

rockypc SERIES COMPANION 2024



ONE STEP CLOSER

Mark's Gospel

WEEKS 10-15

*growing
disciples*
sacrifice. serve. speak



ONE STEP CLOSER

AN INTRODUCTION TO MARK'S GOSPEL¹

Jesus is the man of action, moving quickly and decisively from one event to the next. From the opening sentence, Mark's Gospel is packed full of action. It begins with God's interruption of history (1v1) and ends with a declaration that changes lives (15v39). But this book is not ancient history that belongs in a museum, Mark places all his readers in the story, recording for us the fast-paced movement of Jesus' ministry. In town after town, and story after story Mark shows us Jesus, the Son of God who's come to change the world.

The narrative moves quickly—the word 'immediately' appears 41 times in this the shortest and earliest gospel account, moving the action forwards with conflict arising quickly.² The people Jesus interacts with can't understand how He will bring all God's promises to bear as one who came to suffer, die and rise again.³

Mark shows us Jesus doing, more than Jesus teaching (in comparison with the other Gospel stories which include longer teaching sections), but the teaching is always there. What Jesus says is the climax to the story. Time and again, through his actions and his words, Jesus draws us towards himself because of his deep compassion for people in great need. Jesus shows what love is and the story moves unerringly towards the moment on calvary where Jesus dies on a cross, bearing God's wrath, so that God might pour out his love on all who would draw near to Jesus in faith.

Mark's Gospel story about Jesus focuses on the action. Our response to Jesus therefore, can't be passive, but, like his ministry, must be deliberate and decisive. He invites us, in each episode, to step closer to him — to know him, to see what he is like, to experience his compassion in our own lives, to be confident in his strength.

This year, we're taking a slow walk through Mark's Gospel. Taking one step at a time towards the cross. It's our hope that you'll find Jesus worthy of your greatest attention: unpredictable but reliable, gentle but powerful, authoritative but humble, human and divine. We urge you to consider the significance of his life for your own life, day-to-day, and invite you to take ONE STEP CLOSER each day.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT READING THE GOSPELS — MARK IN COMPARISON WITH MATTHEW, LUKE & JOHN

We want to recognise that each of the Gospels tell the same overall story, and include very similar, smaller episodes in that story. It can be tempting then to read MARK in constant comparison with the other Gospels. However, it's important to realise that each Gospel writer is telling the story from their own perspective, with their own specific purpose behind what they include (or choose to leave out). Often this relates to the specific audience they're addressing. That's why we have four Gospels, and not one!

During this series, try to resist the temptation to look at the other Gospels to compare narratives (certainly not as the first thing you do). Instead, try to read Mark's Gospel on its own terms. Try to see how the details included by Mark fit together to form a compelling picture about who Jesus is, and how Jesus' identity is tied to his life-giving death on a cross.

¹ 'Gospel' means at its simplest 'good news'. It is a proclamation that things have changed for the better. Typically in the ancient world it was a word used to announce victory in battle. In the Bible, it proclaims the good news of the arrival of God's Promised King, heralded by the coming of His Promised King, Messiah Jesus. When used of the first four books in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John), we are referring to the good news story about Jesus according to that author.

² The Greek word translated 'immediately' is εὐθὺς. In the New International Version, it is also translated with words like 'at once' or 'without delay'.

³ Mark's Gospel is presented in two acts. Act One identifies Jesus as God's promised Messianic King (ch1-8), whose purpose in coming, revealed in Act Two, was to give his life by dying on a cross as a ransom for many (ch9-16).

SO, WHO WAS MARK?

The earliest and most reliable information about Mark comes from Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis until 139AD. Papias said that John Mark was a secretary and writer for the apostle Peter. Interestingly, Mark mentions Peter more than any of the other gospel writers. As you read through Mark, you'll see almost nothing happens where Peter is not present. The entire account then, is almost certainly the eyewitness testimony of Peter.

The book itself turns on Peter's confession:

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.

