

**ST ANDREW PARISH CHURCH  
FELLOWSHIP GROUPS**

**LENTEN STUDY 2010**

**A CALL TO ACTION:**

*Know, Live and Share the Faith -  
My responsibility*

**I'M SO FULL, I'M EMPTY****Introduction:**

1. Have you ever had the feeling of being full, even though you knew that you had not eaten? What do you think caused that?
2. Have you had eaten sufficient food, but still felt hungry? Why do you think that happened?
3. Have you ever been so busy doing church work that you were not spending enough time with the God whose work you were doing?

**Read: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

4. What is distracting the Corinthian church from God?
5. Were these obvious distractions?
6. What was Paul's designation of them based on the result of their distraction?

Have you noticed that often when we are diagnosed with a deficiency we have the symptoms but are unable to diagnose accurately without the help of a doctor? In fact, sometimes it's family and friends that point out some of these symptoms to us. The same is true for the spiritual life. The symptoms of spiritual deficiency are often visible to others before they are visible to us. But more than that God is able to see, diagnose and treat these effectively if we open ourselves to Him.

What though is a spiritual deficiency? Spiritual deficiency, as implied by Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, is the inability to be fed with "solid food." In the text, the Corinthians focus on lay leadership distracts them from God. While this is the particular topic that distracts them from God, there are many other things that can divert our attention. The result of this is that we are not able to become what God wants us to become. In our text, Paul points out their state of being; however, it is the responsibility of the Corinthians to refocus their attention on God. Then, and only then, they can begin to eat solid food in the Lord.

**Discussion:**

7. Could a growing child survive on its mother's milk all its days?
  - a. If yes, why? And if no, why?
8. What are the criteria used to determine when it is appropriate to change the diet of a child? And what is the process to change the diet?
9. Based on the answer to the above questions, do you think that there may also be a time when it is appropriate to change the diet of a Christian?
  - a. If yes, why? If no, why?
  - b. What criteria do you think should be used?

- c. Who determines when and who decides how?
10. What were the criteria Paul used to determine whether or not it was appropriate to change the diet of the Corinthians? Based on his criteria what was his decision?
  11. When Paul refers to the Corinthians as being “of the flesh”, what do you think that he meant? (cf. verses 1 and 3)
  12. In what ways are we of the flesh and thus unable to participate in eating “solid food?”
  13. What is the response that is required of each of us to start participating in “solid food?”

*The leader may at this time ask if there are any other responses or concerns based on the discussions and then allow all to pray.*

**We thank you, O God, for your grace given to us in Christ Jesus, for in every way we are being enriched in Him, in speech and in knowledge of every kind, so that we may not be lacking any spiritual gift as we await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Allow us to be pliable in his hands and strengthen us to the end so that we may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we live lives worthy of our calling and thus grow in faith, hope and love. Amen.**

## SCRIPTURE THROUGH THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER

At the end of the reading of the Bible in our churches the reader proclaims “The word of the Lord” and the congregation replies “Thanks be to God”. As we seek to know what we believe, we turn naturally to the Scriptures. Let us look at what “The word of the Lord” really means to us.

1. As we end the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, those of us over the age of 40 are very conscious of the vast quantity of information which now inundates us daily, in fact, with the Internet, by the minute.

How do you judge the quality and reliability of all the information you receive – from books, newspapers, TV, the Internet? What influences how you judge it?

### Read Nehemiah 8: 1-8

The book of Nehemiah records the return of a group of the Israelites from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the walls and houses of the ruined city. Under Nehemiah’s leadership, they have completed the task.

2. What were the assembled people expected to bring to their hearing of the Law? (v.2)
3. What was the responsibility of the Levites and other selected people?
4. What was the response of the people to the reading?

Our catechism tells us that the Old Testament shows us how God was at work in nature and history. In the New Testament we are given the life and teachings of Jesus and the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom for all people. Both were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and we understand its meaning by the help of the Holy Spirit, which gives the Church the true interpretation of Scripture. (BCP 399-400)

In the passage from Nehemiah, we see God’s people, gathered together after their exile, turning to God’s word for guidance as they start to rebuild their lives, as well as their city. It provides a focal point for them, and they respond with awe and worship..

