



**Resources to accompany Sunday life for lifegroup & personal use.**

March to May 2022

Sue Haward & Johnny Douglas

“Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom!” Thomas Jefferson

**“Hope is the one thing that can help us get through the darkest of times.**

Faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase...” Martin Luther King, Jr

“Courage is grace under pressure...” Ernest Hemingway

**“Integrity is doing the right thing. Even when no one is watching.” CS Lewis**

“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” Rick Warren

**“Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:14**



Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March  
**Step One – Honesty**  
Luke 8: 26-39

This story in the life of Jesus makes evil very personal and real. The demonic spirits within the man did several things that a psychological condition cannot explain. First of all, they recognized the divinity of Jesus even though they had never seen him. Jesus talked to the demons and had a conversation with them. They told him their name and made a request of him. *There is an honesty in this exchange.*

The same is true of His conversations with those trapped in sin. Jesus sought them out. *He never sugar coated their sin nor excused their behaviour, but he did love them completely.* He touched people the world would never touch. He spoke to people who were shunned by society. I think he loved their honesty and transparency. They had no pretence. They were ready to admit who they were, and therefore were open to seeing their need of Jesus. Only when we think that we have no sin to be forgiven of is there no hope for us.

1. Have there been times when you have felt trapped by a situation and needed someone to ask the 'right question' to help you out of it?
2. What aspects of this passage are particularly significant to you?
3. Why is it that the demon had 'driven the man into solitary places'? v29
4. What is the importance of Jesus asking the demons 'What is your name?' v30
5. Which is harder; honesty with others or honesty with ourselves?
6. What is it about complete honesty that we can find intimidating?
7. Why were the people of Gerasenes overcome with fear? v37
8. What is the significance of the use of 'God' and 'Jesus' in v39?
9. How might you apply this concept in three ways?



Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March

## Step Two – Hope

Mark 10: 46-52 | Isaiah 12: 1-6

Hope can be defined as a constant expectation of an unseen reality. Romans 8: 24-25 defines it as favourable and confident expectation. Hope is not just ‘wishing’ but it is expectancy. *Hope is faith in the future tense.*

Bartimaeus had a sure expectancy, a certain faith that Jesus would show mercy to him. He faced that make-or-break moment; for him, the opportunity was now-or-never. His hope broke down the barriers between him and Jesus. He didn’t allow the crowds to deter him. He didn’t worry about his deficiency or his handicap; he didn’t focus on what he couldn’t do, rather he just did what he could. He didn’t hesitate; he began calling out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”.

1. What strikes you from these passages?
2. How has hope been rewarded unexpectedly in your life?
3. Hope is often called an anchor, is this an apt description?
4. Why were the crowds so keen to hush Bartimaeus? V48
5. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 says ‘We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.’  
How does that hope help us endure?
6. What difference does the hope we have in Jesus make to our daily lives?
7. Why does Jesus ask Bartimaeus what he wants? v51
8. How do we maintain that hope when we feel like our prayers aren’t being answered?
9. What’s your working definition of hope, inspired by God in the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?



Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March

### Step Three – Faith

**Matthew 8: 5-13** | Hebrews 11: 1-7 | Isaiah 55: 6-9

The soldier understands authority: he tells one of his junior soldiers to do something and they go and do it. He is a man of authority and expects what he says to be done. He believes that Jesus has the same authority in the spiritual realm. If Jesus says for something to be done (like healing this servant), it will be done. *The soldier is confident in the spiritual authority that Jesus possesses.*

Jesus in response says this man has great faith (v. 10). Faith is the evidence of things not seen and the soldier is presuming that what Jesus says will happen even though he hasn't seen that occur yet. Too often our "faith" is just kind of a vague, hope without any practical impact. The centurion's faith believes that the promises are certain. His faith believes that Jesus is in charge.

