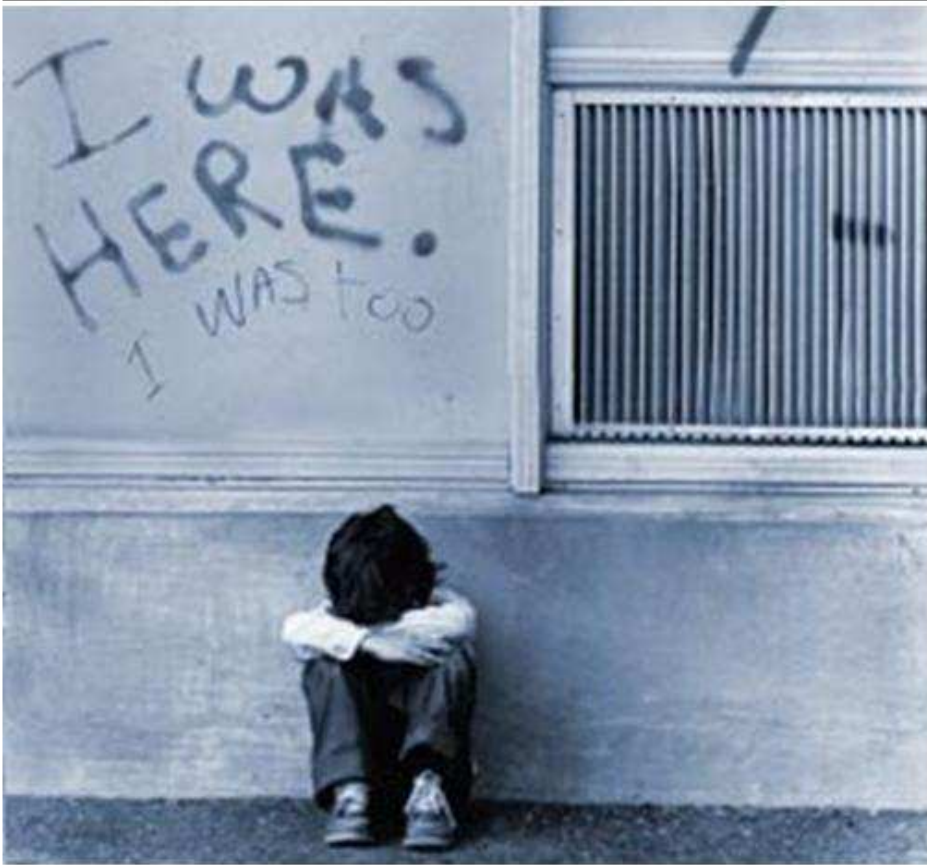


The Platform



*"Whatever
you did
for the
least of
these, you
did for
me", Jesus*

Explore week by week God's mission to rescue
us and bring us back to him

The bible is one of the most important ways to get to know God and hear for yourself how He has worked in peoples lives, working to restore our relationship with Him.

So we challenge you to open up your bibles, explore God's rescue mission for yourself.

There are four weeks between now and the next Platform, and we have designed this booklet specifically to help you explore with us the bible passages as we go along.

There are eight reflections/studies in each booklet. It's designed to make it easy for you, with only two studies each week between The Platforms. Here continues the adventure of God's relationship with man, this month looking specifically at what He wants us to do, and how we are to reflect His just, merciful and giving nature to other people.

If you have any questions or comments about the content of this booklet then please contact emily@c-y-m.org.uk, or alternatively speak to your youth leader at your local church.

Recap:

Last month's studies showed us how God had called the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, and asked them to be set apart for Him, a holy nation, showing the other nations what it was like to live a life with the one true God. We looked at how the image of Israel being saved from slavery mirrored how we have been set free from the wrong things we do in our lives. The Israelites were set free to be a people for God, just as we are called to be different than this world, and live a holy and pleasing life for Him.

This month, we are going to explore a little bit more about what that life looks like, especially at this time of year....

Day One

Read Luke 4: 14-21

This is the beginning of Jesus ministry (the specific task God had for Him) and the first time that he stands up and preaches in the synagogue.