On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Mark 8v27-31

The events of Mark's gospel take place around Palestine, an area from Caesarea Philippi in the North to Beersheba in the South. During Jesus' ministry this region was ruled by the Roman Empire during the reign of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarchs, Antipas and Philip.

The Gospel stories are certainly intended to speak to everyone, but as mentioned above, each Gospel author has a specific purpose for what they included, often targeted towards a specific audience of people with specific needs.

Mark's Gospel seems to be especially focused on Roman Gentiles, making sure he explains things from the Jewish/Hebrew culture that wouldn't otherwise make sense. So, it's significant that from the turning point of Peter's confession about Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the story moves rapidly to its conclusion where a Roman centurion looks up at Jesus on the cross:

And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 15v39

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES COMPANION

ON YOUR OWN—Take your time reading through each of the passages and consider where you are up to in Mark's Story. Ask where Jesus is currently located, find it on the map, and consider whether this is significant.

ON SUNDAY—Make sure you bring your SERIES COMPANION along with you, so that you can keep track of any questions you have and record the way that God's Spirit is helping you to understand His Word and grow in your love for Jesus.

WITH YOUR GROWTH GROUP—This term in GROWTH GROUPS we are taking a break from our usual pattern of following the BIBLE TALK SERIES. Instead, we are considering what it means to be a COMMUNITY that CARES for each other. You'll find the GROWTH GROUP STUDIES called LEARNING TO LOVE later in the SERIES COMPANION.

These series companions are designed to be used as either a print version, or interactively on a device. Use whichever method is most helpful for you.





ISN'T THIS A CARPENTER?

MARK 6v1-29

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:



BREAD AND FISH

MARK 6v30-44

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:



IT IS I

MARK 6v45-56

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:



OUT OF A HEART

MARK 7v1-23

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:



THE DEAF HEAR, THE MUTE SPEAK

MARK 7v24-37

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:



THE BREAD AND THE YEAST

MARK 8v1-21

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

LEARNING TO LOVE

a culture of care at **rockypc**



*growing
disciples*

sacrifice. serve. speak

LEARNING TO LOVE

a culture of care at rockypc



CHRISTIAN CARE

At rockypc, one of our CORE VALUES is COMMUNITY. As we put our faith in Jesus, we're joined to him and to one another (Philippians 2v1-2). Being united together means loving each other through life's griefs, pains and trials (Romans 12v9-16).

As disciples of Jesus, we care for one another in a unique way. Our goal is not just to help others thrive or even just cope in times of suffering. We want to provide specifically *CHRISTIAN* care. Our aim is to help one another grow in dependence on Jesus and in Christ-like character, as God's compassion and comfort overflow.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1v3-4

EVERYONE CARES

It's everyone's responsibility to care for each other (1Peter 1v22). We all have needs and times of suffering, but we also all have gifts and resources to share (1 Corinthians 12v4-13; 2 Corinthians 9v6-11).

Our GROWTH GROUPS are a key way that we are loved and learn to love others. These are a smaller group of brothers and sisters that we can commit to knowing and caring for, as well as to being open to share our own needs with them.

So this term, our GROWTH GROUPS are going to spend 6 weeks looking at the part we can all play in caring.

