Facilitator's guide

Church and community transformation

Transformative Bible studies for small groups, every week of the year



tearfund

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to Tearfund Rwanda for commissioning these Bible studies, under the leadership of its Country Director, Emmanuel Murangira. We appreciate their generosity in making this resource available for broader dissemination.

The Bible studies were developed and authored by Dr Pastor Antoine Rutayisire (consultant).

Our thanks are also due to Peninah Rutayisire, Diane Igirimbabazi, Charlene Hayden and Sara Baines for their collaborative efforts in the production of these Bible studies.

To all who contributed in various capacities, from the initial concept to the publication of this guide, we offer our sincere thanks. May God bless you.

Photography: Elie Muweza, Tom Price, Paul Mbonankira, Peter Caton, Marcus Perkins and Ayaana.
Editing: Seren Boyd
Design: Wingfinger Design

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE. Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland) (0126)

© Tearfund (2026)

Contents

Introduction 4

Bible study steps 8

Quarter 1
Church awakening 9

Week 1
A portrait of abundant life under the kingship of God (Genesis 1:1–31) 10

Week 2
Understanding abundant relationships (Genesis 2: 18–25) 14

Week 3
Understanding sin and its consequences: Paradise lost (Genesis 3:1–19) 17

Week 4
Sin and its consequences: Destroyed relationships, Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1–16) 22

Week 5
Sin and its consequences: Destroyed environment (Genesis 6:1–14) 25

Week 6
God's plan to restore humanity: Noah and the ark (Genesis 6:13–22) 28

Week 7
God's plan to restore humanity: The call of Abram (Genesis 12:1–9) 31

Week 8
God's plan to restore humanity: The message of John the Baptist (Luke 3:7–20) 34

Week 9
God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus proclaims his ministry agenda (Luke 4:14–22) 37

Week 10
God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus' ministry agenda in action (Matthew 4:18–25) 40

Week 11
God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus' commission to the disciples (Luke 9:10–17) 43

Week 12
God's plan to restore humanity: The church that changed a city (Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37) 46

Week 13
Evaluation: A look back over three months (Genesis 1:27–31) 49

Quarter 2
Restoration of our broken relationships **52**

Week 14
Reconciled with God: Repent (Isaiah 1:15–20) 53

Week 15
Reconciled with God: God our provider, Abraham (Genesis 22:9–14) 56

Week 16
Reconciled with God: God who sees us, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–14) 59

Week 17
Reconciled with self: Restored by love (Romans 5:6–11) 63

Week 18
Reconciled with self: Changed destiny, Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:1–10) 66

Week 19
Reconciled with self: Transformed by a divine touch (Matthew 8:1–4 and Leviticus 13:45–46) 69

Week 20
Reconciled with our neighbour: One in Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22) 72

Week 21
Reconciled with our neighbour: The power of repentance (Psalm 32:1–5) 75

Week 22
Reconciled with our neighbour: Forgiveness, Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 50:14–21) 78

Week 23
Reconciled with our neighbour: Possible only at the cross (Isaiah 53:1–12) 81

Week 24
Restored nature: Sin and nature (Hosea 4:1–3) 85

Week 25
Friend of nature: The environment restored (Ezekiel 47:1–11) 88

Week 26
The power of restored unity (Psalm 133:1–3) 91

Quarter 3
Church and community description **94**

Week 27
Mapping the problems in our community (Exodus 3:7–12) 95

Week 28
A vision of the sins of our community (Ezekiel 22:6–12) 98

Week 29
Surveying the walls of our community (Nehemiah 2:11–20) 101

Week 30
A heart for people: Jesus and the people (Matthew 9:35–38) 104

Week 31
Exploring our resources: God and Moses (Exodus 4:1–17) 106

Week 32
Exploring our resources: Hagar in the desert (Genesis 21:8–21) 109

Week 33
Exploring our resources: Elisha and the widow (2 Kings 4:1–7) 112
Week 34
Exploring our resources: Jesus feeds 5,000 (John 6:1–15) 115
Week 35
Shaping a vision of change (Isaiah 65:17–23) 118
Week 36
Conquering the land: Caleb at Hebron (Joshua 14:6–15) 121
Week 37
The battle against the evil giants (2 Samuel 21:15–22) 124
Week 38
A picture of the church that changed a city (Acts 2:42–47) 127
Week 39
Evaluation and celebration (Nehemiah 12:40–43) 130

Quarter 4
Community transformation **133**

Week 40
A vision of our perfect future (Revelation 21:1–8) 134
Week 41
Our mission to transform the community (Matthew 10:1–10) 137
Week 42
Can we keep this good news to ourselves? (2 Kings 7:3–11) 140
Week 43
If you could meet our God! The slave girl and Naaman (2 Kings 5:1–16) 143
Week 44
Unlocking the capabilities of our crippled community (Luke 5:17–26) 147
Week 45
Mobilising resources to do the work (Exodus 35:4–29) 150
Week 46
Called to restore relationships in our community (2 Corinthians 5:14–21) 153
Week 47
The power of our restored unity (Genesis 11:1–9) 156
Week 48
Transforming our environment: Elisha at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19–22) 159
Week 49
Transforming sadness into joy (Isaiah 35:1–10) 162
Week 50
Empowered by God to transform the community (Numbers 13:26–33; 14:1–9) 166
Week 51
Everything was good: Assessing our achievements (Genesis 1:26–31) 170
Week 52
Celebration (Psalm 107) 173

Conclusion **178**

Feedback on resource 178

Introduction

In pursuing its vision to see the church having a deep, holistic impact on its community, church and community transformation (CCT) restores spiritual, social, emotional, economic and environmental wellbeing. Through this process, the church motivates its community to solve challenges sustainably, restore broken relationships, and support one another in overcoming both physical and spiritual poverty. Tearfund bases its CCT work around seven core principles:

1. CCT is driven by a biblical theology of integral mission and dependence on God: *Achieving church and community transformation begins when a church understands and commits to living out its mission in a holistic way.*

2. CCT intentionally seeks the restoration of humankind's four broken relationships: with God, with self, with each other and with the environment. *Poverty is viewed in all its complexity, and any attempt to overcome it ensures that all four broken relationships are considered.*

3. CCT facilitates Bible reflection to bring about changes in mindset, values and behaviour. *Participatory Bible studies set people on a journey to discover for themselves their inherent worth, dignity and potential.*

4. CCT mobilises the church to become an agent of holistic change in the community. *We are called not to remain separate from our communities but to be a catalyst that initiates transformation in them.*

5. CCT relies on an inclusive, participatory process to bring about a sense of ownership and sustainable change. *When the church and community journey together, listening to and including everyone, CCT can be more fully achieved.*

6. CCT celebrates and mobilises local resources, increases people's sense of agency and releases communities' potential. *The church and community recognise the resources they already have and seek their own solutions to create sustainable, inclusive and resilient change.*

7. CCT challenges power structures that facilitate and enable ongoing broken relationships. *The church and community identify and engage with power structures and systems that cause and perpetuate broken relationships.*

The principle underlying this Bible study series is the third one – facilitating Bible reflection to bring about changes in mindset, values and behaviour – though it reflects all seven principles and the whole CCT process.

The purpose of these Bible studies

Tearfund has already produced a Bible study module that is mainly for church leaders, CCT trainers and facilitators, so these Bible studies are mainly for the small groups which it is hoped will be the epicentre of transformation.

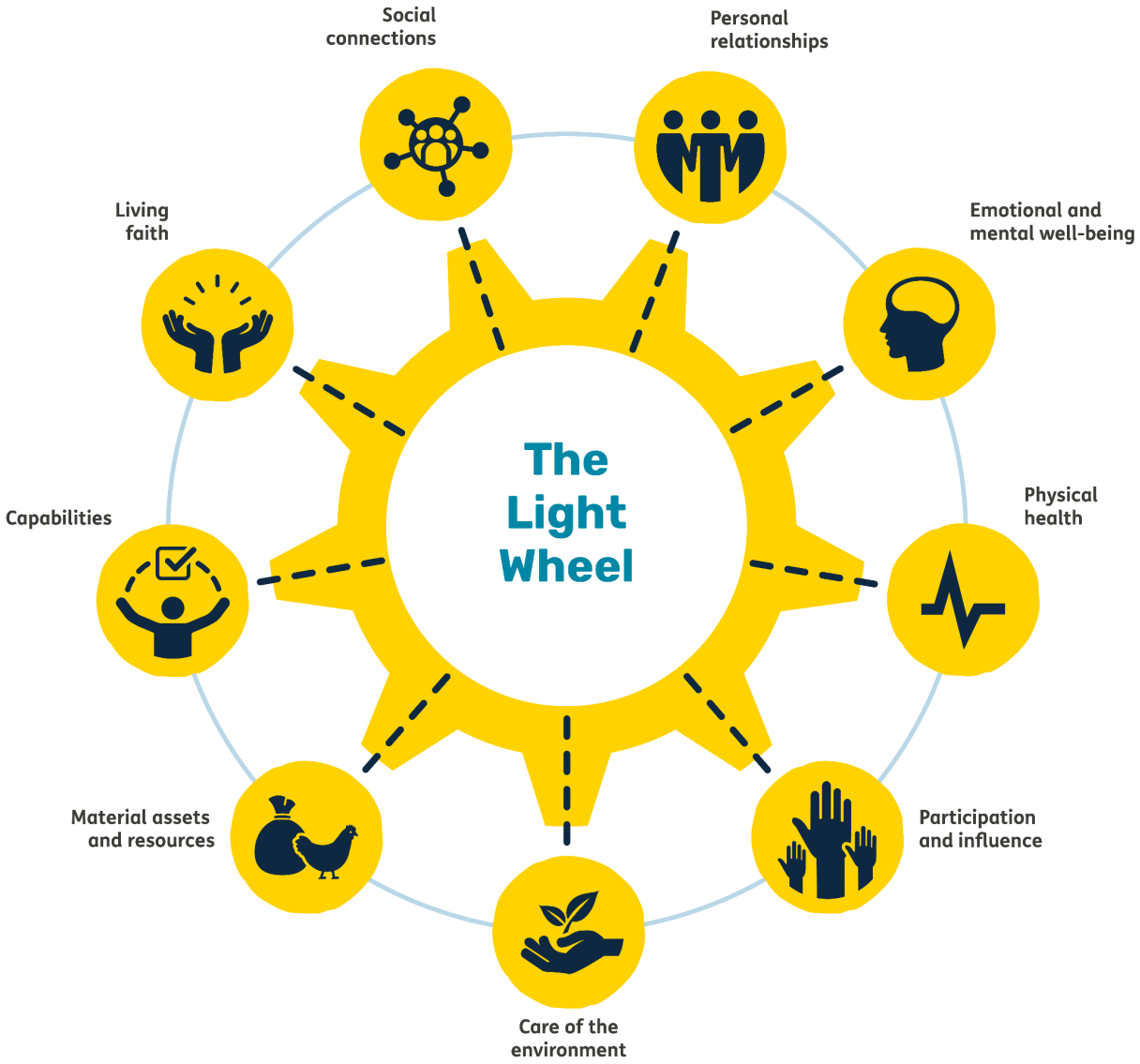
The studies in this guide focus on the search for the kingdom of God as reflected in the garden of Eden and in the description of the new Jerusalem in the book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. Today, humanity looks back with nostalgia at the lost paradise of Eden and forward with hope for harmony restored in the new Jerusalem.

The Bible studies are all about the restoration of the four broken relationships that were destroyed by sin at the Fall in Genesis chapter 3. They point to the abundant life that flows from restoring our relationship with God, self, one another and the environment.

Their goal is both nurturing a new mindset and building a new character, which will flow into new behaviours and relationships. So we can expect them to lead to a visible, measurable transformation that speaks of people's renewed fellowship with God (worship), renewed self-acceptance, restored fellowship with others and a fresh commitment to care for the environment. These are the fruits of what Tearfund calls 'integral mission'.

The Bible studies in this booklet are not new! They are drawn from a rich treasure trove of materials already available in Tearfund, but they have been expanded and enriched with more focus and content to make them more digestible, impactful and appropriate for the small groups central to the CCT approach. They are written in simple, accessible language, avoiding complicated theological terms and jargon.

The studies also reflect the philosophy and content of Tearfund's evaluation tool, the Light Wheel. They are grouped to sync with Tearfund's CCT cycle and to reflect the nine spokes (different aspects of wellbeing) that make up the Light Wheel.



The format of these Bible studies is designed to reflect the normal practices of the small groups: each study is intended to last only one hour. They also follow the LEARN–REFLECT–ACT model which is already central to Tearfund's CCT approach.

Bible study steps

We recommend that the facilitator for each Bible study follows these steps:

Step 1: Introduction – 10 minutes

Welcome all participants and ask one of them to start the meeting with a prayer. Remind them of the purpose of the Bible study and (after Week 1) revisit the major lessons of the previous Bible study and some of the conclusions that the group reached.

Then introduce the new lesson by giving the topic of the day and the Bible passage to be read from the group member's guide.

Step 2: Observation and interpretation – 20 minutes

Ask participants questions about the Bible reading. Do not make any comment of your own: simply ask the participants to give their opinions. When there is a pause, you can repeat the question and maybe ask one of the participants directly for his or her opinion. Make sure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to respond, and gently dissuade anyone who tries to answer all the questions or to monopolise the conversation. If there is someone who is trying to dominate, thank them for their participation and politely ask them to hold back and see if someone else has a contribution to make.

Step 3: Application – 30 minutes

Read aloud the 'Suggested answers to share with the group'. Then invite participants to spend time talking about how they will apply what they have learnt from the passage and from their discussion. Encourage them to make plans for any change they want to see in their personal lives, and the life of their group, their family and their community.

Record the group's ideas and plans in a 'group log book'.

Quarter 1

Church awakening



Growing beans after more than four years of drought in Ethiopia. Photo: Peter Caton/Teafund

Week 1

A portrait of abundant life under the kingship of God (Genesis 1:1–31)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood God's divine plan for abundant life for his creation and humanity's role in that plan. We will spend time dreaming about how life could be rebuilt according to God's plan for our own lives, our families and our community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Introduce the Bible study and say: 'We are starting a series of Bible studies that will help us understand our lives, our relationships with each other and with our environment, and will lead us on a life-changing journey as we come into step with God's plan for our lives, our families and our communities. Today we are starting with the original plan of God for our lives. What was God's original vision for human life when he created humanity? What can we learn from this for our lives today? We are reading Genesis 1:1–31.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The beginning

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’

Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Genesis 1:1–31

Questions

- The Bible starts with this short statement: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ How do you understand this statement in terms of our relationships with God and with his creation?