List the things that Jesus states he came to do:

Read Isaiah 61:1-3

This is the passage that Jesus read in the synagogue. In the NIV it is entitled "the year of the Lord's Favour". **What does this tell us about what Jesus came to do?**

In Luke 4:21 Jesus says that he has fulfilled the things that are mentioned in the passage he read; so he will preach good news to the poor, he will proclaim freedom for the people in captivity, and will give sight back to people who are blind, and release those who are oppressed and exploited.

When Jesus talks about the poor, who do you think he meant? (Read Matthew 5:3)

What is the good news for the poor?

When he talked about giving people freedom, what do you think Jesus gives people freedom from?

When Jesus talks about giving people sight, what do you think he means? (Read Luke 7:22, and 2 Corinthians 4:4)

How do you think Jesus has accomplished each thing?

Who are the blind people in today's world?

Who are the captives in today's world?

Who are the exploited and oppressed?

Do you think what Jesus offers is possible and available for them?

If so, how?

What part do you think you have to play in this?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to understand fully, not only what you came to do on this earth, the things that you give to each of us that has a relationship with you, but also help me to know the part that I have to play. Help me to know how you want me to care for those in this world and in the place that I live that are poor, are trapped by their emotions or circumstances, perhaps have nothing, and those who cannot yet see who you are, and all that you have done for this world.

Day Two

In the last study we looked at what Jesus said He had come to do, and the people he had come to rescue.

Read Mark 12:29-31.

What does this passage, often called the greatest commandment, ask that we do?

What do you think that it means to love your neighbour? Who is your neighbour?

Read Luke 10:25-37

Here Jesus tells a parable which gets people thinking about who their neighbour is. He asks them, which one of the three men was a neighbour to the man who was robbed. This lets us know that when Jesus uses the word neighbour he doesn't mean the person living next door to us. Instead, he means people all around us, the people we walk by, the people we know, the people we are friends with, the people we know and are not friends with, the people we haven't yet met, but are about to meet. All these people are our neighbours, so basically anyone we come into contact with.

The parable of the good Samaritan was told to a group of people who would have hated Samaritans, because they believed different things than them, and they behaved differently to them. What Jesus was doing was telling them that when he said love your neighbour as yourself, he meant even those people you really don't like!

What do you think it means to love people you don't even know?

Note: The good Samaritan gives us a good example of this. It means to help them, provide for them, and look out for their needs above and beyond the call of duty, so more than perhaps you need to. It means to care for them practically, and to look out for them. Love here is not an emotion, but it is an action. When you love someone, you care for them, you look out for them, and you go that extra mile for them. Jesus is asking us to do that for the people around us.

Who to you would be a Samaritan, someone you don't like or don't get along with, someone who might be different from you?

In what ways this week can you show care and concern for that person or group of people?

The good news is that God doesn't ask us to do it by ourselves, or even in our own strength and capability. Instead, we need to look at the beginning part of the great commandment to understand the key to this kind of love for people we don't even like or know: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". This comes first. Now that doesn't mean that we have to get loving God with all our heart, soul and mind right first before we begin to love and care for the people we don't like very much or perhaps have only just met.

But what it does tell us is that our priority has to be God. And if we love God with all that we have, and all that we are, then actually we should want to care for everyone around us, whether we like them or not, whether we know them or not, because we will suddenly see and understand that those people whether we like them or know them, are precious to God. And if we love Him, then we have to love the people He loves and cares for.

Prayer:

Thank you Lord that you love every single one of us, and you have given us the opportunity to love you. Help me to love the people around me, even if I don't like them. Lord help me not to say spiteful things about them behind their backs, help me not to undermine them or exclude them. But God, help me to care for them, to look after them, and to help them exactly as you want me to.

Day Three

In the previous study, we looked at the greatest commandment, and saw that God asks us to love those around us, even if we don't like them or know them. Today, we are going to look at how the first Christians did that. We are going to look at the book of Acts, a book that tells us the "acts" ie. the things that the early Christians did, as well as look briefly at one of the letters Paul wrote to a newly established church.

Read Acts 2:42

What things did the new Christians do?

