

Trusting God Together

1: Trusting God & Entrusted by God

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

From the Christmas period: Each share one thing that's been good for you & one thing that's been not so good.

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...

Share as a group any favourite lines from Christmas carols that you think are particularly worshipful & explain why. Make up others of your own & put them together as a group carol to say/sing(?) together.

WORD

As we journey from Christmas to Easter, we're following the story of Exodus –from the birth of a 'saviour' (Moses) to freedom from slavery and a new way of life. We're particularly focusing on the 'Up' and 'In' of Up-In-Out as we explore what it means to trust God together.

Read Exodus 1:1-2:15 *Try using parts: Narrator, King (Pharaoh), Midwife, Pharaoh's Daughter, Miriam (Moses' sister)*

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!*)

Growth Group Notes

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- What parallels can you find between this story and the Christmas one? What further similarities are there between the birth and life of Jesus and the birth and life of Moses? What are the differences?
- What do we learn about God's patterns of working from this?

The midwives faced a moral dilemma –to obey the rulers or to do what they believed God wanted.

- In their shoes, honestly, what would you have done?
- Have you ever faced similar situations –albeit with lesser consequences? In what circumstances is it right to obey the rules (or those in charge) or to make a stand?
- Moses makes a different moral decision in v11-14. His main concern seems to be over whether he is seen or caught rather than on what God thinks. How widespread is this attitude today? Do you ever find yourself acting like this?
- God is kind to the midwives (v21), but doesn't relieve the wider suffering at this stage. How do you respond to God's care for a few, whilst not acting immediately for the many? Have you seen a similar pattern today?
- God uses the actions of the Egyptian princess to achieve his purposes –even the name she chooses ('Moses') seems prophetic (v10). To what extent do you think that God uses the actions of non-believers in his plans –then & now?

WHAT NEXT?

Share things to pray for –firstly for those in the room & then for those beyond. There may be things prompted by the discussion.

Now pray for growth (Up-In-Out) for your Growth Group in 2009.

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2: God's Call -Our Response

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: What's the most important thing that's happened in your life in the last week?

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...

Focus on the holiness of God. Maybe sing a song –'Holy, Holy, Holy' (hymn or new version (Lift up his name...)) or read Isaiah 6:1-8 with a musical background.

WORD

Read Exodus 3:-4:17 *This is a lot! Try using parts again - different readers for Moses, God & Narrator –Maybe use a different set of readers for chapter 4.*

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!*)

Look through the passage at what **God** says and does. Bear in mind what's gone before. What do you notice about...

- ...how God views and deals with Moses?
- ...how God views and deals with the Israelites?

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- ...God's character?
- How do you feel about that?

Now look at what **Moses** says and does. Again, bear in mind what's gone before this incident. What do you notice about...

- ...how Moses responds to God in 3:1-12?
- ...how Moses responds to God in 3:11-4:17?
- Why do you think Moses responds in the way he does to God?
- What do Moses' responses show about his trust in God or reliance on himself?

Now think about **yourself**:

- If you were Moses, how would you respond to God?
- As you look ahead into 2009 and beyond, are there things that God is speaking to you about personally –things he wants to change in your life or new things to do? How will you respond?

WHAT NEXT?

Discuss in 2s/3s: Talk about your response to the last question above. Are there things you find it hard to trust God with? Pray for one another.

As a group: We are considering our plans for Christ Church for the next year –particularly, vision, staff, money and buildings. There's a Vision Evening on **8-Feb**. Spend some time talking & praying.

One to take away...

Ask God to speak to you this week (You could pray this together now). Make a deliberate effort to listen out for what he's saying about your life over the next few days.

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3: Freed at a Price

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Has anyone noticed God speaking or doing anything in your life, or the lives of others around you, over the last few weeks?

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...

Psalm 105:23-45 is a song of praise to God remembering what he did for the Israelites in the times of the Exodus. What things has God done for you over the years? Try making a similar list, read it out together & end in the same way as the Psalm.

WORD

Read Exodus 11 & 12:21-36 (*You might want to recap on the story to this point first & again try using parts for the reading*)

(*Note: We will look at parallels with Jesus and the Last Supper later*)

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!*)

- The death of the firstborn is the tenth of the plagues that God sends on the Egyptians in response to Pharaoh's resistance. Why didn't God skip the other nine or destroy all of the Egyptians instead of the firstborn?



- How have attitudes of Pharaoh, the Egyptian people and the Israelites towards Moses developed (e.g. v 11:3, 11:8, 12:21)?
- What are Pharaoh's motives in opposing Moses' requests? In fighting for his own motives, Pharaoh is fighting against God and his plans. How is this both a 'physical' battle and a 'spiritual' battle between good and evil?
- Are there times when you have stood up for yourself (or something you believed was important or valued) only to realise that you're opposing God's will? Describe them.

