

Come & See

The text "Come & See" is rendered in a serif font. The word "Come" is in a dark purple color, while "&" and "See" are in a bright magenta color. The text is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by a large, light pink, semi-transparent swirl graphic. A vertical dotted line runs down the right side of the page, and a horizontal dotted line runs across the page below the text.

Come and see...

It is always exciting to be able to share good news. We may invite our friends to come and see... a visiting family member, a new baby, a new home, or new possessions. There is joy in sharing.

During 2012, the shared theme for Women's Ministries throughout the world is *Come and see...* . This series of 12 Bible studies invites us to come and see... God's creation, his provision for us, his gift of Jesus and what Jesus has done for us. As we study together we are invited to see for ourselves, but also to consider how we, as Christian women, can invite others to 'come and see'. We should not keep the good news to ourselves.

The Bible study follows a path through the Old and New Testaments, inviting us to see the story of how people learned more about God and his provision for human beings. The individual studies do not have to be used in this order – for example some are suitable for Christmas, Easter or Harvest time. You may want to use one each month or as a weekly series at some time during the year, or alternatively take more than one week on a particular study when there is a great deal to discuss.

The studies follow a simple pattern that you can use in any setting. They are designed to be flexible, so that you can add material that is relevant to where you are.

- Each study begins with – **What the Bible says**, where you explore 'What does the text actually say?' It is important that you read the Bible carefully and allow it to speak to you and guide the content of your study.
- The second stage – **Our lives/world today**, considers such questions as: what does the Bible reading tell you about your lives? Does it highlight any problems in society? What challenges are there for the way you live your life?
- The third section – **Discussion**, poses a number of questions. Depending upon where you are using the studies, you may choose to select one or two that seem most suitable for you, or ask different groups to discuss other aspects and possibly, if you have time, share what they have been speaking about.
- Some of the studies have a final section that uses a Bible passage or verse from a song – **To think about**. You may want to use this to encourage silent reflection, sharing in small groups or as the basis of your closing worship – it is for you to decide.

We enjoy sharing our news with each other. So this is an invitation to do what we enjoy – to tell how God has invited us to 'come and see' and to find ways of sharing in his mission as we invite others to share what we have.

Bible Study I

Come and see the world God made

Bible reading – Genesis I

‘And God saw that it was good’ (vv 10,12,18,21,25).

‘God saw...and it was very good’ (v 31).

What the Bible says

The story of creation in Genesis I shows clearly that God is the creator of the universe, of our world, of living creatures, of all vegetation and human beings. As we read the story we see the way in which God worked, first of all establishing the universe and then gradually transforming the ‘formless and empty’ earth (v 2) into a world with seas and land (v 10), plants and trees (vv 11,12), sun, moon and stars (vv 14-18) and animals, birds and sea creatures (vv 20-22). Finally he created male and female humanity (vv 26,27).

As he surveyed his creation ‘God saw that it was good’ (vv 10,12,18,21,25) and, finally, ‘very good’ (v 31). The word ‘good’ has several meanings in this story. It means that creation is fulfilling the purpose for which God made it. As we read, we see that everything in creation is contributing to God’s plan for the universe and, by so doing, it is bringing glory to God. The word ‘good’ also implies that God was pleased with his creation, and the extra word ‘very’ in v 31 gives a sense of completion, a judgement upon the whole of creation together. Finally, it suggests that it is beautiful as God intended it to be.

The Bible tells us that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God (vv 26,27). We were created to be like God, reflecting his love and his holiness and sharing in good and holy relationships. This privileged position of human beings also brought a sacred responsibility; we are to care for the world, to be God’s stewards. The Bible says that we were given the right to rule over the other living creatures and to cultivate the plants in order to provide food. However the word ‘subdue’ (v 28) has often been misunderstood. The duty of a steward is to ensure that something is used responsibly; it does not give us absolute power to take and use any part of the world for any purpose without thought for the overall welfare of the whole.