- When God creates the earth, he creates it as a nest for mankind to live in. Analyse the steps of creation and count the blessings God puts in place for mankind to live an abundant life.

- How is mankind created and what are mankind’s responsibilities towards creation?

- What lessons can we draw from this for our own lives?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The Bible starts with these words: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ God is the originator and the owner of everything. God is the king and the master of all creation. Different passages in the Bible reinforce this truth.

- The Bible shows clearly that God creates everything with humans in his mind. God separates the land, the sea and the firmament so that humans and the

whole of creation can have air to breathe and space to live on. The ground is covered with grass and fruit trees to provide food for all the living creatures. God creates day for humans to work and night for them to rest!

- Humans are created in a different and special way. They are created in the image of God and God breathes his spirit into them. God creates them in a special way because they are destined for a special mission: to be the stewards of creation on behalf of God. God remains the king and the owner, but humanity becomes his deputy in charge of caring for the garden and all it contains (Genesis 2:15).

- This reading of God's plan at creation gives us a vision of what our lives should look like. God creates the earth and provides everything humanity will need to live a life of abundance in total harmony with God, themselves and the whole of creation.

Application

God creates man to live a life of abundance, with good relationships. Is it what you see in your life, your family, your community? Can you envision a life with abundance and harmonious relationships? What would it look like?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' (Genesis 1:1)

Week 2

Understanding abundant relationships (Genesis 2: 18–25)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have been awakened to God's original plan for abundant relationships. We will explore the possibilities of recreating such relationships in our families and our communities.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week, we saw God's original plan for abundant life in creation. God would be the king and Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and were given the responsibility to look after nature as stewards of creation. God was the provider and man and woman lived an abundant life. That should be our vision of life, for our families and our communities. Today we are looking at another blessing God has given humanity: abundant relationships. We are reading Genesis 2:18–25.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Adam and Eve

The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said,
‘This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called “woman”,
for she was taken out of man.’

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 2:18–25

Questions

- After creation, God notices there is something missing to make man’s life joyful and he makes a statement that we should always heed: ‘It is not good for man to be alone’ (Genesis 2:18). What does this statement reveal to us about human relationships?

- Eve is created from a rib taken from Adam. What does that mean for our relationships, not only between husbands and wives, but also between people in general?

- Adam and Eve are naked and do not feel shame. What does that mean for our relationships with each other?

- What other lessons can we draw from this story about relationships between people?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Man is created to live in a community. It is not good for man to live alone even when he has God with him. After creating nature, God creates community. We are called to live in a community and that starts with the family.

- Eve is created from a rib taken from Adam. This is the principle of strong bonding between husband and wife, but at the same time it speaks to a principle of connections between human beings. Adam confirms this when he declares that Eve was a 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman", for she was taken out of man'. God created us all to be connected as people who descend from one person!

- Adam and Eve live in total transparency without cover up. This is not just physical. It is a symbol of the absence of lies, pretence, cover-up, fear in relationships and activities. This is the principle of honesty and transparency in relationships.

Application

In your group, examine the state of relationships in your family, in your group and in your community. What does your community look like? Do you live in harmony, connected to each other, or do you have fears and mistrust? How is life in your family? Do you trust each other, or do you have conflict and fights? How are relationships in your group? Do you work together, with transparency and trust? What can you do to restore God's original plan for your relationships?

What are you going to do after this conversation?

Record the group's ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.' (Genesis 2:25)

Week 3

Understanding sin and its consequences: Paradise lost (Genesis 3:1–19)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood how sin corrupted God's plan and alienated humanity from God, from self, from others and from the environment, and destroyed the project of abundant life. We will examine sin and its consequences in our lives, our families and our communities, and be challenged to change our own lives and those around us.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to remind the group of what they learnt from last week's Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw God creating relationships: he created Eve to solve the problem of loneliness in Adam but at the same time God created family so that humanity would multiply. This relationship was characterised by openness and transparency, and this represents the kind of relationship we should have in our families and communities. Unfortunately, that life of abundance in provision and relationship did not survive the day that humanity committed sin. Today we are looking at sin and its consequences and we are reading Genesis 3:1–19.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The Fall

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'

The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."'

'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

The man said, 'The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'

So the Lord God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this,

'Cursed are you above all livestock
    and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
    and you will eat dust
    all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity
    between you and the woman,
    and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,
    and you will strike his heel.'

To the woman he said,

'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
    with painful labour you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
    and he will rule over you.'

To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat from it,"

'Cursed is the ground because of you;
    through painful toil you will eat food from it
    all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
    and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow
    you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
    since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
    and to dust you will return.'

Genesis 3:1–19

Questions

- The Fall of man starts with a statement from Satan: 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?' What is the trap the devil puts in these words and how does he reinforce it?

- What follows the conversation between Satan and the woman? How does she behave after that conversation and what happens at the end?

- What are the consequences of what they have done? What are the losses when Adam and Eve disobey God's commandment?

- What are the signs of those losses in our lives today?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The trap of the devil is in questioning what God had said but he does it cleverly by adding just a few words to the actual words God has used. First Satan asks the question in such a manner as to create doubts in what God has said: 'Did God really say… ?' Then Satan sprinkles God's statement with a few extra small words that corrupt the statement. God says: 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' But Satan distorts God's words to: 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden.' God says: 'When you eat of it you will surely die.' Satan distorts the message and says, 'You will not surely die.' He even shows that there is great gain in disobeying God: 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Can you see the devil doing the same thing with the word of God today, telling people that sin is sweet, that disobeying God will not cause any trouble and will even bring them benefits?

- After listening to the lies of the devil, Eve starts visiting the tree! She even fantasises about the fruit and the benefits the devil has advertised. Then she finally succumbs. Desire conceives and gives birth to sin and sin brings death (James 1:15).

- The consequence of sin is the loss of the rich relationship with each other and with God and the loss of the abundant life God had given to Adam and Eve. Sin creates different levels of alienation:

    - 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid' (Genesis 3:10). Adam and Eve go into hiding when they hear the steps of God in the garden. This is alienation from God.

    - 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked…' (Genesis 3:7). Adam and Eve lose their peace and confidence, they look at themselves and are embarrassed and they develop a negative self-image. This is alienation from self.

    - 'The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree…' (Genesis 3:12). Adam accuses Eve of being the cause of their disobedience. They lose their close relationship and start accusing each other. This is alienation from each other.

    - 'Cursed is the ground… It will produce thorns and thistles for you… By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food…' (Genesis 3:17–19). Adam and Eve lose the privilege of abundant provision, they lose their authority over creation, nature becomes hostile towards them and they exploit it with toil. This is alienation from the environment.

- ‘I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children… for dust you are and to dust you will return’ (Genesis 3:16, 19). Suffering and death come into the world with sin.

- ‘Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’ (Genesis 3:16). Sin brings inequality between men and women. They used to be equal but now men rule over and exploit women.

But all this ends with a promise from God that things will be restored, and humanity will regain its supremacy over the devil, ‘crushing his head’ (Genesis 3:15). From this promise, the Bible becomes the story of God on a journey to restore his creation to its original harmony and abundant life.

Application

In your group, discuss the different levels of alienation that can be seen in your daily life as individuals, in the lives of your families and the community. If sin is the cause of those levels of alienation, what do you think is the way to go back to the blessed abundant life Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall? Are you ready to go with God on this journey of restoration?

Write in your group log book the suggestions that are given.

Bible verse to memorise

‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’ (Genesis 3:11)

Week 4

Sin and its consequences: Destroyed relationships, Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1–16)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood how sin kept corrupting relationships until a man killed his brother out of jealousy. We will explore and analyse the causes of tensions and bad relationships in our families, our groups and our communities, and suggest ways of mending relationships.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to remind the group of the takeaways from last week's Bible study and say, 'Is there anybody who was touched in a special way by the study?' Ask him/her to share a little of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at the Fall and its consequences. Sin destroyed the relationships between man and God, corrupted the way people see themselves and how they relate with each other. Sin destroyed the harmony between man and nature and brought different ills including poverty, suffering and death. And we are still seeing those effects in our daily lives with wars between nations, loss of hope that leads to suicides, bad relationships in our families that lead to divorces; we see poverty, diseases and death around us. We are still living outside Eden and our efforts should be geared towards regaining that paradise we lost. Today we are looking at how relationships in Eden kept deteriorating and culminated in murder. We are reading the story of Cain and his brother, Abel, in Genesis 4:1–16.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Cain and Abel

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.' Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel also brought an offering – fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.'

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'

'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

The Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'

Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'

But the Lord said to him, 'Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.' Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Genesis 4:1–16

Questions

- What causes the problem between Cain and Abel? Does Abel know that his brother hates him?

- What does God tell Cain to warn him against the crime he is planning to commit? Does Cain obey what God tells him?

- What does God do after Cain has killed his brother? Does Cain acknowledge his crime? What is the consequence of his denial of what he has done?

- What do we learn from this story about how people behave when they have committed sin? How can we change that?

Suggested answers to discuss with the group

- Cain and Abel are brothers from the same parents but that does not prevent Cain from killing his brother. Cain is jealous because God looks with favour on the offering of Abel and does not accept his own offering. It is worth noting that the reason God refuses Cain's offering has nothing to do with the quality of the offering; it is the nature of the offering. He brings produce of the land that does not have blood, and sacrifices represent the life of the one who brought the sacrifice for the forgiveness of his sins (Hebrews 9:22). Abel does not suspect Cain is angry with him because there is no reason to believe he is.

- God warns Cain to abandon his evil intention and even tells him how to become acceptable to God. But rather than listen to God, Cain prefers to do his own will and invites his brother to go with him into the fields where he kills him. This is premeditated murder!

- When God comes to hold Cain accountable for his crime, he refuses to acknowledge what he has done as if God did not know everything. He behaves like his parents when God came to confront them for having eaten the forbidden fruit. This refusal leads to a curse on Cain and the work of his hands. Cain will be a wanderer without peace. Even after hearing that, he does not ask for forgiveness: his only worry is about himself, that people will see him and kill him. But God is merciful: he puts a sign on him to protect him.

Application

Do you see similar behaviours in your community where people kill other people or destroy their property because of jealousy? Do you sometimes feel jealous because someone is blessed with something you do not have? How can you fight this kind of bad attitude and rejoice with those who are blessed?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Am I my brother's keeper?' (Genesis 4:9)

Week 5

Sin and its consequences: Destroyed environment (Genesis 6:1–14)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have gone deeper in understanding the consequences of sin on creation. Humanity became so corrupt that God decided to wipe out the whole of creation. Reconnecting with God after sinful behaviour includes taking care of the environment.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Care of the environment, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study. Invite a testimony from someone who was deeply touched by something they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last time we looked at the consequences of sin on our relationship with God and with each other. We saw how Cain out of jealousy ignored God's warning and killed his brother Abel. The consequence was a curse on his life and on his work. Jealousy, hatred and murder lead to loss. Today we are looking at how sin led to the destruction of nature. We are reading Genesis 6:1–14.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Wickedness in the world

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with humans for ever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.'

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created – and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground – for I regret that I have made them.' But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

Noah and the flood

This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

Genesis 6:1–14

Questions

- In this chapter, God is 'deeply troubled' about human behaviour and decides to put an end to life in all of creation. What reasons does he give for that decision?

- Noah finds favour with God. What is so special about him? How does that benefit Noah?

- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- As humanity grows in numbers, their sins become worse, and they become corrupt inside. God sees that 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time' (Genesis 6:5). He grieves over the evil of mankind, and he regrets having created them. His final decision is to take away his Holy Spirit, and to wipe out humanity, animals that move on the ground and birds that fly in the air.

- Noah finds favour with God not because God shows favouritism but because in such a time of corruption, Noah is a righteous man, blameless among the corrupt people. Noah was a man of faith who walked with God, and he is informed of the decision God has taken to wipe out the whole of creation. God gives him the mission to build an ark that will save a remnant of humanity and creation.

- People who believe in God have the responsibility not only to listen to God but also to bring about change that will save their lives and their environment.

Application

Look around your neighbourhood. Are there signs that your environment is being destroyed because of people's behaviour? What can you learn from Noah about how you can be different and become agents of change to protect your environment and save it from destruction?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.' (Genesis 6:9)

Week 6

God's plan to restore humanity: Noah and the ark (Genesis 6:13–22)

Learning objective: After this study, we will better understand God's intention to rescue humanity and all creation from total annihilation through Noah. It is God's plan and Noah must implement it faithfully.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Care of the environment, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask someone to start the meeting with prayer.
- Ask someone to give a personal summary of what they learnt from last week's Bible study. Then ask someone who was impacted by the Bible study to give a testimony.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw that humanity went from corruption to worse corruption and God finally decided to wipe out the whole of creation. But he decided to save a remnant of humanity and creation through Noah. The most important lesson we should all keep in mind is that the sins of man as steward of the earth will always affect not only himself but also his environment, including people, animals and plants. But when we walk with God, he can use us to restore and protect life. Today we are looking at how God commanded Noah to build an ark to save humanity and creation from total annihilation. We are reading from Genesis 6:13–22.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Noah and the flood

> So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: the ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.'
>
> Noah did everything just as God commanded him.
>
> **Genesis 6: 13–22**

Questions

- What does God instruct Noah to do to save himself and humanity? What will the dimensions of the ark be? Share as much detail as possible about the ark.
- What is Noah asked to do with the animals and birds? How will they survive in the ark?
- What does God say about what Noah has done?
- What lessons can we learn from Noah?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- When God decides to destroy creation, he takes Noah into his confidence and tells him what is about to happen. God is going to destroy humanity and all creation, but he wants to save a remnant and he asks Noah to build an ark. God gives details about the material to use: the ark will be built with cypress trees. It will be 140 metres long, 23 metres wide and 13.5 metres high. If this was a modern building, it would be a large four-storey building!
- To save humanity, Noah will take his family and every kind of bird, every kind of animal and every creature that moves along the ground. He will take them in twos, a male and a female. And he must store food, enough for his family and all the creatures in the ark.

- God looks at what Noah has done and congratulates him for doing everything as he was told.

Application

What kind of 'destructions' are happening in your neighbourhood? If God were to ask you to 'build an ark' to save your people and creation around you, what do you think he would ask you to do? As a group, decide on something practical you are going to do to 'save' your neighbourhood from one of its most evident problems.

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Noah did everything just as God commanded him.' (Genesis 6:22)

Week 7

God's plan to restore humanity: The call of Abram (Genesis 12:1–9)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood that God wants to bless us, and that we are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask a volunteer to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw God asking Noah to build an ark to save humanity and all creation. The work Noah was asked to do seemed difficult, but he did it as God told him. We, too, should endeavour to save our families, our community and our environment. It may look difficult, but God will help us to achieve it. Today, we are looking at another person who was called to obey God, a person who was blessed and was asked to be a blessing. We are reading Genesis 12:1–9.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The call of Abram

The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

'I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.'