- What is Moses' role in the battle between Pharaoh and God? How has he changed since the burning bush?
- The Israelites have been largely passive in the story so far, but in 12:21-23 God calls them to obedient action. How do you think they felt about Moses' unusual instructions? Would you have obeyed? Why/why not?
- The final 'plague' (12:29) cuts through the insulation of money, privilege and power, but why does God do it?
- What events today affect everyone regardless of status? How do we react to them?

WHAT NEXT?

- Discuss what you think about the vision, plans and challenges for our church over the next few years. What do you think we should do in response? Talk, think & pray.
- Pray for areas of the world where there is conflict which is blamed, rightly or wrongly, on 'religion'.

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4: From Fear to Freedom

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

What words do you associate with 'freedom'? Think of as many as possible in 1 minute and write them down without analysing them. Then talk about them.

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...

Be still (Exodus 14:14). In silence, each think of a situation you are facing at the moment that you are worried about or you can't see an obvious resolution to. Ask God to speak to you. Listen to a song on a CD which focuses on trusting God (e.g. 'The Lord's my Shepherd – I will trust in you alone' by Stuart Townend) and commit yourself to trusting him.

WORD

Read Exodus 13:17-14:31 (*Another long story so share it out!*)

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!*)

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- Each look back through the story and draw (no ability necessary!) what you think are 4-5 key moments. Share what you have drawn and why.

Imagine you were one of the Israelites with the sea behind you watching Pharaoh approaching (14:10-12). Imagine what you would be sensing (sights, smells, sounds etc) and feeling...

- How would you feel about Moses answer (v13-14)?
- How do you think Moses felt about the people's reactions and God's response? (v15-18)
- Have you ever found yourself in similar situations to either Moses or the Israelites (even if not perhaps quite so dire!)? How do you react & why? How easy do you find it to trust God?

Now, try and picture things from God's perspective...

- Why do you think God acted the way he did (for example in verses 13:17, 21, 14:4, 8, 15-18 ? What do you like or dislike? What reassures you or worries you?
- God is rescuing the Israelite people for their sake, but also for his wider purposes for the history of the world. How much do you feel that being a Christian is about your personal faith or God's wider purposes?
- God involves the Israelites/Moses in his plans and their deliverance. At what times do you want God to involve you in his plans and when don't you?

WHAT NEXT?

The Israelites felt trapped between Pharaoh and the Red Sea...

1. *As a group or in 2s/3s:* Share any situations where you personally feel a bit like that at the moment.
2. Share any similar situations for any people you know, the church or the world

Pray in each case for God to act and people to trust him.

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5: For Better or Worse

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

What's your favourite thing to grumble about?

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...

Get some magazines/newspapers. Each cut/tear out pictures of a few things that give you pleasure or that you're really grateful for. Talk about what you've chosen. As appropriate, thank God for good things & ask for forgiveness for over-depending on others. At the end, all place them in the middle and offer to God the things they represent.

WORD

Read Exodus 15:22-16:21 (*Narrator, God, Aaron, Moses, Israelites*)

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!*)

- The Israelites have celebrated being saved from the Egyptians (chapter 15), but now seem to find themselves in a mess, despite being obedient to God (as in Exodus 1). How much sympathy do you have with their complaints in verses 2-3?
 - Have you ever felt like this?



- Read v2 & v6-8. The people blame Moses and Aaron, but God has led them to where they are. When is it right to complain to God... or to others... or take responsibility ourselves?
- Today, we frequently see our lives and faith as individuals, but God calls the Israelite community as a whole. What impact do you think their shared experiences have had on their sense of community and commitment to one another? Are there challenges for Christians today?
- Acting as a group has both a positive and negative impact on the people's trust in God (v2). When has being part of a group helped you grow as a Christian? When has being part of a group of people made it harder to follow God?
- The Israelites had to learn to depend on God in dire need – when there was no visible means of provision. Give some examples of ways in which our comparative wealth and comfort impact on our trust in God. How can we learn to trust God more when we have so much?
- Why is God so fussy and particular about how and when he provides for the Israelites?
 - Does God seem to act similarly today?
- Would you have tried keeping some of the manna until the next day –or not (v20)?! Why?

WHAT NEXT?

Pray for our church that we would grow closer together as we trust God and that we would make good decisions as we seek to follow him.

One to take away:

Look for one way this week that you can help someone else feel a closer part of the church.

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6: Rules for Life

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

How many of the Ten Commandments can you name between you?

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...