Our world today

Throughout history human beings have failed to live according to God’s intention for us. Although we are created in God’s image, we are also spoiled and flawed by sin (Genesis chapter 3; Psalm 14:1-3). In Jesus we see a perfect expression of humanity (Colossians 1:15), and through his death and resurrection we find the possibility of becoming what God intended us to be (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Sometimes we have not been good stewards and have abused the trust given to us at creation. We may have looked at the needs and wants of human beings and, with the best intentions, done things that have damaged God's creation. At other times our human greed has led to the destruction of parts of the creation that God saw as 'good'. Yet it is our responsibility to care for the world – God's world.

Discussion

1. Spend a few minutes looking at the world around you. How would you describe it?
2. As you have surveyed the world around you, would you describe what you see as 'good'? What is it that makes it good? What is not good about it?
3. In the Bible we see that everything in creation contributes to God's plan for the universe and so brings glory to God. What is it that you can do to bring glory to God?
4. What are the things you can do to be a responsible steward of God's world?
5. How can you encourage people in your community to respect and value creation?
6. If all human beings are made in God's image, how should we treat one another?
7. In Romans 8:29 the writer speaks of Christians becoming 'conformed to the likeness of his Son'. Think about what it means to you to become like Jesus. What do you need to do?

Lieut-Colonel Karen Shakespeare

Bible Study 2

Come and see God's deliverance

Bible reading – Exodus 14:13-31

**‘Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today”’
(Exodus 14:13).**

What the Bible says

After many years of enslavement in Egypt, the Israelites were on their journey to the Promised Land. In their minds their problems had come to an end. Maybe they did not even think of the long journey. They were happy to be free. Then they looked back to see that Pharaoh's army was pursuing them. They looked forward and they were confronted by the Red Sea. To some it seemed like the end of life, while others regretted running away from their cruel Egyptian rulers. They were even thinking of the food they had eaten in Egypt and forgetting the hardships they had faced as slaves.

The Israelites felt that they had come to the end of their road to the Promised Land. But God opened a way for the Israelites through the Red Sea so that they were able to cross over. They were amazed.

Our lives today

There are many situations like this in life. Sometimes there seems no way out, or no hope of a solution (v 10). The way ahead can appear to be even more frightening than the present situation (vv 11,12).

But God can work for our deliverance. We need to stand firm and trust that he will not let us down (vv 13-16).

We need to invite our friends who are still living in frightening situations to ‘come and see’ God's deliverance. The God who worked wonders for the Israelites is still able to provide a safe pathway through life's challenges.

Discussion

1. How would you have felt if you had been in the same situation as the children of Israel – looking back to see Pharaoh's army in pursuit and ahead the Red Sea?

2. Have you faced situations in your own lives where it has seemed impossible to move on or to go back? How has God helped you?

3. The Bible tells us to 'stand firm' (v 13) and to 'be still' (v 14). What does this mean in your life and experience?

4. How can your corps (church) or community help people living in seemingly impossible situations to trust that God will intervene for their good?

To think about

'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10).

'For nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37 NLT).

Major Juliet Nyakusamwa

Bible Study 3

Come and see God's awesome work in our lives

Bible reading – Exodus 34:1-10

‘Then the Lord said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you”’ (Exodus 34:10).

What the Bible says

God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and led them into the Promised Land. He made a covenant with them, promising to be their God if they would be his holy people. Through Moses God gave them the Ten Commandments, which they all agreed to keep. Sadly, the people soon broke their promise and made a golden calf to worship. God punished them by sending a plague. But he mercifully gave them a second chance.

God asked Moses to prepare two more stone tablets ready for the Ten Commandments to be given again (vv 1-3).

Moses met God on Mount Sinai. God again revealed his character to Moses (vv 4-7).

Moses pleaded with God to forgive his people and go with them (vv 8-9).

God renewed his covenant with his people. He promised to do awesome wonders in their lives – wonders never seen before. Other people would see these and be amazed (v 10).

