

St Annes Ryde
ANGELICAN CHURCH



CGS 18 Term 3
2009

Divine appointments, Divine welcome



**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 unexpectants John 4:1- 26
(Sermon 2nd August)**

1. Read John 4:1-26 What 'social barriers' does Jesus transgress in this interaction? What do you think motivates Jesus to do this?
2. People often say 'Don't talk about politics or religion'. Why do you think this is a common saying?
3. How does Jesus arouse the Samaritan woman's interest in his identity?
4. What do you think Jesus means when he says he offers living water? See John 7:37-39 for some help.
5. Think of a conversation starter you could use to lead to a discussion about Jesus.
6. Now - think about today's news stories - how could you use these to lead into a discussion about Jesus?

**Discussion 2 Guard the gospel 2 Timothy 1:3-14
(Sermon 9th August)**

1. Paul speaks of handing on a 'pattern of sound teaching' to Timothy and entrusting 'the good deposit' of the gospel to him (2 Tim 1:13-14). How has this deposit and pattern of sound teaching been passed onto you? How are you passing it on to others?
2. Who else was involved in passing the gospel message on to Timothy? Read 2 Tim 3:14-17 Who passed the message on to you?
3. What threats to gospel teaching and transmission does Paul say Timothy faces in the following passages?
2 Tim 2:14-18 2 Tim 3:1-5 2 Tim 4:3-4
Do you think these are real threats today?
4. Role play possible responses to some of the following 'objections' to Christian faith:
 - “Christianity is just another religion, it is nothing special.”
 - “The Bible is full of mistakes - how can you base your beliefs on it?”
 - “In our modern world belief in Jesus is irrelevant and discredited.”
 - “All you have to do is live a good life - God can't expect me to do any more than that.”
 - “Christianity is just about manipulating people - trying to scare them into belief.”
 - “I admire Jesus - but I don't think you have to get fanatical about him.”

**Discussion 3 The regulars Luke 7:36- 50
(Sermon 16th August)**

1. What difficulties do you anticipate when you introduce Christian faith into the agenda with groups you regularly interact with or relate to? Are there any differences when you talk 1 on 1?
2. What pressures do we feel to keep our Christian belief hidden from groups we regularly interact with?
3. What can we learn from Paul's prayer for boldness in Ephesians 6:19-20? How would we know if God had answered this prayer if we prayed it for ourselves?
4. What resources does God provide us as we live as witnesses to Jesus? See Ephesians 6:10-18.
5. What features of the message of Jesus could we find embarrassing? What possible embarrassments does Paul highlight in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5
6. How would you feel if a person you see regularly called you a fool for taking Jesus seriously? How would you respond?
7. What **practical** qualities should distinguish a Christian member of a sporting team, a workplace team or a neighbourhood?

**Discussion 4 The Family Mark 6:1- 6, 8:27- 30
(Sermon 23rd August)**

1. What features of relationships with family members mean that talking to them about Jesus can be difficult?
2. Read John's account of Andrew's actions in John 1:35-42. What can we learn from Andrews' priorities?
3. "A Christian should walk the walk as well as talk the talk". How important is this balance when it comes to our relationships with family members.
4. What difficulties does a young Christian face as he/she seeks to convince Parents, Children and/or Siblings that as a Christian they now live a life that is transformed by Jesus?

Discussion 5 Our Welcoming God Luke 15:11- 32
(Sermon 30th August)

1. Why did the Pharisees and teachers of the law complain about Jesus in Luke 15:1-2 ?
2. Imagine you are the father in the story (Luke 15:11-32) and your child treats you like the son in the story treats his father. **Honestly** write your own ending to the story indicating how you would react from verse 20b.
3. What features of the Father's response to his 'lost' son are surprising?
4. What are the significant differences between the Father's response and the response of the older brother? What words would you use to describe the older brother's response?
5. Imagine your group is the 'welcoming task force" for our church. Outline the 'ideal welcome' you would plan for a person who has moved into Ryde and has come to church for the first time. What potential pitfalls would you need to take into account?
6. How were you 'welcomed' to St Anne's? What has helped you to feel that you belong? What has not helped?

