



Bethany
Evangelical Free Church

WALKING IN A MANNER WORTHY

VALUE-FOCUSED
BIBLE STUDIES

Edited by

LEOW WEN PIN AND STEVEN TOON

FACILITATOR'S VERSION

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FOREWORD

In early 2025, Bethany Evangelical Free Church (BEFC) launched our renewed vision, mission and core values. These were meant to help the church grow in our faithfulness and obedience towards God. These renewed “north-stars” are:

VISION

A church on God’s mission

MISSION

To participate in God’s mission to unite all things in Christ (Eph 1.10)

CORE VALUES

Brokenness, Empathy, Faithfulness, and Contextuality

(the initials helpfully spell out B.E.F.C., our church’s acronym)

To deepen our congregation’s understanding of our core values, the pastoral team preached a series of twelve sermons on the core values (three sermons on each core value). The preachers involved were Rev. Dr Desmond Soh (Senior Pastor), Rev. Dr Leow Wen Pin (Associate Pastor), Bro. Steven Toon (Pastoral Associate), and Rev. Kenny Lee (our mission partner, the Executive Director from Ambassador from Christ Singapore).

Then, in order to help our members apply what they learned from the sermons, the pastoral team adapted the sermons into twelve corresponding Bible studies, but at times adding new supplementary materials. These studies were then systematically conducted by BEFC’s small group ministry. After completion, it was assessed that these Bible studies had been very meaningful and could also be useful for newer members of BEFC or for members of other churches. Therefore, the studies have been reformatted into this present volume to be shared freely with others.

This volume comes in two versions. First, a participant's version that should be used by the Bible study participants. Second, there is a facilitator's version of the Bible studies which provides recommended answers to the Bibles study questions and helpful pedagogical guidance. Bible study leaders can prepare for the Bible studies using this booklet. However, every small group is different, and adaptations will need to be made for the unique context of each small group.

We have desired to emphasise our core values through these studies because we are convicted that the way that we fulfil our vision and mission is as important as the vision and mission themselves. Biblically-speaking, ends and means must go hand-in-hand—hence the title of this book: "Walking in a Manner Worthy"
(cf. Eph 4:1).

Ultimately, as our vision statement declares, all Christians are sent forth on God's mission. It is our hope that these Bible studies will be a blessing to God's people as they seek to fulfil that mission. To God be the glory!

Rev. Dr Desmond Soh

Senior Pastor
Bethany Evangelical Free Church
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BIBLE STUDIES ON BROKENNESS

STUDY 1

Brokenness as Sinfulness

Romans 3:22b–25

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Romans 3:22b For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ^{25a} whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. ^{25b} This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Verse 23 says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. The Reformers called this absolute state of sin “total depravity”, meaning that every aspect of human nature—mind, will, emotions, and body—has been corrupted by sin. This means that humans are completely unable to choose God or achieve salvation on their own apart from divine grace.

STUDY 1: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

If we have been wholly been corrupted by sin, how should we view ourselves?

Society often wrongly tells us that we are fundamentally good beings, but with some weaknesses. But this is not what Christianity teaches. Instead, we must recognise that our nature is completely corrupted. Therefore, we should view ourselves in the following ways:

- We need “outside help” from God to transform us. We can’t help ourselves.
- We need a complete transformation (to be “born again”), not just incremental change.
- We must be humbled by the immense darkness of our hearts.
- Even after receiving saving faith, we must recognise that all aspects of our life require renewal and growth. We need to be completely committed to the task of Christian growth.

Question 2:

(i) Why must God’s saving grace be given to us “as a gift” (verse 24)?
(ii) How does this differ from other faiths that teach us that salvation can be achieved through sufficient good works?

(i) Because we are “totally depraved”, we are “completely unable to choose God or achieve salvation”. This is why salvation must be a gift from God – there is nothing we can do to earn it. If salvation costs anything, we cannot earn it. This is a sobering yet liberating truth.

(ii) This is different from faiths that teach that salvation can be earned. In those faiths, there is a belief that humans are not all bad, but can achieve a heightened moral state by self-effort. In contrast, Christians view ourselves as being “dead in sin” – completely unable to do anything to redeem ourselves. We need God’s help to be born again.

STUDY 1: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

- (i) Discuss the meaning of the word “propitiation” (google it)!
- (ii) Based on your understanding of the word, answer the following question: according to verse 25a, how does Jesus’ sacrifice save us?

(i) “Propitiation” is a thing (noun). It comes from action word (verb) “to propitiate”, which means “to make someone favourable towards [you]”. Thus, a “propitiation” is something that makes someone favourable towards you.

(ii) Verse 25a says that Jesus was “God put forward as a propitiation by his blood”. In other words, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross (i.e., “by his blood”) makes God favourable towards us (i.e., “as a propitiation”). A propitiation is necessary because, due to our sin, God’s judgment towards sin is rightfully unleashed upon us (see Rom 1:18). This is what a just God must do. But God chooses to “put forward” Jesus as propitiation for us, such that Jesus takes God’s wrath on our behalf. In so doing, God can instead become propitious (i.e., favourable) towards us (see Rom 5:9).

Question 4:

According to verse 25b, why did God save us?

Verse 26 says that God saved us in order to “show God’s righteousness”. Why does God feel that it is necessary to demonstrate His righteousness? This is because, according to v.25b, God had overlooked (“passed over”) our former sins. In other words, He has been more merciful than He should towards our sins. Thus, He might be accused of being unjust for ignoring sin. (Note that this is very different from the usual caricature of God as an angry or harsh deity!)

So, to maintain His own righteousness, God must make sure that all sins are accounted for. But rather than punishing us, God instead chooses to unleash the just punishment for our sins upon Jesus (with Jesus’ full agreement). This way, God is righteous in ensuring that justice is fulfilled while ensuring that we are saved by Jesus. Thus, God is both righteous (because He does not overlook sin) and loving (because He saves us at great cost).

STUDY 1: QUESTIONS

Question 5:

In this study, what have you learned

- (i) about yourself and
- (ii) about God? How should these learning points change the way you live?

