st james in the city

Using these Bible Studies

The studies are broken down into different sections that each focus on one of St James in the City's values. We think this is a helpful way to have time together that focuses on many different areas of our lives as Christians, and not simply in getting more 'head knowledge' about God.

Live:
The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. The questions in the section will help you get to know the members of your group and help grow that sense of family which we are called into.

Grow:
In this section, the questions are designed to bring you to a deeper understanding of the Bible and to help you consider how the truths of the Bible can impact your life.

Serve:
Nothing is more fulfilling than using your God-given gifts to serve and help meet the needs of others in God's family. This section will help make that desire a reality. You will be encouraged and challenged to take steps to serve those inside and outside of the group.

Build:
The thought of sharing our faith can be scary and can feel awkward. Don't worry: this is a common feeling! However, God wants to use you to reach those around you for Christ. This section is designed to give you and your group practical, manageable steps for sharing Christ that can become a part of your everyday life.

Love:
You were made for God's pleasure. Even when we gather as a smaller group, it is great to have the opportunity to worship and to surrender your heart to God. This could come in a variety of forms such as prayer, singing, or simply sharing what God is doing in your lives. Contribute as much or as little as you feel able to.

Build – Missionary Heroes

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Introduction

Jesus clearly commands us to go out on mission (Matthew 28:16-20):
“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”.
Yet in Luke 24:47, Jesus indicates that we start at home and move outwards: mission begins at home.

This series looks at various characters from Biblical times (and later) who all had a mission and what happened when they carried it out faithfully. We shall see that, just like us, they were not perfect BUT they answered God’s call and were obedient. They might have gone to far-flung places OR they may have stayed closer to home, but they all took seriously the call to **Build** God’s kingdom.

Study 1:
Jesus calls us to mission – out of bad comes good. The Church in crisis, persecution, Philip is guided to the Ethiopian official. Evangelism begins at home.

Study 2:
Examples of recent missionaries of different styles: Mother Teresa – The face of Jesus in all, Eric Liddle – Muscular Christianity, David Livingstone – A life dedicated.

Study 3:
John the Baptist – preparation for someone else – the pathfinder – make the way straight. You may not be a visible evangelist but your apparently small actions will pave the way for others. This too is evangelism.

Study 4:
There is room for the reluctant. Jonah – the grumpy evangelist. Feel like you’re not good enough? You’re right, you’re not! But God will use you anyway! Don’t believe for a moment that the Bible is full of perfect, shining people who lived a perfect life for God and who didn’t make any mistakes. The truth is that God chose to use some of the most dodgy characters imaginable; tax collectors, prostitutes, the arrogant, the uncaring, the cruel, murderers and thieves! There is hope for us yet!

Study 5:
Long-term calling and short-term practice (daily). Are you in for the long haul? Scriptures can be Paul’s conversion and the example that God uses anyone, even a one time enemy. Discouraged? Feel that your time is past? Maybe it’s the beginning of a new chapter!

Build – Missionary Heroes

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Study 1: Philip (and other early evangelists)

Live
What would you do if you were given just a short time to live? Who would you spend time with?

Love
Start your time together in prayer and worship. Thank God that he is in charge of building his kingdom.

Grow
Read Acts 8:1-3 together. This is the first time the church faces real opposition.

- How do you think the members of the early church felt?
- Have you ever been persecuted for your faith?
- When do you find it most difficult to stand up for what you believe?

Read Acts 8:26-40 together. The Gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem…

- Have you ever felt God ask you to do something out of the ordinary?
- What do you think it means to be an evangelist?
- Why was God able to use Philip?
- Does this story of Philip encourage you or does it make you feel inadequate?

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-4 and John 20:10-18.

- Timothy and Mary are also evangelists. How do these 3 early church evangelists vary?

Build
Which one of the three do you most associate with?
We are called to be ourselves as evangelists – what does that look like for you?
Who are you praying for to become a Christian?
What can you do to draw alongside them?

Prayer
Close in prayer for each other: pray for those you mentioned above (perhaps in twos or threes).

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Study 2: Well-known Christians

Live

What is the most exciting/exotic place you have visited?

Love

Start your time together in prayer and worship. Thank God that he calls people from all places and to all places.

Grow

Read the stories of these people of God. What can you learn from them?

David Livingstone

David Livingstone's story is incredible. He was born in a poor Scottish workhouse in 1813 with little to no prospects. His family couldn't read or write and it was expected that he would continue in this way. But David felt a strong call from God to serve him in missions abroad, which was normally a role reserved for the educated middle classes. David worked hard to learn to read and write and saved money to earn a place in college. He later went to Africa, becoming a pioneer and explorer. His life was filled with illnesses and tragedies, including the death of his wife and children, yet he remained single minded about God's service.
We learn from David's story that no matter what your current situation is, when God has a call on your life, you can achieve it! When God calls, he equips!

Eric Liddell
Eric Liddell competed in the 1924 Olympics and he famously refused to run the 100 yards race as it was on a Sunday. His "head back, face to the sky" running technique was unconventional and criticised by many. But somehow, he was fast! He was quoted as saying, "God made me fast and when I run I feel his pleasure."
Eric refused to run the 100 yards race. He realised his speed was a gift from God and was an extension of his worship – he couldn't run without God's pleasure. He was entered into the 400 yard race instead, in which he was considered to have no chance as it was 4 times longer than he was used to! But God gave him the speed for the 400 yard race too!
Eric became a superstar but he remained unassuming in his attitude and character. After competing in the Olympics he travelled to China to be a missionary in poor conditions for the rest of his life. He gave up fame and glamour for the service of God and others. Our lesson from Eric is that we should always use the gifts that God has given us and feel his pleasure!

