



## Bible Confidence: Session 6 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

1. Intro slide.
2. What does the New Testament emphasise about the relationship God wants with us? (Being with God)
3. **The love of God.** ① The starting point for a relationship with God is His love, and in Christ the nature of that self-giving love has been fully revealed. John writes, “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 4:8-10) ① **God’s relationship with human beings:** ① **Reconciling us and all creation to Himself, bring peace and wholeness** “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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) Rather than having to wait until the end of time, in Jesus the fullness of God’s promise to restore the order and wholeness of creation *and* people is offered *now*. We are no longer cut off from God in any way. ① **Adopting us as His children.** “In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” (Ephesians 1: 5-6) By using the language of adoption, the New Testament emphasises how much we receive as God’s *heirs*. In the film *Ben-Hur* Judah (a Jew) escapes from a sinking ship in which he is a slave. In doing so, he saves the life of a Roman commander, Arrius, whose son has been killed. Arrius adopts Judah, leading to his being forgiven for his supposed crimes, being given a new name, “young Arrius,” and receiving a full inheritance. Arrius declares the adoption by giving his ancestral signet ring to young Arrius, who says he has received ① “a new life, a new home, a new father”. In the same way, a relationship of adoption means our debts are cancelled, and we receive all that belongs to heirs of God.
4. **Justifying us.** ① Justification by faith has rightfully been emphasised as an important part of understanding salvation. It emphasises the complete forgiveness and right relationship we gain with God because of what Jesus did. It means ① we find ourselves before God in a place in which *it is as if we had never done anything to disobey Him*. A much-loved priest in the Philippines carried around the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years before. He had asked for forgiveness but still had no peace. In his parish was a woman who loved God and who claimed to be able to speak with Christ and He with her. The sceptical priest wanted to test her and said, “The next time you speak with Jesus, I want you to ask Him what sin I committed while I was in training college.” The woman agreed. A few days later they met and the priest asked her, “Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?” “Yes, he did,” she replied. “And did you ask him what sin I committed in college?” “Yes.” “And what did he say?” ① “He said, ‘I don’t remember.’” ① **God’s final judgement has already taken place on the cross.** ① **God restores us through grace.** God’s grace is not just a New Testament revelation – the Jewish people were never driven by works or effort - Judaism was always a religion of grace. Jewish people believed that they were saved because they had been chosen by God. Nevertheless, they were marked out by ways of life given to them by God and by signs of His relationship with Him – such as circumcision, or keeping certain food laws. The good news is that no one is excluded because they haven’t obeyed particular laws which act as ‘boundary-markers’. ① “...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2: 8-9) In the booklet we look again at what it means to “have enough faith” – a theme we cover in module 2.
5. What does the New Testament emphasise about who we are as human beings? (Becoming like Christ)
6. **Humans are renewed creations.** ① Just as God’s plan is to restore all things, He wants to restore us. We look at others, and ourselves, differently: “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ① Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5: 16-17) ① **A restored person becomes more like Christ.** In the New Testament, a fully human life is one in which “Christ is formed in you”. ① (Galatians 4:19) For disciples our baptism is a time when we died to our own way of living, and from now on live a new life – totally identifying with Christ, and living life as He would live it: ① “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4) **Our natural response to what God has done is to live differently.** ① Many of the letters unfold what God has done, and then pivot to challenge or invite Christians to live *in response to that*. Paul writes that those who hear “about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus” will ① “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”. (Ephesians 4: 22-24)
7. **Change** ① **comes as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit** The New Testament describes and explores how the world now lives in the age of God’s Spirit. The presence of God’s Holy Spirit in the world, the power that raised Jesus from

death and brings the reality of God's future promise into the present, is the source of any meaningful change in our lives. As we seek to become more like Christ, *the only path offered is in cooperation with God's Spirit.* ① Those "who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Romans 8:14) and while Christians seek to live to God's eternal standards, ① we cannot do it "by the flesh" (our own efforts) but by the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-13) ① **The Holy Spirit's work in restoring humanity to each other.** In Acts we see how at Pentecost God reverses the way humans are split off from each other in two amazing ways – He uses *all the languages* of those who are present to communicate – He affirms their differences – but He gives His Spirit to all of them – making them *one community* in Christ. The story of Acts describes this creation of a new family, as the Jewish followers of Jesus began to see and respond to how God was now calling all people. ① Through Christ God has broken down the wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) between different people groups..."in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ① There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28) The ultimate promise in the book of Revelation is of ① "...a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9-10)