This is the most important question because this is application (i.e., obedience). Study without obedience is just puffing up our minds without genuine discipleship. So, make sure you spend at least 15–20 minutes on this question. Don't rush through it.

(i) Learning that we are “totally depraved” teaches us: (a) to be humble; (b) to seek to grow in godliness in all areas of our life; (c) to thank God for His saving work in our life; (d) to ask for the Holy Spirit’s help because we can’t grow by ourselves.

(ii) Learning that God is both just and loving teaches us: (a) to seek to follow His just ways; (b) to be ever thankful for His enduring love; (c) to ensure that we balance justice and love ourselves in our own lives as we seek to imitate God.

Note: This list is not exhaustive. There may be other answers that your members might raise.

STUDY 2

Brokenness as Creaturely Limitation 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 12:7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

STUDY 2: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- (i) According to v. 7, why did Paul receive a “thorn in the flesh”?
- (ii) Is this limitation (i.e., the thorn) good or bad? How does this affect the way we look at our own limitations?

(i) Twice in v. 7, Paul repeatedly says that the thorn was given to “keep [him] from becoming conceited”. In other words, it was given to humble him. The reason why this was necessary was because of “the surpassing greatness of the revelations” that was entrusted to Paul, i.e., the divinely-sacred message of the gospel. In other words, this limitation was given to him to humble him lest the greatness of God’s message that Paul stewarded would overwhelm him with pride.

(ii) This is a trick question. Weaknesses and limitations are not good in and of themselves, but they can be for good, ultimately. In one sense, the thorn is bad: it was a “messenger of Satan” and Paul clearly found it painful. But in another sense, it was good for God used it to “humble Paul and supercharge his ministry”. Likewise, our own limitations are neither good or bad in themselves. For example, we might be injured. But if we respond to our injury with dependence on God, our limitation may be turned into an opportunity for spiritual growth. We must recognise that we always have a choice to respond “Godwards” to any limitations we experience.

Question 2:

How might our own personal limitations be for our good as well? Discuss.

In this question, the facilitator should elicit examples from the lives of their small group members where their limitations (illness, weakness, challenges) result in their spiritual good. After hearing each story, the facilitator should seek to highlight what can be learned from each experience, pointing the group towards the first learning point that “limitations are necessary for our ultimate good”.

STUDY 2: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

- (i) According to vv. 9–10, what did Paul learn from his limitation?
- (ii) How can the lack of limitations in our lives (e.g., our gifts, our abilities) be a hindrance to our spiritual lives?

(i) He learned two related lessons. First, in contrast to the human tendency to depend on our gifts, resources, and abilities, Paul learned that God's grace is fully sufficient. Second, we learn that "[God's] power is made perfect in weakness", that is, God's power is made most clear and evident when we are weak. That is, God's power is only truly recognised as sufficient and perfect only when we are limited. Sometimes, when we are well equipped, it is hard to see that God is all we need. It is only in limitation—when what we lack is crystal clear to us—that we can really realise that God is all we need.

(ii) This is why, when we are gifted or well-resourced, it is hard to grow in our dependence on God. How can we, when it is so easy to rely on ourselves when we are rich (in gifts, resources, abilities)? In contrast, when we are limited, we are forced to rely on God. And that is the moment where we truly recognise how awesome God's power truly is.

Question 4:

We ought to respond to our human brokenness by recognising God's goodness at work in our brokenness, and then responding by praising and declaring God's greatness.

We might call this the "brokenness → goodness → greatness framework".

How has this framework been true of your own experiences in your life?

In this question, the facilitator should guide the group to discuss more examples from the lives of their small group members where their limitations (illness, weakness, challenges) gave them an opportunity to recognise God's goodness, and then turn their hearts towards thanksgiving. After hearing each story, the facilitator should seek to highlight what can be learned from each experience, pointing the group towards the second learning point that "limitations are necessary for God's glory".

STUDY 3

Brokenness as Humility Romans 12:1–8

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

¹ Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment [literally: “sober thinking”], each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Preamble.

In Romans 12:1–2, Paul has just commanded the Church in Rome to respond to God’s great salvation work (outlined in Rom. 1–11) by offering “spiritual worship” (12:1) to God. But this worship is not done through song and praise, but through “the renewal of [their] mind” (12:2). In other words, changing the way we think is a key expression of our worship to God.

STUDY 3: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- (i) What word is repeated multiple times in 12:3?
- (ii) How does this repeated emphasis serve to connect humility to the point Paul is making in 12:1–2? (refer to the preamble)

(i) The word “think” (*phronein* in Greek) is repeated four times in the Greek text.

(ii) As mentioned in the preamble, Rom. 12:1–2 emphasises that changing the way we think is a key expression of our worship to God. Thus, in Rom 12:3, Paul gives a significant way that we ought to change in the way we think (hence, the fourfold emphasis), namely, that we must not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, i.e., be humble. In summary, Christians should renew their minds through humility – this is our “spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1).

Rom 12:3 suggests that one of the ways that we renew our mind in humility is to “think with sober judgment”.

Question 2:

- (i) How does comparing ourselves with others (esp. our strengths with others' weaknesses) cause our judgment of ourselves to be distorted?
- (ii) What are some ways we can apply the sermon's suggestions to:
 - (a) ground our self-worth on God's love, and (b) look out for others' strengths?

- (i) When we compare our strengths with another's weaknesses, we tend to overinflate ourselves at others' expense. There is always someone worse than you in something!
- (ii) Invite your small group members to offer up ideas about how they can apply these ideas in their daily lives. You might want to prepare some examples to facilitate discussion.

STUDY 3: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

Verse 3 indicates that sober judgment means evaluating ourselves according to the standard of the Christian faith (= “according to the measure of faith that God has assigned”) revealed in the Bible. How has your regular Scripture reading helped you to evaluate yourself (and thus, control your pride)?

- This is an application question.
- (a) Some members will already be using Scripture to evaluate themselves. Get them to share their stories first to encourage others. (b) Then, for other members who are not doing this already, get them to discuss how they might start doing this on a regular basis.

Rom 12:4–5 remind us that each of us is a member of Jesus’ body. Each of us has a different role, but each of us is still equally precious. We belong to each other.

