

St Annes Ryde  
ANGELICAN CHURCH



**CGS 16 Term 1  
2009**

# **Jesus transforms lives**



**Bible based, application focussed  
discussion material**

**prepared by Greg Burke and linked to sermons  
preached at St Anne's Ryde Anglican Church**

## **Discussion 1. The Gospel Message Romans 1:16-17, 1Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5 (Sermon 15th February)**

1. If someone asked you to produce evidence that God is ***real and active in our world today*** - how would you respond?
2. Paul says he is “not ashamed” of the Gospel. Sometimes this is not true of us. Share with your group an experience when you wish you had spoken up more clearly as a Christian. What stopped you?
3. Paul says that “a righteousness from (or better “of”) God is revealed in the gospel”. He goes on to say (in Romans 1:18) that the ***wrath*** of God is revealed. What is the relationship between the righteousness and the wrath of God? How does the gospel display both?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5. Why is it important for a Christian to be honest about our weaknesses and faults?  
Does this honesty help or hinder the cause of the gospel?  
How and why does it do this?
5. List all the things Paul “boasts” about in his letters to the Corinthians (1 and 2 Corinthians). How do our weaknesses demonstrate God's power?
6. Your group has been given the task of devising a “motto” for an evangelistic website. Work out a short sentence that you could use for a motto to attract people to the site.

## **Discussion 2. A Terrorist - from hell to paradise Luke 23:32- 49 (Sermon 22nd February)**

1. Hebrews 9:27 states that people are “destined to die once and after that to face judgement”. How would you defend this teaching when a friend says “Surely everyone deserves a second chance? I don't think God would send people to hell with out giving them another chance”
2. What are the attractions and dangers in the Roman Catholic teaching on purgatory? (Purgatory: A place of suffering where all who die at peace with the church must undergo penal and purifying suffering. When all their sin is purged away they are translated to heaven. Only those Christians who have attained a state of perfection can by-pass purgatory and go straight to heaven. (Source - “Purgatory” *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* L Boettner)

3. Why do people get so upset when they hear of a notorious criminal who claims to have become a Christian believer whilst in goal? How would you respond to their indignation?

4. **EXACTLY** what is required of a person if they are to get right with God? What evidence is there that the criminal crucified with Jesus meets these requirements? (Luke 23:32-49). In particular - what evidence is there of genuine repentance?

5. How can God's righteousness be maintained when he forgives notorious evil doers like this criminal and potentially even mass-murderers who repent? Read Romans 3:21-31 for some assistance

6. Imagine your group is St Anne's Parish Council. You have been asked to advise the Church Wardens on the policy they should adopt towards a person who has just been released from a prison sentence imposed for the crime of fraudulently using Church funds. What policies would you recommend? What, if any restrictions would you recommend? On what grounds should this person be allowed to share in the Lord's Supper? What Bible passages would you use to support your advice?

### **Discussion 3. Disciples: Empowered witnesses: Irrepressible witnesses Acts 1:8; Acts 4:1- 22 (Sermon 1st March)**

1. Compare the "state of mind" of the disciples in John 20:19-29 with Acts 4:1-22. What factors could explain these differences? What do their opponents put this down to?

2. Jesus promises "power" to his disciples - what is this power given for?

3. When Peter and John are commanded to stop speaking about Jesus, they reply "*Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard*" Acts 4:19-20. Are there any circumstances when you might have to **obey** a similar command not to speak about Jesus? Discuss the ethics of "witnessing in the work place".

How would this apply to some of these people:

A Teacher in a government school

A carpenter working for a boss

A nurse in a public hospital

A GP in her surgery (ctd. over)

A Centrelink staff member dealing with unemployed people  
 A politician in his electoral office

4. How do Peter and John shift the focus from themselves to Jesus? Why is this important?

**Discussion 4. Gospel Pictures 1 Corinthians 15:1-7 (Sermon 8th March)**

Use your group discussion to explore ways of “talking about Jesus”

1. Tick the following fears that apply to how you feel about talking to  
 1. Long term friends, 2. Family members, 3. Work colleagues,  
 4. Neighbours  
 about Jesus

1. Friends	2. Family	3. Work	4. Neighbours	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am afraid of rejection
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am afraid of not having answers to difficult questions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am afraid that I don't know what to say
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am afraid that my friendship will be damaged.

3. Discuss the difference between a “Jesus focussed conversation” and a “memorised spiel”. What negative effects could the latter have?