Our lives today

Jesus offered his life for us on Calvary. If we accept him as our Saviour, we can also enter into a covenant with God. He promises us eternal life and freedom from sin, and calls us to be his holy people, to trust and obey him. But like the Israelites we sometimes disappoint God and turn away from him. We do not always live as he wants us to live. Even our leaders, like Aaron, can take us in the wrong direction. Instead of giving God first place in our lives we make our own ‘gods’.

God longs for us to repent and turn to him again. When we do this God is able to work wonders in our lives and he can use us to draw other people to himself. Women are influential people. In

our families, our workplaces and our worshipping communities we can help other people to see God's awesome work for themselves.

Discussion

1. What do we learn from this Bible passage about God and what he is like? Discuss:

- His actions
- The words that describe his character.

2. Moses pleaded with God for the sake of the people. Why is it important to pray for our families, our community and our nation? What are some of the issues and concerns we need to bring before God today?

3. As Christian women we are in covenant with God. What has God promised us? What have we promised him?

4. Think of any times you have disappointed God and turned away from him. Why has this happened? What or who has helped you to return to God?

5. Has anyone ever disappointed or failed you? What should you do if you realise that even your leaders are taking you in the wrong direction? What can you learn from the way God responded to the sin of his people?

6. When people look at your life does it reflect God's glory? Discuss ways in which we must live so that people will say 'Come and see God's awesome work'. Think about:

- Our families
- Our communities
- Our worship
- Our workplace.

7. Share personal experiences of God's mercy and grace in your life.

Major Brenda Sterling

Bible Study 4

Come and see God in human flesh

Bible reading – Luke 2:4-18, Matthew 2:1-11

‘When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child’ (Luke 2:17).

‘On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh’ (Matthew 2:11).

What the Bible says

The birth of Jesus signalled the coming of the long awaited Messiah, the one who would bring God’s salvation to the Jewish people. Everyone would expect that the religious leaders and the royal family would be the first people to know about the baby, to visit him and to offer their loyal support. But this was not the case.

The first visitors were shepherds, ordinary workmen whose lifestyle meant that they were on the margins of society. They were people who were sometimes classed as unclean because they were unable to follow a regular pattern of worship. Yet the angels brought them a message from God which invited the poor shepherds to ‘come and see’ the baby who was God in human flesh. They did not question, debate or delay. They went to find the family, they saw the child, they witnessed to their neighbours and the people were amazed.

From another part of the world and the opposite end of the social scale, the rich wise men who were not even Jewish were invited to ‘come and see’ as they thought about the significance of a special star. They went to where they expected the newly born king to be and realised that he was not there, but when they found the king in an unexpected place, they presented their gifts to him. Gold for a king, frankincense for a priest and myrrh for a burial - each gift would come to have their own significance in the life of Jesus who was both king and priest, and who would die for his people. All of them were valuable, the best gift that the giver could find.

Our world today

People like to celebrate the birth of a baby. They visit the family and bring gifts that will help the parents to care for the child. Often a child is a cause of celebration for a whole community.

When the shepherds visited the baby Jesus, they were amazed and they did not keep the good news for themselves but invited other people to ‘come and see’. Later, when the wise men arrived they gave him the best gifts that they could offer.

The story tells us that when God sent Jesus, he didn't send him for one particular group of people, or for one nation but for everyone. Both the poor Jewish shepherds and the rich Gentile wise men were invited.

So at the beginning of Jesus' earthly life we can see that God does not distinguish between people according to class, race or religion; but invites both rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles to the place where God can be seen.

At the end of his time on earth we read that the disciples were commanded to 'go and make disciples of all nations', which again shows us that there is a place for everyone in God's Kingdom (Matthew 28:16-20). We are reminded by these stories that anyone can come to God, so we should make room for them in our fellowship (Galatians 3:28).

