b>John 13</b> Jesus’ example of love: amongst his closest friends who betray him (v2) &amp; deny him (38) Jesus chooses to humbly serve (v5) &amp; offer friendship through the sharing of a meal (v26ff)</li> <li>• <b>1Cor 13:1-13</b> love described as practical character traits &amp; given priority over everything else</li> <li>• <b>1John 4:7-10,19</b> we can only love like this if we use God’s energy</li> <li>• <b>John 15:13</b> greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends</li> </ul>

## Questions to get you talking/ Issues to explore

- Jesus' love for us is the primary example for how we should love others: involving sacrificial service for the benefit of those who don't deserve it. For us, where do we draw the line between doing good for others and being taken advantage of?
- Who are the neighbours around you? The 2 Jews who walked ahead of the Good Samaritan either didn't see the man in need, didn't realise they could help, or simply chose not to get involved.  
What can we do to help us:
  1. See the needs around us?
  2. Identify what we can do to help?
  3. Work through our 'selfish' barriers that stop us getting involved?
- Unless you are experiencing God's love for you, it will be impossible for you to love others in the same way. What things are you doing now (or you need to do) that allow you to experience God's love?
- It's easy to fool ourselves. How will we make sure we aren't just loving 'in theory' but never getting around to practising it?
- From your own experience, what are the 3-5 most important things you've learnt about love that you'd want to pass on to someone else?

## things to try

<b>everyday faith</b> <i>bringing it down-to-earth for you</i>	<b>insider living</b> <i>making a difference to those around you</i>	<b>for generations</b> <i>passing this on to others</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memorise</b> some verses that you find motivating in the area of love (maybe some of the ones above)</li> <li>• Every time you feel yourself reluctant to do what you know would be a loving action, offer up a <b>2-second prayer</b> eg "God, I don't feel like doing this, but give me the heart &amp; the hands to do it anyway"</li> <li>• As you <b>meet with another believer</b> for encouragement and accountability, make sure you include in your time some checking up on how each of you are going in showing practical love to those around you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify your neighbours with a map:</b> a good exercise is to draw a diagram of the people in your world. Use this diagram as a starting point to think about how you can help the 'neighbours' you've identified in your world</li> <li>• <b>pray</b> for those you are showing love to, so that God can add 'divine weight' to your efforts</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify the 3-5 things</b> that you think are the most important things you need to know about love</li> <li>• write these things down in a <b>journal</b></li> <li>• <b>organise to meet someone</b> in the next few weeks and tell them what you know about 'love'</li> </ul>

## extra resources



## 2. Bible

### *what is the Bible?*

The Bible is a collection of stories of real people living in real situations experiencing God and each other in their own different worlds over a few thousand years. And through this collection of stories we start to see a big story emerging: of God relentlessly pursuing people to develop a relationship of love with them and to help them find the beginnings of life as it was always meant to be lived. It is a great story. And now you and I can find *our* place in that story as we encounter the living God through the bible.

### *from the bible*

The passages give us insights into how we can approach the Bible in order to encounter God. As you read these passages reflect on what God might be impressing on you.

<b>Key passages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psalm 119 How does the writer view Gods word? What is their practical response to Gods word?</li> <li>Matthew 4:1-10. How does Jesus view and use Gods word?</li> <li>Deuteronomy 6:4-9</li> <li>Psalm 1</li> </ul>
<b>Why is the Bible important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psalm 19:7-11</li> <li>Matthew 4:4</li> <li>2 Timothy 3:14, 17</li> <li>Hebrews 4:12</li> </ul>
<b>How do I approach and read the Bible?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Timothy 2:15</li> <li>Hebrews 3:12-15</li> <li>James 1:22-25</li> <li>Matthew 13:1-23 and Luke 8:4-15 (notice how the condition of our heart influences what we perceive and understand as we read the Bible)</li> </ul>

### *questions to get you talking/ issues to explore*

- How we view the Bible influences its place in our lives and how we approach reading it. What do you think the Bible is? A manual for life, a love letter from God... Why do you think this? How does this compare with others views?
- The condition of your heart influences what you see, perceive and understand when you read the Bible. What are the implications of this for how you read the Bible?
- What are some of the difficulties you face getting into the Bible?
- What helps you get into the Bible?
- From your own experience, what are the 3-5 most important things you've learnt about the Bible that you'd want to pass on to someone else?

