

Cruising or Crewing?

1: Commissioned by God

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this... Each share...

What do you personally remember most about Summer 2007?

In 12 months time, what do you think you will remember most about Summer 2008?

SERIES INTRODUCTION & WORSHIP

Please do this exercise!

First read the front page article of the Magazine (Cruising or Crewing?) which introduces the series –if you’ve not got one, see the website.

Now try this... Individually, on a piece of paper, write ‘cruising’ on the left and ‘crewing’ on the right.

- Take time to think about your life and write down areas of your life (home, work, friends, leisure, school, family etc) which you think you’re cruising in (going with the flow of the world) and areas in which you feel you’re crewing in (seeking God’s direction and living his way) –or somewhere in between.
- How can you move from cruising to crewing in some of these areas? Talk silently to God about it. Ask for his help.
- You may like to share some of what you’ve written with the whole group or in 2s/3s.

WORD

We start this series with Paul being sent by the church in Antioch. We will then look at events from his travels, including what happened at Philippi, before reading the letter he wrote to the Christians there.

Growth Group Notes

Sept-Dec 2008



For the next couple of studies, you may find it helpful to print out a map of the area (Israel, Turkey, Greece) at that time –from a Bible or online.

Read Acts 11:19-25 & 13:1-5

Discuss your initial reactions to these passages:

- Does anything in these passages jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Using **both** of these passages...

- What do you think Barnabas was like?
- What was the Antioch church like? How did it start? What did they do?
- What would it have been like to be a member of the Antioch church? Would you have wanted to be part of it? Why/why not?
- Compare life there to Christ Church & your Growth Group?
- Barnabas and Saul were known as 'teachers and prophets' (13:1). How do you feel they felt about becoming missionaries or evangelists? To what extent do you think they felt sent by the church or by God? In their shoes, would you have gone?

WHAT NEXT?

Re-read Acts 13:3. As a group or in 3s/4s, each share a situation you will find yourself in this week (however 'normal'). In turn, pray for that person, 'sending' them into that situation with God's blessing. You may like to lay hands on them as they did in Acts 13:3. Pray also for Alpha!

During the week, try and remember to pray for the people you 'sent'.

Cruising or Crewing?

2: Navigation -God's Way

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this... Each answer: If you're lost: Do you use a map, ask for directions, go back, or keep going trying to work it out for yourself?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Look at an OS map on the floor. Each think: Where do you feel you are at present –maybe at a crossroads, in a swamp, on top of a mountain? Pray quietly, then sing a song together about God guiding us.

WORD

Paul is now on his second expedition, travelling with Silas & Timothy. A map of that region may help!

Read Acts 16:6-15

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Their journey from Iconium to Troas was approx 400 miles. It would have taken several weeks. They walked west, then north, then west



again having been 'stopped' by the Holy Spirit twice! They eventually end up at the sea in Troas with nowhere left to go. (vs 6-8)

- Imagine you were with Paul and Silas from Iconium to Philippi, what would you be thinking/saying at each stage of the journey ...to the others? ...to yourself? ...to God?
- God eventually reveals his plans to Paul in a dream. Would you have trusted Paul? How do you react to similar stories today?
- God guides the group step by step, just telling them what *not* to do! He reveals the final destination at the last minute. What does this reveal about God and about his ways of dealing with people? Why does he do it? How do you feel about it?
- Has God ever dealt with you in a similar way to this story or is he now? If not, how do you think you would react?
- During 16:1-14, the gospel comes to Europe for the first time and Paul meets Timothy, Luke (notice the switch to 'we' in v10) and Lydia. A new frontier has been crossed and three of the most influential people in church history have been reached. All of this as a result of apparently aimless wanderings! What can we learn from this ...about Paul? ...about God?...about our own lives?
- Have you ever felt like you were going God's way, despite it seeming foolish to those around?
- Paul responds to God's 'promptings' and a vision. He then does the 'logical thing' in Philippi, by finding the 'place of prayer'. How easy do you find it to hear God through promptings or logic?

WHAT NEXT?

Share areas of your life where you particularly want to hear God's voice or know his will & pray for one another.

Cruising or Crewing?

3: Commitment in the Storm

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

Describe a difficult situation you've been in & how you coped.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read out Psalm 142 –maybe a verse each at a time quietly. Take time to think of situations that you are struggling with at the moment and offer them to God. Now read Psalm 145 out loud as a group in the same way.

WORD

Read Acts 16:16-34 and Philippians 1:1-14 (a lot of reading!)

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi. Years later, Paul writes to the Christians in Philippi from prison (where is unclear –probably Rome or Ephesus).



From **both** of these passages, what do we learn about...

- ...Paul's attitude to his imprisonments?
- ...Paul's commitment to God?
- ...Paul's commitment to others even when he's in prison (e.g. Php 1:7)?
- ...the impact Paul's response has on others?

Having considered Paul, now think honestly about your own lives...

(It might help to have a moment to think individually before discussing as a group)

- How do you usually respond to tough times? What's good or bad about these responses?
- What impact do these times have on your commitment to God?
- How do difficult times for you affect your commitment to others?
- What effect does your response have on others?