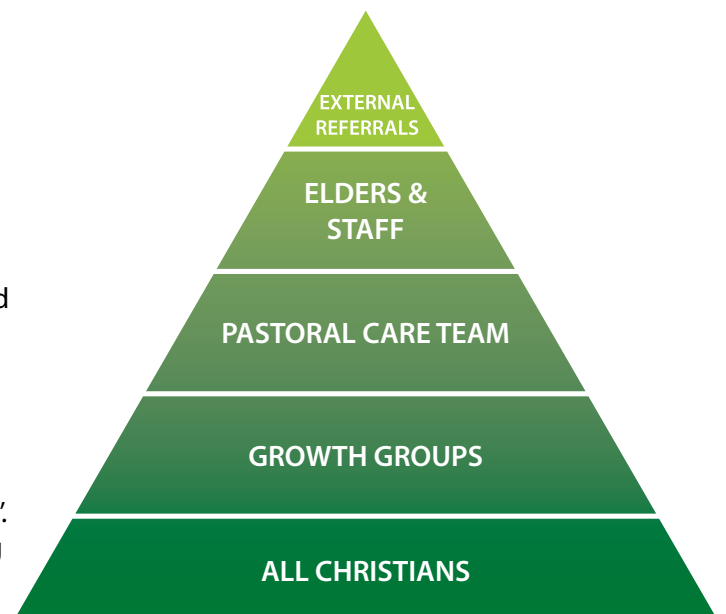
Our goal is to better equip you for this task. For example, this might mean you can develop your self-awareness in relationships; grow in confidence to reach out to others; better understand what you're aiming to do as you care; or have more tools at hand as you seek to love others.

EXTRA CARE

While it's everyone's task to care for one another, particularly in GROWTH GROUPS, there are times when the needs will be greater or more complex than our groups can meet. We've developed this diagram to show how caring can happen at multiple levels, as it's escalated to our PASTORAL CARE TEAM, or ELDERS & STAFF, or outside professional help. This will be explained further in Week 2.

WHAT TO EXPECT

We are using material that we have adapted from an online course developed by Christ Church St Ives Anglican Church in Sydney, called 'Care Ministry Training'. We're grateful for their generosity in sharing this training material with us.



Each week there will be a combination of training videos, interviews, Bible study, discussion, reflection questions and time to practice. You will be able to prepare each week by looking at the Bible passages and the related questions beforehand.

OVERVIEW

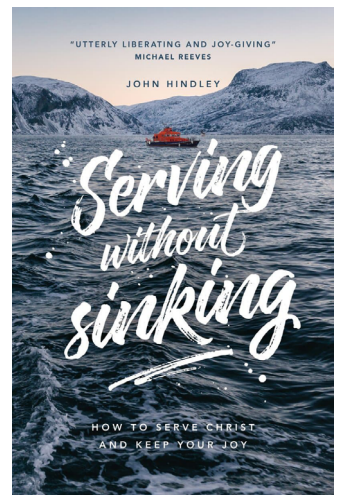
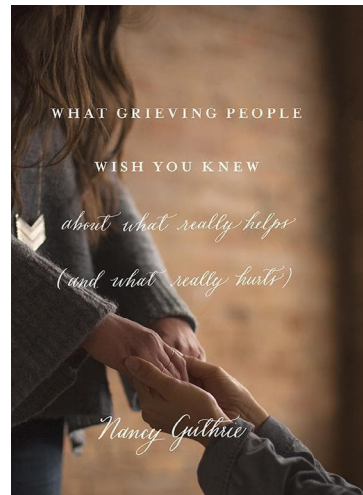
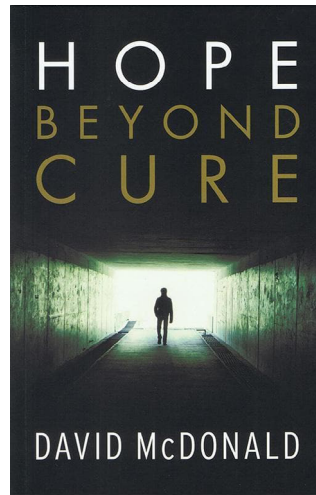
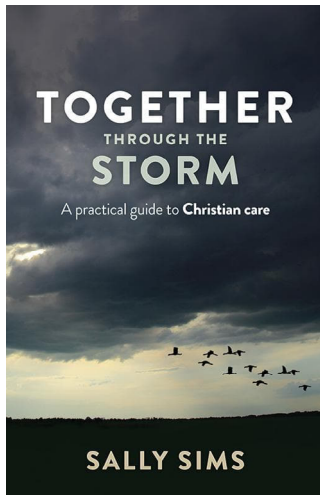
1. What is Christian Care?
2. Church as a Caring Community
3. How can I Listen More Effectively?
4. How do I Respond with Empathy, and Bring Prayer and Gospel Hope?
5. How do I Care for Someone Experiencing Loss and Grief?
6. How Can I Care for Others Safely and Serve Without Sinking?

