



BEING
A HOLY
ATTRACTIVE
PEOPLE

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

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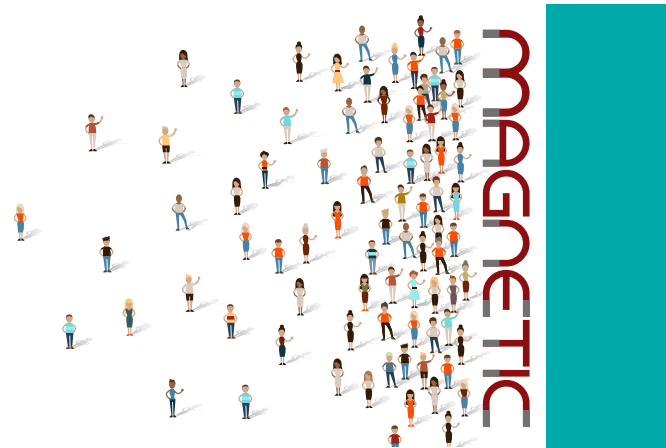
Parramatta
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Magnetic - Genuine living faith

(16 February 2020)

Every time Jesus spoke about God, prayed to God and retreated to be alone with God it was obviously to all that he *knew* God. This rich, personal, intimate, genuine and transforming relationship with God was obvious to all and drew people who also wanted (or were curious) to know God. When our relationship with God is so real it can't help but be observed by others in our lives, the same is true – it will draw those who are hungry, curious or feeling the absence of their own personal relationship with God and open doors that would not be there otherwise.



To start with

Without referring to your Bible, as a group write down as many people as you can from the gospels who were attracted to Jesus. Use their name where possible, or a description of who they were if not. For each person or group of people, discuss what attracted them to Jesus.

Reflect

Read Matthew 5:13-16. Thinking back to Travis' sermon, what do the metaphors of salt and light convey to those who seek to be followers of Jesus?

What difference does it make that Jesus says "You are..." rather than "You will be..." ?

Read John 9:1-5. John in the opening to his gospel, refers to Jesus as "The true light, which enlightens everyone." In this passage Jesus describes himself in a similar way. How does this passage shape your understanding of Jesus' reference to "salt and light" in Matthew 5?

The gospels make it evident that those closest to Jesus observed his genuine, intimate and rich relationship with the Father. Read John 3:1-10. What has Nicodemus observed?

Read also John 7:45-52. What does reveal to us about people's observations?

Who are the people who are closest to you? What would they observe about your faith? (or what would you hope that they observe about your faith?)

Share again (from last week) what your "sent places" are. In the context of those sent places, how observable is your faith? What restrictions or other factors affect your ability to allow your faith to be observed?

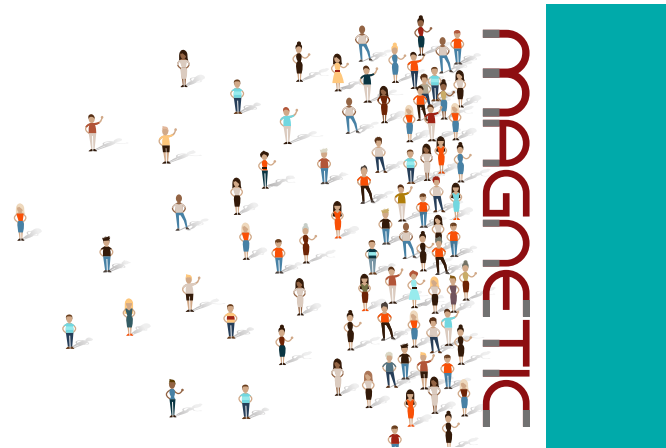
Respond

Disciples are people learning to live and love like Jesus. In terms of developing a rich, intimate and transforming relationship with God, what spiritual practices of Jesus can you begin or grow?

Pray the words of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 over one another, that increasingly the Holy Spirit would transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, such that our faith is both observable and authentic.

Magnetic - Real Spiritual Authority

(23 February 2020)



One inescapable thing that drew people to Jesus was the spiritual authority he carried – in his teaching (Matt 7:29), in his dealing with the spiritual world (Mark 1:21-28), in his ability to heal (Mark 1:40-45). He then sent out the 12 and the 72 with His authority to proclaim the Kingdom and heal and commissioned his disciples after his resurrection with the surety of his power and presence. We see the early

church responding by carrying a real spiritual authority as they go. We see this in the authority of Peter in proclaiming God's plan of salvation fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 2), the power to heal in Jesus name (eg: Acts 3) and the authority to silence demons (eg: Acts 16) just to name a few examples. To walk in this in 2020 is to place our lamp on a stand that shines for all to see.

To start with

What are your life experiences that have shaped your response to political, spiritual and other forms of authority?

What concerns or hesitations do you have (if any) when people speak of the spiritual authority they have in Christ?

Reflect

The gospels are filled with accounts that describe the authority that Jesus exercised. The section from Matthew 8:1 to 9:38 is filled with account after account demonstrating Jesus' authority. **Read Matthew 8:1-27.**

What specific dimensions of Jesus' authority are described in this passage?

