

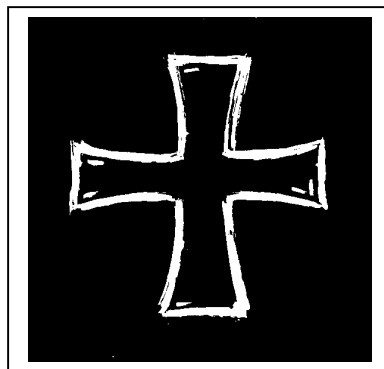
Session One

The family hallmark

What links us together with the church worldwide?

“For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptised into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same — we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 3:26-28 (LB)



Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing *why* they exist. Year after year they live with no idea of God's purpose for their lives. But many people in the UK today are looking for some form of Spiritual fulfilment. Everyone wants to be truly happy.

- ...Some look for happiness by **acquiring possessions.**
- ...Some look for happiness by **experiencing pleasure.**
- ...Some look for happiness by **gaining prestige & power.**

But real happiness comes from a sense of wholeness....physical, spiritual, social and mental....relating to God and understanding my **purpose** in life

Why do we have life?

God made me to love me!

*"Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ...**because of His love.** God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children — this was God's pleasure and purpose."* Eph. 1:4-5 (GN)

When did you first realise that you were loved like that?

We were created to enjoy a personal relationship with God and to all of the rest of God's creation. This makes us special!

"So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said,...live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge." Gen. 1:27-28 (LB)

What has God put you in charge of?

When we know and love God, and live in harmony with His purpose for our lives, it produces tremendous benefits in our lives: He offers us the presence of His own Spirit, who transforms our lives.

Clear Conscience
Rom. 8:1

Life & Peace
Rom. 8:6

Help with Weakness
Rom. 8:26

Purpose and challenge
Rom. 8:28
Acts 1:8

Confidence
Rom. 8:31

Security
Rom. 8:39

Power & Strength
Phil. 4:13

Fulfillment
John 10:10
Phil. 4:19

Freedom
John 8:32,36

What's stops us from finding wholeness?

As humans, we all have a natural desire to rebel, and to ignore God's principles for living.

We all tend to cross God out of the picture of our lives, and reject his authority.

If we're honest, we would rather no-one else knew our deepest thoughts and feelings....they have not always been good and none of us are perfect.

We recognise these things as less than the best. Or making wrong choices. The Bible calls them 'sin'.

"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth."

1 John 1:8

Making wrong choices breaks our close relationship with God. It puts a barrier or a deep ravine between us and God.

God is just, and fair. That means he cannot ignore the wrong things we do and say and think....they have implications for our relationships with others and our relationships with Him.

One day we shall face Him and be held accountable for the way we have spent our lives. *Matthew 25 31 to 40, Hebrews 9 ;27*

The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus will come back to earth one day...no-one knows when... and bring in a whole new world where there will be no more tears or pain. That is God's purpose for the world and becoming a Christian means that we are working with Him towards that purpose now. If you believe that what difference might it make to your day to day life now?

God's gift to us

Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try our own ways of reaching Him....most of which leave us feeling disillusioned.

- "My mother was a Christian so..."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere."
- "I'll give up all my bad habits."
- "I'll work really hard and earn my forgiveness."
- "I'll be religious and go to church."

In the Old Testament times, God provided rituals and sacrifices to enable His people to approach Him.

The great truth about Christianity is that in Jesus Christ God reveals that the solution is no longer down to us. He has provided it for us already.

Jesus Christ said, *"I AM THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me!"* John 14:6

Jesus died to make it possible for our relationship with God to be restored.

"Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, TO BRING YOU TO GOD." 1Peter 3:18.

Jesus has provided a way for us to make a new start. So while we can learn an enormous amount about God's justice and His eternal plan in the Old Testament, we no longer need to go through long rituals in order to rebuild our relationship with Him.

Jesus' death was not the end. God raised Jesus to new life. Because of *His* new life, our lives can be transformed.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3

After Jesus returned to his Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to be with us always.

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth." John 14:16.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live God's way. God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative.

Do you know people who would long to hear about this gift?

Responding to God's gift

In view of all this, each of us has a choice:

We can either ignore this opportunity and remain separated from God's good purpose for us:

Or we can choose to accept Jesus Christ as M.D.?, role-model, life-coach, Lord of our lives.

If we do this we will be forgiven, we will receive the Holy Spirit to help us live God's way, and the gift of eternal life. And joy, peace, a new start, a new world-wide family, the beginning of a great adventure with God, opportunities to serve others, to live life on the edge, to find strength and courage to face whatever comes...

No wonder we call the Gospel...Good news! Not that being a Christian is an easy option...Jesus never said it would be that...but He did say He would be at our side working through things with us.

If you haven't already reached this point on your journey of faith, how close are you to making this kind of choice about your future?

You may find this prayer helpful :

Lord Jesus Christ,

I am **sorry** for ignoring you, and for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift.

Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.

Thank you, Lord Jesus.
Amen.

"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

If you have just sincerely prayed this prayer, you are now at a pivotal point in your journey of faith....you have become a member of God's very own family, the World Church. You have a new status, new life, a new companion and a new task. Your life, and the lives of those around you can be transformed. And you might just like to know that the angels will be rejoicing over you! *(Luke 15:10)*

Welcome to the world church family!!!!

What might happen next?

"Those who accepted the message were baptised...They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." Acts 2:41-42

Becoming a Christian is not the end of the story. It's only the START of an amazing and exciting journey working with God in His World...and being changed by Him. None of us are perfect, and none of us will reach perfection until we arrive in eternity but you are most welcome to find out more. Whether or not you've already taken a decision to follow Christ, over the next three weeks you are invited to take a look at what it might mean to link up with us as we experience that life-changing journey.

Next Week - The family celebrations

- Baptism
- Communion