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

You may find that looking at this topic of caring brings up personal issues for you. For example, your experience of loss and grief, or of not being well-cared-for in times of suffering. When you find this happening, it's an opportunity to practice what we're learning. Please speak up and share with your group about what is happening for you. Use awareness and sensitivity to notice when others seem affected. Practice your listening and caring skills to look after each other. And don't forget to depend on our Heavenly Father as you pray for one another.

FURTHER RESOURCES

If you would like to further think through the topic of Christian care, some good resources are below:



*growing
disciples*
sacrifice. serve. speak


GETTING STARTED

In pairs, reflect on a difficult time you've had recently that you've shared with someone. Think about how they responded.

What did they do?

How did it make you feel?

What was helpful, and not so helpful about the experience?

 **WATCH** *Introduction to the Training Course* — 3 min

 **WATCH** *1.1 What is Christian care?* — 8 min

READ JOHN 5v1-15

1. Why does this man need help? How does Jesus help him?

2. What do you think is something worse than 38 years of paralysis? v14

READ JOHN 3v16-18

3. How does Jesus save us from 'something worse'?

4. What difference do you think this makes to how we view suffering in our lives?

READ 1 PETER 1v3-9

- 5. We may never understand the full picture of why we suffer. But what can we know about God's purposes in hard and dark times?


- 6. How might suffering help us long for our true home?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are **DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY** together.

Can you think of times God has used suffering/trials to refine you? Or to make you long for heaven?



 If you have time, **WATCH 1.4 Principles for caring well for others - interview with Pip Russell** — 10 min (optional)

NOTES

What are the attributes of someone who provides effective Christian care?

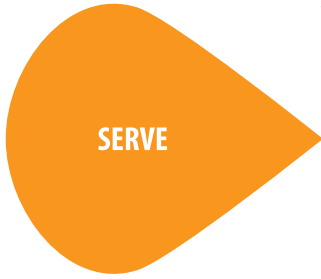
What do they know?

What do they feel?

What do they do?



What is a next step for you, given what we've learned today?



PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus came to save us from something worse than our current suffering. Praise Jesus for taking our sin and condemnation, so that we would not perish. Thank him for granting us eternal life with our loving Father.
- Pray that we would see how God uses our suffering to refine us. Ask that God would be at work in our pain and grief to grow us in faith and hope, all to his glory. Pray that in trials we would long for the inheritance he has kept in heaven for us.
- As we think more about caring this term, ask God that we'd grow in compassion, kindness and warmth for one another.

GETTING STARTED

Set a timer for 1 min. Write down the ways that other Christians have cared for you, as many as you can think of. Compare answers within the group — how many did you come up with?



WATCH 2.1 *Who is responsible for care at Church?* — 6 min

NOTES

1. Read **JOHN 13v1-17** along with Sally.
What does Jesus *KNOW* in this passage? v1, 2, 11

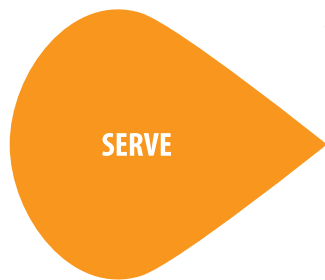
2. What does Jesus *DO* with this knowledge and power? What does this show about him?

3. How does this act of service show what's really going on? v1,10

4. How should we respond to the service of our teacher and Lord?

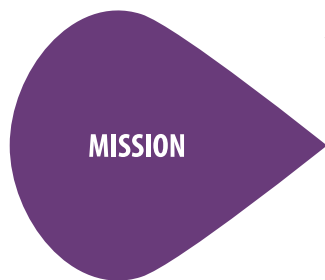
growing disciples

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What situations do you find hard to serve in? What makes you want to recoil?
What do you need to know, in these moments?