Discussion 6 The gospel: God's open invitation
Matthew 28: 16-20, Romans 10:1-15 (Sermon 6th September)

1. Someone has called the gospel message about Jesus 'the open secret'. How appropriate is this? In what way is it secret? Discuss your reasons.
2. Do you think someone could "make up" the gospel message ? Why?
3. How does Paul highlight the 'openness' and accessibility of the gospel in Romans 10:1-15
4. List the universal terms in Jesus' great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). How do these illustrate Jesus' authority and the extent of the task he gives.
5. How would you answer someone who says the 'great commission was only for Jesus' first disciples - it doesn't apply to us'?
6. Your group has been asked to provide two teams for a debate. The topic is "church should give priority to its existing members." Prepare outlines of arguments for both sides.

Discussion 7 Church - God's welcoming community (Sermon 13th September)

Your group should spend time looking at the Welcoming Check List from Peter Corney's book "The welcoming church".

Make sure you watch the DVD clip (#3 below).

Optional Questions:

1. How does 'favouritism' like James refers to in James 2:1-13 undermine our gospel ministry and contradict our message?

2. What subtle ways are we tempted to show favouritism in church?
What basic sinful attitudes underlie these temptations?

3. Watch the Rebecca Manley Pippert video clip.

	Yes/No	We could do better	We must do better	N/A
We are easy to find: good road signs & directions.				
Our notice board is attractive and freshly painted.				
It has helpful information for a newcomer.				
We advertise in the local community.				
The church grounds and buildings look attractive and inviting,				
We have access for disabled persons.				
The church foyer or entrance is clean & attractive, bulletin boards are tidy, flowers & attractive posters are displayed.				
We have a welcome kit.				

	Yes/No	We could do better	We must do better	N/A
There is a welcome kit placed in an obvious place with relevant information for a newcomer or enquirer.				
We have welcomers assigned for Sundays, separate from sidespersons or ushers.				
The welcomers have had at least some training.				
Regular attendees, including children have name tags.				
There is a general welcome to visitors & newcomers in the service.				
We have welcome cards for visitors & newcomers to fill in and these are actively promoted and used.				
We provide tea and coffee and a time for fellowship after the service.				
We have a follow-up system for new people: letter, visit, newcomers' evenings or lunches, a new members group.				
We have people assigned to help new people create friendship links over a period of Six months.				
During the greeting time we encourage people to introduce themselves to people they don't know.				
We have a welcoming system for children and special people assigned to it. This is linked to the Sunday school.				

	Yes/No	We could do better	We must do better	N/A
We have a board for new members photos.				
Every two months we welcome into fellowship new people who have become regular attendees.				
We have a small group system through which new people can become involved In the life of the church.				
We have a conscious and deliberate plan for discovering new people's gifts and involving them in some area of ministry.				
We organise all-age social activities from time to time for people of all ages to enjoy themselves together.				
We regularly evaluate our services and activities & ask how 'outsider friendly' they are.				
We keep records of all people who visit or attend on a newcomers list so they can be followed up. This is reviewed every six months.				
We have a pastoral system that keeps track of new people and if they stop attending they are followed up quickly.				
We are a warm and friendly congregation which welcomes newcomers.				
We have sufficient 'doors of entry' apart from worship services.				
We are careful not to exclude single people by focusing all our activities around families.				

**Discussion 8 Jesus - the light of life John 1:1-14
(Sermon 20th September)**

1. Have a quick look at the references to light/dark in John's gospel: John 1:1-14, John 3:16-21, John 8:12, John 9:1-7, John 12:30-36, John 12:44-50 How does John use this imagery - what does it represent?
2. How would you explain the good and admirable qualities in your not-yet-Christian neighbour? Where do they come from?
3. In our world light and dark, good and evil exist side by side. This leads to many paradoxes - can you identify some?
4. What do you think Jesus means when he says "I am the life" (John 14:6 or John 5:26)

**Discussion 9 Eternal Life John 3: 16-21
(Sermon 27th September)**

1. How would you describe 'eternal life' to a friend who is considering Christian belief? Now look at John 17:3 and John 10:10. What do these add to your description.
2. How would you respond to someone who says "You Christians are always on about heaven - you live in the future and ignore the world around you"?
3. Think of examples to illustrate the truth of John 3 verse 19. How does the internet provide opportunities to do evil and to hide from the 'light'?
4. Exactly what does Jesus save people from?
5. To what extent do you think the gospel functions as a warning from God to people. How would you answer someone who says passages like this (John 3:16-21) are trying to 'scare people into the kingdom'?