

7 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

*Truths to make
your heart sing!*

TERM 3, 2024
DNA BOOKLET

TERM OVERVIEW

"If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair." CS Lewis.

In the Bible, becoming a Christian is often described as 'coming to a knowledge of the truth' (e.g. 2 Timothy 2:4, 2:25, John 8:32). Christians are people who have been set free by the truth of Jesus. They are commanded to guard the truths of the scriptures, protect them from corruption.

In our (post) postmodern world, truth is not a popular thing. To our culture's ears it sounds arrogant to speak objectively about truth, or to claim a knowledge of the truth. Yet truth is what Christianity stands or falls on. Our faith, our hope, our singing for joy, all stand on the truths revealed in God's word.

All this term we'll be studying core Christian beliefs answering questions like, *'What is the Bible?', 'Who is God?', and 'What is sin?'*. My prayer is that this series strengthens our trust in the truths of the Bible so that we are not tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching, nor led astray by worldly desires, but instead are filled with delight in the One who is full of grace and truth.

“ **James Ritchie**
Preaching and Mission Pastor ”



HOW TO BE GROWING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS AS YOU STUDY GOD'S WORD...

IN COMMUNITY

It's good to study the Bible by yourself but it's even better to do it with friends. Bible study is best when it happens in the context of community. Bible study shouldn't be just an unrelated add-on to the rest of your busy life, it should be an essential part of an integrated whole—Christian friends doing what Christian friends do. There are two key ways we should be making use of God's word in community: "word to life" and "life to word".



WORD TO LIFE

When we study the Bible together we're letting God set the agenda. That's very important! We listen to God speak in the Bible, we work hard to help each other understand exactly what he's saying, and then together we apply what God is saying to our lives in the confidence that our loving Creator and Redeemer knows what's best for us. The important thing to remember is that we actually need each other throughout this whole process. It's great to study the Bible together!



LIFE TO WORD

The second crucial way that we should be making use of the Bible in community is in day-to-day conversation, starting with the everyday happenings of our lives and applying the gospel to those situations. The great thing is that the better we get at moving from "word to life", the better we'll get at moving from "life to word" and the more our communities will be shaped by the gospel of Jesus! So enjoy—make the most of it—and let's watch as God shapes us to be more and more like his glorious Son!



This term we're mixing things up a bit for our *Off by Heart* memorisation! While we do a series on Christian doctrine, why don't you have a crack at memorising the Apostles' Creed?

The Apostles' Creed was not written by the apostles but is instead a clear summary of their teachings. It originated in the early church and has been remembered and recited by Christians ever since. Happy memorising!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

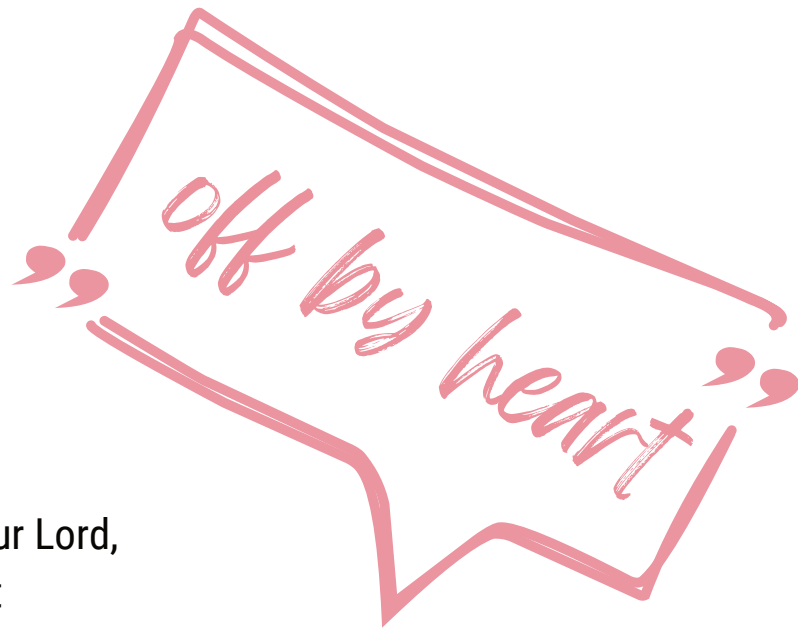
He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

* that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places



YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR

OLYMPICS

SCPC KIDS

9:30AM, AUGUST 4
@ LISMORE HIGH



CELEBRATION SUNDAY 2024

SEPTEMBER 22ND



STORIES TO MAKE
OUR HEARTS SING

CELEBRATING GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD

**FOR CELEBRATION SUNDAY THIS YEAR WE'RE COLLECTING STORIES
OF THINGS THAT MAKE YOUR HEART SING!**

In the last year, what have you seen God doing that makes
your heart sing?