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

From there he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Then Abram set out and continued towards the Negev.

Genesis 12:1–9

Questions

- What does God ask Abram to do? What are the promises God gives Abram to reassure him?

- What does Abram do after hearing the call of God? Why does he build an altar everywhere he goes?

- What lessons do we learn from Abram and his calling? What must we leave behind to be blessed and become a blessing?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God calls Abram and asks him to leave his country, his people and his father's household to go to a new country that he does not know. This means that he is called to leave behind not only his people but also his culture and some of his customs. He has to be open to change and willing to adopt a new life. It is difficult to obey such a calling, but God makes many promises to reassure him: Abram will be a great name among people. He will be the father of a great nation. He will be protected and whoever dares curse him will be cursed by God. He will be a blessing to all nations.

- Abram obeys the calling and goes to the foreign land of Canaan as God directs him. He builds an altar in every place he reaches to remind himself of the covenant he has with God and to claim the land God has promised to give him. Abram remains connected with God and his promises.

- We, too, have been called by God to be his people and we have been given promises that God will be with us, that he will bless us. And we have been blessed so that we become a blessing to others.

Application

In your group, try to count all the blessings God has given you in life. How can you use those blessings to be a blessing to other people who live around you and who are in need? What kind of personal, family and social beliefs must you abandon to be able to be a blessing to others? After your conversation, what practical steps are you going to take to use your blessings to be a blessing to other people?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.' (Genesis 12:2)

Week 8

God's plan to restore humanity: The message of John the Baptist (Luke 3:7–20)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have been challenged to change from having a passive faith to an active faith that bears visible fruit, and to stand up for generosity, integrity and total social transformation.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week, we saw that Abram was asked by God to leave his native country and his father's household to go to a new country God promised to give him. This meant he had to abandon his customs and culture and start a new life. When God wants to do something new with us, he calls us to abandon some old habits and adopt new ways of thinking, doing and even relating to people. And God promised that if Abram obeyed, he would be blessed, he would be protected and he would become a great nation. We, too, if we choose to obey God, will be blessed and we too will be a blessing to others. Today we are looking at another passage that challenges us to examine the blessings we have, and the way we do our work, and then calls us to change and bear good fruit. We are reading from Luke 3:7–20.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

John the Baptist prepares the way

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.'

'What should we do then?' the crowd asked.

John answered, 'Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.'

Even tax collectors came to be baptised. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'what should we do?'

'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?'

He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay.'

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

Luke 3:7–20

Questions

- What is John the Baptist's message? What is he calling people to do?
- What are the different types of people who come to see him and how do they respond to his message?
- What can we learn from this passage? If John the Baptist was preaching to us today, what would he tell us to do?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The people of Israel are used to prophets who are sent by God and speak into the situation of their communities, calling them to change.
    - When John the Baptist starts preaching, he calls people to a life bearing the fruit of repentance. And his message touches on the problems and sins of the day.
- Different categories of people come to see him. He calls them to generosity and sharing what they have, he calls on the tax collectors and the soldiers to stop being corrupt, and he challenges everyone to lead a transformed life.
- Repentance means a changed life. It is a message we need to take seriously. People of that time were very religious, but John the Baptist is calling them to convert their religious beliefs into action. If he was preaching to us today, he would call us to share what we have to help the poor, and he would remind us to do our work with integrity, without corruption.

Application

In your small groups, imagine John the Baptist speaking to each one of you. What would he tell people who are in your profession? What sins would he ask you to abandon? What decision are you taking today as a group and as individuals to live a life that bears the fruit of repentance?

Record these decisions in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.' (Luke 3:11)

Week 9

God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus proclaims his ministry agenda (Luke 4:14–22)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will recognise that Jesus is the Messiah promised in Genesis 3:15. His agenda is to restore humanity to our original relationship with God, to our original lifestyle and relationships. This should be the mission of the church and of each Christian because we are members of his body.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the day's Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw John the Baptist starting his ministry and calling people to repent and bear fruit. It is a call to a life of generosity and support for the needy, a call to a life of honesty, transparency and integrity in all that we do. Today, we are looking at another Bible study that shows us the mission Jesus announced when he started his ministry. We are reading Luke 4:14–22.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus rejected at Nazareth

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked.

Luke 4:14–22

Questions

- When Jesus speaks in his home village, he gives a list of things he is appointed to accomplish. What are the five key parts of his ministry?

- Do we see issues similar to those Jesus identifies in our own context?

- We are members of the body of Christ. What kind of things should we do to carry on the work that Jesus Christ came to accomplish?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- When Jesus goes to Nazareth where he has grown up, he explains that he has come to:
    - preach good news to every type of poor person: those who are poor materially, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually
    - proclaim freedom for prisoners of all types, such as those with addictions to alcohol, negative thoughts, sinful behaviours, demonic possession and other things that hold people captive and hinder them from being what God intended them to be
    - proclaim recovery of sight for the blind, whether that is physical blindness or shortsightedness to possibilities, lack of vision for a better future
    - proclaim release for those who are oppressed by their difficult circumstances, unjust regimes, exploitative workplaces and family systems
    - proclaim restoration of right relationships with God and release of his blessings
- All these problems that Christ promises to tackle are still visible in our different neighbourhoods and it is our role as the body of Christ on earth to carry on the work he started and respond to all those issues.

Application

Of all the problems Jesus announced he had come to solve, choose one that is the most oppressive in your community and decide what steps can be taken to tackle it and what you will do about it.

Record these ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' (Luke 4:18–19)

Week 10

God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus' ministry agenda in action (Matthew 4:18–25)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have observed how Jesus put into action what he had proclaimed as his mission. We will be challenged to turn our words into action.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'Last week we heard Jesus proclaiming what his ministry would look like. He promised to bring good news to the poor, deliverance from all types of prisons and oppressions, and restoration of our relationship with God. Today we are looking at how Jesus turned words into action. We are reading from Matthew 4:18–25.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus calls his first disciples

> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him.
>
> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus heals the sick

> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.
>
> **Matthew 4:18–25**

Questions

- What reasons does Jesus give to his first disciples for their calling?
- What is Jesus doing everywhere they go? How does it relate to the mission he has announced when he starts preaching? Why does he choose the disciples at the very beginning of his ministry?
- We have inherited the calling of the disciples. How can we carry on the work Jesus started?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Jesus calls four brothers – Peter and Andrew, James and John – who are all fishermen and he promises to make them fishers of men.
- Jesus goes around preaching and teaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He is also healing those who are oppressed by sicknesses and even possessed by demons, a fulfilment of the promises he made when he announced his ministry. He chooses his disciples to be with him and learn from him because they are the ones who will inherit the ministry and carry it on.

- We too have been called to carry on the ministry he started and left to the disciples.

Application

In your small group, discuss how you are carrying on the ministry that Jesus started. Are you satisfied with your performance? How can you improve?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness among the people.' (Matthew 4:23)

Week 11

God's plan to restore humanity: Jesus' commission to the disciples (Luke 9:10–17)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood the calling Jesus gave to the disciples to go into their neighbourhoods and bring holistic change. We will be challenged to become agents of change in our communities.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at the ministry of Jesus Christ, how he put into action all the promises he had made and went around preaching and doing good to the people around him. We were challenged to see how we are carrying on with the ministry he left to us as his disciples. Today, we are looking at another Bible study that shows Jesus commissioning his disciples to go and do what they had seen him do. We are reading from Luke 9:10–17.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus feeds the five thousand

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.'

He replied, 'You give them something to eat.'

They answered, 'We have only five loaves of bread and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.' (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.' The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Luke 9:10–17

Questions

- What is Jesus doing in this story?
- What do his disciples say when they notice it is getting late and the people are hungry? What is Jesus' answer?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Jesus is going on a retreat with his disciples to the town of Bethsaida when people interrupt it. Instead of being angry with them, Jesus takes the time to preach to them lessons about the kingdom of God and he heals those who are sick. Jesus' focus is always on responding to the needs of the people; he teaches them but also brings solutions to their problems.
- His disciples are probably annoyed with the people invading their privacy when they are taking a vacation! They are even annoyed that people are still with them: it is getting late and there is no food and no accommodation. Jesus challenges the disciples to feed the people before sending them away for the night. A miracle happens and with five pieces of bread and two fish the disciples feed 5,000 people!

- Jesus' ministry is about taking care of the needs of people. He teaches them but also cares for their needs and he teaches the disciples to do the same. Like the disciples we often lament the lack or scarcity of resources, but Jesus is always calling us to bring the little we have so that he can help us do much more with it and see miracles.

Application

Jesus is calling us to go into our community in need. What are your five pieces of bread and two fish that you can take to Jesus to respond to a need in your community? What resources do you often belittle but can become sources of miracles with Jesus' help?

Record these ideas in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'You give them something to eat.' (Luke 9:13)

Week 12

God's plan to restore humanity: The church that changed a city (Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37)

Learning objective: At the end of the study we will have explored and understood the characteristics of the early church of the apostles and why it transformed life in Jerusalem.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw how Jesus challenged his disciples to take care of the people when they were asking to send the people away because they did not have enough food to feed them. We were challenged to explore the resources we have and use them to respond to some needs in our community. Today we are sharing a Bible study that shows us how the disciples did the work Jesus left with them and transformed Jerusalem. We are reading from Acts 2:42–47 and 4:32–37.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passages aloud.

The fellowship of the believers

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42–47

The believers share their possessions

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there was no needy person among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 4:32–37

Questions

- What characterises the life of the first church during the time of the apostles?
- What is the result of that kind of life?
- How can we as a church go back to that kind of life, taking into consideration the modern context?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The disciples continue what they have seen Jesus doing and what he has told them. They are devoted to the teaching of the word of God and to prayer. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and great miracles keep happening as they did during the time they were with Jesus. They share everything and take care of all the people and their needs.

- The church creates a very attractive way of life. Their spiritual life is very healthy under the teaching and discipleship of the apostles who are fully committed to the work of preaching, teaching and praying. Great miracles happen to respond to people's spiritual needs, but they also respond to people's physical needs and there are no poor among them. The result is that they are admired by all, and many people join their number.

- Despite the challenges of the modern context, today's church can learn from the early church and respond to the spiritual and physical needs of the people. It is not necessary to sell our possessions, but we can use the resources we have available to respond to the needs around us.

Application

In your small group discuss this question: What should we do to become a church like the one we read about in Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37?

Record the group's thoughts and ideas in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'There was no needy person among them.' (Acts 4:34)

Week 13

Evaluation: A look back over three months (Genesis 1:27–31)

Learning objective: This study is a time of evaluation. We will look back over the past three months and consider what we have achieved.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start the activity in prayer.
- Introduce the day's discussion with this short message: 'We have now done three months of Bible study and we need to look back and see if what we have studied has been used to produce good results. We will start by looking at Genesis 1:27–31.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The beginning

> So God created mankind in his own image,
> in the image of God he created them;
> male and female he created them.
>
> God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'
>
> Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.
>
> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.
>
> **Genesis 1:27–31**

Discussion

- When God finishes every day of creation, he looks back and sees that everything he has done is good. He then creates Adam and Eve and puts them in charge of creation, with every provision in place for the people and for the animals, and he sees it is good. After three months of Bible studies, can we also say that we look back and see that what we have learnt and what we have done is 'good'?

- Today we will use our time sharing testimonies of what we have learnt and how we have used it.

- Read the following questions and ask people to give testimonies on each question.

Questions

- What life changes have we made to prove that we have benefited from the Bible studies?
- Has our relationship with God improved through our Bible studies?
- Have our relations with each other improved through our Bible studies?
- Do we have a stronger vision to care for our environment through our Bible studies?
- Do we have a stronger vision for a better life as a result of our Bible studies?

Summary

Write a summary of the main benefits of the Bible studies so far in the group log book.

Quarter 2

Restoration of our broken relationships



A pastor and his wife doing a Bible study at home in the Central African Republic.
Photo: Elie Muweza/Tearfund

Week 14

Reconciled with God: Repent (Isaiah 1:15–20)

Learning objective: In this study, we will be learning more about the heart of God calling sinners back to himself. From the day humans first committed sin and became separated from God, God started a 'mission' of reconciling humanity and creation to himself by calling people to repentance, a life turnaround.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible studies on 'church awakening'.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study of the day and say, 'In our previous Bible studies, we have seen how sin separated God from man and creation. Today we are studying a passage that shows us the heart of God for humanity and creation. God is always calling man to come back into relationship with him, asking him to turn around, to repent of his rebellion and be reconciled with his creator. We are reading from Isaiah 1:15–20.
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

A rebellious nation

> Your hands are full of blood!
>
> Wash and make yourselves clean.
> Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
> stop doing wrong.
>
> Learn to do right; seek justice.
> Defend the oppressed.
> Take up the cause of the fatherless;
> plead the case of the widow.
>
> "Come now, let us settle the matter,"
> says the Lord.
> "Though your sins are like scarlet,
> they shall be as white as snow;
> though they are red as crimson,
> they shall be like wool.
>
> If you are willing and obedient,
> you will eat the good things of the land;
>
> but if you resist and rebel,
> you will be devoured by the sword."
> For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.
>
> **Isaiah 1:15–20**

Questions

- What is God asking his people to do?
- What benefits does God promise to them if they obey? What will happen if they do not obey?
- What lessons can we draw from this passage for our own daily lives?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God is always calling people to repent of their sins and do good. He asks them to cease their evil deeds, to seek justice and raise a voice for the voiceless such as the widows and the orphans. He invites his people to come to him, to be reconciled with him and restore the harmonious relationship that was destroyed by sin.

- If they do that, if they are willing and obedient, God promises to bless them and restore them to the abundant life they enjoyed before sin. All the good of the land will be theirs, but if they continue in rebellion, they will perish.

- God is always calling us to repent of the sins that alienate us from him and from each other. A life that changes from sinful rebellion to obedience to God brings with it the promise of blessings and abundance in our lives.

Application

In your group, discuss again the consequences of sin in our lives and the benefits of living a life of holiness and obedience to God. Give tangible examples from your own lives.