Question 4:

- (i) How does Rom 12:4–5 help us combat our pride?
- (ii) Discuss the two diagnostic questions from the sermon:
 - (a) Do you have difficulty stepping down from a position in church?
 - (b) Are you picky about your role in church?

(i) At least four ways: (1) It helps us avoid an over-inflated view of our role in church, esp. if we are in high visibility roles. (2) It helps us avoid looking down on others, but instead see that they have an equal role too. (3) It helps us avoid insecurity, by recognising that everyone has a role in church. (4) If we belong to each other, we should seek to uplift each other.

(ii) Invite your small group members to respond as a form of application. As these are “yes” or “no” questions, be sure to follow up on members’ answers by asking “why (do you think this way)?”. As these are “confession” questions, be sensitive and give time for people to answer.

BIBLE STUDIES ON EMPATHY

STUDY 4

Empathy as Reflecting Jesus' Heart

1 John 4:7–21

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

¹John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Empathy reflects the loving character of God.

This study aims to help us understand and embody the empathetic heart of Jesus, so that we may love others more.

STUDY 4: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

1 John 4:19 tells us that "We love because he first loved us." Empathy is an expression of God's love and it is also the capacity to feel another person's feelings, thoughts, attitudes and circumstances by stepping into the person's shoes or entering into the person's world.

How do 1 John 4:9, 10, 14, and 17 show God loving and empathising with us?

- God's empathy for us is so profound that He entered into our human condition through the incarnation (v. 9). By becoming human, God fully experienced life as we do—our pain, weakness, suffering, and even our temptations—making Him the ultimate empathiser who truly understands what it means to be human.
- God empathised with our struggle with sin and alienation by sending Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice that broke the power of sin and reconciled us to Himself (v. 10). This act is a deep participation in our suffering and need, offering healing and restoration.
- God empathises with our need for salvation and sent Jesus to be our Saviour (v. 14), taking the initiative to restore the broken relationship between humanity and Himself. Through Jesus, God not only feels our pain but acts decisively to rescue and redeem us.
- God's empathetic love goes beyond mere feeling, so that we can be assured of acceptance on the day of judgment (v. 17). Because God's love dwells in us like it did in Jesus, we can have confidence before God that we belong to Him.

STUDY 4: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

According to 1 John 4:7-8, what does our ability to love, prove? How do we know we truly are saved and belong to God?

Key phrases in vv. 7-8 include "love comes from God"/"God is love" and "has been born of God and knows God"/"does not know God". Because God is the very source of love, those who are "born of God" and truly know Him through salvation and relationship will be able to love others - and will, in fact, demonstrate that love in their lives.

Question 3:

According to 1 John 4:11-12, how would the people around us know that God is real and loving?

Building on verses 7-8, verse 12 tells us that "no one has ever seen God," but He is made known when we love one another. Our love for others shows that "God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." In other words, the people around us will see that God is real and loving through the way we love them.

STUDY 4: QUESTIONS

Question 4:

According to 1 John 4:17-18, what is the relationship between God's love and our fear of eternal judgment?

Believers have no fear of eternal judgment for two reasons: (i) God's love is perfected in them - "perfect love casts out fear" - and this perfected love is evident in their ability to love others as God loves them. And (ii) this godly love demonstrates that believers possess God's love and show that love through our actions (like Jesus - "as he is, so also are we.").

Question 5:

According to 1 John 4:20-21, why is our love for one another so important? What are some practical ways we can live out this kind of love within our small group? What are some things we may need to stop doing—and what should we start doing—to reflect this kind of love more faithfully?

If someone's actions don't match their words, they are lying. Saying you love God while hating your brother or sister is a lie (v. 20a). It's unreasonable to claim to love God - whom you cannot see - if you can't even love your brother or sister, whom you can see (v. 20b). The ability to truly love any visible person comes from the love of and for an invisible God. Any claim to love God is empty unless it is backed up by genuine, practical love for other people (v. 21).

STUDY 5

Empathy as Emotional Stewardship

Romans 12:15–16

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

¹⁵ Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Empathy involves stewarding our hearts, responses and emotions well. This study aims to help us understand and embody the empathetic heart of God, so that we may love others more.

STUDY 5: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's time, Stoic philosophy was highly influential. It discouraged deep emotional involvement, promoting detachment instead. Caring too much was seen as a weakness, often leading to indifference or inaction. Even when sympathy was shown or suffering acknowledged, people were expected to remain emotionally disengaged. In light of this cultural backdrop, how does Romans 12:15 stand out as countercultural?

- In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's time, Stoic philosophy was deeply influential. One of its core values was *apatheia*—a state of being “without feeling.” This didn’t mean feeling nothing at all, but rather keeping emotions under strict control. Feelings like fear, grief, or strong desire were seen as irrational and disruptive. To care too deeply was viewed as a weakness, and self-sacrifice was often discouraged. The ideal was emotional detachment, which frequently led to indifference and inaction.
- Even sympathy (Gk. *sympatheia*, “feeling with”) had limits. A Stoic might acknowledge someone’s suffering—“Oh, you poor thing”—and offer polite comfort—“I hope you’ll be fine”—but would avoid emotional involvement or action that disturbed their inner peace. It was also commonly believed that people were in their situations because they deserved it. Again, deep care was frowned upon, leading to disengagement.

STUDY 5: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

In what ways do you see Romans 12:15 being countercultural in today's world or challenging the values of today's culture?

- Despite being a modern and connected society, Singapore still reflects a mindset of emotional detachment and self-preservation. Common phrases like “mind your own business” and “don’t kaypoh” reveal a reluctance to get involved, especially in crises or personal struggles. The bystander effect*, social distancing from emotional pain, and a cultural emphasis on privacy and saving face all contribute to silence and disengagement. In a high-pressure society that values quick fixes, unresolved issues like grief or mental health are often met with discomfort and avoidance—leaving individuals to cope alone.

* The bystander effect is a psychological phenomenon where individuals are less likely to help someone in need when others are present. The more people around, the more each person assumes someone else will step in—resulting in no one taking action. This often leads to inaction during emergencies, as responsibility feels diffused among the group.

