

Lent Series Brief for House Groups and Personal Study

1. Love the Lord your God **1 John 5:1-5; Matt 22:34-40**

Ice breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

Write a list of people and things you love – and number them in priority order.

Where is God on your list and why?

Way-in to discussion:

What activities best express love for someone?

How do these activities translate into our relationship with God?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 9th March

Read Matt 22:34-40: Why do you think Jesus declared these two commands to be the greatest (Matt 22:34-40)?

In what way can they help us to understand the whole of the rest of scripture (All the Law and the Prophets)?

What do you think is more important and why?

1. Knowledge about God (i.e. Father, Son and Holy Spirit)?
2. Relationship with God?
3. Obedience to God?

Read 1 John 5:1-5: In the teaching of both Jesus (John 14:15) and John (1 John 5:1-5), which of these three is given as the demonstration of our love for God? Why do you think this is?

Why and in what ways do you feel we need to personally ‘overcome the world’ in order to love God?

Take-away:

Write down any encouragements or challenges from the discussion, and reflect upon them at home.

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.

2. With all of your heart {Listening to God} **Rev 3:14-22; John 10:1-5,14-16**

Ice-breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

Think of a time when being truly listened to made a big difference to you. Why did it make such a difference?

What are the risks of un-loading to someone who might not be trustworthy?

Way-in to discussion:

What does a good heart-to-heart feel like; and what makes it work?

Can you truly love someone without giving them quality time and attention?

What might such time and attention look like in your relationship with God?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 16th March

Read John 10:1-5,14-16: How important do you think listening to God is to your journey of faith?

In what ways have you experienced God speaking to you?

How important do you think it is to follow-through on anything God is asking you to do or say?

How do you think you can be sure it is God you are listening to?

Read Rev 3:14-22: How passionately do you think God wants to speak with you?

In what ways might one 'open the door' to God's voice?

What might get in the way, making our love of God only lukewarm?

Take-away:

Write down any encouragements or challenges from the discussion, and reflect upon them at home.

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.

3. With all of your soul {Fruit of the Spirit} Gal 5:16-26; John 15:1-17

Ice-breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

How would you describe yourself?

Which characteristics are ‘essential’ to your sense of self, and which are more like a bucket-list?

Way-in to discussion:

What do you mean when you say “It’s who I am”?

Is this what we mean by ‘my soul’?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 23rd March

If you have had a ‘conversion’ experience, what did it mean for how you see yourself?

Read Gal 5:16-26: How do you feel about the possibility of being transformed by the Holy Spirit?

Do you see The Fruit of the Spirit as a tick-list or as shape into which to grow?

What effect does the Fruit of the Spirit have on the life of the church?

Read John 15:1-17: How do you feel about the idea of being pruned?

What relationship do you think there is between **Gal 5:19-21** and John **15:6**?

Why is the cutting off of unfruitful branches so important to the life of the vine?

How far do you trust God with your very self?

Are you aware of God calling you to do/stop doing anything?

Take-away:

In what areas do you believe God is asking you to show more of the Fruit of the Spirit in the coming year?

In what ways do you ‘hold back’ from God’s full embrace?

Are there areas where you are resisting change(s) you feel you should be making?

List your excuses.

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.

4. With all of your mind {Meat not milk} 1 John 4:1-6; Matt 4:1-11

Ice-breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

What do you consider yourself to be particularly good at?

How did you get to become so good at this?

Way-in to discussion:

If you were challenged to state your position on something controversial (e.g. Assisted dying, immigration, same-sex marriage, the right to abortion, Ukraine, Gaza) – to what degree would you draw on the Word of God?

Why, or why not?

Do you feel equipped to do so?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 30th March

Do you think that wrestling with God's word is important?

Why so?

Read 1 John 4:1-6: What voices in our present culture would you identify as 'anti-Christ'?

How well equipped should we be to defend our faith against such voices?

If something is 'legal' (or not illegal) does that make it right?

Are all opinions equally valid as our post-modern society would have us believe – or does Truth exist in an objective way?

Read Matt 4:1-11: How can we avoid being deceived by those who would misuse scripture against us?

How important is God's word to our spiritual well-being?

What do you think it means to 'Love God with all of your mind'?

Take-away:

What might I do to deepen my knowledge and understanding of God's Word?

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.

5. With all of your strength {Serving in the Body} Rom 12:1-8; John 13:1-17

Note: Serving others outside of the fellowship of the church will be next week's subject.

Ice-breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

Since your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit:-

How do you express the strength of your love for God?

How do you take care of yourself?

In what ways do you serve the body of Christ?

How do you express your love for God when you worship?

Way-in to discussion:

Do you think how we use our bodies matters to God?

What makes you think that?

How challenging is the phrase 'all of your strength' in this commandment?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 6th April

What struck you most from the sermon?

Read Rom 12:1-8: There is a long list of Spiritual Gifts here, but the core of Paul's teaching is that we should use these to serve the body (the church).

In what way do you think our serving becomes a 'spiritual act of worship'?

Read John 13:1-17: Jesus washed the disciples' feet as an example for us to follow.

If Jesus were to wash your feet, how would this affect your relationship with him?

What do you think it means to follow Jesus' example?

The communion service is a remembrance of the Last Supper.

How important do you believe Jesus' example is to our remembrance of his sacrifice for us?

David danced before the Lord with all his might (**2 Sam 6:14**). It was also a part of the normal expression of worship to 'lift up holy hands' to God: in response, in supplication and in praise (**Neh 8:6; Ps 28:2; Ps 63:4**).

Are there new ways you feel you could express yourself when you worship God, and is anything stopping you?

Take-away:

How might you learn to better 'Love the Lord your God with all of your strength'?

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.

6. Love your neighbour as yourself {Living out our faith} **1 John 4:7-12,19-21; John 12:12-16**

Ice-breaker – Personal reflection exercise:

In today's 'global village', who is my neighbour?

Within our individual communities, who is my neighbour?

Way-in to discussion:

Where can my own choices / actions have the greatest impact on another person's life?

What would it mean personally to take that action?

In the light of these, what does it mean to 'love your neighbour'?

The heart of the matter: Listen to/reflect on the Sermon from 13th April

What struck you most from this sermon?

Like all Jewish Rabbis of the time, Jesus called his disciples to 'Follow me' because he believed they could learn to 'do what I do, and say what I say'.

To what extent do you see the journey of discipleship in this light?

Read John 12:12-16: It's easy to follow when the going is good and glorious. But Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem knowing how tough the road ahead would be.

What does it mean to follow Jesus on his journey through all of Holy Week?

Read 1 John 4:7-12,19-21:

According to John, can we love God without loving our neighbour?

What attitudes and values within our culture encourage or militate against loving our neighbour?

What attitudes and values within our culture encourage or militate against loving God?

How can we stand against those attitudes and values that undermine our love of God or neighbour?

Take-away:

Have you picked up or downloaded our reflection sheet?

Put time aside to work your way through this – not all at once but bit-by-bit.

Pray for one another on this journey into the heart of God.