Discussion

1. How do you feel when you hear of the arrival of a baby? How do you celebrate? What gifts do you give?
2. The shepherds saw angels, messengers from God. The wise men followed a star. Each of these invited them to 'come and see' Jesus – God in human flesh.
 - What are the things in our world that invite us to 'see' Jesus?
 - Are they always the things that we would expect?
3. Are we always obedient to God's invitations to 'come and see'? If not, what are the reasons for this?
4. Each of us are called to 'come and see' Jesus. For us he is both the child who is God, and the Saviour who was crucified. What is the best gift that we can bring to him?
5. When we tell our story of 'seeing' Jesus, how do people respond?
6. The birth story of Jesus shows that he came for all people.
 - What things can we do in order to invite people in our village or town to 'come and see'?
 - How can we make sure that we include everyone?

To think about

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*
Isaac Watts (SASB 136 v 4)

Lieut-Colonel Karen Shakespeare

Bible Study 5

Come and see who the Son of God is

Bible reading – John 1:19-36 'Look, the Lamb of God' (John 1:29).

What the Bible says

When reading John 1, we learn about the task of John the Baptist, his personality and character. We see he was fully aware of his role and his calling. He demonstrated strength, courage and humility. Concerning his role he said: 'I am the voice of one calling in the desert...' (v 23).

His task was to prepare the way for the expected Messiah, fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 40:3). The Baptist prepared the way for the Son of God in various ways, but the most important part of his work is found in John chapter 1. He testified bravely and pointed to Jesus, never to himself. No ambition or self-centredness. He testified to what he had seen and heard. He was convinced that Jesus from Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and he knew the purpose of his coming (v 29).

John gave his testimony and explained how the Spirit came upon Jesus when he was baptised. The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all of the Gospels (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). They all tell how the Spirit of God came down like a dove and the voice from Heaven confirmed that Jesus was the beloved Son.

Our lives today

Jesus, the Son of God, was filled with the Spirit of God. He knew his identity. Luke 4:18-19 describes how Jesus introduced himself in the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth. 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me...' (Isaiah 61:1,2). Jesus knew he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

This challenges us to look at our lives today and understand our identity as God's children.

1 John 3:1 reminds us that our identity is a gift of God's love and Romans 8:16 shows how the Spirit assures us that we belong to God.

Discussion

1. John the Baptist testified about Jesus, enabling us to see who he is. In what ways can we testify to who Jesus is?
2. John the Baptist testified bravely about Jesus. How bold are we to witness to our family and community?

3. If we are identified as God's children, how should we behave? What can other people expect to see in our lives?

4. How can we be sure that we are living as children of God? Read Ephesians 1:13,14.

To think about

*Thy name is joined with mine
By every human tie,
And my new name is thine,
A child of God am I;
And never more alone, since thou
Art on the road beside me now.
Albert Orsborn (SASB 59 v 2)*

Major Magda Iversen

Bible Study 6

Come and see salvation

Bible reading – Luke 4:14-30

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’ (Luke 4:18,19).

What the Bible says

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry he outlined his mission in the synagogue in Nazareth. He knew that he was the Son of God with the power to forgive sins and bring salvation to those who need it. Luke 4:18,19 reveals that salvation is for everyone, including those people who are not valued by society.

Our world today

Jesus came to bring salvation to those who are in darkness. The same is true in our world today.

His salvation is for:

- The poor – the gospel is for everyone, especially those who feel they have nothing to offer or who feel they are helpless and hopeless.
- The broken hearted – the only remedy for those lives that are broken, is to receive salvation from Jesus. Christ’s love embraces men and women who are bruised and broken, in need of healing for their souls. He is the Great Physician.
- Those who are bound – read about the woman in Luke 13:11-13, how Jesus graciously ‘put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up.’
- The blind – sometimes Jesus healed people who were physically blind, but this verse can also refer to the ‘blindness’ caused by sin. Many people are blinded by the evil in this world. Only the Lord can open blind eyes (John 8:12).
- The oppressed – whenever people are oppressed by their circumstances or by sin, Jesus offers salvation.

Discussion

1. Who are the poor, the broken hearted, the bound, the blind and the oppressed in your community?

2. What can you do to help them see Jesus and the salvation he brings?

3. The Lord Jesus even though he was the Son of God had to wait for the anointing and empowering of the Holy Spirit to come upon him so that he could enter into and fulfil his earthly ministry.

