



ENTER God's presence

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! - Psalm 139:15-17

Lord God, you know all the days of our lives before they happen. You know what we need to hear from your word today. Help us to be able to listen well as we gather and explore your word today. May we discover more of what you have done for us and more of what you have in store for each of us. Amen.



SHARE life together

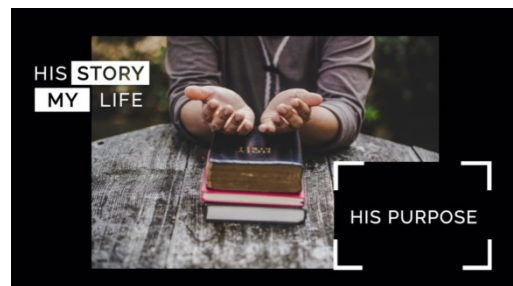
1. Share your highs and lows with each other?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. It can be hard in a year like 2020 to recall positive achievements or outcomes but share a positive experience or a success you have had this year.
4. How would you answer someone who asked the question, "Why would God let this happen?"

Connect the dots. We've all done one. It's a form of puzzle that contains a sequence of numbered dots. When a line is drawn connecting the dots the outline of an object is revealed. Our life and our stories are like a dot to dot puzzle. Each dot is a circumstance, an encounter, a memory, a decision made, a value held, a moment celebrated, a failure experienced, a dream crushed. Unconnected, they are random dots. Disconnected, they make no sense. But connected with the lines of our life, they tell a story. The only problem is they are not numbered. Today the risen Jesus comes to connect the dots, to craft his story of love in our life as he reveals his purpose. That's what we'll explore and experience today.

Week beginning:
Sunday 15th November 2020

Worship series:

His Story...Your Life



VERSE for the week

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

John 21:17



REMEMBER this week

Jesus believes in you more than you believe in yourself. He comes to transform your emptiness into abundance, your darkness into light, your failure into blessing, your rejection into acceptance, your weakness into strength, your endings into new beginnings, so you can live everyday in his presence for his purposes.



LISTEN attentively

Read John 21:1-25 (the whole chapter)

5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?
7. This is not the first time Jesus has appeared to his disciples after his resurrection (you can look back in John chapter 20 for some others). Why do you think John makes a point of including this particular encounter?

Every generation has a crisis which causes them to ask, “WHY?” Why is God allowing this to happen? What possible purpose could God have in this drought, famine, earthquake, war, disease? It can be enough at times to prompt us to ask the question, ‘is God even really there?’ This may have been how some of Jesus’ disciples were feeling after he had died. They had encountered the risen Jesus, but something had changed. Jesus was hinting that he was going to be leaving them soon, that he was going to return to the Father in Heaven. It seems that at least Peter, and James and John may have been at a loss for what to do since the resurrection, and so we find them in this story, having returned to what they had always done. They went back to fishing.

8. We also have encountered the risen Jesus through his word (the Bible) and through his people (the Church), yet we also have times when we continue to live as we had done before encountering Jesus, as if nothing has changed. Why do you think that is?

What’s bizzare in this story is that these three ‘pro-fishermen’ with a little help from a few other disciples don’t catch a thing. Suddenly a skill which had previously provided them and their families with income and security appears to have deserted them. It doesn’t satisfy their need for food, It did nothing to boost their morale. Although they had gone back to living the way they always had, they find themselves unable to do it as they had before. That is until Jesus comes along and tells them to do it again on the ‘right’ side of the boat. Jesus takes who they are and what they know and teaches them how to be that in a new way. Success was nearer than the disciples thought as the small adjustment made a large difference. Jesus does what Jesus commonly does: asks his followers to do the opposite of what they are doing. He does not chastise his pupils for returning to their previous profession. He simply orders a minor alteration. Such adjustments are easier to follow but often harder to believe. How could such a minor modification affect change?

9. Have you ever found yourself trying to do something that is usually easy for you but really struggling to get anywhere with it? In hindsight, would you say it was possibly God trying to get you to make a small adjustment? Discuss.
10. Sometimes God does big things in big ways, although it seems that more often things get done by small, faithful, everyday actions. Have you ever felt ‘led’ by God to phone a particular friend, or stop and talk to a particular stranger at the shops? Did you do something about it, or did you find it too hard to believe that your actions could make a difference?



GROW deeper

But this story gets stranger still. As the disciples approach the shore with this huge catch of fish, having made the changes that Jesus asked of them, we find Jesus on the shore with a fire on the go and he is already cooking fish. Jesus did not need the disciples help to provide a meal and to feed everyone, yet he invites them to participate in the process. In a similar way, God does not *need* us to do anything for him; he is still the all-knowing and all-powerful God, creator of the universe. If he wants to get something done, he is more than capable of doing it himself; and yet, he invites us to take part in his mission, to get involved with his work in the world and to help bring in the catch.

11. In what ways might you be able to make some minor adjustments to the way you do things at home, at work, with your friends, which might allow you to help others come to know Jesus?

12. When you consider your life as part of God's story, do you feel more pressure to perform or do you experience greater freedom knowing that God is responsible for how the story ultimately pans out? Share.

After the disciples recognise Jesus and they had finished eating breakfast around the fire, Jesus has a conversation specifically with Peter. Remember that Peter had denied Jesus three times on the night Jesus was arrested and proven himself to be a 'fair-weather-friend'. Jesus now offers Peter three opportunities to re-affirm his commitment to Jesus, but along with this recommitment, Jesus also does something else. He stops talking about fishing and begins talking about shepherding. As Peter acknowledges who he is and what he has done, Jesus transforms him from a fisherman to a shepherd. Sometimes, when we can be honest enough with ourselves and with God, he may call us into a completely different vocation, location or situation than we had ever imagined. Yet when we know that call comes from God, we can be confident that it will lead us to a deeper relationship with him and bring growth to his kingdom.

13. Have you ever felt God call you into something that you had not expected? What happened?

When our lives become part of God's story through faith in Jesus, we really need to allow him to take control of the story and to let him set the purpose and direction. Only he, as the author, knows the whole picture and can see how everything plays out in the end. Only He knows for sure the paths that lead to blessing. This is part of the joy of following Jesus. The less control we hold onto for ourselves, the more freedom we experience. Instead of worrying about making the right decisions, we can learn to listen to Jesus calling us to make adjustments when necessary, and trust that he will bring about the results that are needed.

14. How difficult do you find it to trust Jesus with that level of control in your life? How often do you find yourself forging ahead without even stopping to listen or pray about things with God?



LIVE purposefully

Have a look at Ephesians 2:8-10

God's purpose for your life is no big secret. It is spelled out pretty clearly here in Ephesians 2, but also throughout most of the letters of the New Testament. Jesus came so that by grace we would be saved. Through faith in Jesus, that salvation in Christ would enable us to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do. He may not have laid out the whole plan for you in one go, but God has a plan and a purpose for you each and every day. He will lead you in it if you will just take the time to stop and listen.

15. How can you create little pockets time throughout your day, to just check in with God and ask him to help you stay on track with his plans for you and your day?



PRAY intentionally

- You might like to pray together in the usual way but for groups that feel comfortable, I would suggest the following...
 - Choose one member of your group to pray for and then instead of praying for specific things, ask Jesus what he wants to say to the person you are praying for. Spend some time waiting on the Lord and share any ideas, pictures or scripture verses that come to mind. We might not always hear what God is saying, but we will only become better listeners through practice. Pick another group member and do it again!



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], may the love of Christ for you, flow purposefully through you. Amen.