

Week 2 New Life in Jesus.



Guided Meditation 10mins.

Look at the crosses you have brought in silence (or play some very quiet music if your group find silence difficult.) What does the cross symbolise for you? Pray and reflect on this individually for 5-10 mins.

After 5 mins or so, talk in your group about your thoughts. What words and ideas came to mind? Were there particular crosses that challenged you in particular ways? Now consider this baptism prayer from the Methodist Worship Book. This is prayed over each baby or child as they are baptised.

For you Jesus Christ came into the world;
For you he lived and showed God's love;
For you he suffered death on the cross;
For you he triumphed over death,
rising to newness of life
for you he prays at Gods right hand:
all this for you, before you could know anything of it.
In your baptism the words of scripture are fulfilled:
'we love because he first loved us.'

Is this what the cross reminds you of? Does this sum up what Jesus means to you or is there more?

Love and Forgiveness

Discussion 10-15 mins What are some of your favourite hymns and worship songs? What do they tell you about God's nature and about Jesus? As Christians we spend a great deal of time talking, singing and praying about Gods love and forgiveness. But what does it really mean for you? Have we fully grasped what this tells us about the nature of God and the New Life he offers us? Today's story comes immediately after a story of a lost coin and a lost sheep - items that were treasured and searched for. Here the image is more complex. A son who chooses to leave and a father who chooses to wait for his return.

Reading Ask everyone in your group to read today's passage Luke 15: 11-31 silently for 5 -10 mins and encourage them to make a note of anything striking they had not noticed before.

Discussion After reflecting on the text by yourselves discuss what you found. What moved you or encouraged you? What does the story tell you about the nature of God?

Reflecting on the themes. think about the following:

In a culture where abandoning and disrespecting your parents might well have been severely punished, perhaps even punished by the community as a whole, how untypical is this Fathers reaction? How important is verse 20 in this context?

Look at verses 18 ,19 and 22 Why did Jesus include this in the story? (Read Galatians 3:26-29 and Galatians 4: 4-7)

Think about the second son who struggles with the generosity of his father's forgiveness. Who are you struggling to forgive? Who might you struggle to welcome into your church?

Getting ready – Think about the hope and meaning God's love brings to your life. How might this affect your choice of activity for week 4? How can you show God's love in your immediate environment?

Summing Up

This story reminds us that:

God loves us but waits for US to move towards him. He does not force his way into our lives. God does not simply 'take us in' and employ us but rather adopts us as his beloved children. God is willing to forgive ANYONE, ANYTHING if they return to him and accept that love.

Response Have someone play or Use Ising on your computer or phone to play the worship song 'You're a Good, Good Father' by Brown/Barrett. then spend some time in prayer, Do you believe God has forgiven you? Can you forgive yourself?

Pray as a group for those in our community who feel excluded and unwelcome and for families with a member who has gone away or is missing.

We say together:

'2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ (they) are a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.*

Our sins are forgiven, let's live our new life in the love of God.'

** New King James Version