

THE
TOGETHER
SERIES

FIVE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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THE TOGETHER SERIES

INTRODUCTION

These studies explore five distinctives of Christian worship. Each study will relate to sermons given in February and early March.

There is much that could be said about Christian worship and we can't possibly cover all of that here. There are other distinctives that we don't fully cover here. We do, however, look at five core distinctions of Christian worship.

2012 is the 350th Anniversary of the publication of the Book of Common Prayer in 1662. The Book of Common Prayer was the end of a long process of prayer book development that was presided over by Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury (1532 – 1552). Cranmer's last Prayer Book was published in 1552 and soon after he was martyred. Over 100 years later, in 1662, when Charles II became King, he re-printed that book. It then became the standard book of common prayer across the Anglican church as it spread to most continents. Along with the King James Bible it has had a remarkable impact on Western culture and the emerging church in the majority world.

These studies explore the five core features of Cranmer's understanding of Christian worship:

- Praise and Adoration in word and song
- Hearing God's Word read and preached
- Prayer for the world, the church and each other
- Public confession, declaration of forgiveness and sharing the peace
- Sharing together in Gospel Sacraments

At St Hilary's, each of these five characteristics are expressed most Sundays.

Every generation and community of Christians has had to shape their worship to keep it fresh and contemporary.

It is my prayer and our hope that we will be refreshed and challenged as we share in these studies together.



Stephen Hale

Senior Minister
February, 2012

"Through Him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess His name"

Hebrews 13:15

LEADER'S NOTES

These studies are comprehensive and so contain a rich resource to be explored. In order to complete the studies you will need to exercise discretion as to what you look at each week. The basic structure is:

A FIRST LOOK

This seeks to get people thinking and the group talking together.



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

Exploring a range of Biblical passages.



LOOK AGAIN

An opportunity to look back over the key themes of the study.



REFLECT ... GIVE THANKS ... PRAY TOGETHER

Please allow time to do each of the above together.

THE TOGETHER SERIES

STUDY ONE:

PRAISE



A FIRST LOOK

What do you most enjoy about coming to church?

- singing / praise / worship
- the preaching
- catching up with people
- prayer
- sharing in Holy Communion.



WORSHIP Discuss what you understand by this word / concept /



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

- 1. Sing to the Lord a new song.
Read Psalm 96.**

The Psalmist covers the who, the why, and the how of worship.

- who is worthy of praise?
- why should we praise Him?
- how is God praised?

2. Worship God in all of our lives.

Read Romans 12: 1 – 16

2.1 Is worship something that only occurs in church?

2.2 If we know God's mercy, how will that impact how we live?

2.3 How do we worship God in our daily lives?

2.4 Is there any place for some sort of:

- sacred / secular divide?

- spiritual / earthly divide?

3. When we come together.

Read Colossians 3: 11 – 17

- Why do we praise God?

- What does our praise of God involve?

- Why do we share in praise with God's people together?



REFLECT....GIVE THANKS....PRAY TOGETHER

Share together by acknowledging God's greatness.

Pray for your group that during this year you will help each other to worship God, both when you are together and when you are apart.

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STUDY TWO:

LISTEN



A FIRST LOOK

Assume you had someone coming to your small group who had never read, seen or heard of the Bible – how would you introduce the Bible to them?



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

Read Psalm 19: 1- 11

1.1 God speaks to all people in creation – how does the Psalmist understand this? Look also at Romans 1: 20

1.2 Why is the Law of God so precious?

2. Building up the Body of Christ

Read Ephesians 4: 7 – 16

2.1 God has blessed the church with four or five “word” related gifts. How would you describe those gifts?

- apostles

- prophets

- evangelists
- pastor / teachers

2.2 How does Paul describe the impact on the body of Christ if these gifts are being exercised properly?
(vs 12) to prepare

(vs 12) the body of Christ

(vs 13) we all reach

(vs 13) and become mature

(vs 15) grow up into

(vs 16) grows and builds itself up

3. A good minister of Jesus Christ.

Read 1 Timothy 4: 1 – 16

3.1 What responsibilities does Paul charge Timothy to fulfill?
(See verse 11 – 14)

3.2 'Watch your life and doctrine closely' (vs 4: 16a) What is the double challenge for the preacher? (NB: Note the other 'double' in 1 Timothy 5: 17, 18)



LOOK AGAIN....

- God is a God who speaks – how does He do that today?
- If God is speaking, how do we listen both personally and as God's people together?
- How essential is God's word written to you
 - personally?
 - your small group?
 - our church community?



REFLECT....GIVE THANKS....PRAY TOGETHER

Give thanks for the access we have to God to hear Him speak.

Pray for those who read and teach God's word regularly at St Hilary's.

Pray for all small groups to build each other up in love as we share the word of God together.

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STUDY THREE:

PRAY



A FIRST LOOK

When we meet together as God's people, how important is prayer?

- In church services
- In small groups

In what ways should we pray together?

How encouraging do you find public intercessions in church?



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

1. Personal prayer.

Read Matthew 6: 5 – 15, 7: 7 – 11

1.1 Jesus teaches us how not to pray as well as how to pray. Discuss the differences.

When you pray:

- do not

- do

- do not

- do

1.2 Is the Lord's Prayer a prayer to be prayed or a model for how and what we should be praying?

1.3 Ask, seek and knock. What sort of response does Jesus promise us?

2. Public Prayer

Read 1 Timothy 2: 1 – 7

2.1 When we come to church what should be included in the intercessions?

2.2 What confidence can we have about what God will do with our mutual prayer?

3. Praying for each other.

There are many scriptural encouragements to pray for each other. You may want to look at all of these, or just focus on one.

