

Discovery Bible study:

Read – John 1:1-14 or Romans 8: 12-21 or Luke 15:11-31

The passage is read in multiple ways – first reading round the room, then one person read with others listening, and then with bibles closed everyone pitching in to try and recall what they have read without looking at the passage

Then answer the following questions?

1. What does this passage tell us about God, Jesus, people and/or life?
2. Does it give us any promises, principles, commands or warnings?
3. What is God saying to me through this, and what am I going to do about it?
4. Who can I tell about what I have learnt here, within the next week?

Respond:

Spend some time listening to a worship song. Write down as a prayer/reminder one way in which you are going to live out your new identity as God's beloved child this week. Pray for the this truth to renew your understanding of who you are and the strength of God's spirit to live out this new identity.

Joining a group and other resources:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160. There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos:

<http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>



GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; in - to each other; out - to mission

Up

Picture Jesus next to you at work, in the car, at the table, at school, in your home, and as you walk this week. He knows you completely and loves you perfectly. He is always listening to what you might say. What do you say? How do you talk to him?

In

Jesus told his disciples that the woman who anointed him with perfumed oil had done "a beautiful thing" for him. Rub some sweet smelling perfume or oil on your hands. Ask God to make you a blessing to others this week.

Out

Can you give someone an extravagantly generous gift this week? You might buy something, or you might make something or give extravagantly of your time. Give to someone who is not expecting it!

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 23rd March

At St Mark's: Today is the second of our two church fasting days during Lent. **Read:** Psalm 69

Question: When have you felt alone? **Pray:** Thank Jesus for all the ways in which he understands how we can feel. Please pray this week for the rehearsals of "The Last Week" and last minute preparations... **Act:** Put the vinegar and sponge by the cross.

Tuesday 24th March

Read: John 2:13-25: **Question:** What do you know about in the world that is unfair and unjust? What can you do about it? **Pray:** Lord, make us care about those whose lives are weighed down by poverty and injustice. Amen. Pray for those situations you have just talked about. **Act:** Tax dodging by some unscrupulous multinational companies costs poor countries and their communities an estimated \$160bn every year – far more than the global aid budget. Take action! Help to stamp out tax dodging at christianaid.org.uk/actnow

Wednesday 25th March

Read: Matthew 26:14-25: **Question:** Why did the chief priests want to kill Jesus? **Pray:** For all those who have experienced "bad religion". **Act:** Find out something about another church in Harrogate, and pray that we can love each other.

Thursday 26th March

Read: Isaiah 53:1-12: **Question:** How are we healed by Jesus' wounds? **Pray:** Thank you Lord, that you died for me. That out of love, you took everything upon yourself. Amen. **Act:** Find a picture of Jesus on the cross that helps you reflect on his suffering, and spend time with it. Tomorrow you will need: to bake bread!

Friday 27th March

Read: Luke 22:14- 20: **Question:** What is a covenant? **Pray:** Be silent for a few minutes, and imagine Jesus sitting at the table with you. Rest in his presence. **Act:** Bake some bread, and as you eat it, give thanks for Jesus giving his life for you.

Saturday 28th March

At St Mark's: Don't forget...donkey tomorrow! **Read:** Matthew 26:36-46: **Question:** Why do we have vigils? **Pray:** Thank you that you had the courage to do your Father's will. May I have that same courage. Amen. **Act:** Spend the last 15 minutes of your day in silent waiting on God.

SEE HIS LOVE COURSE SESSION FOUR: KNOWING YOU ARE A CHILD

First thoughts:

What was the main thing God said to you through the sermon?

Opening Prayer:

Read Psalm 139:1-18 – meditate on verses 13&14. All that God has made is 'wonderful', nothing is an accident or a mistake. Enjoy being in the Father's presence knowing that he made you and that you are wonderful.

Activity:

Spend some time looking at these pictures of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt, and then pray in response to what is laying on your heart.

[https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/28034108/Discipleship notes/rembrandt-prodigal-son-detail2.jpg](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/28034108/Discipleship%20notes/rembrandt-prodigal-son-detail2.jpg)

[https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/28034108/Discipleship notes/785px-Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn - Return of the Prodigal Son - Google Art Project.jpg](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/28034108/Discipleship%20notes/785px-Rembrandt%20Harmensz%20van%20Rijn%20-%20Return%20of%20the%20Prodigal%20Son%20-%20Google%20Art%20Project.jpg)

The question I want to ask is: who are you?

When we ask that question I do not want to know what your name is or where you come from or what you do. But the real question is: what is your identity? What or rather who are you really deep inside of you? Who are you in your inner most being?

How we see ourselves dramatically changes how we see the world, how we interact with others, and how we take on and grow in life. How do you introduce your self? When you meet someone new at a party or in a work

situation or down the gym, what is the second question you normally ask? 1) What is your name? 2) What do you do? We like to try to understand who the person is we are talking too, we want to know something of their identity. We do this by asking their name and occupation.

Are you a sinner because you sin? Are you a thief because you stole something? Are you a failure because you failed at something? Many of us would say so. These statements are statements of identity. They identify us with an action or series of actions. People have always associated their identity with their actions, with what they do.

For example, if you do carpentry for a living, you are a carpenter. If you manage people, you are a manager. If you play the piano, you are a pianist. If you play the drums, you are a drummer.