- How can we be sure that we are open to the Holy Spirit working in our lives?
- How do we know when this is happening?

4. 'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps' (1 Peter 2:21). We are called to follow the example of Christ and proclaim the good news of salvation (Luke 4:18,19). What are the challenges that this brings for you?

5. Discuss ways in which you can tell others to 'come and see' what Jesus has done to bring salvation.

Commissioner Rosemary Makina

Bible Study 7

Come and see the Messiah

Bible reading – John 4:4-30

**‘Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.
Could this be the Messiah?’ (John 4:29).**

What the Bible says

From a Jewish perspective, three things placed this woman on the margins of society:

1. She was a woman. It was simply unheard of for a Jewish man to speak to a woman in public. Many Jewish men would not even speak to their wives in public.
2. She was a Samaritan. In Jesus' day, there was bitter hostility between Jews and Samaritans.
3. She was immoral. She had five husbands and the man she was then living with was not her husband. Because of her reputation, she was an outcast. We are told that she arrived at the well at the sixth hour, which was noon. Women usually came in groups to collect water, either earlier or later in the day to avoid the sun's heat. But the Samaritan woman came at noon, alone. It was perhaps her public shame that caused her to be isolated from other women.

Throughout the Scriptures Jesus demonstrated a love and respect for all women regardless of their circumstances; culture, age, social standing or reputation did not prevent Jesus from manifesting love, care and concern for them.

Instead of pointing out that her sinful lifestyle would lead to eternal death, he chose to focus on speaking to her about eternal life. There was no judgement. He offered hope, not condemnation. He offered life rather than death.

Did he ask the woman for some water simply because he was thirsty and she was waiting by the well? Jesus spoke of living water to help her understand that God's gift of salvation keeps flowing freely, like a stream that does not dry up.

1. Water is necessary for life; so is salvation.
2. Water is a gift from God; so is salvation.
3. Water refreshes and satisfies; so does salvation.

She was spiritually dry and thirsty. She desperately needed something, but did not recognise her need. Was it this living water? Would it permanently satisfy the deep thirst in her soul?

She must have believed that it would, because she left her water jug and ran back to town to tell the people that her spiritual blindness was lifted and she could see. It was the water of life that had her attention now. Instead of avoiding people, she went to find them to share the good news of her encounter with Jesus. She was so excited she could not contain herself. She could not suppress the living water that was bubbling up inside her.

Once she tasted the living water that Jesus offered, she was no longer a woman seeking at the well, but a well woman pointing others to Christ!

Our lives today

The woman brought her empty jar to the well to be filled. She also brought her empty self, little suspecting that it too would be filled.

As with the Samaritan woman Jesus is ready to accept you, as you are, where you are, for who you are, right now.

Jesus is able to bring 'living water' to quench our spiritual thirst.

Discussion

1. Why was the woman's heart so dry, parched and dehydrated?
2. What is the living water that Jesus offered?
3. Like the woman at the well, Jesus wants to have conversations with us. How do we do that?
4. What are you thirsty for?
5. Who in your village/town is thirsty for the living water of Jesus Christ?
6. What is your responsibility for sharing this living water?

To think about

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Matthew 5: 6).

Commissioner Jolene Hodder

Bible Study 8

Come and see Jesus the healer

Bible reading – Mark 10:46-52

‘Go’, said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you’ (Mark 10:52).

What the Bible tells us

Faith is a vital tool in a Christian’s life. Without faith, there is no hope. Bartimaeus had faith that Jesus would restore his sight. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had arrived he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ (v 46). Because he had faith that Jesus would heal him, he shouted for help. He made his request to the right person.

When Bartimaeus called for help his peers rebuked him and told him to be quiet. But Bartimaeus was in a disadvantaged situation. It was Bartimaeus who felt the pain of his blindness, no one else. Bartimaeus shouted even louder and drew Jesus’ attention. When Jesus called him those same people who were rebuking him told him to cheer up! ‘On your feet! He is calling you’. When Bartimaeus came to Jesus, Jesus asked him what he wanted. Bartimaeus went straight to the point. ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ ‘Go’, said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you’ (Mark 10:52). Immediately he received his sight. His faith had healed him.