## *things to try*

### **Read the Bible to connect with God**

Unlike any other book the Bible is designed to function *as a place for us to encounter God*. Jesus tried to help the people of his day understand this when he told them, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40). The ultimate author of the words we read in the Bible is a living being who wants to interact with us as we read the Bible. God didn’t give us the Bible because he knew the best we could hope for was a remote second-hand academic knowledge of Himself. No, he gave us a book designed to help us have a living vital first-hand relationship with Himself. If we read it impersonally with an information-gathering frame of mind we will almost certainly misread it. To read the Bible to ‘get something’ out of it is to have the wrong mentality. If, however, we read it to ‘meet someone’ and that someone is God, it will come to life for us. So, how do we read the Bible to encounter God? Try the following *this week* as you read the Bible:

- Start by asking for God’s help. As you come to the Bible ask God to “open your eyes (and heart) so that you might see wonderful things in God’s word” Psalm 119:18
- As you read a passage in the Bible ask yourself; “In what specific way can this truth help me in one of the following areas?”
  - In relating to God better
  - In overcoming fears and anxieties
  - In finding the fulfillment of my longings
  - In developing loving attitudes and actions toward others
  - In facing discouragement, misunderstanding, and failure in overcoming difficulties.
- Alternatively use the questions in the “Approaching the Bible” resource

### **Read the Bible to get God’s perspective and direction on the questions we have.**

The Bible should be the first port of call when we have a question about our faith and how we live this out in our everyday lives. The Bible is by far the best place to start rather than getting a good book on the subject. Think about an area you need God’s direction in. Use the following steps to get God’s perspective using the Bible.

- Start by having a clear question to go to the Bible with.
- Think about where in the Bible you will find insights into this question. A book of the Bible, key Bible passages, a character in the Bible... Ask a couple of people where they would read in the Bible to find answers to your question.
- Ask for God’s help to have an open mind and heart to God’s perspective, and for insights as you read the Bible.
- Persevere! -it often takes time and effort to gain insight from the Bible.
- Allow time to ponder key passages you find. What is God impressing on you?
- Apply what you learn. What difference will your insights make to your everyday life?

## ***Extra resources***

### ***Articles and worksheets***

- ‘What is the Bible and How Should it be Approached’ by Lynton Brocklehurst
- “Approaching the Bible” A one page sheet of questions to help you as you read the Bible

### ***Books***

- *How to Read The Bible For All It is Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Bible Background Commentary* by Craig S. Keener



### 3. Prayer

**what is prayer?**

Prayer is primarily *not* about requests. It's *not* about a collection of sentences followed by an 'amen'. It's *not* about words. First and foremost, prayer is about *relationship*...your relationship with the God of the universe who is in love with you. In a relationship communication is important – and *this* is what prayer is: the words, requests and 'amen's of communication between you and God. In this respect, prayer is a gauge to the quality of your relationship with God...so it's important stuff!

**from the bible**

Below are a number of passages that give some thoughts on what prayer is all about. Also, there are some examples of people praying. These are well worth taking time to work through. They show us how different people in different times & different situations have responded to God in prayer – they are truly privileged insights for us...

<p><b>Why is PRAYER important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 1:32-39</li> <li>• Luke 22:39-44</li> <li>• John 16:24</li> <li>• James 5:13-16</li> <li>• Psalm 63:1, 42:1-3</li> </ul>
<p><b>How God wants us to PRAY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luke 11:1-13</li> <li>• Luke 18:1-8</li> <li>• Mat 6:5-15</li> <li>• Psalm 62:8/ 1Peter 5:7</li> </ul>
<p><b>Example prayers in the bible</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1Kings 8:22-53</li> <li>• Nehemiah 1:1-11</li> <li>• Psalm 25</li> <li>• Psalm 51</li> <li>• Psalm 62</li> <li>• Psalm 145</li> <li>• John 17:1-26</li> <li>• Matthew 9:36-39</li> <li>• Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:14-19</li> <li>• Colossians 1:9-12; 4:3,4,12</li> <li>• 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5</li> <li>• Philemon 1:4-6</li> </ul>

**questions to get you talking/ issues to explore**

- Perseverance in prayer seems to be highly valued by God. If you were to be faithful in regularly praying for a handful of things over a long time, what might those things be?
- What are some of the difficulties you face with practically staying focused in prayer?
- What are some creative ways you've tried and have worked in keeping your prayer life alive?
- There are a number of *barriers to effective praying*. These include: unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18), selfish motives (James 4:1-3), asking for things outside God's will or that don't honour God (1 John 5:14,15) and wavering faith (James 1:5-7). What sort of things can we do to help us not get caught in these traps?
- Some prayers seem to go unanswered – at least with the answer we're looking for, even for Jesus (eg Heb 5:7-8). How can we make sense of this if God is in control of the world?
- From your own experience, what are the 3-5 most important things you've learnt about prayer that you'd want to pass on to someone else?

