



‘One and Undivided’
24th June – 29th July 2018

A Trinity Home Groups Resource

Welcome,

A big **‘thank-you’** to all home groups leaders and group members for using this curriculum in their home groups. We have received very good feedback from those who did the ‘Holy Spirit - Holy Living’ in their home groups. We still invite other home groups to consider joining us on this journey. If you are not in a home group, please go to our website, there’s a lot for you there.

This is a period between series and covering the school holidays. This opportunity to return to Lectionary for a short time in a season of Series’ allows us to reflect on Scripture with freedom. It may be useful for us to reflect on the New Testament readings at this time though to keep the momentum that has been built in the past four series.

We are taken back to Lectionary at a very special time in the life of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. 2018 is the 60th anniversary of the MCSA’s 1958 conference statement that ‘We are One and Undivided’. So as we live our lives together, let’s remember that unity is our strength.

Don’t forget that we’re still in the Pentecost season, which is the longest on the Christian calendar. This should remind all of us in our home groups that we are Jesus’ branches, and expected to bear fruit. If you’d like to know what I mean, please read Galatians 5:22-23.

Something to ponder on:

I trust you already have this booklet before the 24th of June. If that’s the case, I want you to do this, if you have time. Please read the notes before going to Sunday worship service and after. Doing this will help you spiritually and in your preparation for your home group meeting. As you listen to a sermon, don’t only think about home group discussion questions, but also ask yourself these questions:

- What is God saying to me
- What am I going to do about it

God bless you!

Sunday 24th June

- Theme: **Unity through Christ**
- Sub-theme: Open your hearts wide!
- Scripture: 1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49;
Psalm 9:9-20;
2 Corinthians 6:1-13
Mark 4:35-41

In this passage of scripture, Paul makes a lot of effort to explain the seeming duality of the word in which a Christ-follower finds him- or herself: vs 6-10. While it seems one way, in actual fact it is the opposite. So too with our lives, our society will tell us to live in one way while Christ invites us to live a different way. There is a lot that divides our families, society, churches, country and the whole world.

As the Methodist Church of SA celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the 1958 Conference Statement that we are (and are seeking to be), 'One and Undivided', this statement is as necessary and true now as it was then!

The need of Heart Expansion - Why should we seek it?

1. The heart is capable of it. The Gospel makes it possible for the heart to expand
2. We are representatives of Christ who have to stand between the loving Son of God and the fallen world. How great in soul should Christians be!
3. Enlargement of heart is essential to our usefulness. It is only the heart expanding with love that can turn time, talent, property and acquisitions to make Jesus real in this world
4. We are responsible for the condition of the heart whether contracted or enlarged. The tendency of the gospel to enlarge the heart: eg. it enlarged the heart of Paul, and he believed it enlarged the hearts of the Corinthians. His views and feelings were once confined to himself, but after he had understood and loved the gospel his heart expanded, and he felt interested in everything that bring people to a close relationship with Jesus.

Focus: Being one and undivided.

For reflection

We do not choose our brothers and sisters in Christ, rather God brings us together into one family of faith. Which brothers and sisters have we not opened our hearts wide to?

By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God's servants --- by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God.

When last did you experienced hardships because of your faith in Jesus?

Notes

Sunday 1st July:

- Theme: Balancing the scales
- Sub-theme: In this way both are treated equally (2 Corinthians 8:13)
- Scripture: 2 Samuel 1: 1, 17-27;
Psalm 130;
2 Corinthians 8: (1-6) 7-15;
Mark 5:21-43

This scripture tells of a time in the early church where one community came to the aid of another. The story is about equality as well as breaking notions as small as nationality and distance. Recognising another's needs is what makes us human and responding to another's needs shows us to be Christ-followers. This is not a quick and easy process though, equality takes a long time to be realised (and we may never see the full results of it)!

The Spirit in which Paul urged it.

The apostle spoke strongly, not in the way of coercion, but of counsel and persuasion (verse. 8, 10). Note the difference between the dictatorial authority of the priest and the gentle helpfulness of the minister (2 Corinthians 1:24). St. Paul would not even command Philemon to receive his slave (Philemon 1:8, 9, 13, 14). And in the case before us he would not order the Corinthians to give even to a charity which he considered an important one. This is the watchword of Socialists, who cry out for equality in circumstances. God has given to everyone a certain capacity and a certain power of enjoyment. Beyond that one cannot find delight.

Christ suggests that if we are all loving human beings, then there will be enough love for everyone; if we share what we have, then there will be enough resource for everyone.

For Reflection

We give, not out of what we don't have, but what we do have. What do we really have to offer beyond money?

What is your reaction to inequality?

Where does our society most need equality, and how can we expand our immediate circle?

Which structures do we take for granted that need to change?