STUDY 5: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

Romans 12:15 commands us to “rejoice with those who rejoice.” But can we truly celebrate with others—especially when we feel they don’t deserve it?

What holds us back from rejoicing with them?

And what must change in our hearts for us to genuinely share in one another’s joy?

- We live in a culture of comparison, where someone else’s gain can feel like our loss. In performance-driven Singapore, success is expected to follow effort—so when others thrive, pride and envy whisper, “Why not me?” But life isn’t only about merit; it’s also about grace and God’s generosity. Without space for that in our hearts, envy grows—and rejoicing with others becomes difficult.
- Recall the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25–32). When the younger son returned and was welcomed with a feast, the older brother couldn’t rejoice. Why? He felt entitled—seeing grace and generosity as injustice. Focused on what he thought he deserved, he missed the joy of his brother’s return. The father’s heart is full of grace and abundance, but the older brother, driven by envy and pride, chose to stay outside and miss the celebration.
- Practical ways to rejoice with others include examining our hearts for performance-driven tendencies, idols, or wounds that hinder joy, bringing these before God in repentance, and practising self-denial, gratitude, and prayerful empathy for others in their joy.

STUDY 5: QUESTIONS

Question 4:

Romans 12:15 commands us to “weep with those who weep”. Do we weep in a worldly, hopeless way—or in a godly, hope-filled way? What exactly are we weeping over? Often, what breaks our hearts reveals what truly rules our hearts. So how can we learn and grow to weep with those who weep in a way that honours God?

- Too often, we grieve over worldly losses because our emotions are shaped by our idols—we weep over what we worship. If comfort or success rules our hearts, we mourn their loss. But if shaped by God’s priorities, our tears will align with His. The issue isn’t that we don’t weep, but that we weep for the wrong things.
- To grow in weeping with others in a God-honouring way, we must examine what moves or grieves us, repent of idols like success, control, or comfort that dull our empathy, and ask God to soften our hearts so our sorrow aligns with His.

Question 5:

How can we practise “rejoicing with those who rejoice” and “weeping with those who weep” within our small group? How can we grow in deeper, empathetic love for one another? Let’s consider practical—and, if possible, longer-term—ways we can support, care for, and walk alongside each other as a small group family.

One of the most meaningful and powerful purposes of a small group is to provide a space where Christians can practise empathy and love in a regular and accountable way. As members grow in their walk with God and with one another, they will naturally find opportunities to rejoice and weep together through life’s many ups and downs.

STUDY 6

Empathy as Bearing Another's Burdens

Galatians 6:1–5

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Galatians 6:1-5 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

Empathy means caring deeply enough to bear one another's burdens with humility. This study aims to help us understand and embody the empathetic heart of God, so that we may love each other more.

STUDY 6: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

According to Galatians 6:1, how should we care for fellow believers who have fallen into sin? What might this look like in practice?

Can you think of specific ways this could be lived out in your small group?

- The word "restore" means mend or set right. In Galatians 6:1, the Greek word for "restore" (*katartizete*) is a command, and it's the same word used for mending fishing nets (Matthew 4:21) or setting a broken bone. That's the image: someone is spiritually dislocated or fractured, and our role is to gently guide them back into alignment.
- This kind of restoration must be done with a spirit of gentleness—a fruit of the Spirit in action. We can be gentle because we recognise our own vulnerability to temptation and sin. Empathy begins with humility. Only when we see ourselves rightly—as fellow sinners in need of grace—can we truly care for others rightly.

STUDY 6: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

Galatians 6:2 instructs us to "bear one another's burdens." To "bear" means to carry or shoulder something heavy. In this context, Paul is urging us to help carry the emotional, spiritual, and practical "weights" others are struggling with—such as sorrow, guilt, anxiety, poverty, addiction, loss, doubt, or loneliness. What does it mean to do this in a way that "fulfill[s] the law of Christ" (see Galatians 5:14; John 13:34; John 15:12)?

What might this look like in your small group?

- The immediate context of "fulfill[ing] the law of Christ" in Galatians 6:2 comes from Galatians 5:14: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Here, Paul contrasts the Mosaic law—which some false teachers were using to pressure Gentile believers into being circumcised—with life in the Spirit and the way of love. So when Paul speaks of the "law of Christ," he is pointing to a Christ-centered way of life, one not defined by external rules and rituals, but shaped by love, humility, and self-giving sacrifice.
- We also see this reflected in Jesus' words in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another," and in John 15:12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." These are often called the law of love, which in the context of Galatians 6:2 is what Paul refers to as the law of Christ. It is the ethical teaching and example of Jesus—centred on sacrificial love, humility, and the bearing of one another's burdens.
- Jesus Christ carried our ultimate burden—the burden of sin, shame, and the wrath of God. He entered into our suffering, walked among us, and bore our cross. He didn't simply offer advice from heaven; He took on flesh and walked with us. That is what love truly looks like. So when Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens", he's not just urging us to be kind. He's calling us to live out the very heart of Jesus.

STUDY 6: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

Galatians 6:3–5 gives a strong warning against pride and self-deception. What is Paul teaching us in these verses? What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to others or thinking too highly of ourselves—especially when we’re trying to show empathy and carry one another’s burdens? In your small group, how can you help each other guard against pride and unhealthy comparison, so that you can grow together in sincere, Christ-like love?

- There’s an important distinction between burdens (Greek: βάρη, *barē*) and loads (Greek: φορτίον, *phortion*) in Galatians 6.
 - a. In verse 2, Paul says, “Bear one another’s burdens”—using the word *barē*, which refers to heavy, overwhelming burdens that are too much for one person to carry alone.
 - b. But in verse 5, he writes, “Each will have to bear his own load”—using the word *phortion*, which describes a lighter, personal load, like a backpack. It’s the kind of responsibility each of us is expected to carry for ourselves.
- Paul is saying: help others carry their heavy burdens, but don’t become so focused on measuring or judging their struggles that you neglect your own walk with God. And don’t fall into the trap of comparing yourself with others—because Paul warns this leads to self-deception: “If anyone thinks they are something when they are nothing, they deceive themselves.”
- Paul also says, “Test your own work” (v.4). This calls us to look inward, stay humble, and keep our focus on Christ rather than comparing ourselves with others. Ironically, even in helping others, we can become prideful if we’re not careful—starting to see ourselves as the “strong” or “spiritual” ones, and forgetting our own constant need for grace.
- That’s why Paul concludes this section with a sobering reminder: “Each will have to bear his own load” (v.5). In other words, we are each accountable to God for our own spiritual journey. You can’t effectively carry someone else’s burden if you’ve dropped your own.

