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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.

Live – Protecting Unity

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Introduction

There is only one church, the church of faith ruled by the word of Jesus Christ alone. This is the true catholic church that has never disappeared…It is the body of Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Here at St James, we are part of the worldwide church. In Ephesians we are called to *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Unity is a common theme in the New Testament. Both unity inside the individual expressions of God's church and unity throughout the universal church are spoken about. For us at St James, our unity is shown in how we **Live** as community together.

In this series we will start by looking at unity in the universal church, and then look more practically at what this means for us at St James.

Study 1:

Unity in the early believers – a look at Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17 and what this says about unity.

Study 2:

Acting in love – how we can protect unity by loving each other well?

Study 3:

Working through tension – how can we overcome problems with others in our church and stay united when we disagree?

Study 4:

Supporting leaders – what does unity mean when it comes to all kinds of leadership in the church?

Live – Protecting Unity

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Study 1: Unity in the early believers

Live
Think back to a shared experience with family or friends. What was the best thing about your time and why?

Love
Start your time together in prayer and worship.

Grow
Read John 17 together.

This passage is at the end of the Last Supper, just before Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives (18:1) and is then arrested.

- What are your initial reactions to this passage?
  - Is there anything you don't understand?
  - What verse or verses jump out at you?
- What does this passage tell us about:
  - God?
  - Humanity/us?
- What do you find the hardest thing about the passage?
- 17:1-5 – what does Jesus mean about 'being glorified'?
- 17:6-12 – we belong to Jesus:
  - What does this mean for our unity?
  - Jesus guarded his disciples (17:12) – what does that mean?
- 17:13-19 – Jesus is now going to his Father:
  - What does 'the world' represent?
  - How are we sanctified?
  - We are sent into the world, but do not belong to it. What does that mean for our unity as a church?
- 17:20-26 – what would it look like for the universal church to be 'completely one'?
  - Why should the church work together to be completely united?
  - Why is it not?

Serve
Have a look at Open Doors' website or material (this might require some planning). Is there something practical you can do to show your unity with other believers around the world (e.g. writing a letter, sign a petition, write to your MP etc.)

Prayer
Close in prayer for each other: pray for unity within your group and within St James. Pray also for unity in the whole worldwide church – perhaps pray for Chris and Liz in Spain and Jarod and Bexi in Croatia and for persecuted believers.

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Study 2: Acting in Love

Live
Except for Jesus, do you have a role model for what love in action looks like?

Love
Start your time together in prayer and worship.

Grow
Read John 13:1-17 together.

- What are your initial reactions to this passage?
  - Is there anything you don't understand?
  - What verse or verses jump out at you?
- What does this passage tell us about:
  - God?
  - Humanity/us?
- What do you find the hardest thing about the passage?
- 13:1-5 – what do you think about what Jesus was doing?
  - Why did Jesus wash his disciples' feet?
  - What might the practical equivalent be for us today?
  - How often do we do an act like this?
- 13:6-11 – would you respond like Peter?
  - What washing is Jesus talking about?
  - What does this washing look like for us today?
- 13:12-17 – Jesus has given us this example. Why should we follow it?
- How does acting in love towards each other help preserve unity in St James?

Live
What does love in action mean for how you act to each other in the group and to everyone in St James?

Who do you find it difficult to love in St James? Since love is often determined by our actions, what could you practically do to change that?

Serve
How does our service show our love and our unity?

Build
What does a united and loving church say to those who don't yet know Jesus?

Prayer
Pray for each other: pray for help to act in love towards each other and to stay united.

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Study 3: Working through tension

Live

Are you good at keeping secrets? Which ones are easy to keep, and which ones are hard to keep to yourselves?

Love

Start your time together in prayer and worship.

Grow

Read Colossians 3:1-17 together.

- What are your initial reactions to this passage?
  - Is there anything you don't understand?
  - What verse or verses jump out at you?
- What does this passage tell us about:
  - God?
  - Humanity/us?
- What do you find the hardest thing about the passage?
- There is loads going on in this passage. What verses talk about how we should behave to each other and what do they say?
- 3:8 – this verse refers to bad language (probably not solely about 'rudeness' but also abusive language). What kind of things is Paul talking about?
- 3:9 – what kind of things might come under 'lying to each other'?
- 3:13 – what does forgiving each other look like?
- What does this passage say about preserving unity and how we do it?

Live

Practically, what can we do to avoid gossip? What is the difference in a church setting between gossip and "sharing"? Do we ever drift from sharing into gossip?

What do we do when we come across gossip and tackling it will cause conflict?

Are any of us currently struggling with conflict of any sort?

Prayer

Close in prayer for each other: pray that you would know how much to share with each other. Pray also for any conflict that you might be aware of in St James and among others.

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Study 4: Supporting leaders

Live
Who has been the best leader in your life (e.g. teacher, boss, youth leader etc.)? What made them a good leader?

Love
Start your time together in prayer and worship together.

Grow
Read Hebrews 13:7-18 together.

- What are your initial reactions to this passage?
  - Is there anything you don't understand?
  - What verse or verses jump out at you?
- What does this passage tell us about:
  - God?
  - Humanity/us?
- What do you find the hardest thing about the passage?
- 13:7-9 – what does it mean to 'remember your leaders'?
  - Who are the leaders in St James? Is it just the staff team/PCC or are there other leaders?
  - Discuss the responsibilities leaders have towards us, and our responsibilities towards our leaders.
- 13:10-16 – what leadership did Jesus show in his life?
- 13:17-18 – what is the dynamic between submitting to leaders and praying for them?
  - Does submitting to leaders mean the leaders are always right or cannot be criticised?
  - What does submitting practically look like?

Live
What would the consequences be within the church if we did not support our leaders?

Are there any practical ways that we can support our leaders within the church?

What impact on the work of the church in the outside community is there if we either support our leaders or do not support them?

Serve
How could you serve your group leader/other St James leaders this week?

Build
What role does leadership have in helping to build God's kingdom?

Prayer
Close in prayer for each other: pray for leaders in church and for more leaders to grow and be developed. Continue to pray for unity.