Our lives today

Jesus loves us and is waiting for us to cry out to him for help. Jesus knows what troubles us and is willing to help. It is our faith that matters. How many times have we failed to meet the goals and objectives of our life because we lacked faith?

Matthew 14:25-31 recounts how Peter was about to sink in the sea because he doubted – he lacked faith. But when he recovered his faith and called to Jesus for help, immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him (v 31). ‘You of little faith’, he said, ‘why did you doubt?’

Whatever we ask from the Lord, if we have faith we will receive it. We might be experiencing problems in our lives Jesus is waiting for us to reach out to tell him what we need. Sometimes the advice of other people can be helpful, but it can also distract us from Jesus.

Nothing is impossible for Jesus. Whatever our burdens, we can bring them to him. He said ‘Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28).

Discussion

1. Bartimaeus had faith that Jesus could heal him, so he was determined to ask Jesus for help. What were the things that may have stopped him?

2. What are the things that make us doubt Jesus' ability to help us?

3. How can we help each other to grow strong in faith?

4. People tried to quieten Bartimaeus and stop him sharing his problems.

- When is it right to keep our problems to ourselves, and when should we share them with a friend?

- How do we choose or select our sources for help?

- How do we test their advice?

5. How can we encourage other people to 'come and see' and have faith in Jesus the healer?

Major Juliet Nyakusamwa

Bible Study 9

Come and see God's provision

Bible reading – John 6:1-15

'Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat...they gathered... the pieces...left over' (John 6:11-13).

What the Bible says

Jesus feeds the 5,000. A great crowd followed Jesus after seeing him perform miracles and heal the sick. Jesus needed time to rest with his disciples and so he crossed over to the Sea of Tiberias.

The crowd was in great physical, emotional and spiritual need. All they wanted from Jesus was teaching and healing, in order to deepen their spiritual lives. When Jesus arrived the people had already gathered in large numbers and when he saw the crowd waiting for him Jesus had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34).

Without delay he asked Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' (John 6:5). Jesus wanted the people to be fed because they were hungry. The disciples were worried, because they did not have enough money to feed 5,000 people. I am sure they wanted to tell Jesus that the crowd should go home because it was late. Philip said 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!' (v 7). Jesus knew already what he was going to do. He was testing his disciples.

Andrew saw a boy with two fish and five small loaves of bread and told Jesus. It was totally inadequate to feed the multitude of people. Everyone was hungry, including the disciples, but Jesus did not want any chaos, disorder or pushing so he told his disciples to tell the people to sit down. The disciples obeyed his instructions – he wanted them to have faith and trust in him. Jesus said a prayer of thanksgiving and the food was distributed and all the people had more than enough to eat. The leftovers filled several baskets.

Our world today

Sometimes our resources are inadequate to meet the multiple needs of this world. There is so much suffering, pain, persecution, child abuse, human trafficking, disasters, sickness and wars. We should bring what we have for Jesus to bless. The depth of need often overwhelms us, but we should remember that our God is able to supply us with everything to meet those needs. Jesus is looking for people who are ready to believe and trust in him, who are willing to bring to him whatever little they have.

God's provision is great because he is able to provide for us. All we need to do is bring our resources – gifts, talents, time, energy – and Jesus will multiply them.

Discussion

1. What are some of the extraordinary events that happened in this chapter of the feeding of the 5,000?

2. What lessons have you learned in your personal life about God's provision?

3. The boy was willing to share what little he had and Jesus was able to use it to do something great. What does this tell us about our lives? Share some stories of how God uses the gifts that people bring to him.

4. Talk about some of the difficulties people are facing in your community. How might they be addressed through God's provision?

Commissioner Rosemary Makina

Bible Study 10

Come and see this woman

Bible reading – Luke 7:36-50

‘Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair”’ (Luke 7:44).

What the Bible says

Could this be the woman’s story?