Mother Teresa
Mother Teresa said she saw the face of Jesus in others, and particularly the needy. Her life was totally committed. She came from a middle class background in Albania, and could have had a comfortable, trouble free life; instead she chose God's service. One day when she was walking along a street in India she found an old lady who was in a waste bin outside her house. Her family, who no longer wanted her, had put her there; she was ill and had become a burden. She was expected to die with no inconvenience to her family inside the house.
When Mother Teresa saw herm her heart was filled with love and compassion and helped her. The lady died a short time later, but she did so with some dignity and knowing that someone loved and cared for her. In that old ladies face, Mother Teresa saw the face of Jesus.
Think about how you can reach others and touch their lives in a way that may bring them closer to God. What gifts can you use?

- How does hearing about these people and their stories make you feel? Do they inspire you or make you feel inadequate? Or maybe even both?!
- Do you think that being involved in mission is just about preaching and teaching?
- What other things can be offered to God?
- What types of people does God want to serve him?
- Does it seem too hard to dedicate your life to Christ like these people did? Do v.37-40 make you change your mind?

Serve

Read Matthew 25:31-46 together.

- Does this passage apply just to Christians or to non-Christians as well? Does it matter? (see 25:40).
- How does this inspire you to reach out to and serve others?
- What do you think of the judgement at the end of the passage? How does it make you feel?

Prayer

Thank God for all the people that inspire us and encourage us in our faith. Ask for God to reveal to us the gifts that we have and what we can do with them.

Study 3: John the Baptist

Live

Where are you on the introvert-extrovert scale? Do you work things out and make decisions primarily with your head, heart, or gut? Discuss in pairs.

Love

Start your time together in prayer and worship. Thank God for all the work he does in our lives that is hidden or behind the scenes.

Grow

John the Baptist went before Jesus and prepared the way for his ministry. It cost John his life, but his work had been vital to 'the main event' of Jesus! Read Matthew 3:1-12 together.

- In what ways was John's ministry similar to Jesus'? What was different about them?
    - Read Matthew 4:17-25 for a comparison if it helps.
- Why do you think so many people came to hear John's message (3:5)?
- 3:11-12 – what is the difference between John's baptism of water and Jesus' of fire?
- How did John the Baptist prepare people for Jesus' coming?

Serve

In a similar way to John, so much of our work reaching out to others happens in the background, whether that is the work of the Holy Spirit or of people making events happen.

- What happens in church that we might consider to be a "backroom" job?
    - How important are those jobs?
- Who does these 'backroom' jobs? What is special about them (if anything!)?

Build

In pairs, spend 5-10 minutes sharing what gifts/talents you have and whether they are 'backroom' or 'up-front' jobs. How are you using these gifts at the moment to help others know more about Jesus?

Prayer

Close in prayer. In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus tells us to ask God to send labourers into the harvest field. Pray for the right people in St James, Liverpool, the UK, and further afield to be called and sent with the gifts.

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Study 4: Paul

Live

Are you a stubborn person or easily persuaded? Share some stories of when this attitude has got you into (or out of) a sticky situation!

Love

Start your time together in prayer and worship. Thank God that he has called us from death to life and transformed us by his blood shed on the cross.

Grow

The story of Saul becoming Paul is one we all know well, but it is worth looking at it again! Read Acts 9:1-19 together.

- What do you think that people who knew Saul thought of his conversion? Did they believe it? Would you?
- 9:13-14 – would you have reacted the same as Ananias or differently? Why?
- Can you remember the moment 'the scales fell from your eyes' (9:18)? What did it look/feel like?
- What major events in your life have had an effect on you (for better or for worse)?
- Have there been any incidents in your life which should have changed you but didn't? Do you regret it? Do you still have the chance?

Build

Who are the people in our own lives who are most like Saul – completely opposed to hearing about God and seemingly very far away from him? Share in pairs and then feed back to the wider group.

Prayer

Close in prayer. Thank God for the amazing work he has done in our own lives and pray for those you shared about above. Pray that God would work miracles in them and bring them to know him.

You could commit to pray each day over the next week for one of these Sauls to become a Paul (either immediately or in time!)

Study 5: Future Workers

Live

Is what you are doing now (work/family/friends etc.) what you thought you would be 10 years ago? What do you think you will be doing in 10 years' time and what do you hope you will be doing?

Love

Start your time together in prayer and worship. Thank God for his faithfulness in the past and that he will remain faithful all through our future.

Grow

We are coming to the end of our series about helping to build God's kingdom and today is a chance to think about our own place in it a bit more. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and Hebrews 12:1-4.

- These passages talk about perseverance in our walks with God. In your experience, is our walk with God worth it?
- 1 Corinthians 9:25-26 – what training do you think Paul has in mind here?
- What helps you to keep going in your walk with God? How can you make sure that you keep drawing on these things?
- (In pairs) Hebrews 12:1,4 - What is weighing you down in your spiritual life? What help do you need to cast them off?

Serve

At the end of this series, who is called to serve God, and how? What training do you need to be more effective in your gifts?

Build

Is mission worth it? Or is it too much hassle?

After this study series, has your view of mission and service changed? In what ways? Do you feel you can do it? Or what can you do for God?

Prayer

Close in prayer. Pray and ask God to help us in our willingness to run the race for him. Pray that God would use us and the gifts he has given us for his service.

Let's also pray for missionaries from St James around the world: Chris and Liz in Spain, Jarod and Bexi in Croatia, Bryan and Cherry in China, James Harding and family teaching Church leaders in Kuala Lumpur.