So often this is the way that we understand ourselves. What we do, defines who we are. We swallow the lie that we are only as good as the results we produce. Whether that is reaching the monthly sales target, winning the next court case, getting the right number of children to obtain A grades in their exams, winning the next person for Jesus. What is the tape playing in your head? What message are you listening to that keeps telling you that your identity is wrapped up in delivering the right results – you are what you do.

Interestingly throughout the Bible, identity is always determined by relationship and not by results. When God reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush he says “I am the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob”. The Old Testament is full of genealogies – a person’s identity is revealed through their relationships and not what they do. Jesus identity is revealed in the beginning of Mathew’s gospel in the context of who he is related to, thus emphasizing his humanity.

However it is the devil’s strategy that we believe we are what we do. It is easy for our achievements to give us a sense of status and purpose. So what we do becomes our identity. Our worth and significance become directly related to the results we achieve. This results in a constant struggle to perform better, to achieve more and when things don’t go well, the feeling of loss of status and rejection seek to tie us up and overwhelm us. It is through this that the Devil can keep us imprisoned in shame, worthlessness, and weakness. He can make us feel powerless to change our

lives. He can chain us to performance based living and hopelessness to ever achieving the elusive golden ring on the merry go round of life.

But God works differently. God calls into being that which is not. God calls us to trust His Son as our Savior and in so doing, He declares that we have a brand new identity and nature.

“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received a spirit of Sonship. And we cry Abba, Father” Romans 8:15

He declares what we are (saints or sons) and then our actions begin to conform to that identity. There is a fundamental principle at work in this. God knows that what we believe about ourselves will ultimately influence our behavior. He knows that how we see ourselves has power over how we live. He knows that when we see ourselves the way He sees us, it will change our lives!

And He declares every Christian to have a brand new identity; an identity that is so revolutionary in it’s meaning that it will change not only our lives but the world itself! And the devil has a stake in preventing you from doing this!

Everybody wants to be somebody. All of us strive to be recognised. Most of the things that we do, we do to receive recognition for who we really are. We strive daily just to understand our own identity. But listen, if we are a child of God we do not need to try to become someone or something, we already are someone. We are a child of the only living God. Somehow it is time for us to grab hold again of this truth and to live as men and women who know that they are sons and daughters of God. We need to inhabit this new identity and be confident in who we are. Let our new identity shape the way we live.

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

When you place your trust in Jesus Christ for your life, for your sins, for your acceptance before God, the bible says that He makes you His child. The word become isn’t speaking about a process but about the transformation into something that we were not before. By the phrase, “he gave the power to become children of God,” means that God gives you the power to become what you could not become on your own. It is explained further in the next verse. “...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” (v13)

Becoming a child of God is a sovereign act of God, not an achievement by man. Going to church, being good, being raised in the church or getting baptized seven times won't make you a child of God. Having Christian parents, uncles and aunts, won't make you a child of God. It will only make you a child of wrath born of Christian parents.

You become a child of God by faith, by responding to the fact that God is calling your name.

Gal 3:26 "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus". You become a child of God by God's choice...He draws you, He calls your name and you get a choice to respond to His invitation or to reject His invitation to trust Jesus Christ and to become His child by faith.

We respond to Christ's work on the cross by acknowledging our need for forgiveness and by trusting what Jesus did on our behalf, we are changed from the inside out. God puts a brand new spirit and a brand new set of desires (heart) inside of us.

Ask this question to yourself right now, "Am I a child of God?" I believe God is calling your name today. If He is, you can become His child today. You can respond to His invitation to follow Him today. By faith.

I think this is the single most important truth to get hold of in the Christian life. We talk so often about being a child of God that I think we become blasé about it and its implication for freedom and life in all its fullness. Its something many of us know in our heads but struggle to live out and inhabit on a daily basis. I was talking to someone the other day and he said the single biggest issue for all adopted children is living out the new identity as a loved child in the new family, being secure in their new identity. Its no different for you and I. we have been adopted into a new family where relationship not results define who we are.

This is at the root of what I want you to see and hear this morning.

God sees you far differently that you see yourself. God does not want you to remain in captivity to the lies of Satan. God desires that you see the freedom and privilege that comes with being a child of God. God says so many things positively about you and I in His word. Why don't we believe Him? Perhaps we have never come to grips with all that being a child of God contains. When those lies about your value come, renounce them with the truth. I urge you to "hold every thought captive, " and "to be transformed by the renewing of your mind". Live in the freedom of the new reality that has been won for us by

Christ's death on the cross.

Remember the story of the UGLY DUCKLING (Hans Christian Andersen)
A mother duck is bemused when one of her eggs, larger than the others, takes longer to hatch. When it does a small bird is born that is noticeably different from the other ducklings. He is mocked and attacked for his grey tardiness and ugly appearance, eventually fleeing in search of respite and identity. Following a severe winter the bird decides to seek out the royal birds he had seen before and dreamt of being like. He finds the swans, expecting they too will reject him.

Hans Christian Andersen writes....."But what did he see in the clear stream? His own image; no longer a dark, gray bird, ugly and disagreeable to look at, but a graceful and beautiful swan. To be born in a duck's nest, in a farmyard, is of no consequence to a bird, if it is hatched from a swan's egg. He now felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasures and happiness around him; for the great swans swam round the new-comer, and stroked his neck with their beaks, as a welcome."

The world is waiting for God's children to discover who they really are and in so doing begin to fulfill their God-given purpose of standing out so significantly that the world will want to be who we are!