## 8. What does the New Testament emphasise about our calling as human beings? (Joining in with the Spirit)

9. The New Testament describes how our calling as Jesus' body – His church – is to *join in with His work in the world* as we look in hope for God's Kingdom to come to earth in its fulness. ① **The purpose and life of the church** As we have seen in module 3, the church is called to be a "sign of God's reign and a foretaste of His rule" - who we are is as significant as what we do. The New Testament offers many images and descriptions to help us grasp this identity and task. **Who we are.** ① God's chosen and "holy" people – set apart by Him to continue His purposes in the world. ① "Dearly loved". (Colossians 3:12) ① God's "bride". (Revelation 21:2) Throughout the Bible God has called people into covenant relationship with Him. The "one flesh" of marriage is a picture of the deep covenant intimacy God wants with His people, (Ephesians 5:21-22) under Christ as the "head of the church". (Ephesians 1:22) Knowing ourselves to be loved and united in this way, we live as one body, the fulfilment of God's plan for a newly created humanity in which ① "each member belongs to the others" (Romans 12:5), a ① "family of believers" (Galatians 6:10), no longer strangers, separated by ethnicity or background, but ① "fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household". (Ephesians 2:19) The church becomes God's *temple and priesthood*. No longer is God's presence focussed in a particular building, but in Christ we "are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22) "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) In Christ we are ① "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:5,9) As such, we are living representatives of Christ in the world. ① "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5: 20)

10. **How we live.** ① The New Testament describes the life of the church as being distinctive in world-changing ways. As we have seen, the life of this new temple, creation and humanity is ① uniquely multi-ethnic, breaking down barriers and marked by love. The New Testament also describes how these early Christian churches live as ① salt and light within surrounding cultures. They have a calling to bring life to their wider communities, but challenge many of its values through their life together. Within a context in which Christians were supposed to obey Caesar as the highest authority, a continuing theme is how to ① live with integrity under a different Lord – Christ. By treating men and women, slaves and their owners, rich and poor as equals within God's people, Christians challenged the very structures of societies around them.

11. **What we do.** ① The New Testament describes in very practical terms what it looked like for God's people to be joining in with the Spirit, as they lived within the salvation of God's kingdom and sought to offer that salvation to others. They did so both through their *active witness* and a Spirit-empowered life which *put the message on display*, transformed *every part of life*, and was *energised by hope*. ① **Active witness.** ① "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) ① **The life of the community.** Acts gives us two pictures of the life of the church, meeting together daily in the temple. In other words, this new community is demonstrating what the Temple, as the place where heaven and earth meet, should be. Luke describes this young church as having three defining features, which act as a framework for a healthy church. (Acts 2: 42-47) ① *They were devoted to God, living out the practices that helped them to be with Him, and open to His presence.* ① *As Jesus' body on earth, they demonstrated the life of God's kingdom in their life together and in their individual lives.* The church is the prime example of what the future kingdom will look like – a 'film trailer' for the ultimate masterpiece of God's recreated world. ① *They experienced people being drawn into God's salvation through the visibility of their life together.* They were "enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The content booklet explores how this embraces *every part of life* and is *energised by hope*.