‘I spent years and years feeling dirty, invisible and desperate. You see, I had been married only five years when my husband died, leaving me to care for our three daughters. Had they been sons, things would have been different, for his brother would have taken me as his wife. But girls and women are simply a burden, unwanted and rejected. I also couldn’t go home, for my father too had died only a year before, and my mother now lived in my brother’s house. How would we live? How would we eat? I was desperate!

One night I was offered more than a day’s wage for an hour’s “company”. I felt dirty, but I needed money to care for my children. Word soon got round, more and more men approached me, coming to my door at night or in the early hours when nobody would see.

My daughters and I survived, and yet at the same time, something within me died. The gossip followed quickly, and I was rejected, even by my closest friends. I had become unclean and untouchable.

I hated my body and myself. With my mind and heart, I prayed. With my body, I simply survived.

And then I met Jesus in the marketplace. He greeted me with such warmth and love. He stood and looked me straight in the eye, as if he were gazing deep into my thoughts and my soul. I quickly glanced at the ground, but he lifted my chin gently, searching my face with his eyes.

I broke into tears and poured out my story. And then he spoke those amazing words I will never forget – “I love you, and I forgive you.”

Those words swept through me like a warm ointment, healing the broken places, restoring me and making me whole again. He saw me, really saw me – yet he loved me!

That is why I had to find him that evening. I simply had to pour out my gratitude and love

mingled with tears of genuine repentance. I wanted the new life he spoke of. I needed the life he could offer.

Our world today

Women's stories throughout history have often been ignored and considered unimportant by the world. But tell your story to God. You'll find that he not only cares about every detail, but that he also wants to give you a new life of joy and peace.

If you have already shared your story, take time to listen to the stories of other women.

Discussion

1. What was the woman's motive for finding Jesus?
2. Did Simon see the woman as Jesus did? Explain your answer.
3. When do you feel invisible or ignored?
4. When have you ever felt broken?
5. Is your love for the Lord more like the sinful woman's or Simon's? Why?
6. When was the last time you listened carefully to someone's story?
7. How can you show your love to Jesus today?

A prayer to think about

Dear Lord, today, as I look into your eyes of love, I believe that you are reaching out and offering me forgiveness. I accept. Renew my spirit as I turn from my sin and run into the safety of your embrace. I will forever love you, Lord. Amen.

Commissioner Jolene Hodder

Bible Study I I

Come and see the risen Saviour

Bible reading – Matthew 28:1-10

‘He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

Come and see the place where he lay’ (Matthew 28:6).

What the Bible says

In this passage Matthew tells how Mary Magdalene and ‘the other Mary’ were the first followers of Jesus to discover that he had risen from the dead. They were also the first to worship their risen Saviour. ‘The other Mary’ was probably the mother of James and Joseph. Both of these women were devoted to Jesus. When other disciples ran away because of fear, these two women, with other women and the disciple John, stayed by the cross.

As soon as the Sabbath was over the two Marys went to the tomb where the body of Jesus had been put. Matthew gives no reason for this other than they ‘went to look’. Did they want to pay their last respects? Anoint his body? Grieve? Make sure his body was safe? We can be sure that, whatever the reason, their love for Jesus was unending (v 1).

Only Matthew tells us there was a violent earthquake. An angel from Heaven rolled back the stone from the tomb’s entrance and sat on it. How powerfully this showed that death had been conquered! The guards were so terrified they shook like dead men (vv 2-4).

The angels told the women not to be afraid. Just as Jesus had said, he was risen, so they need not look for a body in a tomb. Instead the angel invited them to ‘Come and see the place where he lay’. Then the two Marys were given an important mission to tell the other disciples the great news and to ask them all to meet Jesus in Galilee (vv 5-7).

Look at the response of the women. They were frightened and yet full of joy as they hurried away to share with the disciples everything they had seen and been told (v 8).

Suddenly they met Jesus. His word ‘greetings’ means ‘rejoice’. The women clasped his feet as they worshipped him. Again they were told not be frightened but to go and tell the brothers – the other disciples – to meet Jesus in Galilee (vv 9, 10).