It could be in your GC, your own life, someone else's life, a church
ministry, the lives of one of our Global Mission Partners, a bible talk or
study (just to name a few)!

Write your responses on the hearts found in the middle of this booklet
and put them into the big heart box at our Sunday gatherings.

Feel free to submit multiple hearts, God is always present and at work!

01

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

KICK OFF

What do your friends, work colleagues and neighbours think of the Bible? What are some different opinions you've heard?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

1. What does it mean that scripture is 'God breathed'? What are the implications of this?

READ 2 PETER 1:20-21 AND 3:15-16

2. Often the Bible will say that Paul, Moses, Isaiah etc. wrote the scriptures, as well as declaring that the scriptures are God's word. How can the scriptures be both the words of a human and the words of God? What is the role of humans in the writing of the Bible?

READ HEBREWS 4:12-13, ISAIAH 55:10-11, 1 PETER 1:22-25 AND PSALM 1:1-3

3. What does it mean that the word of God is living and active?

4. What is the powerful effect of God's word? (see also 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

5. Are there any further questions about the Bible you'd like to explore?

6. Is the word of God living and active in your life?

COMING UP - SCPC KIDS AND FAMILIES OLYMPICS - AUGUST 4

KICK OFF

As you talk with your neighbours, colleagues, friends or family what do they believe about God? What alternatives to the God of the Bible have you heard from them?

SCAN ROMANS 1:18-32 AND PSALM 19

1. How do the passages reveal God's ability to be known? Also, what can hinder it?
2. Read Exodus 34:6-7 and explore how it powerfully reveals God's character (See also Jonah 4:2).

READ GENESIS 1:2, 1 SAMUEL 16:13 AND ISAIAH 42:1

3. How do the Old Testament passages above suggest a distinction within God himself?

READ MATTHEW 28:19, 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14, 1 PETER 1:1-2, JOHN 14:15 AND EPHESIANS 2:18

4. How do these New Testament passages reveal the Trinity in a striking way?

READ HEBREWS 1:1-3 (SEE ALSO EZEKIEL 10:4)

5. How is Jesus the glory of God?

6. How does the glory of God bring radiance to the world? How does the glory of God bring radiance to you?

7. British Christian leader and theologian Michael Reeves reflects on this cultural moment:

“The popular turn to various alternate spiritualities – from the New Age and Neopaganism to Wicca and plan old superstition is routinely connected with a dislike for the idea of a personal God. For surely, isn’t such a being at best a monstrous bore and at worst something much, much darker? In my own experience talking with non-Christian students, again and again I find that when they describe the God they don’t believe in, he sounds more like Satan than the loving father of the Lord Jesus Christ: greedy, selfish, trigger happy and entirely devoid of love”.

How has this study better revealed God’s love to you? Does it make your heart sing? Why or why not?

COMING UP - CELEBRATION SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 22

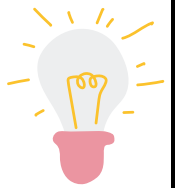
03

Pray and ask God to speak to each of you through his Word. Then

READ GENESIS 3:1-5 AND JOHN 14:1-10

What shines out from these passages? What insight did they provide?

What is an “old truth” that hit you in a new way?



What questions came to mind? Is there anything you didn't understand?

Is there a question you want to ask the writer or the Lord?



What is the central idea, or heart, of the passages?

Can you write it in one sentence?



How does the truth and message in the passage point to Jesus?
How does it fuel your worship?



What can be transformed in your thinking, desires and actions from these passages?



With whom could you share what you've learned?
What do you feel led to share and how can you share it?



Pray for the people named in the speech bubble box and for help with your points of application from the arrow box.



04

WHAT IS A HUMAN?