BIBLE STUDIES ON FAITHFULNESS

STUDY 7

Faithfulness as Holding Fast to God's Word

2 Timothy 4:1–5

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

2 Timothy 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

STUDY 7: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

(a) According to vv. 3–4, what are the challenges and temptations that we will face?
(b) How might these challenges/temptations look like today?

(a) The learning goal of Q1a is to get the small group to identify, in general terms, the challenges and temptations highlighted in vv. 3–4. The question asks about “challenges and temptations” because these issues may be challenges (= difficulties with others) or temptations (= difficulties in our own hearts).

Get your members to identify each of these challenges/temptations from the text, and then paraphrase them in their own words, as follows:

#	Challenge/Temptation	Paraphrase
1	“people will not endure sound teaching”	People will reject orthodox biblical teaching
2	“accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions”	People will find religious teaching that allows them to indulge their own sinful desires
3	“turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”	People will prefer to focus on unproven ideas or speculative ideas

(b) The goal of this question is to concretely contextualise the three challenges/temptations above for today’s world so that members know what to avoid.

For example:

#	Example (corresponding to # in the table above)
1	Reject orthodox teaching by labelling it as boring, outdated, homophobic, misogynistic etc
2	Prosperity gospel (greed affirming); affirming same-sex attraction; insular/inward-looking church teaching (selfishness); affiliating Christians to political parties (power grabbing)
3	Overly specific end-times teaching; Bible teaching taken out of context; Bible “codes” etc

STUDY 7: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

(a) According to v. 2, how do we confront these challenges and temptations?
(b) How might we do so in our small groups and in our church?

(a) Like Question 1, the goal of this question is to identify solutions in the text and paraphrase them.

#	Solutions	Paraphrase
1	"preach the word"	All of us are to be ambassadors of sound biblical teaching. We should not leave the task to solely pastors and missionaries.
2	"be ready in season and out of season"	We must prepare ourselves now for the task by investing in sound teaching and preaching. We never know when we must teach.
3	"reprove, rebuke, and exhort"	Such teaching occurs a variety of contexts, both by encouraging ("exhort") and by correcting ("reprove, rebuke").
4	"with complete patience and teaching"	But we must do so with gentleness and sensitivity marked by a serene demeanour. Careless anger is the enemy of truth.

(b) This is an important question because this question focuses on application (i.e., obedience). Study without obedience is just puffing up our minds without genuine discipleship. In this question, lead your group to discuss how you can live out the four solutions above in concrete ways in your small group and church. Come up with at least 3 concrete ideas that you can implement in your small group, and then choose at least one of those ideas to implement for future sessions. As the small group leader, you may want to think about possible ideas that you can suggest beforehand (instead of just waiting for ideas to be raised during the session).

STUDY 7: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

(a) According to v. 5, how do we confront these challenges and temptations?
(b) How might we do so in our small groups and in our church?

(a) Again, the goal of this question is to identify solutions in the text and paraphrase them.

#	Solutions	Paraphrase
1	“always be sober-minded”	We need to be clear-minded since deceptive teaching comes in subtle distortions of God’s truth, rather than outright refusal (e.g., snake in the Garden of Eden).
2	“endure suffering”	Faithfulness to God’s Word requires endurance, since faithfulness to God’s truth often comes at a cost, e.g., ridicule, rejection, persecution.
3	“do the work of an evangelist”	Each of us is called to proclaim the gospel. We must not think that any of us is exempt from the Great Commission.
4	“fulfil your ministry”	While not all of us are called to be pastors or missionaries, every one of us is called to be a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in our family, workplace, and life. Let us ensure that we complete God’s task for us.

(b) Follow the same instruction as the facilitator’s guidance for Question 2b above.

End the session by reminding everyone that we are called to be faithful to God’s truth. We need to consciously hold fast to God’s Word in order to be faithful. Ask the Lord to guide us in this task.

STUDY 8

Faithfulness as Keeping Step with the Spirit Galatians 5:16–26

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Faithfulness is an expression of the relationship we have with God. The overall goal of this study is to examine faithfulness in terms of how we relate to the Holy Spirit.

STUDY 8: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

(a) Looking at vv. 16 & 25: what metaphor is used to describe life according to the Spirit?
(b) What mental picture is created by this metaphor?

(a) Paul says that we should “walk” (v. 16) “in step with the Spirit” (v. 25).
(b) The metaphor created is of the believer marching synchronised to the Holy Spirit –taking the Holy Spirit’s prompting and guidance as one’s reference and guide.

Question 2:

(a) What term is used in vv.17, 19, and 24 that contrasts with the term “Spirit”?
(b) What kind of mental picture is created by this term?
(c) What general kind of actions does the term describe? (cf. vv. 19–21, 26)

(a) The term is “flesh” (Greek: “sarx”, pronounced “sarks”).
(b) The term “flesh” evokes a mental picture of that which is (i) bodily, (ii) earthly, and (iii) corruptible. It is clearly a negative term.
(c) The goal of this question is to help the group identify common themes that unite all the fleshly behaviours in vv. 19–21 and 26. The main common thread is conflict, i.e., fleshly behaviour produces dissension. For example: “enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy” (vv.20–21) and “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (v. 26). Another common group of actions is sexual immorality.

STUDY 8: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

- (a) Do you struggle with fleshly behaviour?
- (b) According to vv. 18 and 24–25, how do we free ourselves from “fleshly” behaviour?

(a) In particular, the goal of this question is to help the group members identify whether they act in ways that support church unity or harm it, see the discussion on conflict in the answer to Q2(c).