Sunday 8th July

- Theme: Strength vs strength
- Sub-theme: For when I am weak, then I am strong
(2 Corinthians 12:10)
- Scripture: 2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10
Psalm 48
2 Corinthians 12: 2-10
Mark 6: 1-13

Weakness a source of strength

Paul's weakness – That is a quality which we are not accustomed to associate with the apostle, knowing how much he laboured but when we go deeper we discover that one of the most distinctive preparations for the work which he accomplished was his feebleness.

The examples we give to children is that of strength and capability. 'Big boys don't cry' is a well-known saying that highlights this. Others have to do with expectations of society, like not showing weakness in the workplace (and even that of having a work persona and a non-work persona), always being strong when we are out in public and hiding emotions and feelings from others for a number of reasons.

The connection of Paul's weakness with his strength.

1. There was strength in his weakness.
2. There was strength as the result of his weakness.
3. The consciousness of his own weakness led him to cast himself unreservedly upon the Divine help.

Recognising our own weakness also means we can recognise other's weakness and be okay with it. There is no way to have compassion on someone else if I have not been able to have compassion on myself.

God is the source of our strength, there is no way we can bear up to the strains of modern life without God's help – sometimes we don't recognise it as God's work in our lives, but God helps us through.

Sunday 15th July

- Theme: God brings everything together
- Sub-theme: Let us praise God for his glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6)
- Scripture: 2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12b-19
Psalm 24
Ephesians 1: 3-14
Mark 6: 14-29

Except God Himself, there is nothing better than the works of God. Since this is so, let us in all things labour to yield Him glory; through Him, and for Him.

God generally intends the praise of His grace in all who are predestined by Him. Let this stir us up to glorify Him because of His grace to us. Even as waters come from the sea; and return again to it, so from this Divine Ocean comes every blessing. Every benefit should be acknowledged with thankfulness.

We were created in God's image. We were created in God's likeness. Sin separated us from God, other human beings and creation, but God's way is reconciliation. The grace which now works all good things for us, is the same which before all-time purposed them to us. His teaching on breaking power struggles, his acts of self-sacrifice for others, his move towards healing and making whole was always at the heart of his ministry. There is scope here to dig deeply into the life and teaching of Jesus to illustrate how reconciliation actually happens in reality. Sin separates and destroys what it separates. God brings everything together.

Important words: to mend, to build. How do we go forward mending and building?

For reflection

What reconciliation needs to happen in our lives, home group, and our society?

How will we practically make this happen? Prayer is the beginning point of this.

Sunday 22nd July

- Theme: Two become one
- Sub-theme: You are God's special people and members of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19)
- Scripture: 2 Samuel 7: 1-14a
Psalm 89: 20-37
Ephesians 2: 11-22
Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

The Church at Ephesus was a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile converts. The old feuds between them had not passed away. The Jew refused to let go the claim of his nation to some religious superiority over the Gentile, and thought the latter ought to stand afar off and worship in some outer court. But the great design of Christianity, argues the apostle, is to abolish these enmities, to break down these partition walls, to bring these separated worshippers both nigh to each other, and nigh to God.

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have allowed culture, language, practice, creed, etc. to divide us. We are all God's children. Christ declares, he is both our peace and our peacemaker. In Himself, and by Himself, He made one new society; not strangers to another, but one large family, joined together to be a loving family and members of the household of God.

We now look to what we have in common (Christ) rather than what separates us. Christ is the teacher to all - even to those who don't always acknowledge it. We all need to take our cues from his teaching and life-example.

For reflection

Christ loved people who didn't know him, how can we do the same? Being united with others is difficult, what are some of the biggest obstacles we have to overcome to truly be united in Christ. What does it mean for us to be far from God? How do we act and react? Is it all healthy?

Sunday 29th July

- Theme: To be filled with the nature of God
- Subtheme: How broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love (Ephesians 3:18)
- Scripture: 2 Samuel 11:1-15;
Psalm 14;
Ephesians 3:14-21;
John 6:1-21

We encourage home groups to use Trevor Hudson's sermon on healing.

Paul is praying for the church in Ephesus this is a heart-cry for them, that they would know and experience God's love. Seeing it as a prayer for others helps us to see the grace with which it was said in verses 17 & 18, "I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love" speaks of roots which give stability and pull nourishment from the ground. This is a good metaphor for God's love. (This is echoed in Psalm 139:5-10)

Paul prays for strength in our inner selves because he recognises that we don't have the strength within ourselves. Inner strength is grown and cultivated by God – this may be a good opportunity to speak of Examine of consciousness, and the inward spiritual disciplines as ways to intentionally make space for God in our inner selves.

As shown in verse 20, our view is narrow, where God's view is wide. We cannot even imagine some of what God has planned for us. We lack the language and imagination to see what God has in store, which is another reason we should be trusting in God.

For Reflection

Do we resonate with Paul’s heart-cry for us?

Ask the questions: Where do we lack inner strength?

What does this mean for our faith-journey?

Are we willing to trust God, or do we keep looking to our own smaller views?

Healing is far bigger than cure, have you experienced that in your life or seen it somewhere else?

Confession opens up the clogged channels of our lives. Have you found confession healing in your life?

Notes