KICK OFF

What are some different views about what a human is? Is this a topic the average person thinks about much?

READ GENESIS 1:26-31, PSALM 8:1-9 AND PSALM 139:13-16

1. These verses highlight that humans are made by God. Compare this to the atheist Bertrand Russell, who says, *"The universe is just there, that is all"* and claims humans are just accidental by-products of nature. What are the implications of humans being created by God, rather than 'just there'?

2. In these verses what do we see about God's purposes for humans?

3. What does it mean to be made in God's image?

READ ROMANS 8:29 AND REVELATION 5:9-10

4. What are God's ultimate plans for humanity?

5. a) Are you living out your purpose as a human?

b) How do we do that in the midst of our current (fallen) state, yet also in view of our glorious future in Christ?

KICK OFF

What do your friends, neighbours and workmates believe about sin and evil? Do they think people are basically good or not?

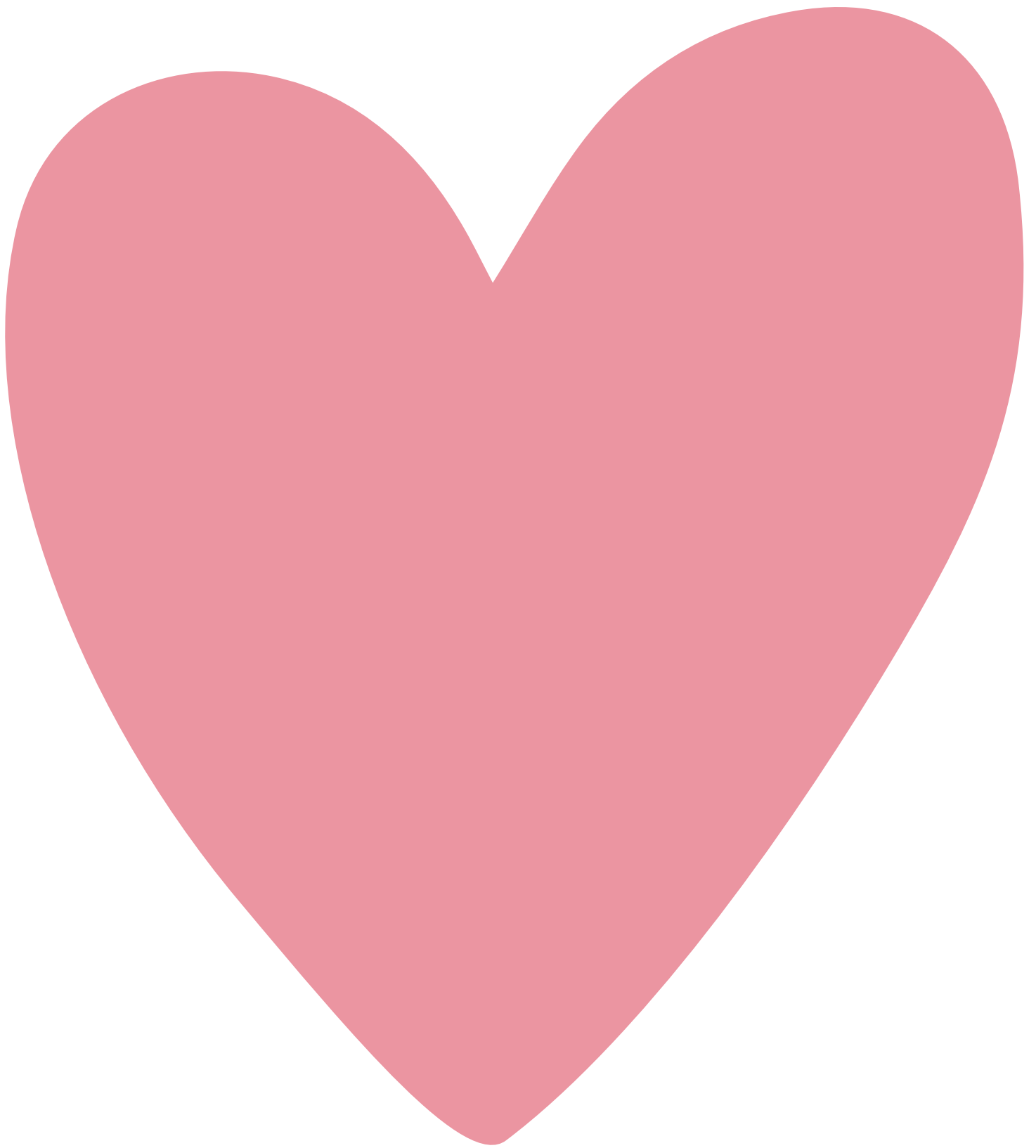
READ GENESIS 3:1-7, MARK 7:20-23, ROMANS 1:18-25, ROMANS 3:9-12 AND ROMANS 5:12