(b) To free ourselves from fleshly behaviour, we must (i) surrender ourselves to being “led by the Spirit” (v.18), and (ii) commit ourselves to repenting from fleshly behaviour by “crucifying” (i.e., putting to death) such behaviour. In other words, we must make a conscious and concerted decision to exterminate such behaviour in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

STUDY 8: QUESTIONS

Question 4:

- (a) If you “walk in step with the Spirit”, what kind of behaviours will you exhibit according to vv. 22–23?
 - (b) Do you see any similarities among the behaviours listed?
- (c) How does such behaviour contrast with the actions described in your answer to Q2(c)?
- (d) Evaluate yourself in light of your answers to Q4(a)–(c): are you walking in step with the Spirit? How can your small group help you to do so?

(a) You will exhibit those behaviours listed as “the fruit of the Spirit”, i.e., “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”.

(b) Several aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are behaviours that promote unity in the Church. For example, consider the virtues of “love … peace, patience, kindness … gentleness, and self-control”.

(c) In contrast to fleshly behaviours that promote conflict, many aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are behaviours that promote unity in the Church. For example, the virtues of “love … peace, patience, kindness … gentleness, and self-control” would promote unity.

(d) The goal of the first part of this question is to help members consider whether they are pursuing unity (or conflict). The goal of the second part of this question is to get the small group to think of concrete ways that they can help one another to pursue unity – which is the heart of walking in step with the Spirit. The second part of this question is the most important question in this study – it is the concrete step of response and obedience undertaken by the group.

STUDY 9

Faithfulness as Knowing Jesus' Resurrection Philippians 3:8-11

PRE-STUDY REFLECTION

Question 1: (Quiet self-reflection)

Write down the things in your life that you are proud of.

The goal of this question is to get members to think about what they hold dear in their lives. This could be in the area of study or work, accomplishments, family, status, etc. Make sure that they do write something down. Later on, they will be required to return to review this list. Note: whatever they write should be kept private to themselves – to avoid giving the members' stress to speak proudly about themselves, and to avoid the session becoming a boasting session.

[We have placed this question before reading the Scripture passage to avoid emotional defensiveness.]

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Philippians 3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

STUDY 9: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

According to v.8, (a) what does Paul “count ... as loss”?

(b) What does it mean for him to lose these things?

(a) According to Paul, he counts “everything” as loss (v.8). In fact, he says he has suffered the loss of “all things”. More specifically, according to vv.5–6, he counts as loss (i) his ethnic lineage (“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin”), (ii) his education (“a Hebrew of Hebrews”, this expression means someone who is extremely proficient in the Hebrew language), (iii) his status (“as to the law, a Pharisee”; remember that Pharisees are popular in Israel), (iv) his reputable accomplishments as a Pharisee (“as to zeal, a persecutor of the church”), and (v) his moral standing (“as to righteousness under the law, blameless”). Ask your members to reflect **privately** if their list overlaps with Paul’s “CV”.

(b) It means for him to either (i) lose them because he became a Christian (e.g., he could not continue as a persecuting Pharisee), or (ii) to discount them entirely (“count them as rubbish”) as he pursued a genuine life as a Christian (e.g., he gave up his reliance on his moral standing).

Question 3:

According to v.8, why is Paul willing to lose these things?

According to v.8, Paul is willing to lose these things “because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” To Paul, it was a logical and sensible choice, because what he lost was relatively little compared to the overwhelming value of knowing Christ Jesus.

He realised, like Jesus said, you cannot serve two Masters. You cannot serve God and the World. Instead, he realised that he had to lose these things in order that he “may gain Christ”. Dying to one’s pride and idols is a necessary pre-requisite in order to pursue God.

STUDY 9: QUESTIONS

Question 4:

According to vv. 10–11, how does Paul elaborate on his rationale for being willing to lose these things? What exactly does he seek to achieve?

Remember that Paul's main goal is to know Christ Jesus (v.8). However, the key thing that he wants to "know" is "the power of his resurrection" (v.10). However, because of the nature of resurrection (i.e., the act of going from death to life), if one wishes to know the power of resurrection, one must first know death. This is why Paul says that he wishes to "share his [Jesus'] sufferings, becoming like him in his death". For this reason, Paul seeks to sacrifice for the sake of Jesus. In this way, knowing "Jesus' death" through suffering, Paul can also appreciate Jesus' resurrection, and thus "attain the resurrection from the dead" (v.11).

Question 5:

According to v. 9, what is the way Paul seeks for achieving his goal?

We should, however, be clear that Paul is not preaching salvation by suffering, salvation by martyrdom, or salvation by works. Paul states earlier in v.9 that salvation "comes through faith in Christ" — it depends on trusting in Jesus' faithfulness. Any righteousness that we have is derived— it is "righteousness from God that depends on faith".

So, Paul is clear that his pursuit of Jesus' way of life (of suffering and sacrifice) is not a way of salvation, but a way to true flourishing as a disciple of Jesus. When we suffer and sacrifice for Jesus' sake, we come to an intimate knowledge of who Him — especially His resurrection power.

STUDY 9: QUESTIONS

Question 6:

Look at your initial list from Question 1. What does it mean to count these things as loss in order to know Christ Jesus? How might that look like practically in your life?

This is the most important question in the study and you should leave at least 20 minutes for this question. The main learning point of the session is that: the way to know the power of Jesus' resurrection is to first live a life of sacrifice for His sake. This question seeks to concretely apply this learning point to those things we are proud of (in our initial list).

Here are facilitation questions you can ask your members:

- How are the things you are proud of in your life holding you back from serving Jesus?
- What are ways that you can count those things as loss (i.e., sacrifice them in worship to Jesus)?
- How does the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus help you count those things as loss?

BIBLE STUDIES ON CONTEXTUALISATION

STUDY 10

Contextualisation as Faithfulness

John 17:14–19

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

John 17:14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Contextualisation means applying God's timeless truths in ever-changing contexts. Yet, if it is not firmly grounded in faithfulness—first and foremost to who God is and what He stands for—it risks drifting into compromise.

STUDY 10: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

Jesus declares in John 17:14 and 16 that His disciples – and by extension, Christians – are not of the world because He is not of the world. What does it mean to be “of the world”?