We now look at a very different scene. A foreigner, a highly placed official, but one who would never, according to Jewish law, be permitted to enter very far into the Temple as he is a eunuch, is travelling home to Ethiopia after visiting Jerusalem.

### **Read Acts 8: 26-40**

5. How does Philip discover his role in this story, and how does he fulfil this role?
6. How does the Ethiopian eunuch respond to Philip
  - a) when he first met him? b) after their conversation

### **Read 2 Tim.3: 15-16.**

7. What does Paul consider to be the ultimate purpose of studying the scriptures?

### **Life application**

8. In what way does the experience of the Israelites in the reading from Nehemiah help us as we listen to the public reading of the Scriptures in Church?
9. In what ways can we , in our own personal Bible reading, gain greater understanding? Share with the group any experience you may have had of a ‘Philip’ who explained the Scriptures to you, or how you were ‘Philip’ to someone else
10. Share with others in the group how the Scriptures have helped you personally in “teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness”

### **Reflection**

In our diligent reading of scripture, let’s not miss the point: ‘These scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you’ (John 5:40. THE MESSAGE) Quoted in New Daylight January 2010

### **Prayer**

Open thou mine eyes that I may see

Incline my heart that I may desire

Order my steps that I may follow

The way of thy Commandments

Lancelot Andrews 1555-1626

Amen.

## A GOOD LIFE VS. A CHRISTIAN LIFE

### Read Mark 10:17-27

#### Questions

1. What was the difference between where he was in relation to God and where he wanted to be?
2. What does the man's grief at Jesus' answer to his question tell us?
3. Do you think there is a difference between living a good life and living a Christian life? If so, what?
4. Does the Christian life require sacrifice? If so, what kinds of sacrifice may we be called upon to make?

#### The good life

It matters not how good we seem to be. The Christian perspective is that the journey of life, without the travelling companion in the form of Jesus Christ, will seem lonely. Have you ever noticed how bereft some persons are who have enough to live on and appear to be surrounded by a company of good friends? Have you ever heard someone say "That person is still searching?" ... and then you realise that something is indeed missing in their life. Perhaps you have a nagging urge to find a means of getting them into church.

A good life may well be good and it may even be pleasing to God, but a life lived out in Christian witness is like a beacon on a hill. Perhaps some person is, without knowing it, missing that support base which rests on the strength of God's grace. There may be emptiness because there is no recourse to the strength of the community of faith. More than that, the person may be missing out on things which would themselves improve the state of the 'good life'.

#### The Christian life

### Read 1 Timothy 6:11-14

5. Do you think that Paul's charge to Timothy is applicable to us?
6. What do you think Timothy confessed in order to be an heir of eternal life?
7. Why do you think Paul referred to Jesus' testimony before Pontius Pilate as he urged Timothy to keep the commandments?

There is no guesswork about the Christian life. It has standards and guidelines, it is tried and tested and very simply – it works. It provides signposts for living and hence dynamic, spiritual direction. The Christian's journey into faith is not lonely given the active participation of Jesus Christ as travelling companion, friend and mentor. Additionally, there is the 'backative' of the

body of Christ - the community of faith. Christians mature through the shared experience of this community. Our life journey is marked by the rites of passage and liturgy which speak to that inner response to religion and worship. The Christian life places a 'value' on each person; recognising them a human being created in the image of God, and affirming their existence within the family of God.

**Read Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 and Ecclesiastes 3:9-14**

**Questions**

8. How does a person who is living the good life begin to live the Christian life?
9. Are the implications of the practice of stewardship greater for the "good life" or the Christian life?
10. How does the support of your church family assist you on your Christian journey?
11. Does the 'good life' carry responsibility? If so, what are they?
12. What is your approach to evangelism? And what informs this?
13. What do you understand about the mission of the Church? How do you share the Good News with others?

***Reflection:***

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

- Thomas Merton, "Thoughts in Solitude"

**GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAINS, OVER THE HILLS AND EVERYWHERE**

**Introduction:**

1. Name the person or persons who were involved in making God known to you?
2. Choose one of these persons and share with the group how they taught you about God?
3. Share with the group how you tell others about God?
4. Share with the group your concerns about telling others about God.