1. In whom do we place our trust in our daily lives, who has that level of authority?
2. What does our faith in them say about us?
3. Have there been situations in your life when you have been let down by someone you thought you could trust? Or have you had to let someone else down through circumstances out of your control?
4. Jesus says to the centurion 'shall I come and heal him?' v7 Why does Jesus ask this?
5. The Message version of v7 says "Jesus said, "I'll come and heal him." How does this change the emphasis of the verse?
6. Why is the centurion's response in v8 extraordinary?
7. In v12 Jesus talks about the subjects of the kingdom being thrown outside. Who does that refer to?
8. Do you find it easier to ask Jesus for healing on behalf of others, rather than yourself?
9. What is the big takeaway message for you today?



Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March

### Step Four - Courage

Luke 18: 31-33 | **Matthew 26: 69-75**

It is said that courage is to count the cost of doing the right thing, and then doing it anyway. If we are honest we have all failed many times in our lives, as partners, siblings, parents or colleagues, and we fail God countless times in our lives too. *God isn't interested in how many times we fail Him, what He cares about is how we learn from our mistakes and whether we have the courage to pick ourselves up and try again.*

Peter is a wonderful example to us when we feel the weight of failure. When Peter was faced with the opportunity to stand for Christ his courage failed four times. Once while on the water, and three times just before the crucifixion. But Jesus came to Peter in John 21, and restored him beyond anything he could have hoped for. Peter had the courage to own up to his mistakes and ask forgiveness.

1. What was the time in your life when you needed to be most courageous?
2. How does physical courage differ from mental courage?
3. Where do you locate scripture most in scripture and your life experience?
4. In this reading, Peter is learning the truth about himself, as foretold by Jesus. How do we deal with aspects of our own personalities that we'd rather not face?
5. Why do we find it so difficult to admit when we are wrong?
6. Peter denies Jesus three times and uses 'oaths' and 'curses' when challenged. Discuss!
7. Admitting to being a follower of Jesus can sometimes be difficult and intimidating. How have you overcome that fear, and how did it work out?
8. The baptism vows ask us to 'Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world and the devil'. Why do you think 'the world' is included in this?
9. How can courage become more and more of your daily life experience?



Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

**Mothering Sunday**

**Step Five – Integrity**

**John 4: 16-24** | 1 John 1: 5-10 | Isaiah 6: 1-8

Robert Lewis Stephenson the writer of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde said “I find that there is always a struggle with the Beast That Lives Within Me.” C.S. Lewis put it this way: “No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good.” The phrase ‘do as I say, not as I do’ can be applied to many a figure of authority, and the press is full of examples of the mighty fallen. We are required by God to live lives of integrity, staying true to the example set by Christ, and worshiping him ‘in Spirit and in truth’ v24.

1. What is your working definition of integrity?
2. It has been said that a man cannot separate his actions from his heart. Do you think this is true?
3. How does faith change our motivation in life? Do our actions follow?
4. Is worship a lifestyle or one aspect of our lives?
5. In v17 the woman answers Jesus honestly. Would you say she has integrity despite her circumstances?
6. Read ‘The Message’ version of this passage. Does it change how you understand it?
7. What do you understand by ‘Spirit and truth’? v24
8. Does living with integrity mean that we have to be perfect? And how might you choose the way of integrity more and more in your everyday?





Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April

**Step Six - Willingness**

**John 5: 2-9a** | Hebrews 4: 14-16 | Isaiah 1: 12-20

Do you really know what you want?

Are you ready to accept what God has for you?

Jesus frequently asks His followers or the people that he heals what they want from Him. He did not always demand faith from those he comes across, but He did ask for agreement in the process. Not everyone wants a real solution, it's easier to be a victim than take responsibility for change.

We have to be willing to accept the changes that Jesus brings if we are going to walk with Him. Faith requires that we put our trust in Him to make the changes our lives need, whether or not they are comfortable.