What does it mean, then, to be not of the world?

- “The world” refers to the fallen, sin-driven tendencies that pervade every aspect of human existence and creation. It encompasses worldly ambitions, unjust systems, and ungodly values.
- To be “of the world” means to adopt and internalize the values, beliefs, and behaviours of societies that live apart from or deny God. Biblically, it describes living under a system fundamentally opposed to God’s standards and priorities —marked by self-interest, materialism, pride, and moral corruption, all influenced by powers under the evil one’s authority. Being “of the world” is therefore not merely about living on earth, but about conforming to a mindset and way of life shaped by a culture that rejects God’s rule rather than submitting to it.
- To be “not of the world,” then, means to live differently — to be shaped by God’s truth and priorities rather than by the surrounding God-denying or God-opposing culture; to reflect His character, values, and purposes.

STUDY 10: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

Jesus then prays in John 17:15 and 18, asking God not to remove His disciples from the world but to protect them from the evil one. Just as the Father sent Him into the world, Jesus now sends His followers into the world to carry on His mission. This captures the well-known idea that Christians are “in the world but not of the world.” What kind of tension or challenge do you experience as you seek to live out this calling — being fully present in the world while remaining faithful to God?

- Because Christians are set apart from the world for God and at the same time sent into the world by God, we exist not for self-preservation or self-glorification, but to participate in God’s redemptive purpose.
- Though not of the world, Christians are neither called to withdraw from it nor to blend in with it. The church must be holy yet engaged—the wrong kind of separation isolates, while conformity corrupts. Our task is to remain in the world as Spirit-empowered witnesses: living faithfully amid opposition, responding to hostility with grace, and trusting in the Father’s care when challenges arise (cf. v. 14).
- As such, we will inevitably face situations—at work, in our families, and in our commitments and decisions—where we are pressured to conform or where our faithfulness to God is tested. Choosing God’s way may at times come with personal cost or loss, yet we must strive to please Him above all and hold Him as our highest priority as we navigate these difficult moments.

STUDY 10: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

Thank God, He did not leave us helpless! In John 17:14, 17, and 19, we see that Jesus has given us God's Word—the truth—through which we are sanctified and made holy. How, then, can we actively participate in His sanctifying work through His Word and truth, so that we may remain faithful to Him while living in the world but not being of it?

- To sanctify means to make holy—to set apart someone or something for God's purposes. God's Word and truth are given so that we may remain set apart even as we engage the world for His mission.
- God's Word also guides us in how to faithfully contextualize His message for the world—helping us communicate and live out the timeless truth of the gospel in ways that are relevant and understandable, yet without compromising its essence.
- God's Word and truth reveal His nature, will, and purposes, enabling us to think His thoughts and live according to His ways. Therefore, we must be immersed in His Word and truth, allowing them to shape and transform us—in our thoughts, words, attitudes, postures, mindsets, desires, and actions.

Question 4:

How can we, as fellow small group members and brothers and sisters in Christ, help one another to live “in the world but not of the world”? How can we encourage and support one another to remain faithful to God while seeking to faithfully contextualize the Good News of Jesus Christ for a broken and fallen world?

Use this question to elicit communal applications for the small group. Application is critical—do not skip this question!

STUDY 11

Contextualisation as Adaptation

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

¹Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Contextualisation means applying God's unchanging truth within ever-changing cultural contexts. Though cultures vary across time and place, the same gospel speaks meaningfully to each. Christians are called not to echo the world's stories, but to retell them in light of God's greater story.

STUDY 11: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

Why would Paul willingly make himself “a servant to all” even though he is “free from all”? (Read 1 Corinthians 9:19 closely.) What does it mean to live as one who is “free from all” yet “a servant to all”?

- Paul made himself “a servant to all” even though he is “free from all” because he wanted to “win more of them”. Paul wanted to make the greatest possible gains for the gospel. He wanted to win people for Jesus Christ!
- “Free from all” means the freedom that Jesus Christ has won for believers. John 8:36 declares that, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” And there are a few aspects to our freedom in Christ:
 - a. Freedom from the Penalty of Sin (Romans 8:1–2)
 - b. Freedom from the Power (Dominion) of Sin (Romans 6:6–7, 14)
 - c. Freedom from the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13)
 - d. Freedom from Fear and Death (1 Corinthians 15:55–57)
- “A servant to all” means to love, care for, help, and do all it takes to ensure that others will come face to face with the power, goodness and reality of the gospel. Paul was imitating the example of Christ as seen in Philippians 2:5–8.

STUDY 11: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

1 Corinthians 9:20–22 teaches believers to be adaptable in engaging with people where they are—culturally and relationally. Yet, it is important to recognise that such flexibility has its boundaries, for believers are now “under the law of Christ.” What might flexibility “under the law of Christ” look like today?

- Flexibility means meeting people where they are—doing whatever is necessary, within biblical limits, to help them be open to, listen to, understand, and hopefully receive the gospel message.
- However, being flexible “under the law of Christ” does not mean simply acting, speaking, or dressing like those we are trying to reach. On one hand, we are willing to adapt in areas that are not theologically essential to the gospel or to God’s character, approaching unbelievers with love, humility, and grace. On the other hand, we must be careful not to compromise or cause others to stumble in matters essential to the Christian faith. Our biblical witness is just as important as our cultural relevance.
- Some practical ways we can apply this kind of flexibility in contextualisation would be to:
 - a. Find common ground with those you contact
 - b. Avoid a know-it-all attitude, practice humility
 - c. Make others feel accepted
 - d. Be sensitive to their needs and concerns
 - e. Look for opportunities to tell them about Christ

STUDY 11: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

1 Corinthians 9:22–23 highlights the ultimate goal of contextualisation—the desire to “win” people so that the gospel may be shared and received. Notice how often Paul repeats the phrase “that I might win” (vv. 19, 20, 21, 22). This emphasis reveals his deep passion for the salvation of others and his willingness to adapt for the sake of the gospel. This is why Paul chose to “become all things to all people” (v. 22). How, then, can we practically “become all things to all people” today so that the gospel can be both shared and received?