What do you observe about the manner in which Jesus exercises his spiritual authority?

What is Matthew wanting his readers to understand about the identity of Jesus?

Read Matthew 10:1-8. What is Jesus doing here? What do you read into the specific types of authority that Jesus gives them? Is their authority limited to these acts?

Read Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:6-9. How do these passages add to our understanding of the authority given to the disciples of Jesus?

Both Steve & Christine referred to Acts 2-4 as illustrations of how the apostles (especially Peter and John) exercised their spiritual authority. What do we learn from them?

What words or phrases are used in the New Testament to describe our spiritual identity? Why is understanding our identity in Christ so crucial to understanding our spiritual authority?

Why is an understanding of our spiritual authority so important for both our prayer life and the way in which we exercise our spiritual gifts?

Respond

During this week, ponder (journal) what it means to be an ambassador of Christ. Is there 1 thing you can do this week to live out that identity more intentionally?

In exercising spiritual authority, are there areas in your life which need to be more aligned with Jesus? Some of the things mentioned on Sunday were humility, courage, gentleness, compassion, wisdom and love. Pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal this to you.

Magnetic – Deep Compassion

(1 March 2020)

To start with

When have you experienced an act of compassion directed toward yourself (or someone close to you)?

What touched you about the way in which they expressed compassion?



Reflect

A little Greek helps our understanding. The word translated into “compassion” in the Gospels is “splanchnizomai”, which has its roots as a description of our “inward parts”, or in Aussie slang, our “guts”.

It depicts something different from love or kindness. “Compassion” in the gospels carries with it a sense of strong emotion, of being deeply moved for another person. Let’s look at some examples.

Read Matthew 15:29-39

What in this context caused Jesus to experience compassion for the crowd?
How did Jesus act with compassion toward them?

Read Matthew 20:29-34

What in this context caused Jesus to experience compassion for the men?
How did Jesus act with compassion toward them?

Read Luke 7:11-17

Who were the recipients of compassion in this passage?
What did Jesus do in response to the compassion that he felt for them?

Drawing from all 3 passages, reflect further on Jesus’ feeling of compassion and his response of compassion:

What do you perceive is the reason why Jesus feels compassion for people?

What do people experience when Jesus responds to them?

How is Jesus’ compassion inseparable from his spiritual authority?

As people witness the compassion of Jesus, what kingdom response results?

Respond

In describing Australian culture, how high would the word “compassion” rate in your opinion?
What opportunities for being “Salt and Light” does this provide?

As disciples learning to live and love like Jesus, what are some of the ways in which we can appropriately express and respond with compassion in our “sent places”?

Pray for the opportunity in the coming week to respond with compassion to a person(s) in your sent places, and pray that in doing so, that person would experience something of the mercy of God.

Magnetic –

Radical grace and love

(8 March 2020)

Jesus was a man of radical love and grace. He would defend the adulterous woman, honour the hated tax collector, ask forgiveness for his enemies and declare that the Kingdom belonged to any who would receive it like a child. His message was consistent with his life: the unconditional love of a heavenly Father and a Kingdom of radical grace where the unworthy were made worthy. Grace is at the very heart of the Gospel message, and as we embody that in the way we live, interact and treat others, there will be those who are drawn to something so wonderfully counter-cultural they can't help but want to know more.



To start with

What is grace? How is it similar/different from justice and mercy?

Can you describe a time when you were deeply touched by grace?

Reflect

Read John 1:14-18. What strikes you from this passage about John's description of Jesus? How does it inform our understanding of who Jesus is and the reason for his incarnation? Why do you think that "grace and truth" are paired?

Read John 8:1-11. What would have been the outcome for the woman in this story if she had received justice? What about if she had received mercy? How does the way that Jesus treats her reflect truth and grace?

Read Matthew 20:1-16. As you read this parable, place yourself in the story. What change in feelings and/or perspective do you experience as you put yourself in the place of the different categories of workers? How does your perspective change when you place yourself in the shoes of the landowner?

From the account of the woman caught in adultery and the parable of the labourers, what strikes you about the nature of grace that makes it such a beautiful and attractive thing?

From the same passages, what is it about grace that makes people feel uncomfortable or even fearful, to the point where we resist the expression of grace to others?

What changes in us when we see the world and all that is in it through the "lens of grace", ie, (from Steve Frost), that we see the world and all creation as being loved by God?

Respond

Is the "narrative" that governs your lens of yourself and the world a narrative of "radically expansive and surprisingly inclusive love and grace" or a narrative more closely aligned to works/justice?

What is one way that you can express "radically expansive and surprisingly inclusive love and grace" to someone that you are in relationship with (but at times also struggle with)?

Give thanks each day this week for one gracious gift of God that you experience.

Magnetic –

Godly character and integrity

(15 March 2020)

Jesus was incredibly consistent in his character, a man of perfect holiness and integrity. Much of the New Testament instruction equips the believer to be people of Christ-shaped character and integrity, acknowledging that whilst we are not perfect, Christ lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to help us in this. Many of us experience disillusionment and disappointment over the lack of integrity in our world today. To see people who are consistent in their character across all spheres of their lives and over every season in their life is magnetic. People take notice, respect and are drawn to people of character.



