

Week 1

Bible Study - God's love and example

A Christian ethic of care and concern must start with the character of God himself. We worship a God who is not distant or removed from his creation, but who is personally involved in caring for what he has made and expressing his holy character through action. This was an integral part of the experience of ancient Israel and has now been extended to the whole world through the incarnation of Christ. By recognising how God has acted towards us we see the principles by which we ought to act towards each other.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22. God has rescued the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt and, after 40 years of wandering, has brought them to the edge of the Promised Land which they are to inherit. Moses is now giving a long sermon on the Law which God had given them and how they are to apply it in this Land.

What is it that God requires of Israel if they are to live as his people? What does it mean in practice to walk in his ways, and how can they know what these 'ways' are?

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How did Israel come to be above the other nations? What does Moses say is the appropriate response to their identity?

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What does this passage tell us about the character of God? What sort of things does God do/not do? How is his care and compassion for the vulnerable expressed?

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How do you think the God of Israel's character would have been different from the other gods of the ancient world? How is this character different from the sorts of 'gods' that people worship today?

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How should this passage shape the communal life of Israel in the Promised Land?

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Read Philippians 2:1-18. The Apostle Paul has been thrown in prison by the Romans for preaching the message of Jesus. Instead of seeing this as a sign of defeat, Paul writes to encourage the Philippian church that his imprisonment has in fact provided many opportunities for the gospel to be spread and that they should continue to bear witness to Jesus even in the face of hardship.

What sort of behaviour from the Philippians will make Paul's joy complete? What should be their priorities?

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What are the two ways in which Jesus shows the pattern of humility? What does each one show us about the sort of humility that we ought to embrace?

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How does Paul expect that the Philippians will 'shine like stars'? What sort of contrast does he expect that they will make with the world?

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How do you think that Jesus' movement from humility to exaltation ought to shape a Christian approach to practical care for others? What will motivate us to keep going when we are called on to make sacrifices for the benefit of others?

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Share the Benefit insights

Share within your group:

- any reflections on the experience of keeping a food and drink diary
- what calculating your normal weekly food and drink budget revealed to you.

Discuss the attitudes you – and others – may have towards people who live on benefits.

Prayer focus – Christian care

As a Christ-centred organisation, Anglicare recognises that Jesus is both the source and the object of all that we do, enabling us to love and serve our clients as image-bearers of the living God. Motivated and equipped for all that we do through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we look for opportunities to share this good news wherever and however possible.

Pray:

- That Anglicare will deliver Christ-centred, professional and effective Christian care programs that meet need, bring the gospel and harness the passion and gifts of Christians in local churches.
- That Anglicare will continue to identify unmet needs in the community and develop solutions to meet those needs.
- That Anglicare will serve all clients in a way that reflects prayerful dependence on Jesus.

Share the Benefit involvement

During the coming week:

- calculate the *Share the Benefit* food and drink allowance for a person or family in your situation (refer to table on page 4)
- think about how you will cope with living on that amount for a week
- consider changes you think will need to be made to your regular spending, eating and socialising habits.