1. Are there any situations that you know of where people have complained about the situation they are in but done nothing to change it?
2. Why does Jesus ask the invalid if he wants to get well? v6
3. The invalid doesn't actually ask to be healed, what is significant about his response? v7. Why does Jesus heal him anyway?
4. Do you think God wants us to take responsibility for change in our lives?
5. How do we find out what God wants for us?
6. Is there a risk involved in a willingness to do what God wants?
7. What is the significance of this happening on the Sabbath? v9
8. What changes is God asking you to make in your own life? How are these difficult?
9. What might be your willingness action plan?



Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April

**Step Seven – Humility**

Matthew 23: 25-36 | **2 Timothy 2: 20-26** | Psalms 51: 1-14

We are all different but all valuable to God, able to fulfill His purpose in our lives and the lives of others. Whether we are a vessel of gold or of wood, we have our use and a place in His plan. Compared to Jesus we are all imperfect and flawed, regardless of our status in society, so we all need to heed the words written to Timothy and follow their advice; we are to ‘flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart’ v22. In being humble and willing to do God’s work we become sanctified, holy in His eyes and ‘instruments for special purposes’.

1. What type of ‘vessel’ do you think of yourself as?
2. How do we balance self-worth with self-righteousness?
3. What does Paul mean by ‘the evil desires of youth’? v22
4. Paul says we must be ‘not resentful’ v24 How do we achieve this?
5. What do you make of the whole concept of humility and it’s place in your life?
6. Is humility a strength or a weakness? How does society see it?
7. God often uses the most unlikely people to perform amazing tasks. What is your favourite example of this in the Bible?
8. If we allow Him to, God can turn us from pots of clay into goblets of gold. Do you know any examples of people whose lives have been completely transformed once they have become Christians?
9. How do you better live the way of humility?





Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May

### Step Eight - Love

Matthew 7: 7-14 | 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 | **Psalms 19: 7-13**

At the time when David wrote these words the Bible was much smaller than ours. There was no New Testament and less than half the Old Testament had been written at that time. Most of what David knew and studied were the Books of The Law – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and that was what David was praising here: the law, the precepts, the commandments, and the rules, things which we often find difficult to study. But David declared that they were more precious than fine gold, and sweeter than the sweetest honey.

1. Why do you think David wrote these words about the Books of the Law?
2. We tend to think of the New Testament as showing us God's love, how do His rules and commandments show us His love and care for us?
3. It has been said that there is freedom in following the rules. Discuss!
4. What rules did you find most difficult to live under when you were growing up? Do you understand them better now? Would you put the same rules in place for your children?
5. Verse 12 says 'who can discern their own errors' do you think this is true? Are we self-deceiving when it comes to our sins?
6. David says that the words of the Law are refreshment to the soul, joy to the heart and light to the eyes. Do you agree?
7. David was a great law breaker, in that he arranged for the murder of Uriah so that he could have Bathsheba. How do we view this song of love to the Law in light of this knowledge? v 13
8. How does David's love of the law differ from that of the Pharisees?
9. If you were to live the way of love more consistently... what would it look like?



Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May

**Step Nine - Discipline**

Matthew 5: 21-26 | Ephesians 4: 25-32 | **Numbers 5: 5-10**

All through the book of Numbers, we see God pausing to remind the Israelites of His laws. The laws of God against sin aren't just meaningless regulations, they're the way to life and blessing in God's presence. With them...we live. Without them...we die. Life in all its fullness means a life lived in the presence of God, according to his Law. But God knows we are human and prone to transgression so the Israelites had to be instructed on how to deal with the sin that was inevitably going to enter their camp. Forewarned is forearmed; we need to know how to deal with the sins that we are going to commit on our journey through life.