**Read: John 4:7-30**

**Discussions:**

5. What is the response of the woman after her interaction with Jesus?
6. What is the reason for her response?
7. What is the response of those who heard the message of the woman? (cf. John 4:39-42)

This story is one of the most popular in the gospels for various reasons. This woman's interactions with Jesus led her to proclaim him to others. These persons, having heard her message, seek out Jesus and their relations with him lead them to faith. It seems that, unlike many of us, she does not need to be told to proclaim Jesus, but instead there is a natural inclination to do so after her encounter with God in Jesus Christ. Her encounter with God is before his offering of himself upon the cross which is a demonstration of his love for all of creation. We, as beneficiaries of his act of love, are called to tell others of it so that they too can be enfolded in his love.

8. Have you ever had experiences with God that you feel like sharing with others? What do you normally do? And why?
9. Do you record your experiences of God?
10. Do you feel that it is the responsibility of your priest to encourage you to proclaim the gospel? Why or why not?
11. In what ways, are you like the woman at the well? How can you be more like her in her missionary endeavours?
12. State three places that you can share stories with others of how God has impacted on your life.
13. List all the missionary endeavours of St. APC?
14. How can you be more involved in the missionary endeavours of St. APC?

Persons may at this time share any other concerns they have with regards to engaging in tell others about God. This should be committed to prayer.

*The group should be invited to pray:*

Teach us good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wound; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward; save that of knowing that we do thy will. Amen.

*The group should then be invited to sing:*

**Go tell it on the mountain,  
Over the hills and everywhere,  
Go tell it on the mountain,  
Our Jesus Christ is Lord.**

## THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

**“But to all who did receive Him, to those who have yielded Him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1: 12)**

1. Every year a number of young people attend Confirmation Class for months, and are then confirmed by a bishop. After a short time we find that some of these young people have stopped coming to church, and do not seem to be continuing the journey they have begun. Why does this happen? Is there anything we can do to help?

**Read Ephesians 1: 11 – 23.**

Paul is writing to Christians in Ephesus. He addresses them as “believers incorporate in Christ Jesus”. They have been born into God’s family.

2. What blessings have they already received as those born into God’s family?  
(v.11- 14) and what result should there be? (v 12)
3. What is Paul’s first reaction when he gets the news of the faith they have? (v.15,16)
4. Paul then prays for them and in his prayer he is very specific. What is his specific request in v.17?
5. In v.18 Paul prays that their inward eyes may be illumined so that they will know three things. What are they? (v.18, 19a)
6. What is the measure of the power which is available to us? (v.19b – 21)
7. (a) What is the position of Christ now?  
(b) What is His relationship to the church? (v.22-23)

Where are we on our Christian Journey? This is a question we should each ask ourselves. First we have to be born into God’s family. Jesus shocked Nicodemus by telling him “Unless a man be born over again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 3). There are some people who can state the date and time at which they responded to Jesus and made a commitment to follow Him. A friend of mine who had been a regular churchgoer, was challenged by one of her students about her faith, and she then gave her life to the Lord, and was used mightily by Him to bring others to Him. On the other hand there are others, like me, who grew up in a Christian home and cannot remember a time when we did not have a personal relationship with God, yet we are aware of changing and growing in that relationship

**In whatever way the new birth comes, we must know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and have a personal relationship with Him.**

Having been born into God's kingdom, we must grow and not remain as babes in Christ.

**Read Hebrews 5: 12 – 14**

8. What is the state of the Christians to whom the author is addressing these words?

9. In Ephesians 1: 17 Paul prays that God will give them powers of wisdom and vision, by which comes knowledge of Him. Can we look back and see how we have been growing in that knowledge? Share this with others.

10. In verse 18 Paul prays that God will open their eyes to know the hope to which they are called, and to realize the wealth and glory they are offered. Share with others any experience you have had recently which has increased your realization of the hope, wealth and glory which are yours in Jesus Christ.

11. Verses 19, 20 describe the vast resources of power which are theirs. What is the measure of that power? Spend a few moments just contemplating the power that God used in raising Christ from the dead, and realizing that this power is available to us. When have you had the faith and courage to use even a part of this power? Share if you can.