- For Paul, sharing and living out the gospel was a way of life—flexible in approach but unwavering in message. His methods could change depending on the people he engaged with, yet his goal remained the same: “that by all means I might save some.”
- Ask ourselves: Do we live with the same laser-focused intent to make Jesus Christ and His Good News known? Do we recognise that every part of our lives—our relationships, workplaces, communities, and circumstances—are opportunities to contextualize the gospel so that we too “might save some”?
- The literal translation of the end of verse 23 is “so that I might be a participant in it.” Paul’s greatest joy was to share in God’s work of proclaiming Christ and bringing people to salvation. This same mindset and posture should shape how we engage in mission—both as a church and as individual believers.

Question 4:

How can we, as fellow small group members and brothers and sisters in Christ, help one another use our freedom in Christ to serve others with flexibility, while never losing our focus on the gospel?

Use this question to elicit communal applications for the small group. Application is critical—do not skip this question!

STUDY 12

Contextualisation as Cultural Transformation

Acts 17:22–34

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Acts 17:22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

²⁸ for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”

⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Contextualisation means applying God's unchanging truth within ever-changing cultural contexts. Though cultures vary across time and place, the same gospel speaks meaningfully to each. Christians are called not to echo the world's stories, but to retell them in light of God's greater story.

STUDY 12: QUESTIONS

Question 1:

When Paul encountered a culture vastly different from his own, what was his first response (vv. 22–23)? Why is it vital for us to engage the world not with condemnation, but with careful observation and understanding? What longings and forms of lostness do you notice in the cultures and people around you today?

- Note that Paul is speaking in a way his audience can understand. He doesn't quote Scripture because they don't know it, nor does he refer to Jewish history because they don't share it. Instead, he draws from their own culture—something familiar to them—and uses it as a bridge. Yet notice, this is only his starting point. He doesn't remain within their story or let it define the terms. Rather, he uses their story as an open door to tell God's story.
- Here are some starting applications: Look around Singapore—people are religious about education, with shrines to grades, trophies, and rankings; religious about success, with skyscrapers as altars; and religious about social media, seeking identity, attention, and validation.
- These are our “unknown gods.” They expose both our deep longings and our lostness, showing that our culture is spiritually searching—even if it doesn't call it that.
- So what does this mean for us?
 - a. Before we proclaim, we must observe.
 - b. Before we answer, we must listen.
 - c. Before we correct, we must connect.
- Contextualisation starts by paying attention to the stories people are already telling—and showing how those stories find their fulfillment in God's story. Start with their story.

STUDY 12: QUESTIONS

Question 2:

After building a bridge with the unbelievers, what does Paul do next (vv. 24–29)? Notice the shift—from the “unknown god” to the God who is Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of all. How can you speak the world’s language yet still tell God’s story? What might that look like in your own life and your interactions with non-believers?

- This is contextualisation at its best. Paul speaks their language while telling God’s story. He doesn’t sprinkle Christian terms into a Greek setting; he shows how their own words only make sense in God’s light. By quoting their poets and philosophers, Paul connects with the Athenians’ culture and uses it to reveal the one true God and humanity’s relationship with Him.
- Here are some examples of how to speak the world’s language and tell God’s story as the better story:
 - a. Education: “If you don’t study hard, you’re nothing.” → God says: “Your worth isn’t in grades, but in being made in My image.”
 - b. Work: “Climb the ladder, or you’ll be left behind.” → God says: “I’m the One who gives you life, breath, and everything. Your work is a gift, not a god.”
 - c. Love: “Find the one, or you’ll never be complete.” → God says: “In Me you live and move and have your being. I am nearer than you think.”
- We can begin with culture’s words—success, love, freedom, identity—but if we stop there, we’ve only echoed culture. Our task is to reveal God’s story within those words and point them back to their true source. The gospel isn’t afraid to speak culture’s language; Paul did it with Greek poetry, and we can do it with the language of our time. But when the gospel speaks culture’s language, it tells God’s story, not just culture’s. And Paul doesn’t stop at explanation—he calls for a response. Knowing God’s story leads to a choice: will we enter it? For Paul, that turning point is the resurrection of Jesus.

STUDY 12: QUESTIONS

Question 3:

The climax and turning point of God's story is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 30–31).

Why does this matter for engaging the world's cultures and stories? Why must the proclamation of Christ remain central in our cultural engagement and storytelling? What do we lose if we neglect this—and what transformation occurs if we don't?

- Notice what Paul does here: he doesn't simply say, "Here's a new idea." He doesn't leave them with, "An interesting philosophy—think about it." Instead, he redirects their entire search, their questions, their culture toward one event, one person: Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. The resurrection becomes the pivot point—the decisive proof that God is not just another idea, but the living Judge and Savior.
- True contextualisation doesn't end with cultural relevance—it moves toward cultural transformation. And that transformation takes place at the cross and the empty tomb. The Athenians thought they were searching for truth. But Paul proclaims, "The Truth has come searching for you—and His name is Jesus." The point is this: all our searching, all our longing, finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ—for in the end, we are all searching for the one true God.
- This is how Jesus fulfills our deepest longings:
 - a. When culture talks about justice, we don't just agree—we redirect to Christ, who will judge with perfect righteousness.
 - b. When culture longs for love, we don't just echo—we redirect to Christ, who revealed God's love through His death and resurrection.
 - c. When culture cries out for hope, we don't just nod—we redirect to Christ, whose resurrection guarantees a new creation.
- Important note: When Paul finished speaking, the responses were mixed (vv. 32-34). Some sneered. Some delayed. But some believed. And that's often how it is. When we let the gospel speak our culture's language and tell God's story, the outcome isn't always mass conversions—but it is always faithful. It always brings people face to face with Christ. Yet people are still searching. The question is: will we speak their language, and tell them God's story?

STUDY 12: QUESTIONS

Question 4:

How can we, as small group members and brothers and sisters in Christ, help one another speak the world's language, yet still tell God's story, in a way that is culturally sensitive, gospel-faithful, and courageous?

Use this question to elicit communal applications for the small group. Application is critical—do not skip this question!

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