

God in 3D

Introduction

This is a short set of Growth Group notes to go with the Summer series of teaching. In it we consider what God is like by looking through Peter's eyes. As we do so, we will hopefully find parallels with our own spiritual journeys and encounter God in a fresh and inspiring way.

Far more is written in the New Testament about Peter's encounters with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit than can be covered in a single sermon series, and in these notes we are able to cover even less than that!

However, hopefully, a taste will whet your appetite for delving more into Peter's story and through doing so, you will deepen in your love and commitment to the same God that he encountered and followed.

There are 3 sets of notes, which will then allow you time to do something different of your own choosing for a few weeks. I've provided some suggestions at the end of the notes.

Feedback, ideas and suggestions are always welcome.

Enjoy the journey!

Toby

Growth Group Notes
May-Jun 2011



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1: Follow Me!

WELCOME

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

Have you ever followed in 'someone else's footsteps' or 'stepped into someone else's shoes'? What was it like? Share your answers.

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...

Some of the Psalms are very short –for example 117. Try writing your own mini-psalm to God, including something that is important to you.

WORD

Reading the Intro to the Series should help set the scene.

Read Mark 1:14-39

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!*)

- We don't know how much experience of Jesus, Simon (Peter) had at this point, but what factors do you think might have caused him to follow Jesus so readily (v18)?
 - * Have you ever responded to Jesus or to another important invitation in a similar way?

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- Look at each of these 4 stories (v14-20, 21-28, 29-34, 35-39) in turn (or split into 4 groups to do it taking one each). For each story, discuss:
 - * Describe the thoughts and feelings you think Simon (Peter) was having about what going on.
 - * How do you think the other characters in the story felt?
 - * What do you think Jesus was thinking?
 - * Share your responses with the group.
- Have you ever had similar thoughts, feelings or experiences to any of the characters in the stories?
 - * How would you have responded if you had been in their shoes?
- What is the picture of Jesus that we build up from these snapshots?
 - * What seems to be important to Jesus?
 - * Why do you think he responds in the way he does?
- What picture do you get of what it was like to follow Jesus from these snapshots?
 - * How does that compare to your experience of following Jesus?
- Peter gave up his job to follow Jesus. What things tend to hold you back from following Jesus more closely?

WHAT NEXT?

Either all together or in 2s/3s...

- Spend time sharing concerns, problems and reasons to be thankful. Then pray for them with short prayers...
 - * 1: People you know personally –friends, relative, group members etc –people who are not in the room
 - * 2: Share personal situations from your own life –those in the room.
 - * 3: Then pray for things going on in the church

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2: World or Soul?

WELCOME

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

Share a time when you've discovered something unusual or surprising about someone you already knew.

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 take a pen & paper. Write down as many words you can think of to describe Jesus. Swap the pieces of paper. Go round in a circle, each reading out one word off the paper. Stop after a few times round. After a bit of silence, finish with a simple prayer such as: 'Thank you Jesus for who you are. Amen.'

WORD

Read Mark 8:27-38

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!*)

- If you haven't already done it, I'd recommend doing the 'Worship' exercise as an introduction to the story this week.
- If you went asked a random group of people in Alsager 'In your view, who is Jesus?' what responses do you think you would get?

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- * How would these responses compare to those (including Peter's) in 8:27-29?
- What do you think had led Peter to reach his conclusion in 8:29?
 - * Why do you think Jesus responded the way he did in 30-32?
- In the exchange in verses 31-33, why do you think Peter rebuked Jesus? Why did Jesus say what he did?
 - * How does this link to Jesus' next bit of teaching to the crowd?
- If someone said to you: 'Being a Christian is selfish – Christians just want to ensure life after death for themselves –like an eternal life insurance policy.' How would you respond in the light of v34-38?
- People sometimes refer to a 'cross they have to bear' (which can sometimes be an excuse for complaining about something they needlessly struggle with!) What do you think Jesus' teaching in v34-36 really means for people living as Christians today?
- How would the world be different if people (including us) took seriously Jesus' teaching in these verses?

Extra -only if you've got time (or another week!):

Read Mark 9:1-13

- Try acting out the scene with deliberate over-acting!
- Discuss how the different characters felt.
- How do you think it changed Peter's perception of Jesus?
- Discuss how this episode might relate to 8:27-30 & 9:1

WHAT NEXT?

Share round some pages from newspapers. What evidence do you find in them that mankind is trying to 'gain the world' but 'forfeiting our souls' (v36)? In the light of this, spend time praying for our world and neighbourhood before praying for one another.

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3: Failing & Forgiveness

WELCOME

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

Share a time when you've fallen asleep or lost concentration.

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...

If you have the technology, then ask someone to search for a favourite worship song on YouTube and play it on a TV or computer.

Alternatively, use a CD, print out words and let those who want to sing along.

WORD

The readings this week are a bit disjointed, so the leader of this week may need to explain briefly the missing bits of the story.

Read Mark 14:27-42, 53, 66-72 –you could take parts for the different characters

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!*)

- Compare Peter's exchange with Jesus in v27-31 with last week's in 8:31-33. What do they show about their relationship and characters?

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- Share any times in your life when, like Peter, you have been confident and enthusiastic about following Jesus, but soon after failed?
- In both v32-42 and in 1:35-37, we see the priority that Jesus places on prayer, but Peter and the disciples don't really seem to get it!
 - * To what extent do you sympathise with the disciples?
 - * To what extent do you share Jesus' frustration – frustrated with yourself or with others regarding prayer?
 - * Are there times when you find it particularly hard to pray –either because of distractions, sleep or for other reasons? Are there times when you find it easier?
 - * Share ideas for how to help one another pray more.

You could split into 4 groups briefly for this & then share together...

- Describe how you think Peter felt & why he did what he did...
 - * As Jesus found him asleep in the garden (v40)?
 - * As he followed Jesus at a distance (v54)?
 - * As he denied Jesus (v66-71)?
 - * As the cock crowed (v72)?
- Have you ever felt similarly?

WHAT NEXT?

Read John 21:15-19

After his resurrection, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him – reflecting the three times that Peter denied him. He shows that he has forgiven him by giving him a job to do (Feed my sheep) and repeats his call to him 'Follow me!' (Mark 1:17).

- Share in 2s-3s. pairs: What has God called you to? Are there areas of your life where you've failed, become lazy or given up on following Jesus' call? Is he repeating his call to you: 'Follow me!'
- Pray for one another –asking for God's healing and help.

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Extra Stuff!

After finishing this mini-series, you'll have 3 or 4 meetings until the summer. Here are some suggestions...

- Have a Prayer Week (worth doing for everyone).
 - * You might want to use some of the episodes from Peter's story that we're looking at which refer to prayer in Acts:
 - 4:23-32; 9:32-43; 11:1-18; 12:1-18
 - * You could ask different members of the group to prepare one prayer activity each
 - * Try to be creative and make it easy for anyone to take part in some way
 - * Maybe split into 2s/3s for some parts, use pictures, poems, information from mission partners etc
- Finish Just10, if you didn't get through it
- Try using some of the past Growth Group notes. There are plenty on the website under 'Downloads'. Short series that people have particularly asked about include:
 - * Discovering our Gifts –Practical and Spiritual (Spring 2007)
 - * How should we think about our money –Spending and Giving (April-May 2007)
 - * Prayer: Spring 2008
- Watch a film together at home or at the cinema –either a Christian one or one which raises moral or spiritual issues and then (next time?) discuss what you thought about it from a Christian perspective
- Use some of the resources from the Growth Group 'Library' –Nooma Videos or short courses.