How did they treat their possessions?

How did they treat the poor?

What was happening at the same time as this?

What was their motivation for giving to everyone according to their need?

What was the result of all that they did?

What does this tell us about the impact our beliefs should have on the way that we live our lives, and the things that we possess/own?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Paul is writing this letter to a church in Corinth, and in this part of it, he is telling them how great the church in Macedonia has been. He tells them that even though the

Macedonian church are in the middle of a famine, and are really struggling, they have given generously to the work that Paul was doing, travelling around and telling people about Jesus. He uses them as an example to the Christians in Corinth, about what it means to live your life for God.

How much did the Macedonians give?

Why do you think they considered it a privilege to give to the work that Paul was doing?

Do you find it a privilege to give things that you have away to help people with their needs, and to help people know more about God?

What does it say that the Macedonians did first, before they gave to Paul?

What does this tell us regarding what our motivation and focus should be when we give and help people?

Who do you know that has a need right now?

In what way can you help them?

Prayer:

Lord, you know that I love the things that I own, and the things that I have. Help me not to love them more than you. Help me to use them to help people in a practical way, to provide for their needs. But also help me to use the things that I have, money, possessions and skills to tell people about you, and about the relationship they can have with you.

Day Four

So far we have looked at what Jesus claimed he had come to achieve, how he used the Old Testament passage from Isaiah to show the Jews who he was, and all that he was going to do. We've looked at how Jesus asks us to do the same by giving us the great commandment to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves, irrespective of their social status, how friendly and nice they are, and how much we get on with them. We've then looked at how the new church loved the people around them, by not only caring for their needs, but also telling them about the freedom that they could experience by having a relationship and believing in Jesus.

But is this a new teaching? Did God only become concerned about the poor, the needy, the lonely, and those excluded from society when Jesus came to earth?

Read Psalm 146:5-10 and Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

What do both passages tell us about who God is?

What do we learn about the things He is interested in and cares about?

What type of people do these passages say God specifically cares for?

What does God do for them?

Who do you think the aliens are that God mentions?

Note: At the time that these passages were written, it was the culture that all the land and possessions upon the death of their owner, would go to the male heir. His widow would have nothing unless her son, or the son of her husband would care for her and provide for her. If she had no sons then she would not be given anything (see the case

of Naomi in the book of Ruth). If she had children and none of them were male or old enough to take the inheritance, then they would also suffer and have nothing (hence the widow and the fatherless). As well as losing their land, their home, etc, a widow and her fatherless children would lose their voice and standing in society as it was the man that represented the family in the community debates and decisions.

When it talks about “aliens” in these passages, it does not mean little green men from outer space. An alien was a person who was not part of the nation of Israel, an outsider, a person who didn’t belong, someone who had no other place to be, or perhaps had even been ostracised, turned away from their own family.

What do these passages tell us about how God feels about those who are outsiders, who are put down upon, bullied, left out, those who have nothing, who have no voice in society?

If this is how God feels about them, then how do you think He wants us to feel about them?

Who are the aliens in the place that you live, the outsiders, the people viewed with suspicion, the people no one wants to talk to?

Who in this world and where you live are the people that are being oppressed and put down upon, who are not being treated fairly?

Who are the people who are unable to speak for themselves, who have no voice in today’s society or community?

Note: In these passages we read of how this almighty God, who has control of everything, who is boss of everything, how he cares for the least. No matter who we are, how popular, how great, how gifted and skilled, God wants us to do the same. If the God of this universe, with all His power and authority has compassion for the

weakest, the least able, the ones who are vulnerable and have nothing, not even a voice, then we should too.

It is often said that we are God's hands and feet here on earth. In these passages it says that God cares for these people, and we should too. What do you think we need to be doing as a response, and how?

Prayer:

Lord will you help me to understand how you feel about people who are outsiders, people who are bullied, put down on, and left out. Help me to understand how your heart breaks for those who have nothing in this world, those who have no voice, no way of changing things for themselves, and how you want justice for them. Show me what I can do, how I can be your hands and feet in the area that I live, and in this world.