To start with

Is there someone whose integrity has positively impacted your life? In what way?

On the flip side, what have you personally seen happen when there has been a significant failure of integrity?

Reflect

Integrity is the consistency between our declared values (think of this as our 'front of stage') and our actions and attitudes when no one is watching (our 'back of stage'). At times, our lack of integrity is an intentional resolve to live inconsistently. At other times, we disappoint ourselves by failing to live in a way that we truly desire to, finding ourselves stuck in addictive and destructive actions and attitudes. The questions that follow will be of most benefit to those (like me) who fall into this latter category.

Read individually through Matthew 5:1 – 7:12. As you do so, write a list of the “values” that Jesus speaks of as reflecting the kingdom of God. By “values”, I am talking about important actions and attitudes. You will find that some values are mentioned a number of times, but in different contexts, for example, humility.

Read Colossians 3:1-17. What values does Paul describe in this passage?

Kathy mentioned that to be a person of integrity, we must be clear about the values that we wish to live by. How is the list of values from the above passages helpful as you clarify your own set of values?

Are there any values from the 2 passages that you feel are not relevant for you? Why not?

Read Psalms 7:8 and 25:21. Prior to David becoming King, what importance did he place on his own integrity? What do later events in his life, such as those involving Uriah and Bathsheba, teach us about the nature of integrity?

Why is so important that we understand the “excuses” and “exceptions” that we create for ourselves when it comes to living out our own values?

Respond

As Christians, we are not immune from the cultural pressure of prioritising “image” over integrity. What is one practice that you can engage in this week to grow in integrity. Some that Kathy mentioned were:

- Clarify your values, ensuring that they are shaped primarily by God’s revealed word.
- Finish each day by reflecting on your consistency between your values and your actions and attitudes of the day.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring conviction in areas where integrity was lacking.
- Confess to God areas of your life where there is a conflict between your front of stage and back of stage. Share this with one person who you trust will graciously keep you accountable.
- Develop a rhythm of praying that God will grow you in Christ-like character and integrity.

Magnetic – Strength of convictions (22 March 2020)



To start with

Share 2 strong convictions that you hold.
How and when did you develop those convictions?

What convictions have you encountered that you have found unattractive? What made them unattractive?

Reflect

Steve spoke about 4 convictions that Jesus held strongly. They were:

- His identity;
- His calling;
- That no one is beyond the love and grace of God; and
- That eternity exists

Read Luke 4:1-30 and Luke 18:1-34. From just this snippet of the gospels, which of the above convictions stand out? What other convictions of Jesus appear in these passages?

What other characteristics of Jesus (that we have discussed in the preceding weeks) do you see at work in these passages alongside his convictions?

Read Acts 2:14-47. What convictions are evident among the disciples on the Day of Pentecost and in the days following? How are these reflective of Jesus' convictions?

Christians are often labelled as “bigots” or as “judgmental”. What is the difference between having strong convictions and being bigoted, and why is it so important to understand this?

Respond

Take time this week to write your “Top 5” life convictions and consider firstly, how aligned they are to Jesus' convictions, and secondly, how well you live them out. That is, are your life convictions **actual** convictions or **aspirational** convictions?

If you are someone who would love to be more like the Apostle Paul (who declares “I am convinced”), pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal the truth of scripture to you in a deep and powerful way.

If you are someone known for holding “strong views”, pray that the Holy Spirit would plant the words of Peter into your spirit, “give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” so as not to cause unnecessary offense.

Magnetic – Beautiful community

(29 March 2020)

To start with

Where have you found (or still find) a genuine sense of community? What is it about that group of people that brought/brings about that sense of community?

As a nation, it felt as though we rallied together with a sense of “community spirit” in response to the bushfires. Why has it been more difficult to see that same community spirit with the C-19 pandemic?



Reflect

Read John 15:9-17 and 17:20-23. In these passages, Jesus speaks of his relationship with the Father, his relationship with his disciples and their relationship with one another. What point is he making?

Why does Jesus consider unity between Christians so important?

Read 1 John 4:7-21. Written well after the death and resurrection of Jesus, what similarities do you see with Jesus' teaching? Why is there no “fear in love”?

Travis described the early church as a community:

- of inclusive Jesus-centred unity;
- where the Kingdom is made visible; and
- marked by love.

Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35. In these earliest accounts of the church, how are these 3 descriptions lived out practically in the course of their everyday lives?

Why, as the church grew numerically and spread geographically, was it increasingly difficult to maintain such a beautiful sense of community?

What makes for a “beautiful community” in 2020?

Respond

What do you bring to Parramatta Baptist that increases a sense of unity and community?

In a season where “self-isolation” and “lockdown” are often heard, in what ways can you build a sense of genuine community in your neighbourhood or sent place?

In this season, what opportunities can you think of for the church to make visible the Kingdom of God?