

OCTOBER

2019

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

Worship Emphasis Month & Reformation Sunday

Sermon Series

06 Oct 2019 Psalm 95 A Call to Worship

13 Oct 2019 John 4:1-26 The Heart of Worship

20 Oct 2019 Revelation 5:1-14 The Hows of Worship

27 Oct 2019 Romans 1:16-18 The Power of the Gospel

A note about the BFA material for bible study

The goal of small group bible study is for fellow believers to come together, read the Bible, interpret the Bible, and encourage each other to apply the teachings of the Bible in our daily living. The questions in the BFA material are designed to help each group to move through the various steps in this process. Therefore, the goal of small group bible study is not mainly to find the “correct” answer to each question or to gain some deep knowledge, but to get to the truth in God’s Word that should be apparently to all who seek the truth prayerfully with open hearts and proper bible study skills.

Part of the goal of the small group ministry is to equip each small group member to be able to read and interpret the Bible for ourselves, and thereafter to apply this knowledge in a way that leads to spiritual growth and life change. We also recognise that different small groups are on various stages of spiritual maturity and with different group dynamics. Therefore, each group should use the BFA material in a way that is best suited to their style of study. Ultimately, there are only three questions we need to ask when we study a text: what does the text say? – observation; what does the text mean? – interpretation; and how does the meaning of the text apply to life today? – application.

06 Oct 2019

Psalm 95

A Call to Worship

1. Read verses 1-2.

(a) Verses 1-2 of the psalm contains three exhortations for us to worship God as marked by the repeated "let us...". What does the psalmist say we should do? How are the three exhortations similar or different? Consider carefully how each exhortation repeats, emphasises, or broadens the previous exhortation.

(b) From your observation above, what do you understand to be the attitude that the Psalmist is calling the readers to have as they worship God?

2. Read verses 3-5.

(a) What do we learn about who God is and what He has done from these verses?

(b) From these verses, what do you understand to be the main reason the Psalmist gives for people to do what is stated in verses 1-2?

(c) How is your answer in question 1(b), the attitude of the people in worshipping God, linked to your answer in question 2(b), the reason for worshipping God?

3. Read verses 6-7.

(a) The psalmist repeats his call to worship God. How does his call in verses 6-7 build upon verses 1-5 in stating how people are to worship God and why they are to do so?

(b) According to the psalmist, who are to worship God? How would someone living in Old Testament times understand this and how are we to understand this in light of Christ's coming?

(c) The psalmist uses the idea of a flock of sheep under a shepherd's care in verse 7. What does John 10:27 say about the sheep who belong to God's flock? Who are those who hear God's voice?

4. Read verses 8-11.

(a) How are these verses different from the rest of the psalm? While the psalm began with the psalmist's call to worship, whose voice are these verses written in? Why is this significant in light of verse 7?

(b) What should people do if they hear God's voice? What is the psalmist saying in these verses about the response of worshippers' hearts to God and also their obedience to Him? How is this relevant to the acts of worship that the psalmist has called people to in verses 1-7?

5. Psalm 95 invites us to worship the LORD, it tells us why we should worship Him, and warns us against rejecting God. What do you think is the main idea of this psalm and how can you apply this in your daily living today?

6. **Going deeper:** What are some ways that Jesus fulfils this Psalm? Cite the Bible verses that show this.

Study Skill – Linking Words

Linking words like “if”, “since”, “consequently”, “for this reason”, “therefore”, “because”, “so that” play an important role in helping us to understand the text. They help us to see the flow of an argument, by showing cause-and-effect relationships.

Study Skill – Parallels

Hebrew poetry often comes written in pairs of lines – the repetition in the pairs helps us to grasp the meaning of the passage as it echoes, intensifies or provides an opposite meaning.

13 Oct 2019

John 4:1-26

The Heart of Worship

1. Read verses 1-14. The background of this incident is the profound contempt that the Jews and Samaritan felt for each other (verse 9). Jews despised the Samaritans because they were defiled with Gentile blood and pagan worship practices. Not surprisingly, the Samaritans responded with enmity towards the Jews. When travelling between Galilee and Judea, many Jews would cross the Jordan twice rather than pass through Samaria. Jesus did not follow this practice (see Luke 9:52-53).

(a) Picture the scene of the dialogue in your mind. What details do you have from the text that you need to include?

(b) What did Jesus ask for from the Samaritan woman? Why was Jesus' request so surprising given what little the Samaritan woman knew about Him at this point?

(c) Jesus' reply would have raised at least four questions for the woman in her mind: (i) what is "the gift of God"? (ii) Who is this man? (iii) What is living water? And (iv) How can he get this water without a bucket? What does she choose to ask Jesus and what do her questions, especially that in verse 12, imply about who she thinks Jesus is? Does she really think that Jesus is greater than Jacob?

(d) Jesus proceeds to tell the Samaritan woman more about this "living water". Living or running water was employed figuratively in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 2:13, Zechariah 14:8) as a reference to divine activity. Considering this, what was Jesus revealing to the Samaritan woman in his answer as given in verses 13-14? How would you summarise this message?

2. Read verses 15-26.

(a) If you were sharing the gospel with a stranger, what would you say next in the conversation after verse 15? What personal issue of the woman does Jesus touch on instead? Why is repentance of sin a necessary part of the salvation issue?

(b) The Samaritan woman avoids the issue of personal sin and asks Jesus whether the Samaritans or the Jews have it right regarding their place of worship in verse 20, essentially asking, "Is this really applicable to me since I am a Samaritan?" How does Jesus answer her question and yet point her in the direction that He wants to go?

