



Bible Study 3

‘The Journey’

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Relationships are the most important thing, so start with warmth and hospitality. Get acquainted. You could do it your own way or use some of the following questions to get people talking...

- *What's the one of the best trips or journeys you have taken?*
- *What's the one of the hardest journeys you have taken?*
- *What journey have do you dream of taking?*
- *Can you recall a song about a journey? (Eg. 'The Happy Wanderer' or Avicii's 'Wake Me Up'!)*

OPENING TIME OF REFLECTION

Tonight we start with words from one of our beautiful members of Immanuel whose journey on earth ended last year. Pastor Rick Zweck was suffering from Motor Neurone Syndrome and used to sit in a wheelchair near the front most Sundays. He died in a hospice surrounded by his family, after having Holy Communion and witnessing his son's wedding in the hospital room. Rick loved the labyrinth as a prayer tool. This poem was Rick's introduction to the labyrinth. He would read it out before people entered. Have one person read it and listen quietly... What do you hear?

Set out!

You were born for the road.

Set out!

You have a meeting to keep.

Where? With whom? Perhaps yourself?

Set out!

Your steps will be your words,

The road your song,

The weariness your prayers,

And at the end silence will speak to you.

Set out!

Alone or with others,

But get out of yourself.

Set out!

Your head does not know

Where your feet are leading your heart.

Set out!

You were born for the road,

The pilgrim's road.

Someone is coming to meet you

Seeking you

In the shrine at the road's end,

In the shrine in the depths of your heart.

He is your peace.

He is your joy.

Go!

God already walks with you.

What did you hear? What surprises or intrigues you in Pastor Rick's poem?

THINKING OF LIFE AS A JOURNEY?

In pretty much every religion and culture life has been pictured as a *journey*! This seems to be a universal image. Perhaps deep down human beings want our lives to go somewhere, as if we have a longing for a destination half known and almost lost to memory?

- What is good about thinking of life as a journey?
- The idea of 'life as a journey' may not always be healthy! What ways could it be negative?
- What does the following passage have to say about the idea that faith is a journey?

Hebrews 11:13-16

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth... If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one.

THE JOURNEY IN THE BIBLE

From start to finish, the Bible is soaked in this idea that life is a journey. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word DEREK means way/road/path/journey/lifestyle. In the New Testament the Greek word HODOS has a similar range of meaning. From HODOS we get EXHODOS – the journey out!

Reflect on each of the following Bible verses one by one.

- Notice that the underlined word can mean way/road/path/journey/lifestyle. Which fits best?
- What encouragements and warnings for our 'journey' are found here?
- For the verses from the Gospels, notice the things Jesus did 'on the way'.

Genesis 35:3.

God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me on the way.

Deuteronomy 1:32-33

... the Lord your God went before you in the way to find for you a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go.

Job 23:11.

My foot has held fast to God's steps; I have kept to his way and without turning aside.

Psalms 27:11.

Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path...

Proverbs 15:10.

Stern discipline awaits those who leave the way...

Psalms 142:3.

When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way.

Matthew 7:13-14.

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Mark 8:27.

And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

Luke 24:15,32.

Jesus himself drew near and travelled with them... They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the way...?"

1 Corinthians 12:29.

And now I will show you the most excellent way. [Perhaps you should look up the next verse here!]

THE ULTIMATE WAY

Throughout the Old Testament runs the idea of a 'way' – the true path, lifestyle or track for a person to follow. In the Psalms we read often that God has a true, holy and good way for us to travel (e.g. Ps 16:11). In the Proverbs we are repeatedly warned not to go off the way (e.g. Pr 12:28, 23:19). In the time of Christ the word 'way' was understood to mean something like "the right path which leads to God." So what Jesus said to his disciples in John 14 was radical. Read it and reflect...

John 14:4-6

¹Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Reflect quietly on this for a while.

- What have you noticed? What is speaking to you?
- What is the destination? (See verse 2 & 6).
- How do we get there? Be specific – look for the verbs used by Jesus in verse 3.
- What do Jesus words mean to someone who is having a hard time?

HOW JESUS CHANGES THE JOURNEY

Just calling life 'a journey' isn't good enough. Contrary to popular ideas, for a journey to be helpful the destination matters! The first Christians were so sure that Jesus changed life completely that they called themselves 'The Way' (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:24, 24:22). This was a big claim.

As a group discuss how Jesus changes the 'journey of life'

- How does Jesus change the journey that is this life?
- How is the destination different and how does that change the journey?
- How might obstacles be differently viewed?
- Who leads you?
- Who goes on this journey with you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray in whatever way suits your group best!

You may use this blessing, said by a leader, read out as a group, or said individually to each person...

May the road rise to meet you.

May the wind be at your back.

May the sun shine upon your face.

May the rains fall upon your land.

May the light of Christ guide your path.

May laughter grace your home.

And when eternity beckons at the end of a journey well-travelled,

May the Lord embrace you and welcome you home to the heavenly feast.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.