READ JOHN 13v34-35

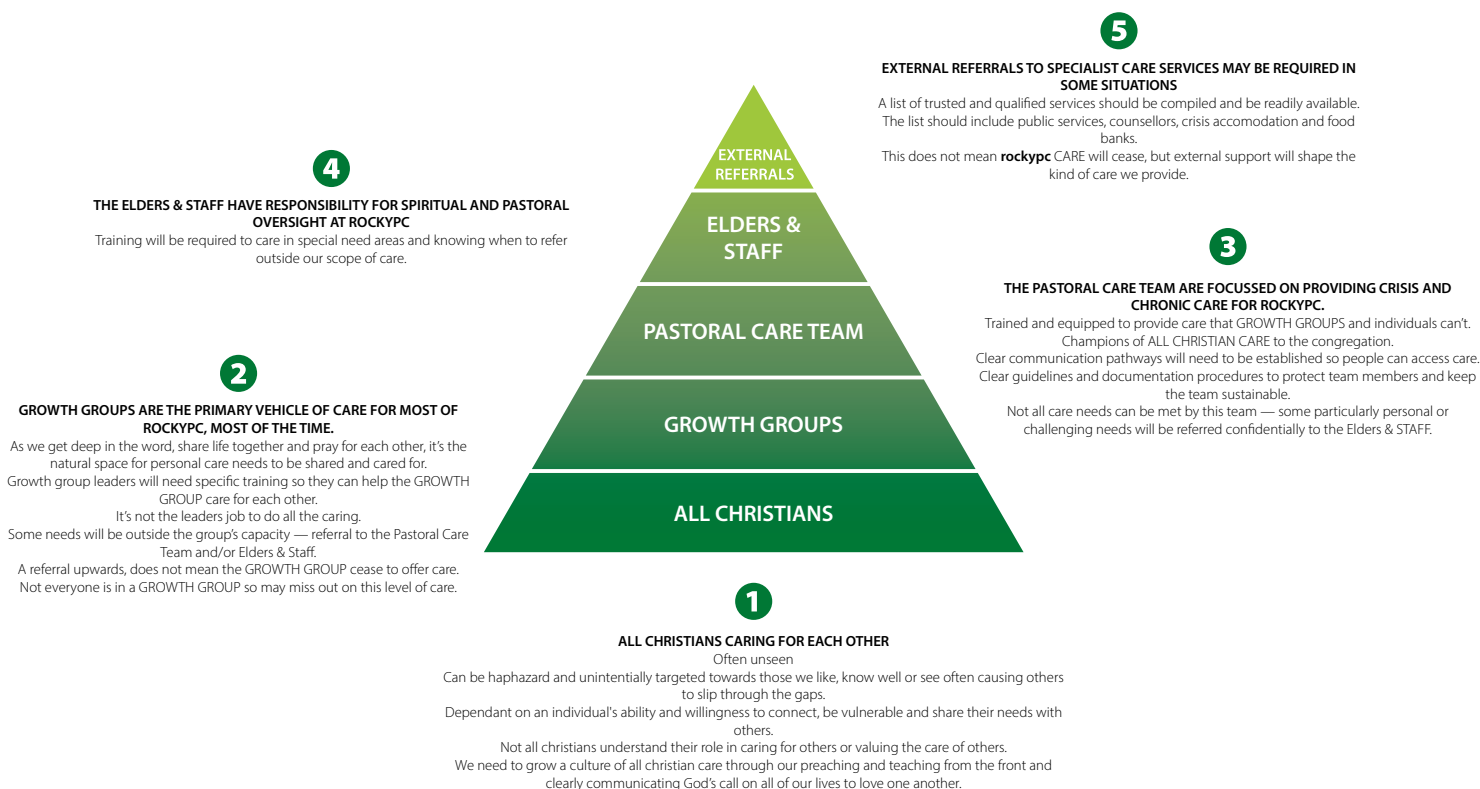


How can following Jesus' example stretch out beyond our **rockypc** COMMUNITY?
When have you seen this in action?