**things to try**

<p><b>everyday faith</b> <i>bringing it down-to-earth for you</i></p>	<p><b>insider living</b> <i>making a difference to those around you</i></p>	<p><b>for generations</b> <i>passing this on to others</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the <b>2 places</b> you spend most time in a day. When you first arrive there in the day, pray, committing your time in that place to God</li> <li>• Use the <b>bible like a telephone</b>. Read a passage and when a question or significant thought comes to mind as you are doing this, <i>voice</i> your question/issue to God...and trust God to answer somehow.</li> <li>• <b>Memorise</b> some of God's promises and use these as starters to your prayers eg 1Peter 5:7, Isaiah 58:10-12</li> <li>• <b>Have a big day out</b>. Plan a half day to be alone with God. Consider doing this every 4-6 weeks. Take your bible, journal, pen, paper, musical instrument if you find this helps you to praise God and anything else that might help you to focus on God. This is a time to seek God, praise and thank God, pray for situations and people on your mind and heart, reflect on your current priorities, talk to God about important decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use a prayer hand</b> – identify 5 people you would love to see experience the love of God, and allocate each of them a finger! Pray as often as you remember your hand</li> <li>• Every time you are asked to pray for someone or when someone comes to your mind out of the blue, <b>pray a 2 second prayer right then &amp; there for them</b>. If you pray again later that's a bonus; at least this way you do pray!</li> <li>• <b>meet with another believer or believers to pray</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Prayer relay</b> – organise with your friends to do a 'tag' relay of praying for your world over a number of hours...or overnight!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify the 3-5 things</b> that you think are the most important things you need to know about prayer, or some of the best ways you've found for integrating prayer in your life.</li> <li>• write these things down in a <b>journal</b></li> <li>• <b>organise to meet someone</b> in the next few weeks and tell them what you've discovered about 'prayer'</li> </ul>

**Extra resources**

- "Prayer That Moves The World": an article by Lynton Brocklehurst.
- "The Place of Prayer": a Bible study in the Navigator SRM study series.



## 4. Insider

### what is an insider?

Jesus, the Word, became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood (Jn 1:14 msg). When God came to earth, he set us an example to follow – of living out the God-life in an understandable way to those around us. Put simply, an *Insider* is a ‘local’. He or she is a Christian who is a message-bearer to their unique group of friends and acquaintances. The Good News is passed from life to life as Insiders share their words, their actions, their lives in the midst of everyday life. And this is a role to which we have all been called.

### from the bible

Although the term *Insider* isn’t used in the bible, the concept behind it is seen throughout the bible – of people passing on the good news to those they rub shoulders with.

Below are a number of passages that give some thoughts on what being an *Insider* is all about, as well as some examples of people living as Insiders. Read them and take particular note of how you could apply some of these things to the way you live your life amongst your friends who aren’t Christians.

<b>Why is being an INSIDER important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John 1:14,18 God became a human being so that people could see and know what he is like – not theory or philosophy, but flesh</li> <li>John 17:14-18 we have been sent into the world by Jesus, not taken out of it</li> <li>1Cor 9:19-23 for Paul being ‘like’ those he wanted to reach was crucial for seeing the gospel move</li> </ul>
<b>How God wants us to live as INSIDERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Col 4:5-6</li> <li>1Peter 3:13-16</li> <li>Rom 12:14-21</li> <li>Phil 2:14-16</li> <li>Phil 1:27 working together is key</li> <li>Mat 13:24-30,36-43 the wheat &amp; weeds are so close together that uprooting one may uproot the other</li> <li>1Cor 7:17-25 you shouldn’t leave where you are now without good reason, because this is where God has sent you (note the repetition of the idea to stay where you are in v17, 20, 24)</li> <li>Note that in his letters, Paul never asks the local believers (<i>insiders</i>) to ‘preach’ the gospel in the way he did; rather he asks them to live good lives, demonstrating the gospel at work</li> </ul>
<b>Examples of INSIDERS in the bible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mark 5:18-19 the demon-possessed man</li> <li>John 1:35-51 the disciples</li> <li>John 4:39-32 the Samaritan woman</li> <li>Acts 10:23-48, esp v24 Peter and Cornelius</li> <li>1Thess 1:4-10 the Thessalonian believers</li> </ul>



