

# Centred Discussion Guide



## Part 1: Centred

Matt Thiele, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Buderim - Mar 1<sup>st</sup> 2020

### GROUP INTRO

Welcome to your 'centred' group. You will be walking together for 40 days until Easter. Start with warmth, food, a cuppa or drink. Also (and this matters) please turn off your phones and give real attention.

You might like to start with one or two of these questions:

- If you were to write a book what would it be called?
- Have you considered fasting (giving something up) for Lent?
- What could or would you give up? Why?

The first core value of our Immanuel is "everything starts with prayer". Give it a go!

# WHAT DO THEY CENTRE ON?

Take a look at this list of centres. We have tried to be fair and state them in their own language without judgment. But we may not have this perfect!

WAY OF LIFE	CENTRED ON
Buddhism	escaping samsara / enlightenment
Materialism	stuff
Judaism	One God
Islam	submission to Allah
Wicca	power from nature
Capitalism	capital / money
Idealism	ideals / goals
Hedonism	pleasure
Mysticism	mystical experience
Subjectivism	feelings
Narcissism	me
Pluralism	?

- Which of these ways of life surround us?
- Which are tempting or attractive?
- How do each of these centres affect a person's life?

## EVEN 'GOD' & 'LOVE' ARE NOT CLEAR CENTRES

Many claim to centre on God. But the question is "which God, what kind of God, what do you mean by God?" Christians theologians teach that there is some knowledge of God in every culture - this is called "general revelation". The problem is that a relationship with God is obscured by our self-obsession. So many who claim to centre on God often actually selfishly, abuse others and even commit atrocities.

- What is the problem with a kind of general idea about God?

Many claim to centre on love. But again the question is "What is love? What kind of love? Where is this love from?" I have a friend who claims he centres his life on love. He says things like "love is free" and "love is love". He has lived in a number of communes and each time it has failed, resulting in conflict and destruction!

- What do you think of saying that love is the centre or focus of life?

# CENTRING ON THE CROSS (CHRIST CRUCIFIED)

The centre for our lives needs to be concrete, real, and touch real history. It needs to be more than just rules, clever principles, or idealism. It needs to be realistic about death, suffering, pain, and evil - and answer them somehow. It also needs to connect God and love together. This is why the cross of Jesus is the only workable centre for faith and life. Christian theologians call the cross 'special revelation'.

- What do you think of the idea of centring on the cross?

Spend some time discussing the following Bible reading...

*1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:2*

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:*

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

*<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. <sup>26</sup> Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him. <sup>30</sup> It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." <sup>1</sup> And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

- Spend some time together understanding this Bible reading.
- What are you drawn to in this?
- What challenges you, concerns you, or doesn't work for you in it?
- What is God saying to you in this? What is God saying to our church?

# WHAT CENTRING ON THE CROSS MEANS

Look at the four reasons centring on the cross works. Then discuss:

- Which is your favourite?
- How does each one go against our world's culture?
- What do they change for the way we live?

## 1. Centring On The Cross Means Costly Love

Centring on love, self-giving sacrificial love. It's not some unrealistic idea that love is 'free'. Instead it is gutsy real love that is willing to pay the cost...

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. - John 15:13*

## 2. Centring On The Cross Gives Everyone Infinite Value

Atheism gives us no good reasons to believe all humans have infinite value. But the cross proves that no human is worth more than another; that all races, all genders, all types have infinite value, because it says that God died for all.

*The love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that Christ died for ALL... 2 Corinthians 5:14*

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. - Colossians 1:19-20*

## 3. Centring On The Cross Means Not Dominating But Serving

*For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. - Mark 10:45*

## 4. Centring On The Cross Means God Is Love

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. - 1 John 4:10*

Centring on the cross, is centring on God's love. This is not just some 'general' idea about God with no specifics. This is not some ideal dreamed-up idea about love. The cross grounds and proves the idea that God is love.

# GROUP ACTIVITY FOR THE WEEK

As a group come up with something small you could all do that would remind you of the cross this week. Then next week report back on what it was like for you!