Day Five

Read Micah 6:8 (use the contents page as it is a tiny book at the end of the Old Testament)

Micah is a book about a man who was told by God to tell the nation of Israel that they were living in a corrupt and evil manner. They were no longer caring for the poor, and needy and excluded, but instead were abusing them, and each other as well. They were a nation full of corrupt leadership, idolatry and social injustice. Micah came to tell them that God would bring judgement on them if they continued to live like that, but also came with a message of hope that if they repented they would be restored, and God would bless them.

Based on this passage, what does God require of anyone who believes in Him?

What do you think it means to act justly?

**How can you act justly to:
The people that you go to school with**

To your family

To your brother/sister

To your best friend

To the person you hate?

What about the rest of the world? How can you act in a way that allows justice for people all around the world?

What do you think it means to love mercy?

Who are the people that you need to show compassion for, both in your family, your friends, your school, and in general in this world?

How can you show your compassion in a practical way?

Who are the people that you perhaps need to forgive for the things that they have done to you?

What does it mean to walk humbly with God?

Do you sometimes make God smaller than He is, and forget that He is the God of EVERYTHING?

How do you think a good understanding of who God is, who you are in relation to Him, and the relationship you can have with Him, will help you to be fair to other people and want fairness for other people?

How will understanding all the above help you to forgive and have compassion for people?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to understand quite how unjust this world is, and how much you want fairness for everyone in this world, no matter where they are born, no matter whether I like them or not. Help me to act fairly, and be someone who supports and encourages justice and fairness in this world, through the way that I behave, the things that I support, and perhaps even the way that I shop. Help me to also forgive those that hurt me, and to have compassion on those who don't have the same things as me. But most of all, help me to know you, and who you are, and what you want to see done in this world.

Day Six

Read Amos 2:6-7 (use the contents page as it is a tiny book at the end of the Old Testament)

Similar to Micah, Amos was a man who came to tell the Israelites that they were at a real low point. They had become greedy, and unjust, they had stopped living as God had wanted them to, and stopped listening to the values that were close to God's heart. Instead the wealthy elite were becoming rich at the expense of others. Peasant farmers who once only farmed what they needed to live and survive as a family are being forced to farm what is best for foreign trade. This particular passage is looking at why God is going to pass judgement on Israel.

What is it that Israel has done wrong?

Thinking about the previous studies that you have done, why is that so bad?

Note: When this passage talks about the Israelites selling the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals, it is talking about the fact that they were living in a way that gave no regard for the poor, they didn't care about them, and instead they chose to abuse them to get what they wanted. Selling the righteous for silver, was referring to the fact that they bribed the judges at that time, and got the verdicts that they wanted. So they bought the judges, the men who were supposed to say what was right in God's eyes (righteous) with their money. Sometimes verdicts were bought with as little as a pair of sandals.

When it says that they trampled on the heads of the poor, it means that they forced more labour, hard work, on them; they did things and worked in ways that inflicted more poverty on them.

In what ways do you forget about what is right and do what you want instead?

Do you sometimes try to manipulate things to get your own way instead of letting the right thing happen?

In what ways do you think you might make things worse for the poor?

How many of us consider where our clothes are made, by whom and for how much money?

If we knowingly buy clothes or stuff from places which use slave labour, and refuse to pay people in developing countries a fair wage, do you think we could be accused of making things worse for the poor, after all, if we didn't buy it, there wouldn't be a demand for it.

Prayer:

Lord help me to be aware that everything I do has consequences, even the things that I buy, and the places that I buy them from. Lord, help me to care for the poor, and the people that don't have a say. Help me to look after them by not perpetuating their problem, but instead, give me your heart for them and your conviction about how I can help.

Day Seven

Read Matthew 25:31-46

This passage is looking at judgement, how God will decide who will be in heaven and who won't. The only way we can be in heaven is by knowing Jesus. But what does it mean to know and love Jesus? What will knowing and loving Him look like in our life? That's what this passage is looking at. In this passage the sheep are those who will go to heaven and the goats are the ones that don't.

In vs 34 – 37, what does Jesus say the people in heaven have done whilst they were on earth?

Who have they done these things to or for?