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land.'
(Isaiah 1:19)

Week 15

Reconciled with God: God our provider, Abraham (Genesis 22:9–14)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will understand the benefits of a life reconciled to God. In the beginning, God was the king, the provider and the protector. When we are reconciled with him, we depend on him for all our needs.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Living faith, Material assets and resources

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Give a summary of the previous Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study we saw God calling people to repentance from their rebellion and inviting them to come back to a life of obedience to God. He promises them all the 'good things of the land'. Today we are looking at an example of a life of obedience to God and we see God fulfilling the promise of providing the 'good things of the land'. We are reading from Genesis 22:9–14.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Abraham tested

> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"
>
> "Here I am," he replied.
>
> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."
>
> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."
>
> **Genesis 22:9–14**

Questions

- What does God ask Abraham to do to test his obedience?
- How does Abraham respond to the order God gives him?
- What does God do when he sees that Abraham has obeyed the order? What promises does God give Abraham for his obedience?
- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God tests Abraham on his obedience by asking him to sacrifice the only son he has with his wife, Sarah. This son is so precious because he is the son of promise from God; he is Abraham's heir and the only son of Sarah.
- Abraham obeys and passes the test of obedience. He takes his son and goes to the mountain God has told him and is ready to sacrifice his son when God intervenes.
- God stops Abraham from making the sacrifice and offers a ram in exchange. He then makes a promise to Abraham to bless him, to multiply his descendants and give them power over their enemies. Abraham names that place 'God will Provide' or 'God will be my Provider'.

Application

In your group, discuss how you can live a life of obedience and consider God as your provider for everything.

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

‘Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide.’ (Genesis 22:14)

Week 16

Reconciled with God: God who sees us, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–14)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will understand how caring God is. He is the God who sees and who hears us even when we are alone and lonely, far away from our familiar places.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Emotional and mental wellbeing, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the day's Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study we saw God intervening to bless Abraham in reward for his obedience. And Abraham gave God a name that we should always remember: Jehovah Jireh, God our Provider. Today we are reading another story of someone who experienced God in a time of need. We are reading from Genesis 16:1–14.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Hagar and Ishmael

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me."

"Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

The angel of the Lord also said to her:

"You are now pregnant
    and you will give birth to a son.
You shall name him Ishmael,
    for the Lord has heard of your misery.

He will be a wild donkey of a man;
    his hand will be against everyone
    and everyone's hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
    toward all his brothers."

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

Genesis 16:1–14

Questions

- Where is Hagar when the Angel of the Lord speaks to her? How would you feel if you were in her situation?

- What does the Angel of the Lord tell her?

- What is Hagar's reaction? What name does she give to the Lord in that place?

- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Hagar is running away from her mistress, Sarai, who has treated her harshly. She is alone and lonely, far away from every familiar place and person. But it is at that very place and moment that God appears to her.

- The Angel of the Lord redirects Hagar to go back to her mistress and submit to her. He also gives her the name to be given to the child she is carrying in her womb. The child will be called Ishmael, which means 'God hears'. And he gives a promise to bless and multiply that son into a great nation. This reassures Hagar and she goes back to her mistress, Sarai.

- Hagar is overwhelmed by all that loving care from God and she gives a new name to God, Jehovah Lahai Roi which means 'God who sees me' and she names the well where she was sitting, Beer Lahai Roi, 'the well of the God who sees me'.

- This story of Hagar alone and lonely near a well shows us God's loving care. Even when we are in desperate situations, God knows where we are, what we are going through and is ready to come to our rescue. This is a reassuring lesson to bring us peace, and one to remember.

Application

In your group, ask people to try and remember a time when you were cornered in a desperate situation and God showed up when you did not expect him. Imagine a situation where you, too, could have said to God: 'You are God who sees me!'

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me".' (Genesis 16:13)

Week 17

Reconciled with self: Restored by love (Romans 5:6–11)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood how our value is restored through the love of God expressed on the cross of Jesus Christ.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Emotional and mental wellbeing, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study we saw God rescuing Hagar from loneliness and hopelessness and giving her the promise of a better future in her son, Ishmael. Two names of God come from this story, Ishmael – God who hears – and Jehovah Lahai Roi, which means 'God who sees'. God sees us in all our situations, and he hears our prayers, even when we don't know what to pray for. Today we are looking at another Bible study that tells us about the love of God for us and we are reading from Romans 5:6–11.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Peace and hope

> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
>
> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
>
> **Romans 5:6–11**

Questions

- What does Paul say is so special about the love of God?
- What benefits do we have thanks to what Jesus Christ did for us through his death?
- How can we apply these truths in our daily lives? How should we feel when we are fully conscious that we are loved by the Almighty God?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Paul speaks with amazement about the love of God for sinners: Christ died for us when we were sinners, when we were prodigal sons in rebellion against God. Maybe someone would die for a good person or a righteous person, but God showed his love when he gave his son to die for us when we were sinners.
- Paul goes on to show the many benefits we have in the death of Christ: we are forgiven our sins and saved from the wrath of God, we are reconciled with God, and we live a life of joy and contentment because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.
- Knowing how much God paid to save us is what gives us value! Many people feel they are of little value because they are poor, because they have many weaknesses, because people don't like them, and for many other reasons. But to know that God loves us as we are is what gives us value. And knowing our value is what will help us to rise up and live better lives. Accepting that we are children of God in Christ Jesus, that we are loved by God, that we have been bought with the precious blood of his one and only begotten son should give us joy and confidence in our daily lives.

Application

In your group, discuss how you would feel if a very important person such as the president adopted you as his child or made you his best friend. Why don't you feel the same when you hear that God Almighty, the creator of the whole universe, loves us so much that he gave his one and only son to die for us?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:8)

Week 18

Reconciled with self: Changed destiny, Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:1–10)

Learning objective: After this study, we will have understood that a bad past can be a springboard to a better future when we turn to God and call for his transforming power in our lives.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Living faith, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Capabilities

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we explored the true value that we gain from knowing the love of God expressed for us in the death of his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. Knowing how much we are loved should restore our sense of confidence in life and strengthen our resilience in every situation. Today we are looking at the story of someone who knew God and used that knowledge to transform a bad past into a life of success and honour. We are reading from 1 Chronicles 4:1–10.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Other clans of Judah

The descendants of Judah:

Perez, Hezron, Karmi, Hur and Shobal.

Reaiah son of Shobal was the father of Jahath, and Jahath the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the clans of the Zorathites.

These were the sons of Etam:

Jezreel, Ishma and Idbash. Their sister was named Hazzelelponi. Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah.

These were the descendants of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah and father of Bethlehem.

Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.

Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni and Haahashtari. These were the descendants of Naarah.

The sons of Helah:

Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, and Koz, who was the father of Anub and Hazzobebah and of the clans of Aharhel son of Harum.

Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, 'I gave birth to him in pain.' Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request.

1 Chronicles 4:1–10

Questions

- In this long list of names, the Bible does not say much about many of the characters, but it highlights one life: Jabez. What is it that makes him so different from the others in the list? What do we know about his life?
- What is it that transforms his destiny? What is his prayer about?
- What can we learn from this story of Jabez?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Sometimes God singles out an individual in a long list of names and zooms in on his life because there is something special he wants us to see and learn from. Jabez starts life in very difficult circumstances: we don't know what has happened, but his mother calls him Jabez (which means 'pain') because she 'gave birth to him in pain'. But the Bible tells us that Jabez is more honourable than his brothers.

- Jabez's secret is in his knowledge of the God who changes destinies and names, the God of Israel. (Israel was the new name for Jacob whose original name meant 'cheater'.) Jabez prayed and God granted his request! Jabez's prayer to God is very instructive. He prays for God to change his circumstances so he will move from a life of scarcity in a small corner to a blessed life in a larger territory. He prays for God's blessing and presence and protection against pain so that his life story will not become synonymous with his name!

- There are many lessons we can draw from this story of Jabez. We may be born in very poor and miserable conditions, with parents who confuse us with their problems, but God always has a very positive destiny for us to explore and step into when we trust him. Jabez has a vision of the kind of life he wants, he converts that vision into a prayer but also goes out and works for it. And God is with him, grants his request and blesses his life. We too can do the same and change our situations with the help of God.

Application

If you were asked to pray like Jabez, what areas of your personal life would you like to change? What territories of your life would you like him to expand? What bad experiences would you ask him to protect you from? Make a list and commit to pray like Jabez!

Record this list in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' (1 Chronicles 4:10)

Week 19

Reconciled with self: Transformed by a divine touch (Matthew 8:1–4 and Leviticus 13:45–46)

Learning objective: By the end of this study, we will have explored the problem of social stigma and how it can be healed by a touch of the divine hand.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we explored how Jabez used his knowledge of the transformative power of God and prayed a prayer that changed his destiny. We too can shape a vision of a better future with the helping hand of God. Today we are looking at another man whose dignity and reintegration into society were restored by a touch of the divine hand. We are reading from Matthew 8:1–4 and Leviticus 13:45–46.'
- Ask one of the participants to read both passages aloud.

Jesus heals a man with leprosy

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'

Matthew 8:1–4

Regulations about defiling skin diseases

Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

Leviticus 13:45–46

Questions

- Leprosy is a deadly disease in the time of Jesus and any person who has leprosy is asked to live on their own and is avoided by all. Why does Jesus decide to touch the man?

- Why does Jesus send the man to the high priest?

- What lessons can we learn from this story and from what the Bible says about people who have infectious diseases?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Leprosy is a very infectious disease and, in Jesus' day, it is a disease without a cure. Anybody with leprosy is condemned to seclusion, away from other people; they must warn others of their approach so they can keep their distance. It is a painful disease physically but one with painful psychological and social consequences. Jesus heals the man by touching him though he could have done it just by saying a word. He wants to restore his confidence, to heal him not only from his physical problem but also from the psychological trauma that is caused by isolation and social stigma.

- After healing him, Jesus sends the man to the high priest to have his physical health validated and to restore his moral and social standing.

- This story contains many lessons for us. There are people who have contagious diseases who must be isolated physically so as not to contaminate others. They too need our love and care though at times we may have to keep our physical distance. Unfortunately, that often comes with stigma and those people feel rejected. We should do like Jesus and keep on loving them.

Application

In your group, identify some of the diseases or life conditions that have stigma attached to them. How can you live with people suffering from these conditions without rejecting them?

Record these ideas in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' (Matthew 8:2)

Week 20

Reconciled with our neighbour: One in Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have learnt the importance of the cross of Jesus Christ in the process of reconciliation and will be challenged to live a life of unity and togetherness.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we saw a leper approaching Jesus and he was healed by a touch from God. We learnt that we should care for and love people who are stigmatised in our community because of their physical, psychological/emotional or economic conditions. Today we are looking at a passage that introduces us to another important truth: our unity in Christ. We are reading Ephesians 2:11–22.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jew and Gentile reconciled through Christ

> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (which is done in the body by human hands) – remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
>
> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
>
> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
>
> **Ephesians 2:11–22**

Questions

- What is the cause of division between the Gentiles and the Jews that Paul mentions in this passage?

- How has God solved the problem to create unity? What are the benefits of that unity?

- What lessons can we draw from this passage for our daily life?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Paul reminds the Greeks in Ephesus that they were previously considered as pagans and despised by the Jews who considered themselves as the heirs to the promises of God. This religious pride always creates a dividing wall between the Jews and other people.

- The cross of Jesus Christ becomes the meeting point for all nations. The blood of Jesus gives salvation to all without ethnic or racial distinction and introduces all into one humanity of the family of God. Salvation seals our peace with God and with each other as members of the same family and

builds hope for a better future with God and each other. Our unity attracts the presence of God.

- As believers, we should work at our unity in Christ. Through his cross he has broken down the walls of division and we should not rebuild them. We are called to work together as one family, bound together by the blood of Christ that makes us all one in the family of God.

Application

In your small group, discuss the types of divisions that you see in your community, in families and other places. What can be done to pull down those dividing walls? What are you doing to build stronger unity in your group, your families and your community?

Record the group's ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'He himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.' (Ephesians 2:14)

Week 21

Reconciled with our neighbour: The power of repentance (Psalm 32:1–5)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have considered the consequences of hidden, unconfessed sin and learnt about the peace that comes from repentance and confession.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the day's Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we studied how the cross and the blood of Jesus have destroyed the walls of division between people. We decided to be agents of reconciliation in our groups, our families and our community. Today we are looking at one of the pillars of our unity and harmonious relationships: repentance and confession. We are reading from Psalm 32:1–5.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Of David. A *maskil*.

Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, 'I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord.'
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32:1–5

Questions

- What categories of people does David call blessed?
- How does he feel when he is hiding his sin?
- What is the answer to his problem? How does he find relief?
- What can we learn from this psalm?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- David says that blessed are the people who have confessed their sins and have been forgiven, and whose hearts do not hide any bad intentions.

- David reveals to us that when he was hiding his sin and trying to cover it up, his heart was troubled, and he could not sleep or have peace during the day and the night. He was wasting away because of the guilt, and he was losing strength and concentration.

- He eventually decides to confess his sin and the Lord forgives him and he finds peace.

- This psalm is very instructive about the state of mind of a person who refuses to confess any evil he has done. It's only when we acknowledge what we have done wrong and confess it that we can really be forgiven and find peace.

Application

Do you know people who did not have peace until they repented and confessed what they did?

Share those stories in your group.

Bible verse to memorise

'I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.' (Psalm 32:5)

Week 22

Reconciled with our neighbour: Forgiveness, Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 50:14–21)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have explored and understood the challenges of rebuilding broken relationships.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we saw the burden upon a heart that is full of guilt. The only way to find peace is not in hiding the truth but in opening our heart, confessing and asking for forgiveness. We even shared stories of people who have found peace through repentance and confession. Today we are looking at a similar story about a man who forgave his brothers. We are reading Genesis 50:14–21.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

Joseph reassures his brothers

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: "This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly." Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said.

But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Genesis 50:14–21

Questions

- Joseph's brothers are afraid he will take revenge on them. Why do you think they have lived so many years without asking for his forgiveness? How does this confirm what we saw in our previous Bible study? What do you think of the way they confess what they have done to Joseph?

- How does Joseph react to their request? What is his response?

- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The brothers of Joseph have been living with their father and their brother in Egypt for many years, but they are still afraid Joseph will take revenge on them for the wrongs they have done to him. This is a good illustration of the guilty heart that does not find peace that we saw in Psalm 32 last week. Rather than confess what they have done, they try to force Joseph to forgive them by manipulating him, telling him this is their father's last wish. These brothers are not really repenting!

- Joseph is grieved and weeps to see that, after so many years, his brothers have not noticed that he has forgiven them. He reminds them that what they

did to him was evil but that he has forgiven them. He even gives them a promise, to provide for them and for their families.

- This story teaches us how difficult it is for some people to confess openly when they want to ask for forgiveness. If we are repenting, we should be open and spell out what we did wrong and ask for forgiveness. Joseph gives us a good biblical example of how to forgive. He reminds the brothers of the wrong they did, then he reassures them that it is over and that he will do them good. Spell out the wrong that was done to you. Tell the person you were offended. Tell them they are forgiven and promise to do them good. End the fear and enmity.