**questions to get you talking/ issues to explore**

- For some of us, the majority of people we seriously share life with are already Christians. We may have interactions with people who aren't Christians, but not at a deep level of 'life on life' – and therefore it is difficult for them to see the *good news* through us. But isn't this ok? Aren't we meant to have a special relationship with other believers? (and we don't want to be too influenced by people who don't share our same values) Where do you think the balance should be?
- For some of us, we live comfortably amongst people who aren't Christians, some of whom are our really good friends. But a problem can be that we so enjoy their friendship that we don't want this issue of 'faith' to create a barrier to the friendship, and so the topic of 'religion' doesn't come up much with us. What are some ways we can get beyond this?
- Living faith out everyday is tough! When you're around people regularly, it's easy to just relate to them as they are and it is hard to remember this additional focus of thinking about them in relation to God, and how you are meant to be teaming with God to help these people discover this deeper life in Jesus. What sort of things can we do to keep that sharp edge to our relating without going overboard and treating people like projects?
- If we are to be motivated about helping our friends discover the *good news* we need to be experiencing some of the benefits of it ourselves! How does God's *good news* show itself in **your** life at the moment? (eg giving you a sense of purpose in a seemingly meaningless job, giving you strength to cope with a current crisis, helping you feel understood by Someone and not alone,...). What might be *good news* for some of your friends? (ie what would they have to experience or understand for them to say 'now that is good news!')

**things to try**

<b>everyday faith</b> <i>bringing it down-to-earth for you</i>	<b>insider living</b> <i>making a difference to those around you</i>	<b>for generations</b> <i>passing this on to others</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No one can do this on their own- you need encouragement, accountability, and other people! Start by <b>identifying the 1-2 people who you can team with</b>. Discuss what's on your heart with them and agree on ways to help each other. You're under way!</li> <li>• In your team, use '<b>think twice</b>' to help you practically love and serve your friends (see <i>extra resources</i> for details)</li> <li>• Read through '<b>The Insider</b>' together for more ideas and help (see below for details)</li> <li>• <b>Let a lifenet coach know that you have a team</b> – they are there to help you in this faith adventure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pray regularly &amp; practically</b> – small prayers about practical details help keep things focused (eg "God, today give me a chance to talk with XX about how You helped me with my anger problem")</li> <li>• <b>Plan for 'faith' to come up in conversation</b> – think about what you have been learning/experiencing recently in your faith life and imagine how you might explain it to someone who isn't a Christian. This will vastly increase the chance of the 'faith' topic coming up with your friends.</li> <li>• <b>Let a fellow believer know of your plans</b> to be intentional in words/actions with someone – they can encourage, pray and keep you accountable on it</li> <li>• <b>Ask your friends what they believe</b> - simple to do, but often we forget to ask them</li> <li>• <b>Invite your friends to explore faith with you sometime</b> - sow the idea that you're happy to help them explore further, whether by reading a bible with them or taking them to a meeting etc. You will never know unless you ask!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify the 3-5 things</b> that you think are the most important things you need to know about prayer, or some of the best ways you've found for integrating prayer in your life.</li> <li>• write these things down in a <b>journal</b></li> <li>• <b>organise to meet someone</b> in the next few weeks and tell them what you've discovered about 'prayer'</li> </ul>

**Extra resources**

- "The Insider" by Jim Petersen & Mike Shamy, Navpress 2003.
- 'Think Twice' by Liz MacClure – a simple programme designed to help small groups of friends keep each other accountable in putting their love into action. For more info contact: [lizmac@globe.net.nz](mailto:lizmac@globe.net.nz)



# 5. Community

## what is community?

In general terms, a community is a group of people having something in common. In this sense you can be a passive member of a community and still belong. But this is not what we're talking about. When we talk about the need to belong to a faith community, we mean the need to be intentionally and actively involved with other believers in living out the Christ-life right where you are. It's not about organisation – it's about *together* representing God to our world, *together* helping each other live life to the full, *together* making a difference in the lives of those around us. There is great freedom as to what this can look like...so long as we do this *together*!