WATCH 2.3 Who cares at Christ Church? - a talk by Nigel Fortescue — 8 min

*NB: Nigel will talk about where to go for support at Christ Church and there will be a pyramid diagram to show what it looks like at their church. At that point, please refer to the diagram below, to see how we looking to capture a similar structure at **rockypc**.*

LAYERS OF CARE @ ROCKYPC



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▶ If you have time, **WATCH 2.4 Care Ministry team member - interview with Janet Curren** — 11 min (optional)

NOTES

5. In summary, whose responsibility is it to provide Christian care at **rockypc**?



How are you currently caring for others? How can you grow in doing this?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus used all his knowledge and power, as the Son of God, to become a servant. That he bore our guilt and shame at the cross, so that we might be washed clean. Thank him for stooping so low to serve us in love.
- Ask forgiveness for when we've thought we're better than our master. Confess when we've been reluctant or refused to serve when it was hard, messy or costly.
- Pray that Jesus' love would transform us. That our love for him would grow and overflow to one another. Pray that we'd serve humbly, patiently and sacrificially.
- Pray that our CITY might see Jesus' love reflected in our **rockypc** COMMUNITY. Pray that the way we love each other would draw others in to know Jesus.
- Pray that we would all be responsible for caring for each other, each with a role to play, especially as a GROWTH GROUP. Pray that we would know our own limits and work together to care, especially in complex and sensitive situations.

GETTING STARTED

Do you ever think it's your fault when you get sick?

Today, we're going to think through the relationship between sin and sickness. And then we'll explore how to become better listeners.

READ JOHN 9v1-7, 34-38

1. According to the Pharisees, whose fault is it that this man was blind from birth? v 34

2. According to Jesus, whose fault is it that this man was blind from birth? v3

3. How is the man's disability healed?

4. How is the man's sin healed? (see also John 5v24-27)

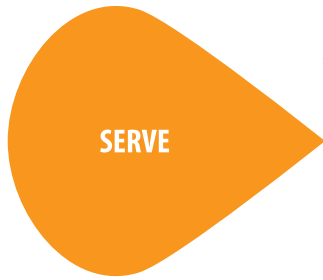
READ PHILIPPIANS 1v27-2v2

5. How does God treat us in our suffering?

6. How do we treat each other?

growing disciples

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Have you ever been tempted to blame or look down on someone for their sickness?
What would you say to someone who expects God to heal them in every situation?

Pause now to pray.

PRAYER IDEAS

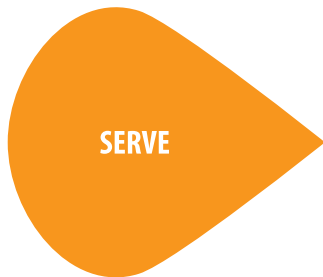
- Praise God that Jesus gives us life when we believe in his name.
- Ask his help not to unfairly blame ourselves or others for our sicknesses.
- Pray that God's comfort and compassion would enable us to endure sickness and suffering. And ask that we'd comfort and encourage one another.

 **WATCH 3.1** *How can I listen more effectively* — 3 min


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 **WATCH 3.3** *How NOT to listen!* — 2 min

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Does listening come naturally to you? What traps do you fall into as a listener?

 **WATCH 3.4** *The art of effective listening* — 9 min

NOTES

If you have time:

Break into groups of 2 or 3. One person takes 5 minutes to relate a story that happened to them this week. It could be a good or bad event. It can be as heavy or as light a story as you'd like. The other person practices listening well. If there's a 3rd person, they can notice what tools the listener is using (or not using!).

Allow 2-3 minutes to give the following feedback:

For the speaker: What was a good question or action used by the listener that helped you to feel listened to? Was there something unhelpful?