Application

In your group, share stories you know of people who have repented, confessed and asked for forgiveness and of those who have forgiven. What is easier: to repent and confess or to forgive?

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' (Genesis 50:21)

Week 23

Reconciled with our neighbour: Possible only at the cross (Isaiah 53:1–12)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have understood the role of the cross in the process of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we saw Joseph's brothers struggling to find a way to express their repentance to him and we saw Joseph forgiving them and reassuring them of his love and support. We have heard of stories of those among us who have forgiven those who offended them and how they did it. Today we are looking at the power of the cross of Jesus Christ in the process of rebuilding broken relationships. We are reading from Isaiah 53:1–12.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

> Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
> and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,
> he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
> and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.
>
> After he has suffered,
> he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
> by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
> and he will bear their iniquities.
>
> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
> and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
> because he poured out his life unto death,
> and was numbered with the transgressors.
> For he bore the sin of many,
> and made intercession for the transgressors.
>
> **Isaiah 53:1–12**

Questions

- How does Isaiah describe Christ in verses 1–3 of this passage?
- What are the three reasons Isaiah gives for Christ going to the cross?
- How can knowing that Christ suffered what we suffer, that he took our pains and our sorrows on the cross (verse 4) help those who are suffering and offended? And how can knowing that he took our sins to the cross help those who want to repent and confess?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Isaiah describes Jesus Christ as a man who has suffered from rejection and hatred, 'a man of sorrows and familiar with pain'. This is a picture of the suffering Messiah.
- Isaiah tells us that Jesus went to the cross carrying our pain and our sorrows (verse 4), carrying our sins and our iniquities (verse 5) and even our sicknesses (verse 5).
- Knowing that Christ has experienced all the suffering, all the injustices, all the miseries of life that we go through makes him approachable for those who are going through the same problems. He can help if they open up to him and cast all their burdens on him who understands because he went through the same things. And those who are carrying heavy burdens of guilt can find rest in him because he went to the cross because of those sins. At the cross, they

are already forgiven but they must repent and confess. The cross is the divine meeting place for those who have been offended and those who have offended them! It is only when those who are hurt have been healed at the cross that they can forgive. It is when those who have offended know that their sins are already forgiven that they can confess. And it is at the cross that both groups, the healed offended and the repentant offenders, can meet and true reconciliation happens.

Application

In your group, try to remember people who were hurt and have forgiven others, and those who had offended them and have confessed and asked for forgiveness. What was the role of their faith in the process?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.' (Isaiah 53:4–5).



Learning new farming techniques in Ethiopia. Mahad Usman/Tearfund

Week 24

Restored nature: Sin and nature (Hosea 4:1–3)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have considered how humanity's sin affects the environment and explored what we should do to face up to the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Care of the environment, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we saw the importance of the cross in the process of reconciliation. It is at the cross of Jesus who took our pains and our sorrows that the offended can heal and find the power to forgive. It is also at the cross of Jesus who took on himself our sins and our iniquities that the offender can find strength to repent and ask for forgiveness. Today we are shifting to another relationship and seeing how we deal with our environment. We are reading Hosea 4:1–3.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The charge against Israel

> Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
> because the Lord has a charge to bring
> against you who live in the land:
>
> 'There is no faithfulness, no love,
> no acknowledgment of God in the land.
>
> There is only cursing, lying and murder,
> stealing and adultery;
>
> they break all bounds,
> and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
>
> Because of this the land dries up,
> and all who live in it waste away;
>
> the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
> and the fish in the sea are swept away.
>
> **Hosea 4:1–3**

Questions

- What does God reproach his people about in this passage? What are the relationships that people have broken?
- What consequences does that behaviour have for the environment?
- What lessons can we learn from this short passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God reproaches his people for having broken their relationship with him and with each other. Their lives are characterised by sinful behaviours such as lies, slander, murder, theft and sexual immorality. They have adopted sinful lives as their norm.
- God warns them that their sinful lifestyle will not only affect them but that even the environment around them will suffer. Their lives will waste away and the animals, the birds and the fish in the sea will also be affected.
- Sin always affects people but it also affects their environment. Adam and Eve brought a curse to the land when they sinned. People in the time of Noah made God angry and he destroyed the total of creation with the flood. In

countries that have wars, people suffer but also the animals and the plants are destroyed.

Application

In your group, discuss the truth of this passage. What sins are affecting the environment in your area and how can you work with others to protect nature locally?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the fields, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.' (Hosea 4:3)

Week 25

Friend of nature: The environment restored (Ezekiel 47:1–11)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have a clear picture of what the environment is like when our relationship with God is restored, and people are revived.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Care of the environment

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask one of the participants to give a summary of what they learnt from the previous Bible study.
- Ask one of the participants to give a short personal testimony of how they have applied some of what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'In our last Bible study, we saw that human sin comes with heavy consequences on human lives but also on the environment. Today we are looking at the healing of our environment when there is spiritual renewal. We are reading Ezekiel 47:1–11.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The river from the temple

The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me round the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in – a river that no one could cross. He asked me, 'Son of man, do you see this?'

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds – like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Ezekiel 47:1–11

Questions

- What does this river flowing from the temple represent? (Refer also to John 7:37–39 to help you answer this question.) Where does the river come from and where does it go? What does this movement represent for us?

- What effect will that river have on the environment that surrounds the temple?

- What lessons can we draw from this passage in relation to our relationship with our environment?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The river in the Bible is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit as we see in John 7:37–39. This river flowing from the temple is a symbol of a congregation that

has been refreshed in church and goes out into the community, transforming everything they pass.

- The river revives and refreshes everything on its path. Trees grow on its banks and fish multiply in its waters. People benefit from this restored environment as they find food and medicine in the leaves of the plants that grow around the river, and they draw fish from the water.

- When we are revived in our relationship with God, we will give value to our environment and take care of it so it will benefit us and other creatures around us.

Application

Discuss in your group the practical steps that can be taken in your neighbourhood to restore nature, to keep your area clean and to protect your environment.

Record the group's ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.' (Ezekiel 47:9)

Week 26

The power of restored unity (Psalm 133:1–3)

Learning objective: Today, we will be evaluating what progress we have made over the past three months in changing mindsets and adopting new practices.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start the activity in prayer.
- Introduce the day's discussion: 'We have now spent three months focusing mainly on restoring our broken relationships, with God, with self, with each other and with nature. Today we will share what we have learnt and how we have applied it. But first, let's read Psalm 133:1–3, about the power of unity.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

A song of ascents. Of David

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life for evermore.

Psalm 133

Discussion

- God affirms strongly that it is good and pleasant to him when people are together in unity. Two comparisons are used to illustrate how important that unity is in his eyes. It is compared to the sweet-smelling oil that is used to anoint priests and kings and it is compared to the dew that comes on dry grass and refreshes livestock in the pastures. Unity is a divine principle and unity is a fruitful practice. In the Rwandan culture, unity is praised in many proverbs such as:

  (1) 'Babiri bafatanya baruta umunani urasana' ('two people who are united are far stronger than eight who fight each other')

  (2) 'Imisega ibiri ntinanirwa igufwa' ('two small dogs working together will easily crush a big bone')

- The writer of the psalm concludes that where there is unity, that is 'where the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore'. This is an encouragement for us to keep working to build unity and preserve it jealously.

- As mentioned earlier, we are going to spend this time evaluating our progress over these past three months. We have focused mainly on the theme of restoration of relationships, and we need to evaluate if we have benefited from the time we spent on this theme. Here are some of the questions we will try to answer.

Questions

- What life changes can we show to prove that we have benefited from the Bible studies?
- Has our relationship with God improved through our Bible studies?
- Have our relations with each other improved through our Bible studies?
- Do we have a stronger vision to care for our environment as a result of our Bible studies?
- Do we have a stronger vision for how we can improve our lives through our Bible studies?

Summary

Write a summary of the main benefits discussed in the group log book.

Quarter 3

Church and community description



Community members discuss community development opportunities in Burundi.
Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund

Week 27

Mapping the problems in our community (Exodus 3:7–12)

Learning objective: By the end of this study, we will have learnt how to identify and analyse the problems in our communities and how to shape a vision of a better future.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from last week's evaluation.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Today we are starting a new series of Bible studies that will focus on analysing our community, exploring its problems, and envisioning solutions to improve our livelihoods. Today we are starting with a Bible study where we learn how to identify the problems around us. We are reading Exodus 3:7–12.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Moses and the burning bush

The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'

Exodus 3:7–12

Questions

- What are the three main verbs that God uses to describe his awareness of the situation of his people? What is that situation in Egypt like? What does God decide to do about the situation?

- How does he describe the new land where he intends to take his people?

- What lessons can we draw from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- There are three key verbs that God uses to describe how he perceives the situation of the people in Egypt: I have seen the misery, I have heard them crying out and I know their suffering. God is aware of the miserable situation of his people and is ready to go and rescue them from their oppressors.

- God promises to take them to a better place, a larger land, fertile and 'flowing with milk and honey'.

- God is always concerned about the welfare of his people and is ready to transform their bad situations and give them a better life.

Application

If you took the place of God and watched your community closely using the three major verbs in this Bible study (to see, to hear and to know), what would you say about your community? What are the challenges that you can see, the problems that people talk about or that you know about because you live there?

Record these thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.' (Exodus 3:7)

Week 28

A vision of the sins of our community (Ezekiel 22:6–12)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have identified the types of sins committed in our community and analysed their visible, immediate consequences.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to recap on what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we learnt to explore our community by looking at what happens there that makes people suffer, by listening to people and using our own knowledge of what we see every day. Today we are looking at the sins committed in our neighbourhood. We are reading from Ezekiel 22:6–12.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Judgment on Jerusalem's sins

> See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood. In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the foreigner and ill-treated the fatherless and the widow. You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths. In you are slanderers who are bent on shedding blood; in you are those who eat at the mountain shrines and commit lewd acts. In you are those who dishonour their father's bed; in you are those who violate women during their period, when they are ceremonially unclean. In you one man commits a detestable offence with his neighbour's wife, another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father's daughter. In you are people who accept bribes to shed blood; you take interest and make a profit from the poor. You extort unjust gain from your neighbours. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord.
>
> **Ezekiel 22:6–12**

Questions

- What sins are listed in this passage?
- Who are the people that God says are being oppressed and exploited?
- What does God say will be the consequences?
- What lessons do we take from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- In this passage, God is telling his people that he is a witness to the many sins committed in their communities. Leaders misuse their power, oppress and exploit people living in poverty. Children disobey and neglect their parents; the poor, the orphan and the widow are neglected and exploited. Sexual immorality is rampant with a high tolerance of debauchery, incest and adultery. Corruption, usury and exploitation are the norm. All these sins go on while people have abandoned God and have turned to worshipping idols.
- God reminds them that they are oppressing people living in poverty, the foreigners, the widows and the orphans.
- God warns the people that they will reap the consequences of their sins and will be punished for what they have done.
- This passage reflects what happens in many communities. Economic, social and moral sins corrupt the society and ruin it. We are called to be mindful of such sins happening in our families and community around us, to avoid the consequences.

Application

Look at your neighbourhood: if God came to visit you, how many of those sins would he find in your community? Who are the people who are underprivileged and who need others to advocate for them? What are the visible consequences of sin? What can you do to act and change the situation?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'You have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord.' (Ezekiel 22:12)



A saving group in South Sudan. Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund

Week 29

Surveying the walls of our community (Nehemiah 2:11–20)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have assessed the vulnerabilities that put our community at risk and will have taken the decision to act on some of the major issues we have identified.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to recap on some of the issues that were raised from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we identified some of the sins that are rampant in our communities and are causing suffering and misery. Today we are doing another Bible study that encourages us to stand up and do something about all those areas of need that we have identified. We are reading from Nehemiah 2:11–20. '
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Nehemiah inspects Jerusalem's walls

I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

By night I went out through the Valley Gate towards the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on towards the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.' I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. 'What is this you are doing?' they asked. 'Are you rebelling against the king?'

I answered them by saying, 'The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.'

Nehemiah 2:11–20

Questions

- What does Nehemiah do before starting the project of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem? Why does he survey the walls in ruins?

- What does he tell the people, to encourage them to do something about the situation of their broken walls?

- How do their enemies react when they hear that the people are going to repair the walls? How does Nehemiah respond to their discouraging comments?

- What can we learn from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Before starting the rebuilding project, Nehemiah first inspects the walls to see the extent of the damage and to assess how much effort and time will be needed to repair the walls.

- He calls the people and reminds them that living in a city without walls is like living in a house without a door! You are in perpetual danger of being attacked and robbed.

- He also gives them a testimony of how the Lord had been with him and has given him favour with the king who has granted him the permission to repair the walls and provided all the necessary materials to do the work.

- Their enemies are troubled and start a campaign of discouragement, but Nehemiah strengthens the people by reminding them that God is on their side and the success of their initiative is guaranteed.

- We should learn from Nehemiah. When we are starting a project, we need to do our survey and our feasibility study and then act with faith believing God will give us success if our project is for the benefit of his people.

Application

Imitate Nehemiah and do a survey of those areas of life in your community that make many lives vulnerable. Those are your broken walls. How can you encourage the community to change the situation?

Record the group's ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.' (Nehemiah 2:17)

Week 30

A heart for people: Jesus and the people (Matthew 9:35–38)

Learning objective: The aim of this Bible study is to reveal to us the kind of heart we must have when we assess the vulnerabilities in our community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to recap on some of the issues that were raised in the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we identified the vulnerabilities in our community that call for action and we took the decision to act on some of them. Today we are having another Bible study that shows us the kind of attitude we must have when we look at the poverty of our people. We are reading from Matthew 9:35–38.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The workers are few

> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'
>
> **Matthew 9:35–38**

Questions

- What is Jesus doing in the cities that he goes through?
- How does he feel about the people?
- What does he tell his disciples to do? Why does he not tell them to go directly into the cities and respond to the needs of the people?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Jesus goes through the cities teaching, preaching the good news of the kingdom, healing the sick. In other words, he is changing their minds, instilling in them a vision of a better life, and restoring their bodies to health. Jesus' ministry is about the restoration of total wellbeing.
- Everything he does is motivated by his compassion for the people. He takes care of their problems because he loves them and wants to see them well.
- The priests, scribes and other religious leaders of Jesus' day do not care about the needs of the people, who are 'like sheep without a shepherd'. Jesus asks his disciples to pray that God raises true leaders with a heart for the people.
- What Jesus and his disciples saw in their day, we still see today. People are lost and confused while churches are going on with their business as usual. We need to pray that God will give us Jesus Christ's heart for people, so we will see people as he saw them.