What is Jesus' reply when the people who think they do what is right in God's eyes (the righteous) ask Him when did they ever see Him hungry, thirsty, in poor, or in need?

Why do you think Jesus says that if they do it for the least person, the person with nothing, the person in real need, then you are doing it for Him?

If going to heaven is about believing in Jesus, and is not about what we can do for Him, then why does Jesus tell this story?

What do you think is the relationship between our belief in Jesus and how we care for the poor, the people in need, the outsiders?

Why does Jesus say the two are interlinked, inseparable?

Note: This passage is about judgement, about who will be in heaven with Jesus and who will not. Jesus tells this story about the sheep and the goats, and the people who care for the needy and those who don't, because He wants to show the people listening that there is a difference between someone who says they know Him, and someone who really does know Him. How can we tell if we know Jesus or not? Well, Jesus tells us it is by caring for the things that He cares about.

In this story Jesus is not saying that He is in the poor and needy, but instead that God has a particular interest in those who are outsiders, poor, and needy, those who are not treated fairly in this world. God loves everyone the same, but He does want us to love and show grace, kindness, compassion, as well as help those who don't have as much as us, how ever much or little we have ourselves. If we don't do this, then Jesus is saying we don't really know Him, we don't know what is important to Him. If we love Him, and know Him, then we will know quite how important this is to Him.

It's like knowing your best friend loves her Dad, but whenever you meet her Dad you ignore him. Your friend would pretty quickly have an issue with you and wonder whether or not you even care about them as a friend when you so blatantly ignore someone they really love and care so much about.

If we love someone, then we want to love the people they care about as well. And that's what Jesus is saying here.

**Who are the people in this world that don't have
Enough food**

Enough water

A home to go to

Clothing or protection or warmth

Their freedom

Who do you know who is sick?

What can you do this Christmas time to help them, to show that you care about the people that God cares about?

It is said that you can't truly love and serve people unless you love God. And you can't truly love God without loving others. Our relationship with God and our relationship with others are inseparable.

Mother Theresa was once asked, "How did you receive your call to serve the poor?" She answered, "My call is not to serve the poor. My call is to follow Jesus. I have followed him to the poor."

Remember this Christmas ALL that Jesus did by becoming a man, limiting Himself, and coming to earth to serve us. The God of all creation chose to make Himself smaller than He was to serve us and to give us everything. Are we willing to do the same for the people that He cares about?

Prayer:

Lord, I really want to know you. I want to know what you want in this world, the things that you care about, the things that matter to you. Lord help me to be willing to follow you anywhere even when it leads me to things that are hard, to hard people, even when it leads me to give things up in my life that I love. Help me to want to serve you more than anything else in this world.

Day Eight

Today I want you to spend the time praying with God, and asking Him to show you the people that need your help over this Christmas period.

And then, if you are aware that someone has a need, who ever they are, where ever they live, then be the person that shows that you care, be the person God wanted the Israelites to be to the people around them, be the person God wants you to be to the poor, the disadvantaged, the needy, the outsiders today, the person that cares about their need and tries to do something to help.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!”

Margaret Mead

Always preach the gospel. If necessary, use words.

St Francis of Assisi

To give you something to aim for, each month at the back of the bible study booklet there is going to be 8 questions related to the 8 bible studies.

If you complete the questions and bring this sheet with you to the next Platform then there'll be a free goodie upon arrival!

Happy answering, and hopefully happy munching!

Name:

Age:

1) What are the 5 things that Jesus says He has come to do?

2) Who were the people that passed by the man who had been robbed?

3) In the 3rd Study, you looked at the early church, and particularly the church in Macedonia. What were they praised by Paul for?

4) In the 4th study you looked at one of the Psalms. In that Psalm who does it say God watches over?

5) In the 5th study, you looked at a passage in the book of Micah, the story of a prophet. What did that passage say God required of those that believed in Him?

6) What did the writer of the book of Amos mean when he wrote "selling the righteous for silver"?

7) In your 7th study you looked at some sheep and goats. Who were the sheep and who were the goats?

8) Who said "Always preach the gospel, and if necessary use words"?