



bible studies for ashfield presbyterian church

does christianity work?

Many people are not asking the question “Is Christianity true?”, but “Does Christianity work?” Does it help me make sense of the world? Does it give me meaning? Does it give me tools to cope with suffering? Does it make life better now? Does it enable me to flourish? This series attempts to answer these questions

These studies are designed to be completed after the sermon, and are focussed on application, rather than investigation of the Bible passages.

1. meaning that can cope with loss



The Big Idea: People find meaning and purpose in many ways (work, family, success, pleasure). God made us to be his children, connected to him by faith in Jesus for eternity. This gives meaning to life that can cope with loss

1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you have from the talk/passage?



Investigate the Bible

2. Read **Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11**. In what areas of life does the Teacher conclude there is no hope of finding meaning?
3. Read **Ecclesiastes 2:24-26**. Discuss what the teacher's conclusion means in the light of the preceding verses.
4. Read **Romans 8:28-30**. What meaning has God created us for? How can this perspective affect the way we approach life?



Taking it in

5. What is the thing in your life that, if it was taken away, would significantly affect your motivation, joy and direction?
6. In the light of the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, how should you change how you are living your life?
7. Think about one of your non-Christian friends. What gives their life meaning? How might you lovingly begin to point them to a better meaning?

2. contentment not based on circumstances



The Big Idea: The secret to contentment is valuing righteousness before God as most important.

1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you have from the talk/passage?



Investigate the Bible

2. **Read Philippians 4:10-13.** Paul discusses contentment. What do you think he means by being content (v.11)?

Does it mean:

- Being apathetic?
- Not wanting your circumstances to be different?
- Never striving for anything?
- Or Something else?

3. Why would Paul need to learn to be content when “living in plenty”?
4. What is the secret to being content?

Read Philippians 3:7-11. What does Paul value above everything else? How might this influence his contentment?

What lessons do you need to learn from this?



Taking it in

5. (a) Try to finish this sentence in at least 3 ways: “I’d be happy with my life, if:

...

...

...

(b) What sorts of things feed any feelings of discontent you have?

6. Think about one of your non-Christian friends. Are they content? How might you lovingly begin to point them to a better satisfaction with life?

3. identity that's secure



***The Big Idea:** We are created by God to be adopted by him, for an eternal inheritance. We are being built into a building with Jesus as the cornerstone, to proclaim him to the world. This identity gives us freedom to enjoy things, relationships and activities, without them having to provide us with identity, security and acceptance.*

Optional Intro question: Can you think of a time when you really felt like you didn't belong? What did it make you feel like doing?

1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you have from the talk/passage?



Investigate the Bible

2. **Read 1 Peter 2:4-12.** List all that believers now are, or have received.



Taking it in

3. If this is our corporate Christian identity, what should the church be like?
4. What are the practical implications of being strangers and aliens in the world (v11)?
5. The book of 1 Peter points to both the security (elected by God) and insecurity (exiles in the world) of being a Christian. Which one of these best describes your current experience? Which one do you need to be reminded of?
6. Because of our identity in Jesus, we are to "declare the praises of God". How do you in your life tell and declare all the wonderful things God has done for you?
7. Think about one of your non-Christian friends. Where do they place their identity? How might you lovingly begin to point them to a more secure identity?

4. hope that perseveres



The Big Idea: Christian hope in God's gracious judgment, salvation and paradise shields us from trials, and strengthens and motivates us to holiness and endurance.

Optional Intro question: What kind of heaven are you expecting?

1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you have from the talk/passage?



Investigate the Bible

2. **Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.** How would you describe the hope that we have as God's people?
3. What is the dominant emotion that Peter describes in these verses? How is such an emotion possible in the midst of suffering?



Taking it in

4. How do you think trials help us look forward to the new creation?

Can you think of a difficult situation that you have endured that helped you to look forward to the new creation?

5. Think about one of your non-Christian friends. Are they optimistic or pessimistic about the future? How might you lovingly begin to point them to a source of hope that will last?

5. forgiveness that frees



The Big Idea: Unforgiveness consumes people. Jesus commands us to seek repentance from those who sin against us, so we can forgive them, and be reconciled. The power to forgive comes when we recognise how much we have been forgiven. When we know we've been forgiven, we can be humble and gentle and patient

Optional Intro question: How would you define "forgiveness"?

1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you have from the talk/passage?



Investigate the Bible

2. **Read Matthew 18:15-35.** What are you to do when someone sins against you?

According to the passage, what is the motivation or the power that will enable us to forgive others?

3. **Read Ephesians 4:1-3.** Christians are to live a life worthy of their calling. Their calling is described back in 2:1-9. What is the connection between the forgiveness and grace we've been shown by God and the attitude we're to have towards others (4:2-3)?



Taking it in

4. Why do we find it hard to forgive certain people? How might these passages help us progress towards forgiving them?

Is there anyone you need to approach who has sinned against you so you can be reconciled?

5. Imagine someone comes to you to show you your fault because they claim you have sinned against them. How do you react? (Be honest!)

How should you react?

Anything you've read, or thought about, today that can help you react better?