4. Do you agree with this statement “A good witness spends far more time listening to where others are at than telling them where they should be at”?

5. As a group, “brain storm” conversation starting questions you could ask.

### **Discussion 5. Ethiopian Treasurer: Scripture searcher to Jesus finder Acts 8:26- 40 (Sermon 15th March)**

1. What evidence is there of God's sovereign control in this "gospel encounter"? Have you ever been aware of God's sovereignty in encounters you have experienced?
2. The Ethiopian treasurer is reading from the "servant song" in Isaiah 53. Read the whole chapter and discuss how you would "begin with this passage of scripture and tell someone the good news about Jesus" as Philip did.
3. What "assumed knowledge" would a person need to understand your explanation (in Q2 above)? If your friend knew nothing at all about Christian faith - what parts of the Old Testament would you refer them to so that they could understand the good news about Jesus?
4. What events might the Ethiopian treasurer have witnessed in Jerusalem before he left.? What do you think the Ethiopian treasurer would have done when he arrived home?
5. For interest you might like to check out Ethiopia and the Ethiopian church in "Operation World".

### **Discussion 6. Saul: persecutor to preacher Acts 9:1- 31 (Sermon 22nd March)**

1. Read this passage and choose two verses which best highlight the dramatic change in Saul's attitude to Jesus.
2. Someone has claimed that "Any critic of Christianity must provide an explanation of the radical change in Saul's life" What possible explanations could there be? How do they compare to the account in Acts?
3. Why do you think Luke includes 3 accounts of Saul's (Paul's) conversion to Christian faith? (See Acts 22:1ff, 26:1ff)
4. What does Jesus' question "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute **ME**?" indicate about the relationship between Jesus and his people?
5. How does Paul's experience illustrate the truth of his claim in 2 Corinthians 5: 16-17 ?

6. What marks of genuine repentance does Saul exhibit? What features of his description of himself as a witness to the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-11) illustrate his **ongoing** repentance?
7. How important is the resurrection of Jesus in our gospel message? Do you agree with the statement “a dead saviour is no saviour”?

### **Discussion 7 Thessalonian Christians: Idol worshippers to model believers 1Thessalonians 1:2-10 Sermon(29th March)**

1. Paul says the gospel came to the Thessalonian Christians with “power, the Holy Spirit and deep conviction”(v5) Was that true in your case when you came to trust in Jesus?
2. Paul models Christian faith (v6) and the Thessalonian Christians became models for others(v8ff). Discuss the importance of modelling faith and faithfulness as Christians bear witness to Jesus. What does it mean in practical terms to be a model believer? Is it possible to avoid this responsibility?
3. How would you describe Joy? How does it differ from happiness? The Thessalonian Christians welcomed the gospel with joy in spite of suffering for their faith. Do people see joy in your life and mine even when things are tough? Should they be able to? What would help you to be joyful in hard times?
4. Why does Paul talk about conversion to Christian faith as “turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (v9)?  
What exactly is idolatry? Why is it so bad?  
First century culture was steeped in idolatry - what are the pervasive forms of idolatry in our culture that Christian faith must repudiate?  
What idols did you serve before turning to Jesus? Do they still hold some attraction for you? How does a good gift from God become an idol?  
*On idolatry you might like to check out Colossians 3:5 and Jeremiah 2.*
5. The Thessalonian Christians were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (v10) To what extent should a Christian live for the future as opposed to engaging in the present? What practical differences does waiting for the return of Jesus make to the way we plan our future (investments, retirement, making a will, donations to Christian and other good causes etc.)?

## **Discussion 8 Timothy: Childhood faith to church elder 2Timothy 3:14 - 4:5 Sermon (5th April)**

1. Paul indicates in 2Timothy 3:14 that the character of a witness plays an important role in a person's journey to faith. What characteristics do you think should be evident in a Christian witness? Can you think of examples of Christians whose character has impressed you and commended the gospel to you?

2. How would you encourage someone who grew into Christian faith and sees their own lack of a "conversion experience" as a shortcoming? How does Timothy's example help?

3. To what extent do you think the time when people "will not put up with sound doctrine" referred to in 2Timothy 4:3-4 is a description of 21st Century Australia? What "sound doctrine" is unpopular today? Where do people turn to get more palatable messages?

4. Your group has been asked to advise the ministry team about what should be included in this year's preaching program at St Anne's. You aim to choose material that will be of interest to people in our community as we connect with the as well as building up our regular attenders. What advice would you give?