Ephesians 6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Philippians 4: 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Colossians 1: 9 *For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*

Colossians 4: 2- 6 *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should. Conduct yourselves wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.*

1 Thess. 5: 16 - 18 *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*



LOOK AGAIN....

Which of these passages has been the most

- encouraging

- challenging



REFLECT....GIVE THANKS....PRAY TOGETHER

- Pray for all who have the opportunity to lead the intercessions in our church services.
- Pray for those who exercise leadership in our world and country.
- Pray for each other, giving thanks for God's desire to answer prayer.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer together.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be Your Name,

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on

on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours

Now and forever.

Amen



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STUDY FOUR:

CONFESS



A FIRST LOOK

How do you react to the saying together of a prayer of confession in church services? An example is this confession from one of the Communion Services in the Anglican Prayer Book.

Confession

Knowing the goodness of God, and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

*Heavenly Father,
You have loved us with an everlasting love,
but we have broken your holy laws
and have left undone what we ought to have done.
We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.
For the sake of Your Son who died for us,
Forgive us, cleanse us and change us.
By Your Holy Spirit,
Enable us to live for You;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen*

This is followed by the Declaration of Forgiveness (Absolution) and often the Greeting of Peace.

Declaration of Forgiveness

*God is slow to anger and full of compassion,
forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in His Son as Saviour and Lord.
God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus,
in whom there is no condemnation.
Amen*

Greeting of Peace

*We are the body of Christ
His Spirit is with us
The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.*



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

1. Personal Confession.

Read Psalm 51: 1 – 17

1.1 Explore the flow of David's prayer of confession.

- Have mercy on me ...

- I know my transgressions ...

- Cleanse me ...

- Create in me a pure heart ...

- Then I will ...

2. Public Confession

Read –

Isaiah 55: 6 – 8

⁶Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

⁷let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

Matthew 11: 28

²⁸ 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

John 3: 16

¹⁶ **For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.**

1 Corinthians 11: 27 - 29

²⁷ **Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

²⁹**For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves.**

2.1 What encouragements and challenges do these verses contain?

3. Mutual confession

Read James 5: 13 – 20

3.1 The Scriptures urge us to help each other out in all sorts of situations. Why should this include confession of sin and restoration of those who have wandered away?



REFLECT....GIVE THANKS....PRAY TOGETHER

- Why is it so hard to confess our sins?
- Why is it so important to confess our sins?
- What does God most want for us?

Share in the Greeting of Peace together.

*We are the body of Christ
His Spirit is with us*

*The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you*

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THE TOGETHER SERIES

STUDY FIVE:

CELEBRATE



A FIRST LOOK

- Share together your reflection / memories of your own baptism / dedication / confirmation
- Share together your reflection / memories of the first time you shared in Holy Communion.

[Please note: Try to respect the variety of experiences and positions that people in your group may have in relation to the sacraments. This is not an opportunity to debate these positions. See Postscript at the end of this study]

Baptism and Holy Communion are known as sacraments – signs.

The classic definition from the Anglican Catechism is:

“An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given to us by Christ Himself, as a means by which we receive that grace, and a pledge to assure us of this.” (page 817 A Prayer Book for Australia)

In baptism, water is the outward sign of cleansing and forgiveness. In Holy Communion the bread and wine / grape juice are the outward signs which remind us of Christ’s body broken, and His blood shed on the cross.

Baptism is a sign of inward and spiritual grace as a result of dying to sin, and new birth to righteousness.

Holy Communion is a sign of inward and spiritual grace whereby the believer is spiritually refreshed and strengthened by the body and blood of Christ.



LOOKING INTO THE BIBLE

1. Baptism.

1.1 The Great Commission

Read Matthew 28: 16 – 20

Where does baptism fit in the outworking of the church's mission in the world?

1.2 Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost.

Read Acts 2: 36 – 41

What is involved in being baptised?

1.3 Baptised into Jesus Christ.

Romans 6: 1- 4

When you are baptised, what is it a sign of?

2. Holy Communion / Lord's Supper

Read 1 Corinthians 11: 23 – 32

2.1 What do we remember when we eat bread and drink wine at the Lord's table?

2.2 Why is proper preparation required before we receive Holy Communion?

2.3 How is sharing in Communion a gospel action (see verse 26)?



LOOK AGAIN....

What you have learnt about baptism?

What you have learnt about the Lord's Supper?



REFLECT....GIVE THANKS....PRAY TOGETHER

Give thanks for your baptism.

Give thanks for the privilege of sharing in communion with God and communion with each other at the Lord's Supper.

Give thanks for how both sacraments point to the heart of the gospel that we believe and proclaim.

[Postscript: At St Hilary's we have an open approach to both baptism and the Lord's Supper. We respect that a variety of views exist in relation to infant baptism. We therefore either baptise infants or dedicate infants. We encourage confirmation for those baptised as infants or baptism for believers. We offer sprinkling or full immersion. We invite all who would claim Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord to come to the Lord's Table. Children are welcome to receive Holy Communion and we regularly offer a short explanatory session in relation to this.]



NOTES ...



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