

THE HEART OF GOD

through St Hilary's Vision



A BIBLE
STUDY FOR
SMALL
GROUPS

Special Thanks to Karen Morris for her role in developing this Bible study.

STUDY 1

Introduction

These 2 studies are designed to enthuse people about the things that enthuse God. They are structured so that they provide the opportunity for individuals to read the bible and report back to a group discussion. The observation phase involves reading the text to see what is actually written (what does it say?); the interpretation phase asks the question how do we understand it (what does it mean?) and then the application phase asks how we can apply it to our lives (so what?).

Observation

Working in pairs or individually ask the group to read their passage and report back to the others in 1 minute what it communicates about what moves the heart of God.

They may ask:

- What is God's overall purpose in the world?
- What are God's other purposes?
- What does God react to?
- What brings him joy?
- What makes him angry?

John 17:1-6
2Ths. 1:6 -12
Rom. 9:15-18
Eph. 1:3-12
Isaiah 48:9-11

As a group list on butchers paper God's actions, reactions and purposes etc. (Keep this section moving along or you will run out of time)

Ask for reactions or comments from people. Allow the discussion of God doing things for his own glory to flow if that comes up. (See Appendix 1 from John Piper- 'Let the Nations be Glad' Pgs 26-7 to help with the issue of God's apparent 'egomania')

Interpretation

As a group summarise the list into a few sentences, forming purpose statements.

Eg God is doing/ being ... because...

Look at Matt 28:18-20 (the Great Commission) and Matt. 22:34 -40 (the Great Commandment) and list purpose statements for Christians.

Eg We should be doing/being... because...

Compare the two sets of purpose statements (i.e. ours and God's). Do they correlate? Why or why not? Are the Christian's purpose statements complete or sufficient summaries of God's purposes in the world? Why or why not?

Application

Given both sets of purpose statements ask each person to record and explain to the group something they are doing to achieve God's purposes and something they will do.

NOTES

NOTES

The St Hilary's vision statement is: 'Under God, by 2010 SHACK will be a community with 2000 people meeting in congregations and small groups living out Jesus' great commandment and great commission in the city of Melbourne and beyond. ' and was established from the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Ask: How well or otherwise does St Hilary's achieve the purposes we developed earlier? Be specific. What needs to be done? NB. Not "what needs to be done to satisfy my desires"; but what needs to be done to satisfy God's desires.

Bible Texts

John 17:1-6

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 -12

For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:15-18

For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.

<p>Mary: After the conversation with the Angel</p>	<p>Paul: Praying for the Philippians</p>
<p>Luke 1:4-11</p>	<p>Philippians 1:3-11</p>
<p>And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."</p>	<p>I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.</p>

All text reprinted from the NRSV

<p>Nehemiah: Before Petitioning the King</p>	<p>Jonah: In the Fish</p>
<p><i>Nehemiah 1:4-11</i></p>	<p><i>Jonah 2: 1-10</i></p>
<p>When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.' They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man!"</p>	<p>Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?' The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God. As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!" Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.</p>

Ephesians 1:3-12

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

Isaiah 48:9-11

For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, so that I may not cut you off. See, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tested you in the furnace of adversity. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for why should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34 -40)

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

What will this look like in the context of our church, our vision and our strategies ie. what will you do to be part of that?

St. Hilary's Strategies are:

1. To be a family of both congregations and small groups
2. To run excellent programs for evangelism, pastoral care and training with special focus on youth and children
3. To plant off-site congregations, each with a network of small groups
4. To initiate new, and support existing, mission partnerships, at home and overseas
5. To develop our John St. facilities to better serve our congregations and ministries and facilitate growth both on and off site

character	motivations and actions	understanding of God	relationship with God

Interpretation

Ask: What is striking about these lists? What questions or comments do you have?

Form summaries of each column. Try to develop a profile of a person who seeks after God's heart.

Application

Write down a person you know who you consider seeks after God's heart. What is it about them that conveys this life choice?

What do you need to change to be considered a person who seeks after God's heart? Be concrete: What will you change to become someone who seeks after God's heart?

Appendix 1

GOD IS MOST GLORIFIED IN US WHEN WE

ARE MOST SATISFIED IN HIM

But is it loving for God to exult his own glory? Yes it is. And there are several ways to see this truth clearly. One way is to ponder this sentence: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. This is perhaps the most important sentence in my theology. If it is true, then it becomes plain why God is loving when he seeks to exalt his glory in my life. For that would mean that he would seek to maximize my satisfaction in him, since he is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him. Therefore God's pursuit of his own glory is not at odds with my joy, and that means it is not unkind or unmerciful or unloving of him to seek his own glory. In fact it means that the more passionate God is for his own glory the more passionate he is for my satisfaction in that glory. And therefore God's God-centeredness and God's love soar together.

DUTY OR DELIGHT IN A HOSPITAL ROOM?

To illustrate the truth that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him, consider what I might say on a pastoral visit when entering the hospital room of one of my people. They look up from their bed with a smile and say, "O, Pastor John, how good of you to come. What an encouragement." And suppose I lift my hand, as if to deflect the words, and say matter-of-factly, "Don't mention it. It's my duty as a pastor." Now what is wrong here? Why do we cringe at such a thoughtless pastoral statement? It is my duty. And duty is a good thing. So why does this statement do so much damage?

It damages because it does not honour the sick person. Why? Because delight confers more honour than duty does. Doing hospital visitations out of mere duty honours duty. Doing it out of delight honours the patients. And they feel that. The right pastoral response to the patient's greeting would have been: "It's a pleasure to be here. I'm glad I could come." Do you see the paradox here? Those two sentences would show that I am, "seeking my own." "It's my pleasure to be here. I am glad I could come." And yet the reason these statements are not selfish is that they confer the honour on the patient, not the pastor. When someone delights in you, you feel honoured. When someone finds happiness in being around you, you feel treasured, appreciated, glorified. It is a loving thing to visit the sick because it makes you glad to be there.

This then is the answer to why God is not unloving to magnify his glory. God is glorified precisely when we are satisfied in him – when we delight in his presence, when we like to be around him, when we treasure his fellowship. This is an utterly life-changing discovery. It frees us to pursue or joy in God and God to pursue his glory in us. Because they are not two different pursuits. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

Piper J, Let the Nations Be Glad 26-27

STUDY 2

Introduction

This study looks at biblical people who were seeking the heart of God. We are trying to understand their character, motivations, actions and overall their relationship with God. We will try to understand their hearts through their prayers. The handout is simply four people's prayers compiled together for convenience. Feel free to use your bibles to understand more of the context if you need to.

Recap

What did we discover about what moves God's heart last week?
What have you done differently this week in response to this?

Observation

On the handout underline any information we can glean about the persons character, motivations and actions, understanding of God and relationship with God. If possible give each person a variety of different coloured pens/textas to underline each different category. The passages are: Nehemiah 1:4-11; Jonah 2:1-10; Luke 1:4-11; Philippians 1:3-11.

Collect something from each person in the group under any of the four headings on a couple of pieces of butchers paper. Keep going around the group until you've exhausted everyone's observations.