For the listener: What do you think you need to work on, to improve your listening?

For the observer: What did you notice in the interaction?


Leave some time to finish with prayer.

PRAYER IDEAS

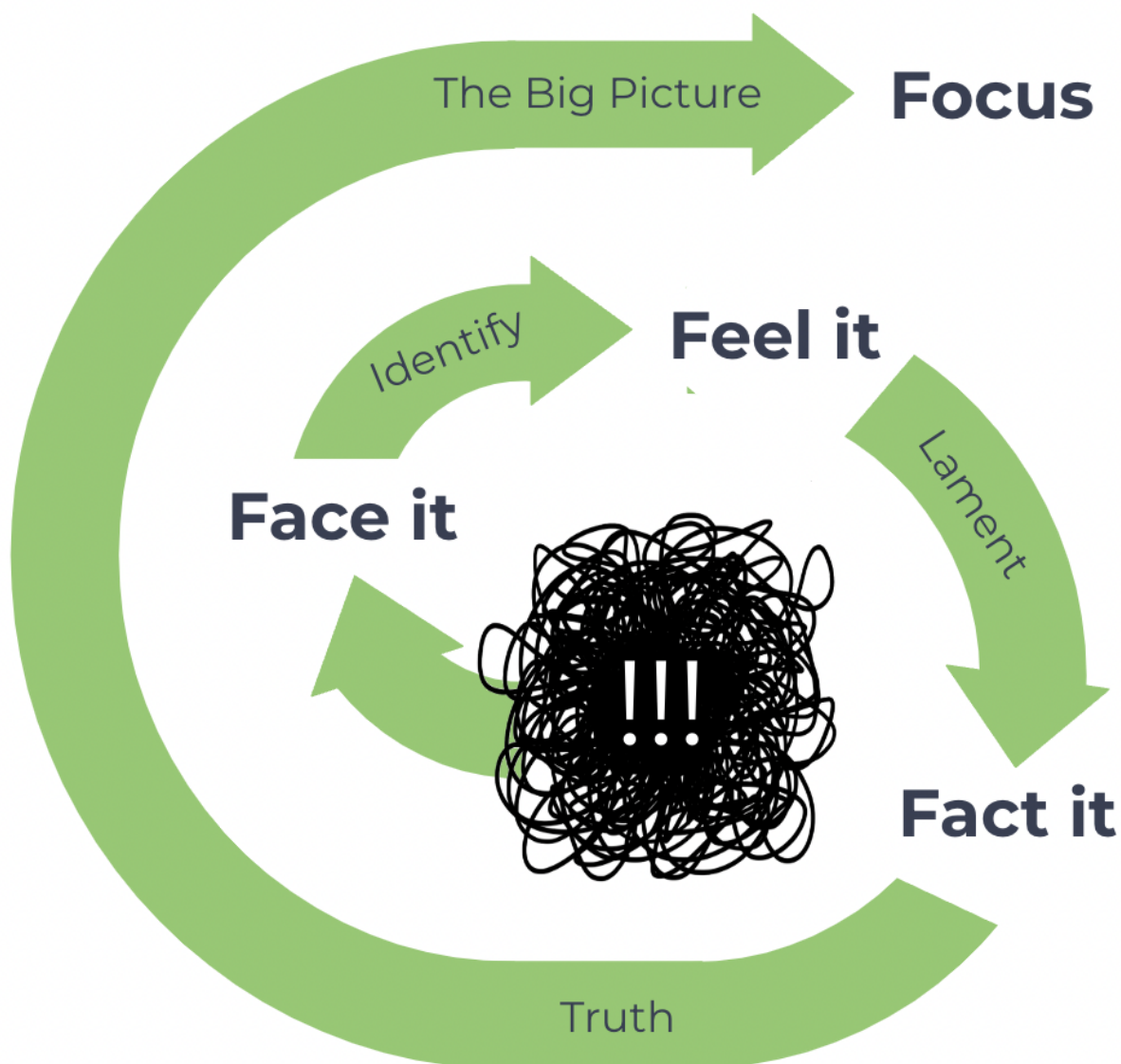
- Praise God that he loves to listen to us, that we can always cry out to him.
- Pray that we'd become better listeners, so that we can really hear and understand one another.
- Pray for the person who shared in the final exercise.

