

## **Discipleship – Spring 2012 – Week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> February**

### **Home group / study notes: Baptism**

*Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. I'm suggesting you try singing this week if you don't usually do so! CD available with notes.*

Do you remember your baptism or confirmation? **Share** any experiences you have. Or perhaps you had a conversion point you can remember, or some event or events which moved you on significantly in your faith?

Why do we baptise people? **Read Matthew 28:19**

The 25th 'Article of Religion' of the Anglican church states:

*'Sacraments ordained of Christ [Baptism and Holy Communion] be not only badges or tokens of Christian profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly within us...'*

The Reformed 'Westminster Confession' says something very similar:

*The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.*

The word 'grace' occurs here. The Greek word *χαρις* ('charis' - grace) is closely related to *χαρισμα* ('charisma' - gift), and also to *χαίρω* (rejoice – remember the study on 'joy' a few weeks ago?).

What does the grace of God mean to you? Does it help to compare it with the opposite, disgrace?

**Read Rom 5:1-8 and 17.** Notice how all the action is God's – we are totally on the receiving end. Our response? **Read 1 Peter 4:7-11.**

Baptism is all about receiving God's grace in faith.

**Prayer:** where do you need especially to receive God's grace at the moment? For yourself? For others? Where could you 'dispense God's grace' (1 Peter 4) this week? If it looks as though this could be costly, ask to be prayed for.

**Worship time:** does your group ever *sing??* Why not sing along with St James', using the first two tracks of the CD attached, recorded in church on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb? Words overleaf. (*Bonus tracks included...*)

**Extra Bible passages** for those who wish to use them, from the NT letters:

Look up: Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 2:11-13; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 1 Cor 10:1-4 These all speak of the association with God's *covenant* promises in the OT, and continuity through baptism in the NT. What was once dependent on being a particular people (Israel) and on keeping the law, is now free to receive under the new covenant by the church through grace.

Here are the remaining five references to baptism in the letters: Romans 6:3-4; 1 Cor 1:13-17; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Cor 15:29 (*what on earth was going on?*); Ephesians 4:3-5

Wonderful grace that gives what I don't deserve,  
pays me what Christ has earned, then lets me go free.  
Wonderful grace that gives me the time to change,  
washes away the stains that once covered me.  
*And all that I have I lay at the feet  
of the wonderful Saviour who loves me.*

Wonderful love that held in the face of death,  
breathed in its latest breath forgiveness for me.  
Wonderful love, whose pow'r can break every chain,  
giving us life again and setting us free  
*And all that I have...*

I stand amazed in the presence  
of Jesus the Nazarene,  
and wonder how he could love me,  
a sinner condemned, unclean.  
*How marvellous! How wonderful!  
and my song shall ever be:  
How marvellous! How wonderful!  
is my Saviour's love for me.*

He took my sins and my sorrows,  
he made them his very own.  
he bore the burden to Calvary  
and suffered and died, alone.  
*How marvellous!...*

When with the ransomed in glory  
his face I at last shall see,  
'twill be my joy through the ages  
to sing of his love for me.  
*How marvellous!...*