1. Make a list of all that we learn about sin from these passages.

2. Is sin a behaviour or a desire?

3. Are we responsible for our sin? What are the consequences for our sin?





4. What are common things people do to stop or 'manage' sin? How effective are they? Is sin fixable?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

5. Spend some time in prayer praising Jesus who became sin for us.

6. Part of being a Christian is admitting we are desperate sinners who need (and have) a saviour. James 5:16 calls us to "confess your sins to one another" and "pray for one another". Too often we hide or minimise our sin, rather than confessing it.

Think of a specific sinful behaviour or desire that you'd like to bring before God. If you're comfortable to do so, take some time to confess your sin to one another and then pray for each other.

KICK OFF

What are some of the views you have come across about who Jesus is?

READ THROUGH COLOSSIANS 1:15-20, PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11 AND HEBREWS 2:17

1. What do we learn about:

a) the divine nature of Jesus?

b) the human nature of Jesus?

2. What do we learn about the purpose or role of Jesus?

3. Jesus is not only attested to by the bible but many other sources, Josephus, a Jewish-Roman historian, included the following reference to Jesus in his work 'Antiquities of the Jews':

"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." Josephus (ca. AD 93)

3. How does what Josephus said line up with what the Bible says about Jesus?

4. Read through this C.S. Lewis quote from Mere Christianity:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Who do you say Jesus is? Why?

5. Is there anything about what you have read that makes your heart sing? Why?

COMING UP - CELEBRATION SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 22

07

WHAT IS SALVATION?

KICK OFF

How may the performance-based culture of the West, affect our view of salvation?

Imagine if someone said to you in frustration and sadness, "*I could never come to God*"? What would you say?

READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10

1. What was the effect of our sin and transgressions?

2. How did God intervene?

READ ROMANS 3:21-26

3. How does this passage reveal how the cross displays God's perfect justice and extravagant grace?

READ ISAIAH 53:6-11 AND ZECHARIAH 3:1-4

4. How do these Old Testament promises flood these New Testament passages (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 8:1) with the confidence of Jesus as our righteousness?

5. The American Christian Evangelist Bill Graham stated, *"If Satan can't keep you away from Christ, he will at least try to make you doubt your salvation"*. Discuss how this study has helped to affirm your salvation.

6. How does the news of your salvation affect you?

7. Reflect on this quote from Martin Luther:

"Her sins (the believer) cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast of as her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say: 'If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his'".

Consider how the news of salvation can give you a despair-crushing confidence. Do you know this confidence? Why/Why not?

10. Why should the truth of our salvation make our heart sing?

11. Now, spend a few minutes writing one line of song, constructed by you, about your salvation. (Don't worry, you don't need to write any sheet music!)

COMING UP - CELEBRATION SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 22

08

WHAT ARE HEAVEN AND HELL?

KICK OFF

What are some things people hope for? What do they believe about the future of the world?

READ MARK 9:42-48, 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18, 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10, REVELATION 21:1-11 AND REVELATION 21:22- 22:5

1. What do these verses say about hell and judgement?

2. What do they say about heaven and the new creation?

3. Why do you think such descriptive language (such as 'unquenchable fire', 'torment' and 'worms that do not die') is used of hell?

4. Why is heaven often pictured as a vague cloudy place where everyone just sings all the time? How is the actual description different to that?

5. Why do you think so many Christians get so caught up in the finer details of Jesus' return but miss the big picture? How do we both discover all we can about the second coming, but also keep the big things as our main focus?

6. What are you most looking forward to about Jesus' return? How can we help each other long for his appearing?

COMING UP - CELEBRATION SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 22

04

WHAT IS A HUMAN? NOTES

08

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SOUTHERN CROSS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

July 2024