**Reflection:**

Let each of us consider where we are on our Christian Journey. When we were 'born again' we were saved from the Penalty of Sin. Now in our earthly life we are in the process of being saved from the Power of Sin. When we come to our 'End and New Beginning' we will be saved from the very Presence of Sin. Oh glorious thought!

In Philippians 3: 10-14 Paul describes his own position on this journey. He tells us quite plainly that he has not already arrived but that he presses onwards to the goal. Can we say the same for ourselves?

A Daily Prayer

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ

For all the benefits which you have given us,

For all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.

Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,

may we know you more clearly,

love you more dearly,

and follow you more nearly,

day by day.

Amen.

## MY RESPONSE TO GOD'S GOODNESS

**The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love He showed to us by sending His Son to be the remedy for the defilement of our sins. (1 John 4: 10)**

**We love because He loved us first. (1 John 4: 19)**

Not long ago my brother and I were talking about our parents and he said "You know they really sacrificed a lot for us to give us a good start in life. I wonder if they knew how grateful we were. We didn't ever really thank them." I assured him that they did know, and appreciated how we kept close to them and looked after them as they got older.

1. Think of a time when you realized how much someone had done for you that you wanted to respond to that love. How did you respond? Share this with the group if you like to.

**Read 2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 9.**

2. What is Paul praising the Christians in Macedonia for?
3. Before giving money they gave something much more valuable. What was that?
4. What were the circumstances of the Christians in Macedonia?
5. In these circumstances why did they give so lavishly?
6. What does Paul expect from the Christians in Corinth? How is he putting their love to the test?

Our Catechism defines Christian Stewardship as "the Christian's response of love and thankfulness to the redemptive love of God in Jesus Christ." (BCP page 404)

**Paul says "He (Jesus Christ) was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor. So that through His poverty you might become rich." (2 Cor. 8: 9)**

How rich He was! Only consider the first three verses of the Gospel according to John: **"When all things began, the Word already was.... Through Him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him."** All creation was His, yet He left all that wealth and became a helpless baby, born in a stable.

Geoffrey Bull was a missionary in Tibet when the communist army took over that country. He was captured and had to trek with his captors across the mountains. In his book "When Iron Gates Yield" he gives a diary of that time. In one entry in his diary he describes how

they were housed in a loft over a stable, and he was sent down to look after the horses. He describes how he climbed down the ladder to the stable below. As he got down there his boots squelched in the mud, and the fetid smell of the animals filled the air. For a moment he stood still in that eastern stable and asked himself "What day is this?" He realized that it was December 24. He thought to himself that it was to a place like this that Jesus came for him! How we glorify the stable and the Cross! But they were stark realities in the life of Christ. He left His home in heaven to come as a helpless baby, to grow up in a poor home, to work as a carpenter until He was about 30 years old and then to take to the road as an itinerant preacher. He faced misunderstanding, criticism, opposition, sneering and false accusations until these led to the most cruel and ignoble death imaginable. All this He did for us; so what should be our response? Yes we give money in church, some of us even tithe! But is this enough? We are told that the Macedonians first gave **themselves**.

### **Life application:**

7. How far can we follow the example of the Macedonians as we respond to God's redemptive love in Jesus Christ?
8. Our catechism tells us that we practise Christian Stewardship by participating as fully as possible in the programme of worship and service in our parish. Participation in worship does not mean just going to church on a Sunday. It means much more. How can we prepare ourselves for worship? How can we take an active part?
9. Jesus often got up early and went into the hillsides to pray. If He needed to have time alone with God, how much more do we. How can we find time in our busy day to have time alone with God? Do we give Him our 'prime time' or our 'spare time'?
10. We are each here for a purpose, which should be fulfilled, at every stage of our lives. We are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems of our country and the world. We cannot take them all on, only God can, but He needs each of us to take on one little bit for Him. Do we genuinely ask God to show us what wants us to do? Are we willing to respond and do what He shows us however trivial? However daunting?

### **Reflection**

Bye and bye when I look at His face,  
Beautiful face, thorn-shadowed face,  
Bye and bye when I look at his face,  
I'll wish I had given Him more.  
More, so much more,  
More of my life than I e'er gave before.  
Bye and bye when I look at His face,  
I'll wish I had given Him more.