1. What are the big ideas from these bible passages?
2. Why does verse six say that anyone who wrongs another is 'unfaithful to the Lord'?
3. Verse seven says that the sin must be confessed before restitution is made to the wronged party. Why is it this way round?
4. Why is restitution necessary if we have already confessed and repented?
5. There is no mention of 'punishment' in God's Law. Discuss!
6. Why is it important that the guilty party has to give the amount required directly to the wronged person? v7
7. How does God's plan help reconciliation a) between the two parties b) between us and God?
8. How do God's laws reveal His character to us?
9. Retribution and revenge versus restitution and reconciliation: what is your choice... for private reflection?
10. What consistent choices might increase your discipline, character and godliness?



Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May

**Step Ten - Perseverance**

**Luke 12: 35-48** | 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13 | Psalms 15: 1-5

When Jesus returns will he find us living out our lives and our faith as if he were present? We are not told when Christ will return, but we are asked to be ready and told how to behave while we are waiting. The text refers to the delight Jesus will feel when he finds his servants faithfully waiting for His return. “The master will himself seat them, put on an apron and serve them as they sit and eat!” We are asked to live our lives in such a way that we are assured of His approval, and to be alert and ready to welcome Him back amongst us.

1. What grabs you from these bible verses?
2. Verse 35 says we are to be dressed ready and keep our lamps burning. How do we interpret that in our lives?
3. Give an example of something you have had to wait a long time for. How did you stay positive and hopeful?
4. Have there been times that you’ve given up waiting for something? How did that affect you?
5. In verse 41 Peter asks whether this parable is for everyone or just the disciples. What is our responsibility in His answer?
6. Using this scripture, would you say it is better to know of Jesus’ teaching and do nothing about it, or not to know anything about his life and ministry? (Obviously accepting that to know and follow Jesus is the aim!)
7. Look at verse 47 and 48, how do they relate to those who live in our villages?
8. What tools can help us persevere in the waiting?



Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May

### Step Eleven - Spirituality

Matthew 26: 36-46 | **1 Thessalonians 5: 12-22** | Psalms 25: 1-15

Paul is giving the Thessalonians, and us, a road map for life. *His words are both encouraging and challenging, but ultimately they are aimed at increasing our happiness and holiness.* C.S. Lewis observed: “There is no excess of goodness. You cannot go too far in the right direction.” and Puritan Thomas Brooks noted: “No holiness here, no happiness hereafter.”

1. Do you think that Paul’s instructions here are attainable?
2. Who is Paul referring to in verse 12 & 13?
3. Of the categories of people listed in verse 14 & 15, who do you find most challenging to deal with?
4. Are there people in your life that you have found to be particularly encouraging? How have they affected your outlook?
5. Verse 16 tells us to ‘rejoice always’, how can we achieve this when we are faced with difficult and challenging circumstances?
6. Verse 21 tells us to test prophecies. How do we do that? How can we protect ourselves against false prophecies?
7. Read The Message version of this passage. How does it compare?
8. How does this passage help you achieve a positive outlook?
9. What’s the big take away for you?



Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May

## Step Twelve – Responsibility

Luke 19: 1-10 | **Galatians 6: 1-10** | Isaiah 61: 1-4

Responsibility to ourselves and to others is important to the life and health of the individual and to the life and health of the church. How we handle the difficult task of mutual accountability can help us grow as followers of Jesus. It won't always be pretty. Even if we do it properly, we can experience a backlash from it because at the heart of sin is pride and self deception. That should not scare us because accountability is the way we can gain a better perspective. Mutual accountability is a necessary tool if we are to grow more and more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, and self controlled.

1. What speaks to you from this main Galatians passages?
2. Who do you feel accountable to in your day-to-day life, and why?
3. Is responsibility a burden or a blessing?
4. How do responsibility and accountability differ?
5. Verse two tells us to carry each other's burdens. What does this mean?
6. Verse four tells us to take pride in ourselves and not compare ourselves to others. How can we achieve this?
7. How does this scripture compare with the message to the Thessalonians that we read last week?
8. Verse nine encourages us not to become weary in doing good. What can we do to avoid 'compassion fatigue'?
9. This verse could be used as a summary passage for our series on Essentials. How has the series helped you view its instructions?