- The Philippian jailer pleads for physical safety. Paul & Silas give him a surprising answer (compare with Acts 3:1-6). What do you make of it? How do you feel about offering 'spiritual' life to those asking for 'physical' help? When might it be relevant today?

WHAT NEXT?

Share in 2s/3s things that you are personally struggling with at the moment. Pray for God's blessing and help, but also that like Paul you would remain committed to God and be a good witness to others.

Pray for those participating, leading or helping with the Alpha Course.

Cruising or Crewing?

4: Committed like Christ

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

Each write down & share in one sentence how you would like to be remembered.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Take a small piece of paper each. Think of something that you are proud of (a qualification, a job, something you've made, your children etc). Draw a simple picture to represent this on the paper. If you want to, share what you've drawn with the group.

Now, fold the paper over and hold it in your hand. Say together: 'Thank you God for this.' Then all place your pieces of paper in a bowl in the middle of the room and say together: 'Lord, I give it all to you.' Then have a time of open prayer.

WORD

Read Philippians 1:18b- 2:18

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Growth Group Notes

Sept-Dec 2008



Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Paul writes 'to live is Christ and to die is gain' (v21). Some people say that Christianity is just about 'pie in the sky when you die'. How do you think Paul would respond? What difference does this make to how we live as Christians?
- v27: Paul urges the Philippians to live 'in a manner worthy of the gospel'. What did this mean in practice for the Philippians? What could it mean for us?
- Is ambition (v3) always wrong? Are your ambitions what God wants them to be?
- In our society, we are regularly encouraged to look after our own interests. In 2:4-11 Paul uses the ultimate example of humility, Jesus, to show how we should live together. How would things change if you and others had the same attitude as Jesus...
 - when prioritising things in your own life?
 - when working/interacting with others?
 - in situations you regularly find yourself in?
- How easy do you find it to follow Paul's advice in 2:14?!
- **Extra Deep Question, in case you want one...**
What does this passage reveal about what it means for Jesus to be both God and man (2:6-11)?

WHAT NEXT?

Share situations where people following Jesus' example would change things for the better. Pray for those situations together.

Now think individually of one thing you could do differently this week to be more like the example of Jesus. Pray for one another.

Cruising or Crewing?

5: Watching the Horizon

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

Each choose a hero, someone you admire or someone admired by others. Act it out charades-style for the others to guess it.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Split into 2 or 3 groups if necessary. Look at the words of Philippians 3:6-11 and each group work out some dramatic/dance actions to portray the verses as they are read out. Then each group share what you've done. You could use a CD instrumental as a backing track to reading out the words.

WORD

Read Philippians 3:1 - 4:1

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)



- Paul has reasons to put confidence in his family history, his upbringing and his achievements. What different sources of confidence do people have today?
- Sometimes we might think or imply that as Christians, 'once we're saved, that's it'. In vs12-16. Paul, who has good reason as a Christian to feel 'competent', paints a picture of lifelong growth. What has this involved for Paul? What does it mean for us?
- What does it mean to '**live up** to what we have already attained' (v16)?
- To what extent do people today have their 'minds set on earthly things' –looking down rather than living up? In what ways can this attitude also evident in the church?
- What does Paul mean by 'our citizenship is in heaven' (v20)? What practical difference would it make to live increasingly as 'citizens of heaven' ...to us as individuals day-to-day? ...to us as a church? ...to our society?
- Paul's picture of 'standing firm' (4:1) involves 'forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead' (v13)! How do you feel about doing this?

WHAT NEXT?

Find out what's coming up at Christ Church and in the town over the next few weeks. How can you get involved? Pray for those events.

Cruising or Crewing?

6: Staying Focussed

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

Each share: What things make you laugh?!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Bearing Philippians 4:4 in mind, start by rejoicing using songs. If you have a musician who doesn't normally play, how about asking them to play one song for you –whether it's a flute, a trombone, the kazoo or the bongos!

WORD

Now Read Philippians 4:4-20

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Paul, writing from jail after long journeys and persecution, tells the Philippians to rejoice (v4), not be anxious about anything



and to pray! Imagine Jesus writing this to you. How would you reply?

- Paul says that we should pray about everything (v6). Are there areas of your life where you forget to pray or things that you regard as too trivial to talk to God about?
- Get out at least one national newspaper. Looking through it, how do the stories in it fit with the picture Paul paints in verse 8 of what we should think about? To what extent do you think society is shaped by this?
- Give some examples of the sort of things Paul would want us to be thinking about (v8)? What can you do practically about this?
- Paul commends the Philippian church for supporting him financially (v10-19). How should we support one another financially through giving to the church? How should we as a church support others who seek to share the gospel? What can/do you do as a group?

WHAT NEXT?

Please do this: v9: Quickly recap on the main themes of Acts and Philippians over the last few weeks. Remember back to your list of 'cruising' v 'crewing'. What have you learnt over this series that has helped you move from cruising to crewing or to more competent crewing in areas of your life? What will you continuing to work on?

Now: Share what you are anxious about –in any area of your life and then with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (v6)

Finish by saying to one another (from v7): 'The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.'