## from the bible

The bible gives us some good ideas on *why* community is important and *how* we should do this.

<p><b>Why is community important?</b></p>	<p>The invisible God is revealed <i>through</i> the believing community to the world as the community lives in unity and love...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John 13:34-35</li> <li>• John 17:20-26</li> <li>• 1John 4:11-12</li> <li>• Matthew 18:20</li> </ul> <p>No one can live an effective life of faith on their own. As each one contributes to the community (or body), everyone benefits. Everyone is the poorer when we don't work together...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romans 12:3-8</li> <li>• 1Corinthians 12:12-31</li> <li>• 1Peter 4:8-11</li> </ul>
<p><b>How God wants us to be a community</b></p>	<p>In the new testament, the believers are constantly encouraged to practise the 'one anothers' as a community. These 'one anothers' can be categorised into 4 different types:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>LOVE</b> (love one another) occurs 16 times</li> <li>2. <b>ENCOURAGE</b> (including encourage, spur on, speak with spiritual encouragement, teach and admonish, instruct, build each other up) occurs 10 times</li> <li>3. <b>PROMOTE PEACE &amp; JUSTICE</b> (including live in harmony, be at peace, bear with, agree with, forgive, confess your sins to, accept, have fellowship with, NOT: judge, slander, destroy, provoke, grumble or lie) occurs 19 times</li> <li>4. <b>SERVE</b> (including submit to, wait for, honour, have equal concern for, serve, be humble towards, be compassionate with, be kind to, offer hospitality, greet, pray for) occurs 13 times</li> </ol>

## 5. Community contd...

<p><b>Examples of community in the bible</b></p>	<p>The word 'church' (or 'ecclesia' in the Greek) turns up a number of times in the new testament, but the emphasis is always on a gathering rather than an organisation<sup>1</sup>. It's what they <i>did</i> together that defined them as followers of Jesus, not what they called themselves. And what they <i>did</i> changed with the circumstances they found themselves in ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts 2:42-47</li> <li>• Acts 4:32-35</li> <li>• Acts 6:1-7</li> <li>• Acts 13:1-3</li> <li>• Acts 19:8-10</li> </ul>
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### *questions to get you talking/ issues to explore*

- What characteristics do you think should distinguish the people of God? How do you think this matches with reality as you see it in the group you are a part of?
- Do you think a faith community should be for the benefit of those in it or should it have an outward focus? As you think of the faith community that you are a part of, where does the emphasis lie?
- Everyone has a crucial role to play in the community of believers. As you think about your own situation and your strengths, what are some of the areas where you could start or continue to make a contribution in your group? (note: that contribution doesn't have to be just for the immediate benefit of other believers – your strengths may take you more into mission to your world)
- Life is to be lived, and the community of believers will help you live well and make a difference in your world. How often do you feel you need to connect with other believers in order to faithfully follow Jesus in your world?
- The 'one another' categories mentioned above (love, encourage, promote peace & justice, serve) are verbs. Brainstorm a list of practical things you could do in your world that would fit into these categories. Choose 1 or 2 to do this week.

### *things to try*

<b>everyday faith</b> <i>bringing it down-to-earth for you</i>	<b>insider living</b> <i>making a difference to those around you</i>	<b>for generations</b> <i>passing this on to others</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is common to meet Christian friends socially, but our walk with God rarely gets mentioned in these conversations. <b>Set up some regular time with a friend</b> when you can specifically discuss your faith, for your <b>Mutual Encouragement &amp; Support</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Seek out a mentor/coach</b> – someone you look up to who can help you sharpen your walk with God.</li> <li>• Make sure you <b>belong to a small group</b> of some kind for the challenge, support &amp; encouragement of your faith.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team up to make a difference</b> – identify some Christian friends with whom you could work together (maybe this could be the small group you are a part of?) Meet to pray &amp; together decide how you can love &amp; serve &amp; promote faith with those in your world.</li> <li>• <b>Throw a party</b> so that your friends who aren't Christians can meet those who are!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify the 3-5 things</b> that you think are the most important things you need to know about effectively being a Christian community.</li> <li>• write these things down in a <b>journal</b></li> <li>• <b>organise to meet someone</b> in the next few weeks and tell them what you've discovered about 'community'</li> </ul>

### *Extra resources*

- *one anothers in the new testament.doc* – a list of bible passages where 'one another' is mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> One commentary writer notes: "Ecclesia denotes a 'meeting' or an 'assembly' rather than an 'organisation' or a 'society', and this is how the term is used in the NT" Colossians Philemon, Peter O'Brien WBC 1982. p58



## 6. Commitment

### what is commitment?

The athlete who has the ability and knows the correct techniques, but only trains on fine days, will struggle on race day.