Application

Our communities have problems, but people do not seem to care. Pray in your group that God will open the eyes of the leaders and of all the people to see where the needs are greatest and respond to them as Jesus would do if he was physically present today. Will you be among those God will use to be an answer to those problems? How?

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.' (Matthew 9:36)

Week 31

Exploring our resources: God and Moses (Exodus 4:1–17)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have been challenged to explore the resources available to us to bring change in our neighbourhood.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Capabilities

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise some of the decisions that were taken in answer to the challenge in the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw the kind of heart God desires in people he will use to be an answer to the problems in the community. We were challenged to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem. Today, we are doing another Bible study that calls us to look at the possibilities we have around us and in us to fulfil that mission. We are reading from Exodus 4:1–17.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Signs for Moses

Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The Lord did not appear to you”?’

Then the Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’

‘A staff,’ he replied.

The Lord said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’

Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.’ So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. ‘This,’ said the Lord, ‘is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has appeared to you.’

Then the Lord said, ‘Put your hand inside your cloak.’ So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous – it had become as white as snow.

‘Now put it back into your cloak,’ he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.Then the Lord said, ‘If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.’

Moses said to the Lord, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’

The Lord said to him, ‘Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.’

But Moses said, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.’

Then the Lord’s anger burned against Moses and he said, ‘What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so that you can perform the signs with it.’

Exodus 4:1–17

Questions

Moses did not want to go to Egypt, but he looked for good reasons to give to God.

- What is Moses' first reason and how does God respond to it?
- What is his second reason and how does God respond to it?
- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Moses is looking for a pretext not to go to Egypt and the first reason he gives is about his people who will doubt his mission. But God gives him power to do miracles that will convince them that he has been sent by the God of their ancestors.
- The second reason he gives is about his lack of eloquence and a speech impediment that makes him stammer. But God reminds him that he is the one who created the mouth and enables people to speak. He promises to go with Moses and put words in his mouth. He even provides an aide in the person of Aaron, Moses' brother.
- There are many lessons we can learn from this story. When we are faced with a tough situation, we often tend to look for ways to avoid confronting it. But when God chooses you and sends you on a mission, he promises to give you the resources, the abilities and even the people you will need to succeed in your mission. He even promises to be with you himself, to intervene wherever you need him.

Application

You have identified many areas of your personal, family and community life that need to be transformed. What do you have in your hands in terms of resources and capabilities to bring the change you need to see? Explore all the different possibilities in your group.

Record the group's ideas in your log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'What is that in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2)

Week 32

Exploring our resources: Hagar in the desert (Genesis 21:8–21)

Learning objective: By the end of this study, we will have been challenged to depend on God. We will also have asked him to reveal to us some of the possibilities and resources around us that we may have overlooked.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise some of the resources and capabilities that were identified during the last Bible study and how they can be used.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we explored some of the resources we will need to bring change in our context. Today we are reading another Bible study that calls us to ask God to open our eyes to more possibilities and resources that we may be overlooking in us or around us. We are reading from Genesis 21:8–21.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Hagar and Ishmael sent away

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, 'Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.'

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, 'Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.'

Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bow-shot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy die.' And as she sat there, she began to sob.

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.'

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Genesis 21:8–21

Questions

- What problem does Hagar have that makes her weep in the desert? What is she feeling?
- What does the angel of the Lord tell Hagar? How does he solve her problem?
- What can we learn from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- This is the second time Hagar is chased away by her mistress, Sarah. She is sitting a short distance from her son, weeping because she has run short of

water, and she is desperate because they are going to die of thirst. Hagar is desperate and lonely: she has no one to talk to. But God is watching and listening as he promised he would the first time she fled.

- The angel of the Lord calls Hagar from heaven and asks why she is worried. He tells her God has heard the prayers of Ishmael and then he opens her eyes and she sees a well of water. The well has been there all that time but Hagar has not seen it because she has been focusing on her problem rather than looking around for a solution.

- There are many lessons we can draw from this passage. When we are in trouble, the first thing we should do is to call upon God because he has promised to be with us and to listen. And he cares about us. We should ask God to open our eyes to see the possibilities that are around us that we do not see.

Application

As a group, take one of the problems you have identified in your area. Pray over it and ask God to open your eyes to the possibilities you have that could be used to solve the problem. What 'wells' do you have?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So, she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.' (Genesis 21:19)

Week 33

Exploring our resources: Elisha and the widow (2 Kings 4:1–7)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have been challenged to explore the resources we have and how they could be used to respond to the problems we have identified.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise some of the resources that were identified during the last Bible study and how they can be used.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw that we should ask God to open our eyes to see the possibilities we have around us that we could use to solve our problems. Today we are reading another Bible passage that calls us to identify those resources we could multiply to provide answers to our problems. We are reading from 2 Kings 4:1–7.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The widow's olive oil

The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.'

Elisha replied to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?'

'Your servant has nothing there at all,' she said, 'except a small jar of olive oil.'

Elisha said, 'Go round and ask all your neighbours for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.'

She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.'

But he replied, 'There is not a jar left.' Then the oil stopped flowing.

She went and told the man of God, and he said, 'Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.'

2 Kings 4:1–7

Questions

- What is the problem this widow brings to the prophet Elisha?
- What is Elisha's answer? What question does he ask the woman?
- How does God solve the widow's problem?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- This widow is the wife of one of the prophets, but he has died and left the family in debt. She comes to see Elisha hoping that he will give her an answer to her problem. She probably expects him to give her money to pay the debt she owes to the creditor who is pestering her every day.
- Elisha does not solve her problem the way she expects: he asks her to tell him what she has in her house. The answer from the woman is revealing: she tells him she has nothing 'except a little oil'.

- The oil that the woman is belittling is what Elisha uses to solve her problem! God multiplies the oil and fills all the jars the woman borrows from the neighbours. Elisha tells her to go and sell the oil and solve her problems.

- This is a very important lesson for us. The resources that we often despise may be the answer to our problems and the seed God will use to give us a harvest of blessings. But we must be ready to identify what we have that can serve as a seed for our miracle. We must trust God with it and then go out and work to make it productive. We may have the seeds but if we do not work, we will not have a harvest. Elisha does not give a fish to the woman, metaphorically speaking: he teaches her to fish and then sends her out to sell the fish! That is how God solves our problems: he calls us to open our eyes to the possibilities we have, then he tells us to use them and he blesses the work of our hands.

Application

Think of some people who have applied this principle to change their lives. They perhaps borrowed money from their neighbours and started a business. Maybe they leased a field and sowed the seeds they had and harvested a rich crop. How can you learn from this example?

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.'
(2 Kings 4:7)

Week 34

Exploring our resources: Jesus feeds 5,000 (John 6:1–15)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have explored the possibilities and resources we have and considered how to believe God for change.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study and how they are applying it.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw Elisha teaching a woman to trust God with her little oil to receive a miracle. Elisha taught the woman not to depend on what he was going to give her but to work with the little she had as seed and produce more herself. Today we are looking at a similar lesson with Jesus and his disciples. We are reading from John 6:1–15.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus feeds the five thousand

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'

Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.' So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

John 6:1–15

Questions

- What question does Jesus ask Philip when he sees the hungry crowd?
- What is Philip's answer and what does it reveal about Philip's perception of the situation?
- Where does the answer come from? What is the result?
- What is the reaction of the people when they see the miraculous sign?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Jesus sees the hungry crowd and has compassion on them. He knows he is going to do a miracle and feed them, but he wants to test the faith of his disciples.

- Philip answers with scepticism about the possibility of feeding so many people.

- But with five small barley loaves and two small fish, Jesus manages to feed 5,000 men: the 5,000 does not include the women and the children who tend to be more numerous on such occasions. They eat their fill and even 12 baskets of leftovers are collected!

- The people are amazed, and they believe in Jesus and want to make him their king, but he escapes to the mountain to pray.

- There are many lessons we can draw from this passage. The miracles of Jesus are done to respond to the needs of the people. We could do the same and expect Jesus to do something about the problems we bring to him on behalf of ourselves or our communities. And it does not matter how much we have in terms of resources, the essential thing is the need to surrender all to Jesus and act believing for a miracle. Responding to people's needs is the best way of leading them to Jesus and salvation.

Application

As a group, identify one of the problems people are faced with in your community. Identify some of the resources that you could bring to the Lord as the seed for a miracle to solve the problem. Decide how you are going to act.

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?' (John 6:9)

Week 35

Shaping a vision of change (Isaiah 65:17–23)

Learning objective: The aim of this Bible study is to encourage us to dream about a better future for ourselves and our communities and to shape a vision to turn that dream into reality.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they remember from last week's Bible study and how they are using what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw five small loaves of bread and two small fish used to feed many thousands. We decided to take the little we have and ask God with faith to multiply it to respond to the needs in our midst. Today we are looking at a similar lesson from the Old Testament. We are reading from Isaiah 65:17–23.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

New heavens and a new earth

‘See, I will create
    new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered,
    nor will they come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice for ever
    in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
    and its people are a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem
    and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
    will be heard in it no more.

‘Never again will there be in it
    an infant who lives but a few days,
    or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
    will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
    will be considered accursed.

They will build houses and dwell in them;
    they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
    or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
    so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
    the work of their hands.

They will not labour in vain,
    nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
    they and their descendants with them.

Isaiah 65:17–23

Questions

- Why is God calling his people to be glad and rejoice?
- What does God promise for physical health?

- What does God promise for economic prosperity?
- What does God promise for social peace and security?
- What lessons can we draw from this text?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God promises to create a new earth and new heavens where there will be no more suffering and death.
- In this new environment, people will work and reap the fruit of their labour and they will live long lives, far away from all types of trouble.
- There will be abundant peace and harmful behaviours will be no more.
- This vision of the new heavens and the new earth is given to inspire us and encourage us to believe that with faith in God, we can work and reap a plentiful harvest. No one should go hungry and die at a young age and peace should prevail wherever we live. This vision should be our goal!

Application

In your small group, discuss what you could do in practical terms to make this dream a reality in your community. How would your community look if you were living out the fulfilment of this divine promise?

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'They will not labour in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.' (Isaiah 65:23)

Week 36

Conquering the land: Caleb at Hebron (Joshua 14:6–15)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have identified some of the areas of greatest challenge and will have decided how we will act to try to bring about change.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they remember from last week's Bible study and how they are using what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw a divine vision of a healthy community. That is the vision we should have for our own community and for our families. But to achieve that, we need determination and faith. Today we are looking at and learning from the life of a man who had faith to confront a difficult challenge, and he succeeded. We are reading Joshua 14:6–15.
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Land allotted to Caleb

Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, 'You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people sink. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, "The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly."

'Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.'

Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Then the land had rest from war.

Joshua 14:6–15

Questions

- What does Caleb ask Joshua?
- Where does he draw his courage and confidence in success from?
- What is the outcome of his efforts? What happens when he wins the war?
- What can we learn from Caleb?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Caleb reminds Joshua of the promise God has given to him to possess the land. He asks him to give him Hebron, the home of Arba, the leader of the Anakites.

- Caleb affirms that he is still strong and can fight despite his age. The secret of his courage and determination is in the close and 'wholehearted' relationship he has with his God. His courage is fed by his active faith.

- Joshua gives the mountain to Caleb and after it is won, the whole country rests from war and has peace.

- Caleb is a living example of the power of active faith. Those who believe God will be given the courage to face up to all situations and will bring blessings to their communities.

Application

From the many problems you have identified, choose one that looks like the most challenging and discuss how to develop faith enough to face and transform it.

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.' (Joshua 14:12)

Week 37

The battle against the evil giants (2 Samuel 21:15–22)

Learning objective: At the end of this study, we will have identified the problems that look like evil giants in our communities and decided to tackle them one by one.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise some of the decisions taken from last week's Bible study and how they are applying what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we read and studied from the life of Caleb, a man who at 85 dared ask for a mountain populated by the strongest of the enemies of his people. Caleb fought the Anakites, won the war and conquered their land. And the whole country found peace. Today we are looking at another group of people who delivered their country from the oppression of giants that we can compare to the big problems we face in our communities. We are reading about the army of David in wars against the giants among the Philistines. We are reading 2 Samuel 21:15–22.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Wars against the Philistines

Once again there was a battle between the Philistines and Israel. David went down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he became exhausted. And Ishbi-Benob, one of the descendants of Rapha, whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels and who was armed with a new sword, said he would kill David. But Abishai, son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue; he struck the Philistine down and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, saying, 'Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished.'

In the course of time, there was another battle with the Philistines, at Gob. At that time Sibbekai the Hushathite killed Saph, one of the descendants of Rapha.

In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot – twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan, son of Shimeah, David's brother, killed him.

These four were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.

2 Samuel 21:15–22

Questions

- How many giants do we see in this passage? Where have they come from? How do they die, and who kills them?
- Where do David's soldiers get the courage to fight and kill those giants?
- What lessons can we draw from this story? Can we name some of the evil giants we are facing in our personal lives, our families, our community?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- This passage names four giants who terrorised the people of Israel. They are all brothers of Goliath whom David kills when he is young; they are all descended from the same father, Rapha. All the people in Israel are scared by the sheer size of those giants but David's brave soldiers kill them all. In all the previous wars, these giants have terrified Israel's army but with David and his army, they all fall. They do not fall in one battle; they fall one by one until they are all eliminated.

- David is a brave fighter and his soldiers have learnt from him, from his courage and his faith. They believe they can face the giants and kill them. The leadership of a slayer of giants gives courage to the soldiers that they too can kill giants.

- We too are faced with many giants that terrorise our people. We can name many of them such as sinful behaviours including domestic violence, drunkenness, adultery. We are also faced with poverty, diseases, ignorance, and many other ills that face us and can look like giants. But with courage that comes from our faith in God and through developing our skills, we can slowly kill these giants, one by one. The question is: do we have the faith to give us the vision and the courage to face up to every giant in our personal life, our families, our community?

Application

Identify some of the major giants that are destroying your community. What do you need to do to face them and eliminate them one by one? Write down the names of the giants you have identified and define the steps you will take to eliminate them.

