



Neither the one
who plants
or the one who
waters is
anything, but only
God, who makes
things grow.
1 Corinthians 3:7

GOING FOR GROWTH

Diocese of Bristol

Session 4 Creating

1 Getting to know one another

There are a number of the meal suggestions that could work well with the session but note that they will require a little forward planning. See note 3 for leaders. During the meal invite members to share their ideas/reflections on Genesis 1. End by offering the ideas and thoughts from your discussion to God and pray for your discussion of the passage.

2. Looking at the Bible together

The key passage has been divided up into 4 sections. You might like to read the passage with four different voices or listen to the recording. See note 4 for leaders.

Key Bible Passage - Mark 4:35-5:20.

A sense of purpose - Mark 4:35, 36

Jesus is withdrawing from the crowd. Tired perhaps? He falls asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat, where the person steering should be. In setting off across the lake Jesus is heading away from the 'comfortable', familiar territory of Galilee, and his base at Capernaum, towards the south-east. This was Gentile territory, the 'wrong' direction. What was a Jewish rabbi doing going to these people? There is a sense of purposeful engagement. Jesus doesn't sit back waiting for things to happen. The message of God's kingdom and the signs of God's kingdom move outwards. In order to do this, however, means risk; it means an adventure into new territory beyond what is familiar.

Facing difficulties - Mark 4:37-41

As they cross the lake chaos threatened to overwhelm them. The scene is a reversal of Genesis 1 - God's presence is moving over the waters and, to the disciples, it looks as if the chaos will win. There are also echoes of Jonah chapter 1, and we can almost hear the disciples thinking to themselves 'we shouldn't be heading this way ... we should stay where it is safe - where we have been made welcome. Jesus is responsible for this.' He tells the storm to 'Be quiet' (in the way that someone might tell off their dog if it was barking). Just as in the beginning, God spoke and there was life. Jesus brings order and peace to the everyday world of the fishermen. The context for human flourishing is restored. His power over creation stuns the disciples and he rebukes them for their lack of faith!

Confronting demons and creating order and peace - Mark 5:1-13

When they got to the other side of the lake there was even more chaos. Again we can imagine the disciples thinking to themselves 'Told you so! I knew we shouldn't have come here'. The demon recognises Jesus, which contrasts the terrified and bewildered disciples "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (verse 41). The possibility for human flourishing has been restored, but it has been a risky business and it has meant confronting opposition.

Creating a community of wholeness?

- Mark 5:14-20

Jesus has brought order and peace to the world of nature and to human bodies and minds. As we look back at the incident we are amazed at what Jesus did and what he was able to recreate however many of those directly involved found it threatening and unsettling. Perhaps they had become so used to things being as they were that they took it to be the norm. They were frightened when God made things good and destroyed the fears and forces that enslaved people. Understandably the man who was healed is keen to stay with Jesus, but Jesus does not let him. Instead he is encouraged to go and tell his story (which, after all, is very good news). He is told to be a witness. We are left to imagine the creative impact of that person, and his story, upon his community!

- *What part of this adventure do you most identify with? Why?*
- *What are the 'demonic' influences today in individuals and society?*
- *What do we learn about the creativity of Jesus' mission from these incidents?*

You might like to end this section with the Iona reflection 'It is not true that' See the supplementary resources.

3. Prayer and reflection

*Creating involves
imagination and hope
Revelation 21:1-7*

The final part of this session will lead to a reflection/meditation using Revelation 21:1-7. The Lord's Prayer invites us to pray for God's will to be done and for the coming of God's kingdom on earth. What do we imagine?

Listen to Revelation 21:1-7, a description of the world reborn or recreated full of vibrancy, fun and human flourishing. Invite people to rewrite it: (in the supplementary resources you will find a master sheet which you can copy for the group).

Either:

a) *Imagine your church as a community of wholeness with Christ at the centre - what would be the characteristics? Rewrite the passage so that it is a description of your church.*

Or

b) *Imagine your neighbourhood, or your place of work, or ... as a community of wholeness with Christ at the centre - what would be the characteristics? Rewrite the passage as a description of it.*

End the session by reading out your versions of Revelation 21 as prayers for the church and for your community.

4. Preparation for next session

Before the next session make four lists:

- *What words would you use to describe your church (building)?*
- *What words would you use to describe your church (community of people)?*
- *What words would you use to describe a typical service in your church?*
- *What words would you like to use but can't at the moment?*

(A helpful way of approaching the last question is to begin by asking yourself 'What words might people in our community use to describe our church building? or our church as a community? or a typical service in our church? If some of these are negative then they will point you towards answering the question).

Supplementary Resources for Session 4

- Leader: It is not true that this world and it's inhabitants are doomed to die and be lost.
ALL: This is true: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in Him shall not die but have everlasting life.
- Leader: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction;
ALL: This is true: I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
- Leader: It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay for ever;
ALL: This is true: For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given in whom authority will rest and whose name will be Prince of Peace.
- Leader: It is not true what we are simply victims of the powers of evil that seek to rule the world;
ALL: This is true: To me is given all authority in heaven and on earth, and lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.
- Leader: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the church, before we can do anything;
ALL: This is true: I will pour out my Spirit on all people, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions, and your old folk shall dream dreams.
- Leader: It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of humankind, our dreams of justice, of human dignity, of peace, are not meant for this earth and this history;
ALL: This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

*From 'The Iona Community Worship Book', copyright 1991 The Iona Community, Glasgow
Reproduced by Permission*

Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any _____

[2] I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4] He will _____.

There will be no more _____
for the old order of things has passed away."

[5] He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

[6] He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. [7] He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.