## 12. Reading it well: How do we apply the Bible well to the questions we wrestle with today?

- 13.**The New Testament reveals Christians working through issues and controversies together. While Christ is the fullest revelation of God we have, Paul writes that until the world and human beings are completely restored, ① we continue to “see through a glass darkly”. (1 Corinthians 13:12) We continue to live in a time of *progressive revelation*. When we approach difficult questions, ① four lenses (or ‘sources of God’s revelation’) have been developed through which we can seek to get as close as we can to a faithful Christian response. ① Three (Scripture, Reason, Tradition) were developed by Richard Hooker (1554–1600), a prominent Anglican priest, and a fourth ① (Experience) was added by John Wesley (1703-1791), who was responding to his sense of God’s Spirit at work in his life and speaking to him. ① These four sources of guidance work together, often overlapping to act as legs of a table, helping us discern in a balanced way.
- 14. Scripture: What does the Bible say?** ① For Christians the Bible is always the supreme source of authority, ① and the testing measure for everything else. A key principle in interpreting well is reflecting on whether issues are seen as ① first order (in other words, essential) or second order in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul begins the chapter by reminding them “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures....” In 434 AD Vincent of Lerins was asked a question: “What should every Christian believe for sure?” He replied: “*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est.*” ① That which has been believed everywhere, always and by all people. For centuries this has acted as a guide for first order parts of the Bible. *Questions to ask:* ① *Am I giving the Bible the full weight it needs?* ① *Am I aware of my own interpretations?* ① *What are first order and second order issues?*
- 15. Reason: What makes sense?** ① Hooker believed God had gifted us (as His partners in creation) with ① the ability to think and feel, and with conscience. Reason helps us to connect and analyse various ideas, concepts, and arguments. It can help us define and defend how we view Scripture, but also our traditions and even our experiences. ① Reason is not the opposite of faith – reason can be exercised with faith, and faith can be defended by reason. As Christians we are transformed by the “renewing of our minds”. (Romans 12:2) ① While faith might always go beyond reason, it never goes against it, and sound arguments can be made to explore and defend positions. Nevertheless, we will always be aware that no one person can be completely objective. *Questions to ask:* ① *Do I see my ability to think as a gift as I interpret the Bible and listen to others?* ① *Am I humble about my own brokenness as I consider this question?*
- 16. Tradition: What have voices before us said?** ① Each generation of Christians does not come from nowhere, but we have inherited wisdom from those who have gone before as they have sought to apply the Bible. They have developed principles of interpreting Scripture well and living it out. ① God has been active in the lives of those who have passed on their living tradition to us. ① These voices have an important, but secondary role. ① The Church of England has historically drawn on the thinking of the early church ‘fathers and mothers’ yet always sees ① these teachings as being useful only as much as they are “agreeable to the...scriptures” (Canon A5). *Questions to ask:* ① *What voices and wisdom do I need to pay attention to?*
- 17. Experience: ① How have I and others sensed God’s direct action?** ① God is always at work in all His creation, and in our daily lives, and therefore we expect Him to be revealing Himself in new ways. Wesley believed it was only when we experienced something personally that we could have true confidence in our understanding. We can be suspicious of experience because it is *subjective*. ① At best it can only *reinforce* our opinion, rather than *inform* it. In addition, in making decisions, the experience of others can enable us to pay attention to perspectives we would be otherwise unable to understand or consider, particularly those who have been marginalised. In making good decisions, a final principle is that ① it is in the context of a Spirit-led community – in which we are open to the Holy Spirit, learn from each other, and read Scripture together, that the peace of God to guide us will most likely be found. *Questions to ask:* ① *Am I open to God speaking to me today in this question? How am I listening to the experiences of those who can help me understand better?* ① *Where is God at work in the world?*
- 18. Practical suggestions: How do we read the Bible well together?**
- 19.**One of the features of ① New Testament letters is that they were mostly written, and intended to be read, by groups of people – they are community documents. If we lack confidence because we don’t know where to start, or feel we are not clever enough to understand, we can be reassured by knowing that the Bible is intended to be for everyone – and that the best way of approaching it is always with others. ① In addition, being able to lead a Bible study does not need to be the task of experts. Any Christian should be able to do this with others.
- 20.**In recent years the ① Discovery Bible Study method has led to significant growth in the church around the world, and offers us a way of reading the Bible with anybody. It is a method that ① emphasises discovery, not teaching, and is particularly aimed at empowering people who may not have read the Bible before to be able to start. ① Discovering truth is far more powerful than being told it. The process allows the Holy Spirit to be the teacher rather than a person, helping to ① avoid over-dependence on a gifted individual. ① Crucially, it helps us not only to understand what the Bible says but also (as in so many New Testament letters) to respond in our own lives, putting into practice what we feel God is showing us. This is why it helps us grow as disciples. As we finish the ‘Way of Discipleship’, Discovery Bible Study gives us a way of discipling others which any Christian can use.