Get some plasticine, modelling clay, blu-tac or (if you're really creative) make your own salt dough. Each make something which expresses how you feel towards God at the moment. Share as much as people want to. Then talk to God about what you've made.

WORD

Because this passage is so familiar (or is it?!) It might help to find a number of different versions & compare them

Read Exodus 20:1-20

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!*)

- Unlike most laws, either now or in ancient times, God's laws are recorded in the context of the people's story. In particular, they're given in the context of God having freed them. The Bible doesn't separate out God's rules for living from the people's



experiences of life following God. Why do you think the Bible writers (inspired by God) do this?

- As you read through the Ten Commandments, how would you describe the tone of them?
 - How do you think they sounded to the people at that time?
 - How do they sound to people today?
 - If there was a popular vote today, which commandments would be most popular, least liked, most relevant? (You could try a vote amongst yourselves!)
- Split into pairs. Divide up the 10 commandments amongst you evenly. Now spend a few minutes trying to re-express the commandments you have in a way that addresses particular issues for people similar to yourself today.

For inspiration, have a look at Matthew 5:21-22 & 27-28 & Mark 12:28-34

Now share what you've written.

- How might you re-write them if you were explaining them to a 7 year old?
- Read Matthew 5:17-20. Jesus said that he didn't come to abolish the law, but he did fulfil its requirements. How does God call us to respond to his commands? What are we to do when we fail and what hope is there for us?
- If someone said to you, 'I'm not religious, but I believe in following the Ten Commandments', how would you respond?

WHAT NEXT?

Pray for one another, but also pray for people in our community or worldwide who are suffering because of others not keeping one of the Ten Commandments.

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7: Easter and the New Exodus

WELCOME

Even if you don't normally, please do this...

- What parts of the Exodus Stories that we've been following have you most enjoyed and found most helpful?
- Which have you struggled with?
- Which would you have liked to have included or spent longer on?

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...

Each bring in an object or find one around that represents a significant part of your journey as a Christian over the last few months or year. Share why it's significant and then praise God together.

WORD

Read Exodus 12:1-14; 24-30; Deuteronomy 7:7-12

Redemption is a key theme throughout the Bible –Old and New Testament. Redemption of a slave is when a price is paid to free slaves from captivity. Although the word isn't used directly in Exodus 12, the Bible repeatedly makes it clear that this was what was going on.

- Why is this theme so important to the Israelites throughout the Old Testament (Exodus 15:13, Deut 7:8, 2 Sam 7:22-24 etc etc)?

Covenant, another big Bible theme, is also mentioned in the Deuteronomy passage –although it occurs first in Genesis (Noah, Abraham etc –see Ex 2:24). Covenant includes a two-way commitment



between both parties made in love, including both promise and law – similar to a marriage.

- How do you feel about the idea of a 'covenant'?
- Why is this also so important to the Israelites throughout the Old Testament?
- To what extent did the Israelites succeed in keeping their side of the covenant in the Old Testament?

Now Read Mark 14:12-26

The 'Last Supper' was a Passover meal at which Jesus introduced Communion. There are many strands to what is going on in communion, but let's look at a few...

- In what different ways is Communion a replacement for the Israelites' **Passover Meal**? (see also John 1:35, 1 Cor 5:7)
- How is the theme of **redemption** relevant to Jesus' death and Communion (see also Romans 3:21-26, John 1:35)?
 - How are we 'slaves'? What does being redeemed and freed mean for how we live?
- How is the theme of **covenant** relevant to Jesus' death and Communion? (see Hebrews 8:6-13, 9:15 etc)
 - What does this new covenant mean for us?
 - What is God's commitment **to** us and what does he expect **from** us?

WHAT NEXT?

Talk about:

- At Easter or the next time you share in communion, how will any of these themes from Exodus shape your thoughts and feelings?

Pray for one another, for your group and for the church.

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8: Extradus!

If you'd like to spend more time on Exodus on a group or as individuals, you could try this...

The Exodus story is referred to throughout the Bible and acts as a foundation and foreshadowing of so much that happens later, especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We looked at a couple of themes in the last session, but here's some more...

Read through all/some of the following groups of passages in turn (or divide them up between you). For each, discuss:

- How do these passages relate to the Exodus story?
 - Why is the writer/speaker referring back to Exodus in their context?
 - What relevance does this passage have for us today?
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- Psalm 81 & Psalm 105:23-45
 - Jeremiah 32:17-23, Amos 3:1-2
 - Matthew 5:17-20
 - Luke 9:28-36 (NB 'departure' in v31 = 'exodus')
 - Acts 6:11-7:3; 7:17-41 ;7:51-53
 - Acts 13:14-20 & 38-41
 - Romans 13:6-10
 - 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
 - Heb 11:23-29
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- There are lots more!