What you are committed to can be seen by what you do. Not what you *say* you *will* do, but what you actually *do*. In this series we have looked at a handful of things we need to do in order to sustain and grow our walk with God and make a positive difference in this world. But knowing what these things are is not enough; somehow we need to integrate them into our life in a sustainable way. This is where faith comes in: Do we believe these things are important enough to incorporate them into the fabric of our lives – at the expense of other things we could do with our time, our money, our energy? If so, *that's* commitment.

### from the bible

Jesus invited many people to follow him and to learn from him as his disciples. And he made it clear to people that being his disciple meant putting God and his priorities first in their lives. What does this mean for us today?

<b>Why is commitment to Jesus important?</b>	Mat 6:19-24 Mat 7:24-27 John 6:66-69 John 10:10
<b>How God wants us to show our commitment</b>	Mat 22:36-40 Mat 13:44-46 Mark 12:41-44 Luke 6:27-49 Luke 14:25-35 Luke 18:18-30 Hebrews 12:1-3 James 2:14-19 Micah 6:6-8 (for an old testament perspective)
<b>Examples of commitment to God in the bible</b>	Luke 19:1-10 Luke 8:1-3 Acts 4:32-35 Acts 5:40-41 Acts 20:22-24 Philippians 3:4-14 1Thes 1:4-10 Daniel 3:13-18 (for an old testament example)

## 6. Commitment contd...

### *questions to get you talking/ issues to explore*

- When Jesus invited the first disciples to follow him they “left everything and followed Jesus” (Luke 5:11, 28). Jesus also said that unless we give up everything we cannot be his disciple (Luke 14:25-27). This all sounds extreme. What do you think it means for us today?
- For us, giving up everything to follow Jesus sounds too hard to do...and Jesus agrees with you! (eg Luke 18:24ff) In fact he said it is impossible to do on your own. We need God’s help. What help is available to us? How can we practically access this help?
- Jesus wants us to put his words into practice, not just store them up as knowledge (Luke 6:46-49). How could this influence the way you read the Bible?
- In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus tells a story about seed falling onto different types of soil: fertile soil, rocky soil, soil covered with thorn bushes and compacted soil. And he explains that many will not really hear what God is telling them because their hearts have become hardened and calloused (Mat 13:15)
  1. What chokes out Jesus’ message in your life?
  2. What helps you to keep an open and soft heart towards God and his word?
- Paul talked about building our lives on Jesus and putting our roots into Jesus (Colossians 2:6-7). How might you practically do this?
- Life is complex and busy today, and there never seems to be enough time to do everything we want to do. Is it really realistic to try to build this handful of things into our everyday lives? What one change in your life would help you make the most progress towards achieving this?

### *things to try*

<b>everyday faith</b> <i>bringing it down-to-earth for you</i>	<b>insider living</b> <i>making a difference to those around you</i>	<b>Generations</b> <i>passing this on to others</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What we <i>do</i> tells something about what we believe and who we are. To this end, <b>audit yourself</b>: write down the major things you spend your time, money and energy on in an average week or month. How well does this match what you say you believe and where you’d like to be? Tell someone you trust about your proposed moves to rectify anything that needs changing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell some of your friends who aren’t Christians about the audit exercise you did in the ‘everyday faith’ section (to the left.) Share some of your findings and, if you found it beneficial, suggest they try it too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify the 3-5 things</b> that you think are the most important things you need to know about living as a committed follower of Jesus.</li> <li>• write these things down in a <b>journal</b></li> <li>• <b>organise to meet someone</b> in the next few weeks and tell them what you’ve discovered about ‘community’</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>If you are doing this as the last study in the series (of 6), go back over what you learnt throughout the series and note down the small number of key things you took away with you from each topic. Also note down the things you intended to try <i>doing</i>. Some of it may have been successful; some not. Decide what you are going to do with the things you never got around to trying (ie make a conscious decision to try again to do something about it or to let it go – don’t let these things just slip off the map).</p>		

### *Extra resources*