Record your thoughts and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'These four were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.' (2 Samuel 21:22)

Week 38

A picture of the church that changed a city (Acts 2:42–47)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood the key characteristics of a church or a Christian group that can impact any community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise some of the decisions taken from last week's Bible study and how they are using what they learnt.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week's Bible study showed us David's soldiers eliminating four giants that had terrified their people. We took the decision to identify the evil giants in our own community and to eliminate them one by one until they are no longer with us. Today we are doing another Bible study that shows us some of the qualities we must develop in our church and group to transform our community. We are reading Acts 2:42–47.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The fellowship of the believers

> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
>
> **Acts 2:42–47**

Questions

- What are the main activities of these Christians in the early church of Jerusalem?
- How does the Bible describe the relationships between the members of the church?
- What are the results of such activities and relationships?
- What can we learn from them to benefit our own church/group?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The main activities of the first church in Jerusalem consist of studying the word of God, worship, prayer, creating community through sharing communion, and fellowship among Christians taking care of each other to meet every need that arises.
- The relationships between the members of the church/group are characterised by love and care for each other; they joyfully share everything they have, responding together to all the needs of the group.
- The outcome of this kind of life is that they enjoy great favour from God and from people and many join their group and are saved.
- This is the kind of lifestyle we should aim to imitate. As we have seen through different Bible studies, our relationship with God through obedience to his word, through prayer and worship, gives us greater vision and opens new doors that we had never seen before. Loving relationships among ourselves and for our community lead to activities that bring transformation, responding to the different needs we see around us. More people will join us, thus bringing continuous, unstoppable transformation in our personal lives, our families and our community.

Application

In your group, discuss the kind of activities you should start carrying out to imitate the faith of that early church in Jerusalem and describe the kind of outcomes you want to see in your community.

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'... praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people... the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.' (Acts 2:47)

Week 39

Evaluation and celebration (Nehemiah 12:40–43)

Learning objective: Today will be dedicated to evaluating the progress we have made in changing our mindset and adopting new practices based on what we have learnt from the Bible studies over the past three months.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Introduce the day's discussion: 'We have spent the past three months of Bible studies identifying the problems and the opportunities in our community and our group, shaping visions and taking decisions to bring lasting change in our lives. Today we will share our experiences and testimonies about what we have learnt and the changes we can see resulting from the different lessons. We will start with this short passage, Nehemiah 12:40–43.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem

> The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, as well as the priests – Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets – and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.
>
> **Nehemiah 12:40–43**

Discussion

- Nehemiah leads the people of Jerusalem in the rebuilding of the walls of their city and when they have finished the project, they take time to thank God and to celebrate. All the people come together, sing to the Lord, and rejoice over the finished work.

- Today we will share our testimonies and celebrate what we have achieved while thinking about how to move forward to see even greater transformation. Here are a few questions we will use to guide our evaluation and celebration.

Questions

- As a group, what have we learnt through these Bible studies during these past three months?

- What are some of the problems we have identified that are visibly being solved by our group members?

- What resources are being used to change lives?

- What new attitudes and behaviours can we see as the fruit of the Bible studies of these past three months?

- Who can give us one or two lessons that have impacted their life and have produced visible evidence of transformation?

- Who can share a new vision they have as a result of the Bible studies and that is bearing fruit in a tangible way in their personal, family or group life?

Summary

Summarise the main lessons that have been learnt, the problems and the resources that have been identified, and people's visions of change. Write all these things down in the group log book.

Quarter 4

Community transformation



A community works together for their transformation in Rwanda. Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

Week 40

A vision of our perfect future (Revelation 21:1–8)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have explored the vision of the perfect future that God is preparing for his people, to inspire our vision for a better, transformed community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they remember from last week's evaluation.
- Introduce the new series of Bible studies: 'We are starting a new series of Bible studies that will focus on implementing what we have learnt and the decisions we have taken during the past nine months. We are starting the series with a Bible study that shows us a picture of a perfect community according to God. We are reading Revelation 21:1–8.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

A new heaven and a new earth

> Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'
>
> He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'
>
> He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.'
>
> **Revelation 21:1–8**

Questions

- What does God promise will define life in the new Jerusalem?
- What is expected from the people who will live this new life?
- Who will not be allowed in the new city?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God's promise is to make everything new. This newness of life includes restoration of our relationship with God, the end of sorrow, suffering and death. It is a vision of the kingdom of God with God at the centre as the king, the provider and the protector, a restoration of life as it was before Adam and Eve committed sin.
- People are called to hunger and thirst for that kingdom and even fight and overcome to inherit it.
- But those who do not believe in what God says, those who live in different types of sin, will be kept out of the kingdom.

- This vision gives us a picture of the kind of life we should be aiming at for ourselves, for our families and for our communities. God is calling us to be co-workers with him to restore the beauty of life as it was before sin, to alleviate suffering that comes from sickness and poverty, to abandon sin and fight the good fight of a life changed for the better. As God promises to make everything new, we too should aim at making everything around us new!

Application

In your group, put together all the actions you have decided to undertake to make life in your families and in your community look 'new'. What are you doing to imitate God in wiping every tear from your people's eyes? What is your common vision for a better future for yourselves, your families and your community?

Record your thoughts and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' (Revelation 21:4)

Week 41

Our mission to transform the community (Matthew 10:1–10)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have been reminded of our God-given mission to go and transform our community and we will have committed to act on what we have learnt.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we were challenged to shape a vision for a better future for ourselves, our families and our community. Today we are looking at another Bible study that reminds us that we have a mission to transform life in our communities. We are reading Matthew 10:1–10.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus sends out the twelve

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and illness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Heal those who are ill, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

'Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts – no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.

Matthew 10:1–10

Questions

- Why does Jesus tell his disciples not to go to the Gentiles but rather focus on their own people?
- What is the message the disciples are given to take to the people?
- How will that message manifest itself in visible ways?
- What lessons do we take from this passage for our own lives?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- When Jesus sends his disciples out for their first mission, he tells them not to go to the Gentiles but to start with their own people, in their own communities. It is always easier to start in a familiar environment, where you know the people and their problems and can easily communicate with them. When you succeed in your community, it makes it easier to show what you have learnt and help other people beyond your community.
- The message Jesus gives the disciples is all about the kingdom of God. It is about restoring God as king of our lives, believing in him as our provider for everything and our protector against every evil. It also calls on us to live in harmony with each other and with nature.

- The message comes with visible signs of health and lives being restored.

- This passage is a call to us to restore our relationship with God, with self, with each other and with nature, but that must go beyond words and translate into visible and practical acts of transformation.

Application

As a group, think together how you can take the message of the kingdom of God to your community. What practical ways can you use to convey that message of restoration of relationship with God, with self, with each other and with nature?

Record your thoughts and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'As you go, proclaim this message: the kingdom of heaven has come near. Heal those who are ill, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.' (Matthew 10:7–8)

Week 42

Can we keep this good news to ourselves? (2 Kings 7:3–11)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood our calling to go out into the community and share with others the good news of what we have learnt.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'The Bible study of last week gave us a picture of the mission Jesus gave to his disciples to go out and bring the kingdom of God through word and deeds wherever they went into their community. Today we are having another Bible study that challenges us not to keep to ourselves all the good things we have learnt and have been practising in our lives. We are reading 2 Kings 7:3–11.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The siege lifted

Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, 'Why stay here until we die? If we say, "We'll go into the city"– the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.'

At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, 'Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!' So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.

The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.

Then they said to each other, 'What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace.'

So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, 'We went into the Aramean camp and no one was there – not a sound of anyone – only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were.' The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace.

2 Kings 7:3–11

Questions

- What decision do these lepers take and why do they take it?
- What do they do when they see that the camp of the Arameans is empty?
- What decision do they take when they find food and other treasures in the camp?
- What lessons can we draw from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The four men live outside the walls of the city because they have leprosy and those who have that disease are condemned to live outside, away from the community to avoid contamination. They are dying of hunger because of the siege imposed by the Arameans but they finally opt to beg for food from the Arameans because they do not have anything to lose. If they stay away from the Arameans, they are condemned to die of hunger; if they go to the camp of the Arameans, there is a chance of either being killed or spared.

- When they reach the camp, they find the Arameans have fled during the night and have left all their tents with food, clothes and even gold and silver. The lepers eat, drink and take some of the other treasures for themselves. After looting some of the tents, they remember people in the city are dying of hunger and need reassurance.

- They take the good decision not to be selfish and they go into the city to declare that the Arameans have fled their tents, leaving plenty of food and wealth in the camp. The city is saved from starvation because four lepers shared the good news!

- This story is a challenge to us: if we keep to ourselves the good news of what we have learnt from our Bible studies and what we have achieved in our group, God will bring judgement on us for being selfish. We too must go at once and report to our community!

Application

In your group, discuss how you are going to share with people outside your group the good news of what you have learnt through the year. What good news do you have that you can share with others? How will you share with other people in your community the good understanding and good practices you have acquired through your group life?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace.' (2 Kings 7:9)

Week 43

If you could meet our God! The slave girl and Naaman (2 Kings 5:1–16)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have been envisioned and challenged to take the good news out to our community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Physical health, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we were challenged not to keep to ourselves the good news of what we have learnt. Today we are looking at a similar story where taking the good news to someone in need produced faith in God, and the restoration of health and relationships. We are reading 2 Kings 5:1–16.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Naaman healed of leprosy

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 'By all means, go,' the king of Aram replied. 'I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: 'With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.'

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, 'Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!'

When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: 'Why have you torn your robes? Make the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.'

But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?' So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, "Wash and be cleansed"!' So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.'

The prophet answered, 'As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.' And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

2 Kings 5:1–16

Questions

- What is the main problem in this story? Can you identify the consequences of this problem in the life of Naaman's family?

- What is the good news in this situation? Who brings that news?

- What happens when Naaman obeys the orders given by the prophet?

- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Naaman is a very valiant soldier, highly respected in the country, but he is very miserable because he has leprosy. Leprosy is a very contagious disease and people who have the disease are expected to keep their distance from other people. This means that Naaman cannot hug his children, or sleep in the same bed as his wife, and everything he touches has to be washed separately.

- A slave girl who has been taken from Israel is the one who brings the good news and informs Naaman's wife that there is a prophet of God in Israel who could heal Naaman. She does not think of her status as a slave girl: she cares for her master and wants to give him good news.

- When Naaman obeys the prophet's orders and washes himself seven times in the river Jordan, his skin is healed, his health is restored, and this is good news for the family. Naaman is so touched that he commits to abandoning his pagan religion and becomes a believer in the God of Israel.

- There are so many problems that plague people and families in our community, and it is our duty to share the good news that there is a solution to all those diseases that affect people's health, all the bad behaviours that affect people's relationships and livelihoods. There is hope that if we take the good news to people, they may resist at first but, in the end, when they accept, we will see change and transformation and even people coming to faith.

Application

In your group, discuss how you can take the good news to restore health, relationships and faith in your community. Are you ready to overcome fear as the servant girl did and share good news with the people in your community?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.' (2 Kings 5:3)

Week 44

Unlocking the capabilities of our crippled community (Luke 5:17–26)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood our calling to awaken the capabilities that lie dormant in our community.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we saw how a slave girl took good news into the family of a general who was highly honoured in public but miserable at home because of his leprosy. Today we are looking at another Bible study, where a man is healed of his paralysis because of the faith of his friends. We are reading Luke 5:17–26.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Jesus forgives and heals a paralysed man

One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal those who were ill. Some men came carrying a paralysed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, 'Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, 'Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the paralysed man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'

Luke 5:17–26

Questions

- What is this story about? What is the central problem in the story?
- What makes a difference in the life of this paralysed man?
- How does the story end?
- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- This story shows four people of great faith taking a neighbour born paralysed to Jesus.
- These people show great faith and determination because when they see they cannot get close to Jesus, they decide to pass the man and his mat through the roof of the house. The amount of effort they have to put in to do this shows their level of faith and conviction.

- Jesus sees the faith of the men and proclaims forgiveness of sins over the paralysed man, heals him and sends him home. Everyone there is amazed and praises God.

- This is a story of faith and resilience and there is much we can learn from these people. They want to see their neighbour healed but they meet lots of hindrances. They take an unexpected route and pass the man through the roof! Today, Jesus is alive and the power to heal our people is available to us. We too can take our community to God for healing and whole-life transformation.

Application

Identify some problems that have been paralysing people in your community. Discuss how you can take the community to Jesus for healing and transformation. What will be the hindrances to change? How will you overcome them?

Record your thoughts and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Some men came carrying a paralysed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.' (Luke 5:18)

Week 45

Mobilising resources to do the work (Exodus 35:4–29)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood the importance of mobilising resources to bring about change and we will have put in place plans for implementing what we have learnt.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at the faith and resilience of a group of men who took their friend to Jesus and were able to overcome all the obstacles until the man was healed and sent home healthy. Today we are taking another Bible study that shows us the people of Israel mobilising resources to build a tabernacle for their God. We are reading Exodus 35:4–29.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Materials for the tabernacle

Moses said to the whole Israelite community, 'This is what the Lord has commanded: from what you have, take an offering for the Lord. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

'All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded: the tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; the ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it; the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light; the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand; the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes; the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary – both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests.'

Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewellery of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the Lord. Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or other durable leather brought them. Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the Lord, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun – blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord through Moses had commanded them to do.

Exodus 35:4–29

Questions

- What are the resources that are required to build the tabernacle of the Lord?

- How do the people respond to the appeal made for the building of the tabernacle?

- Why is it so important to build that tabernacle of the Lord?

- What can we learn from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- God has asked Moses to tell the people to bring all the material resources that are needed to build a tabernacle for the Lord to reside visibly among his people. Moses is asked to mobilise materials such as gold, silver, bronze and all types of skins, woods and oils. To do that building work, it is important to mobilise people of talent and competency to do all the Lord has commanded Moses to do.

- It is amazing to see how people respond positively and mobilise all the resources needed to do the work and all those who are competent and skilled join the work.

- The presence of the Lord among his people is an assurance of provision and protection for the people of Israel.

- The commitment of the people to give despite their problems and their poverty is a good example we can imitate when we decide to accomplish an objective that we set for ourselves for the good of our community. Mobilising material resources does not depend on the wealth we have but on our willingness to reach our goal. When we set a goal, we must use all our resources and all our skills to achieve it.

Application

Looking at the plans you have been discussing in the different Bible studies, what are the resources and skills you will need to mobilise to achieve those goals? Make a clear plan like Moses and the people of Israel did, and make a road map to guide you as you work towards achieving your goal.

Record your plans in your group log book.

Bible verses to memorise:

'Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver and bronze… All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded.' (Exodus 35:5, 10)

Week 46

Called to restore relationships in our community (2 Corinthians 5:14–21)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood our role in bringing reconciliation and unity in our community to build lasting change.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at the people of Israel mobilising resources to build the tent of meeting so that God might reside among them. Today we are taking another Bible study that reminds us to mobilise people for reconciliation. As we have seen in another Bible study, our unity is essential to achieving our vision for change. We are reading from 2 Corinthians 5:14–21.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The ministry of reconciliation

> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
>
> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:14–21**

Questions

- Paul affirms that those who have believed in Christ are no longer living for themselves but live for him who died for them. What is the impact of that change on their relationships with other people?
- What is the mission Paul says those people have received from God?
- What is the content of the message they should bring?
- What lessons can we draw from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Paul affirms that those who have accepted Christ are no longer living a self-centred life: they no longer live for themselves but for Christ who died for them. This has a great impact on their relationships because they are a new creation in Christ and all the old ways of thinking, feeling, acting and relating are no more. Everything is made new in Christ. They no longer look at people from a carnal, worldly perspective but see everybody with new eyes as children of God.
- From this new understanding we are expected to be ambassadors of reconciliation everywhere we go. God has given us a ministry of reconciliation and he has entrusted to us a message of reconciliation.
- Our message is to call people to reconciliation with God and with each other through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

- This is a call to transform our communities into places of transformed relationships. We are ambassadors of God, entrusted with the mission to rebuild relationships between God and people, between people and others. This is a mandate, not an option.