(c) How may Jesus' statements in verses 21-24 be viewed as counter-cultural or intolerant today?

(d) Jesus contrasts "true worship" with worship regulated by the temporary provisions of the Law. How does Jesus' coming make it irrelevant what rituals are used in worship or where one worships? Instead of rituals and places, what is important for true worship?

(e) According to this passage, what kind of worshipers does God seek? How is this relevant to the earlier discussion on living water between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? Consider John 7:37-39.

3. What do you understand to be the nature of true worship? Why can a person who receives the gift of God worship in spirit and truth?

4. On the question of worship, the Jews were more concerned with the separation of Jew and Gentile and with the requirement of temple worship in Jerusalem. Are churches today concerned with some similar issues that are irrelevant to true worship? If so, give some examples and discuss how we may focus on being the true worshipers that God seeks instead.

Study Skill – Narrator’s Comment

It sometimes happens in narratives that a comment which does not appear to belong is included in the text. These are likely “narrator’s comments,” which are a brief commentary on what is happening, explaining the events described in the text for us.

Study Skill – Context

When we read narratives or arguments, the context for what we read is important to give us an accurate understanding of what we are reading. We need to read each word in context of its sentence, each sentence in context of its paragraph, each paragraph in context of its section or chapter, each section/chapter in light of the Bible book it is part of, and each book in context of the whole Bible. One of the most important questions we ask as we read any text in the Bible is “how does this fit with what comes before and after?”

3. Compare Rev 4:2-11 with Rev 5:8-10.

	Rev 4:2-11	Rev 5:8-10	Significance
What is held by the twenty-four elders?			
Content of song			

4. In Rev 4-5, there are five declarations of worship. Compare them.

	Rev 4:8	Rev 4:11	Rev 5:9-10	Rev 5:12	Rev 5:13
Object of worship					
Reason for worship					

	Rev 4:8	Rev 4:11	Rev 5:9-10	Rev 5:12	Rev 5:13
Who worships?					
How is worship carried out?					

5. The angels proclaim the deity of the Lamb (vv11-12) and all creation praises the Lamb (v13) in response to the declaration of the Lamb's worthiness. What does this teach us about how we are to worship? How is this demonstrated in the way we worship today?

Study Skill – Bible Timeline

When reading the Bible, it is helpful to remember that the Bible tells one coherent story, starting from Genesis (creation) and ending with Revelation (God's people dwelling with him in a perfect new world and God's enemies punished in hell). Important events in this timeline include the fall of man in Gen 3, the establishment of Israel, the Exodus, the exiles, the return from exile, as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Three questions that help us to place ourselves on this timeline:

1. Where is this passage on the Bible Timeline?
2. Where am I on the Bible timeline?
3. How do I read this in the light of things that have happened in between?

Study Skill – Study Tools

Study tools like study Bibles and commentaries can help to give us the context of the passage which we do not have (e.g. history, culture, geography, problems faced). Some of these are free online – e.g. ESV Global Study Bible (esv.org) although most of them are paid resources. Do look in the ORPC Book Library for these tools, our Book Library has a very good supply of these.

27 Oct 2019

Romans 1:16-18

The Power of the Gospel

1. Why does Paul need to state that he is not ashamed of the Gospel? (vv13-15) Why might a Christian be shamed for believing in the Gospel?
2. What is the gospel as stated in vv16-18?
3. How does Paul's definition of the gospel in vv16-18 support his statement in v16 that he is not ashamed of the gospel? How does this encourage us when we are shamed for our beliefs?
4. Why does Paul need to state that the Gentiles are included in "everyone who believes"?
5. The NIV translates v17 as "a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last," whereas the ESV translates it as "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith." How are these the same in meaning? What is different about their meaning?
6. The OT quotation "the righteous will live by faith" is from Habakkuk 2:4. What does this quote speak about originally in Habakkuk? How does the original reference help us to understand how Paul is using it here?

7. Romans 1:18 speaks about God's wrath being revealed. What is God angry about, and why is He angry about it?

8. How is the wrath of God related to the gospel that Paul is not ashamed of?

9. Many Christians today talk about 'living by faith'. What do they usually mean by this? How might it be different from what Paul is speaking of here?

10. How can we demonstrate that we are "not ashamed of the gospel" today? – what would our lives look like if we were the ones saying it, and what would we be doing?

Study Skill – Translations

The original languages of the Bible are Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Yet the Bibles we are reading in our congregation are in English. When we translate from one language to another, many decisions on the meaning must be made. Some translations try to translate word-for-word (e.g. NASB), and on the other end of the spectrum, other translations try to translate idea-for-idea (e.g. NLT, MSG). The NIV translation which we use is somewhere in the middle of this spectrum.

Since different translators make different decisions on the meanings, it would be useful to read different translations of the same text and see if the sense remains the same or is enriched. For example, Romans 1:16 in ESV reads "for I am not ashamed of the gospel" which prompts us to read the preceding text to see what the "for" links to, while in the NIV it reads simply as "I am not ashamed of the gospel." An alternative is to read the same text in different languages, for those who are bilingual or trilingual.

Study Skill – Quotation/Allusions

When the Bible quotes itself (e.g. NT quotations of the OT), it is important for us to look up the original text from which the quotation is lifted. Without reading the original text surrounding the quotation, it will be hard for us to understand how the author understands the quote and how he is using it.