Our lives today

Jesus is our risen Saviour! He is not shut up in a tomb. He is alive. We must move into the world with Jesus and not shut him up in our halls or churches. As Christian women our mission is to share the good news that Jesus is alive and at work in the world today. Just like the two Marys in our Bible passage we can meet Jesus and know him as our friend and Saviour. Like them we must

not keep Jesus to ourselves and simply enjoy worshipping him. In the way we live as well as in the words we say we can invite other people to 'come and see'.

Discussion

1. Mary Magdalene and 'the other Mary' showed their deep love for Jesus by going to his tomb at dawn as soon as the Sabbath was over. In what ways can women today show their deep love for Jesus?
2. The earthquake was a powerful sign that God was at work. By his resurrection Jesus broke the power of sin and death forever. In what situations are you aware of the resurrection power of Jesus?
3. The women were told Jesus had risen, just as he said he would. Why do you think the followers of Jesus were surprised by his resurrection? Why did some other people then refuse to believe it had happened?
4. The two Marys were invited to 'Come and see the place where he lay'.
 - Why was it important for them to look inside?
 - How can we invite people we know to 'come and see'?
5. Although the women were frightened they were also filled with joy.
 - What makes us fearful?
 - Why should Christians be joyful people?
6. When Jesus met them the women clasped his feet and worshipped him. What is your response when you meet with Jesus?
7. The women were given a mission by both the angel and Jesus. Their mission was to share the good news of the risen Saviour. They did not delay, but hurried to do this.
 - Who do you need to tell about Jesus?
 - Are you sometimes slow to do what God is asking you to do? Why?
8. What difference does the presence of the risen Saviour make in your life? Share this with the person sitting next to you.

Major Brenda Sterling

Bible Study 12

Come and see...then go and tell!

Bible reading – Acts 9:1-31, Matthew 28:1-7

‘But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus’ (Acts 9:27).

‘Then go quickly and tell the disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him”’ (Matthew 28:7).

What the Bible says

Saul had been a real bully! He persecuted and even killed many of the early Christians, but then he met with Jesus and his life was turned upside down! (Acts 9:1,2,17,18). You might say that the Damascus road experience was a radical way for this to happen, but in Saul's life the dramatic incident had a great effect for the Kingdom of God.

We read that, understandably, the group of disciples were frightened and very cautious when Paul wanted to join them (vv 21-26). But he had seen Jesus and this experience had changed him, so that before very long the effects of this change, which were eventually shown in his ministry, were known far and wide (v 22).

Our world today

A true story is told of a fetish priest (wizard, witch doctor) in Africa, who had been involved in bad practices and trickery in his community for many years. People were frightened of him, as he was supposed to have magical powers. After a spiritual campaign in his village where many people were gloriously saved, he went to confront the leaders and try to frighten them away. Instead he had a Damascus road experience himself and gave his life to Jesus!

He publicly destroyed his pots, magic sticks and all the tools of his trade. His testimony won many more people for the Kingdom of God. His life and example became an invitation to know the Lord.

We have many things that might be described as fetishes in society today: human trafficking, satanic worship, gambling and pornography, to mention a few. People are trapped in sin and need the power of God in their lives to set them free.

We have a responsibility. We have seen Jesus so we must go and tell other people, inviting them to experience the joy of knowing him and the freedom that this can bring to them.

Discussion

1. Share the story of how you met with Jesus. It does not have to be like Paul's experience – it is the meeting, not how it happens that is important.
2. How can we as women, church members and communities, show Christ's freedom by the way we live?
3. We all have 'fetishes' (things that hold us back from living for Christ). What are they? How do we deal with them?
 - Individually?
 - As a family?
 - In the church?
4. What are we doing in our communities to go and tell people about Jesus?

To sing, or think about

*All other gods
They are the works of men,
You are the most high God
There is none like you.*

*Jehovah (you are the most high),
Jehovah (you are the most high God).
Lenny Akpadie*

Lieut-Colonel Wendy Leavey



Come & See