Application

As a group, identify all the broken relationships in your community. Start with your own group, with your own families, and then move to the community at large. In practical terms, how can you be ambassadors of reconciliation?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.' (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Week 47

The power of our restored unity (Genesis 11:1–9)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have reinforced our understanding of the importance of unity for community transformation.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at our mission to reconcile people with God and with each other, and we committed to being peacemakers and reconcilers in our community. Today we are looking at the benefits of living and working in unity. We are reading Genesis 11:1–9.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The tower of Babel

> Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.
>
> They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'
>
> But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.'
>
> So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.
>
> **Genesis 11:1–9**

Questions

- What characterises this community that even God says will make them very successful?
- What is wrong with the objective they have set for themselves that makes God decide to thwart their ambition?
- What happens when God confuses their language?
- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The people in the valley of Shinar first work at creating a unified community with everyone speaking one language. Their communication is clear and easy, and they develop their technology. When God comes to visit their project, he observes them and declares that with that kind of unified understanding, fluid communication and developed technology, everything they try will succeed.
- The problem with their project is that it is in total contradiction to what God has commanded. They do not want to scatter and fill the earth; they rather want to build a tower and climb to heaven. They also want to make a name for themselves rather than give glory to God. God is displeased with their

arrogant intention and decides to put an end to their project, and he confuses their language.

- When they can no longer understand each other, the project stops by itself, and they are scattered all over the earth in line with God's original plan.

- This passage gives us great lessons about the importance of unity and common understanding in the success of every project we start in life. Initially, the people in the valley of Shinar have the same language and their words mean the same thing to each one of them. They have a common language, they agree on a common objective, and agree on the material to use, and God himself concludes that since they have managed to create that kind of context, everything they endeavour to do will succeed. This gives us a blueprint of what to do when we want to succeed as a group: create unity, have clear channels of communication, agree on what we want to achieve and how to achieve it, and importantly give God the glory!

Application

In your group, discuss how you can create a context of unity and common understanding like the people in the valley of Shinar. What will be the hindrances to that unity? How can you eradicate them?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'If as one person speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.' (Genesis 11:6)

Week 48

Transforming our environment: Elisha at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19–22)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have explored the possibilities of transforming our environment to restore it to greater productivity.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Care of the environment, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we looked at the importance of unity in the success of our plans and projects. Today we are looking at another topic that challenges us to explore and restore our environment to greater productivity. We are reading 2 Kings 2:19–22.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Healing of the water

> The people of the city said to Elisha, 'Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.'
>
> 'Bring me a new bowl,' he said, 'and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him.
>
> Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, 'This is what the Lord says: "I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive."' And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.
>
> **2 Kings 2:19–22**

Questions

- What is the problem the people of Jericho bring to Elisha?
- How does Elisha respond to their problem?
- What is the result of his action?
- What lessons do we draw from this story?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- The people of Jericho come to Elisha to plead for their land that is very unproductive because of the water. It is the people who know the problem well who take it to the prophet to find a solution.
- Elisha calls for salt, goes to the source of the river and after throwing the salt into the river, he declares the healing of the land.
- The result is that the water is cleansed, and the land becomes and remains productive.
- Elisha adds salt to the river to make the water clean and the land productive. There are many things we can do to clean our water and to enrich our lands to make them more productive. The people of Jericho are concerned about the situation of their environment, and they do something about it. This is a reminder to us that we too could do the same and transform our situations.

Application

In your group, discuss the problems of water cleanliness and land productivity in your area. What can be done to change the situation? What can you do to make your lands more productive? What can be done to make your environment more habitable?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

‘This is what the Lord says: “I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.”’ (2 Kings 2:21)

Week 49

Transforming sadness into joy (Isaiah 35:1–10)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will be encouraged to dream of a community of joy, a community of comfort, a community of abundant physical and spiritual health.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week the Bible study encouraged us to consider how we could restore our environment to cleanliness and productivity. Today we are doing another Bible study that calls us to dream of a community that is being transformed in the right direction, to become a place of joy, a place of mutual encouragement, a place of physical and spiritual health. We are reading Isaiah 35:1–10.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Joy of the redeemed

The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the Lord,
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;

say to those with fearful hearts,
'Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he will come to save you.'

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.

The burning sand will become a pool,
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay,
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way.
The unclean will not journey on it;
wicked fools will not go about on it.

No lion will be there,
nor any ravenous beast;
they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there,

and those the Lord has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;

everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 35:1–10

Questions

- What are the promises about the environment that we find in this passage?
- What are the people asked to do for each other?
- What will be the conditions of physical and spiritual health being prophesied here?
- What kind of community are we encouraged to dream about by reading this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- This passage gives great promises about the restoration of the environment where the desert lands and the wilderness will blossom, and people will rejoice because of the changes they see. The dry places will be watered, and plants will grow where land used to be a desert.
- The people are asked to transform their relationships, to encourage and strengthen those who are weak and fearful.
- God will restore not only nature and relationships, but he will also restore physical health: the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the mute will speak, and the lame will walk. Communication and relationship with God will be restored: it will be like a highway connecting people to their God.
- This passage speaks of the day of the Lord when God restores everything to its original state as it was at creation. It calls people to dream of a better future when life in the community will be harmonious as it was at creation. It calls for a restoration of nature, restoration of relationships between people and restoration of our communication with God. This picture serves as a model of what we should be aiming at in our efforts to transform our community.

Application

Using the picture of the community given in this passage, describe the steps you could take to transform your community into that image. What are you going to do in practical terms to restore your environment, to encourage and support those who are in need, to restore cleanliness and health in the community, to restore spiritual health by faith in God?

Record your ideas and plans in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear."' (Isaiah 35:3–4)

Week 50

Empowered by God to transform the community (Numbers 13:26–33; 14:1–9)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will be encouraged to trust God as we step out and transform our community in his power.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'Last week we were encouraged to dream of a better, transformed community and we put together different ideas of what we should be doing to turn that dream into reality. Today we are doing another Bible study that encourages us to trust God to help us overcome all our difficulties and succeed in our dream. We are reading Numbers 13:26–33, and Numbers 14:1–9.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passages aloud.

Report on the exploration

They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: 'We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.'

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.' But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.' And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, 'The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.'

Numbers 13:26–33

The people rebel

That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to each other, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, 'The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.'

Numbers 14:1–9

Questions

- Moses has sent 12 chosen leaders to spy in the land God has promised to his people. What is the report when the spies come back?

- What are the comments that some of the spies make that discourage the people?

- What reason do Caleb and Joshua use to persuade the people that they can go and conquer the land of promise?

- What lessons can we learn from this story to strengthen us in our efforts to transform our community?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- When the 12 spies come back from their mission, they bring a mixed report. They speak of a land of milk and honey, and they even show a large grape to prove it.

- However, ten of the spies add comments about the size of the walls of the cities and the power of the people in that land. That discourages the people and they all lose hope and start thinking of choosing another leader to take them back to Egypt, the land of their former slavery.

- Caleb and Joshua are the only two spies who still believe they can conquer the land with the help of their God. Unfortunately, they are the minority and people prefer to listen to the other ten who bring a discouraging report. The consequences are that a whole generation dies in the desert because they refuse to trust their God.

- This is a very instructive story for us in our efforts to transform our community. Sometimes those who focus their attention on the size of the problems will discourage us from moving on. They will tell us, with supporting evidence, that the projects are too ambitious. But if we trust in the power of our God, we can take the land and transform it. Let's try to be like Joshua and Caleb rather than walk in the steps of the other ten spies. With the help of our God, we will win!

Application

As a group, discuss some of the discouraging comments you have had to overcome to continue in your quest to transform your community. What are the big challenges that could cause your project to fail if the power of God was not on your side?

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.' (Numbers 14:8)

Week 51

Everything was good: Assessing our achievements (Genesis 1:26–31)

Learning objective: At the end of this Bible study, we will have understood the importance of reviewing what we have achieved as a step towards planning for the future.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Capabilities, Living faith

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Ask some of the participants to summarise what they learnt from the last Bible study.
- Introduce the new Bible study and say, 'We are getting to the end of the year in our transformative Bible studies. It is time to look back and evaluate what we have learnt, what we have changed in our lifestyles and relationships. In the Bible we are reminded to imitate God as his children and today we are looking at a passage where God looked back at his creation and drew the conclusion it was good. We are reading Genesis 1:26–31.'
- Ask one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

The beginning

> Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
>
> So God created mankind in his own image,
> in the image of God he created them;
> male and female he created them.
>
> God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'
>
> Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.
>
> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.
>
> **Genesis 1:26–31**

Questions

- What does the passage tell us about the creation of mankind?
- What does the passage say about the other living creatures?
- How does God perceive the whole of creation when he looks back?
- What lessons do we draw from this passage?

Suggested answers to share with the group

- Mankind is created in the image of God, male and female: there is no inequality at creation. And God gives them his authority to take care of creation and he makes provision for their survival. Provision is also made for all the other living creatures.
- God looks at what he has done and is pleased, and he declares that everything is good. Throughout the six days of creation, we see God looking back, evaluating what he has done and declaring it is good before he proceeds to the next day.

- This passage is a clear call to us to imitate God as our heavenly Father. We must remember that we are created in his image, male and female. Inequalities come after sin, and we are called to restore everything to its original beauty. Men and women are given enough to live on, to have a life of dignity. They are given a mandate to look after God's creation. God looks back and declares everything good.

Application

Take time to look back and remind each other what you have achieved together through this year. Can you say, like God, that all is good? Take this assignment home and next week, spend time reminding each other what you have learnt, and what you have changed in your lifestyles and relationship with each other, with God and with nature.

Record your thoughts in your group log book.

Bible verse to memorise

'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

Week 52

Celebration (Psalm 107)

Learning objective: The aim of this Bible study is to look back and celebrate the successes that flow from putting into practice the different lessons we have learnt through the different Bible studies in the past year.

Spokes of the Light Wheel:

Personal relationships, Emotional and mental wellbeing, Physical health, Participation and influence, Care of the environment, Material assets and resources, Capabilities, Living faith, Social connections

Introduction

- Ask one of the participants to start with a short prayer.
- Introduce the conversation by saying, 'Last week the Bible study we did called on us to look back and consider the outcomes of what we learnt. Today we are sharing our experiences and thanking God for all we have achieved. We are reading Psalm 107 but we will not discuss it. It is just a prompt to stir our hearts to remember where we have come from, and what we have gone through, and to draw us to thank God and rejoice.'
- Ask one of the participants who reads well to read Psalm 107 and read twice verses 35–38 (highlighted).

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures for ever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story –
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.

Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.

They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.

He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness,
prisoners suffering in iron chains,
because they rebelled against God's commands
and despised the plans of the Most High.

So he subjected them to bitter labour;
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,
and broke away their chains.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

for he breaks down gates of bronze
and cuts through bars of iron.

Some became fools through their rebellious ways
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

They loathed all food
and drew near the gates of death.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

He sent out his word and healed them;
he rescued them from the grave.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

Let them sacrifice thank-offerings
and tell of his works with songs of joy.

Some went out on the sea in ships;
they were merchants on the mighty waters.

They saw the works of the Lord,
his wonderful deeds in the deep.

For he spoke and stirred up a tempest
that lifted high the waves.

They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;
in their peril their courage melted away.

They reeled and staggered like drunkards;
they were at their wits' end.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.

He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.

They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people
and praise him in the council of the elders.

He turned rivers into a desert,
flowing springs into thirsty ground,

and fruitful land into a salt waste,
because of the wickedness of those who lived there.

He turned the desert into pools of water
and the parched ground into flowing springs;

there he brought the hungry to live,
and they founded a city where they could settle.

They sowed fields and planted vineyards
that yielded a fruitful harvest;

he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased,
and he did not let their herds diminish.

Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled
by oppression, calamity and sorrow;

he who pours contempt on nobles
made them wander in a trackless waste.

But he lifted the needy out of their affliction
and increased their families like flocks.

The upright see and rejoice,
but all the wicked shut their mouths.

Let the one who is wise heed these things
and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.

Psalm 107

Discussion

The writer of this psalm lists reasons why different people should thank God. What do we have to thank God for? We have covered 51 lessons that helped us to look at different facets of our lives and the life in our community. What lessons have we learnt? What transformations have we seen happening in different areas of our personal lives, our families and our community? What can we show to people who have not been with us that would prove to them we are in a process of change? Read the following questions and invite people to give testimonies on each question

Questions

- Who can give us a personal story of change in terms of relationship with self or with others (inside or outside your family)?
- Who can give us a testimony of change in their relationship with God, someone whose faith has been improved by our Bible studies?
- Who can give us a testimony of healing in their heart and emotions because of a Bible study?
- Who can give us a testimony of improvements in managing money or family life?
- Do we have a testimony of change in the way we deal with our environment?
- Who can give us a testimony of a vision for a better life and what has been achieved through that vision?
- What can we show to a visitor to prove that our lives have been impacted by the Bible studies?

Summary

Summarise the main lessons that have been learnt, the problems and the resources that have been identified, and people's visions of change. Write all these things down in the group log book.

Conclusion

This first volume of the CCT Bible studies facilitator's guide constitutes a foundational journey for the transformative small groups. Our intention is to develop second-year and third-year manuals. These forthcoming guides will systematically build upon these foundations, ensuring a sustained and intentional progression toward the holistic growth and maturity of the small groups and, consequently, the broader transformation of the church and communities across the world.

In the meantime, our prayers are with you as you work through what you have learnt and grow in full assurance of faith that change is possible and God is with you, every step of the way.

Feedback on resource

We'd love to hear how it helped you. Your feedback helps us improve and share more of what matters.

learn.tearfund.org/feedback

‘Everyone is created in the image of God and can reach their full potential.’

Peninah Kayitesi Rutayisire,
Regional CCT Advisor, Tearfund

learn.tearfund.org
Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 3906 3906 publications@tearfund.org

Registered office: Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE. Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland) (0126)

tearfund