GETTING STARTED

From your own experience of anxiety, or from what you've observed in others, what does anxiety do to us? (Think about the body, the mind, relationships etc)

 **WATCH 4.1** How do I respond with empathy, and bring prayer and gospel hope? — 7 min

NOTES



Our painful and uncomfortable emotions can affect us in profound ways — in how we see ourselves, our relationships, decisions, actions and more. But we often pay little attention to them and develop lots of strategies to ignore, avoid, suppress, or project the feelings onto others. When we are faced with the hurting emotions of other people as we care for them, we can be tempted to make people feel better or bombard them with gospel truth so that they stop feeling that way. These strategies are driven by our own discomfort, rather than the needs of the other person.

However, this diagram represents a more healthy way to approach our own emotions, or those of others.

1. **FACE IT** Identify it

We usually avoid what is painful. We push it away, put a bible verse on it, tell ourselves everything is fine, others have it worse, laugh it off, anything to pretend it is not there. None of this helps.

Counter-intuitively what we need to do is stop and face it. Meaning, we need to make ourselves think about what is painful and feel it.

What is the actual pain we are feeling? Identify it. Think primary emotions

(learn more <https://therapyinanutshell.com/primary-vs-secondary-emotions/>)

Think, 'What message am I hearing?' Whether or not the message was actually being said is not the point .

2. **FEEL IT** Lament.

Pain has energy. And while it has energy, it will make its presence felt. Often in unexpected ways and unhelpful times. We need to pay attention to the pain and give it time — We need to feel the pain we were avoiding.

We need to allow ourselves to feel it, and respond to the pain as is appropriate to what the pain is. Really experience and lament the big feelings, through tears, physical actions or journaling.

Until we do this we will not be able to neutralise the energy from the painful feeling.

3. **FACT IT** Recall what is true

Our pain is not the whole truth. There comes a time where other truths can be brought to bear, to create a more realistic perspective.

If we go here too quickly, we will not find the peace or healing we are looking for. But if we have done steps 1 *and* 2, then it is time to bring in other truths — or get help to bring another perspective to how we see and feel things.

Sometimes we think we are done, but then the painful feelings surface again. We may need to repeat these steps a few times.

4. **FOCUS A** Gospel Perspective

There comes a time when we just need to move on. The moving on that heals us most is when we focus on the work of serving Jesus, growing disciples, serving in love, having the perspective of heaven and hell.

As we do this it can be hard to begin with, like we are moving through mud. We move forward in faith and over time we find we forget ourselves and are serving with a joy and fulfillment that we were not expecting.

This can be a really helpful process to follow yourself, but it is also important to give others the space and permission to do this, as you care for them. For example, you can sit with others in their tears of grief and hear their raw cries rather than too quickly reminding them that their loved one is now with Jesus in Paradise.

CASE STUDY

Grace: Hello Frances. How are you? We missed you over the holiday break, were you away?

Frances: Hi Grace! Nice to see you too. Yes - we were visiting my parents in Melbourne. It was such a happy time! But now, Craig has raced back to work, and he's working all hours. The kids are back at school and it's awfully quiet at home...

Grace: Sounds great! There's barely any down-time at our place with all the kids activities, and the builders started this week. I wouldn't mind some quiet!

1. How might Frances be feeling?

2. How could Grace have responded differently, if she had been listening attentively?

READ PHILIPPIANS 4v1-9

The Philippian Christians had lots of reasons to be anxious. For example, Paul, who founded their church was in prison for preaching the gospel (1v13), while others are preaching the gospel to stir up trouble for him (1v15). There are false teachers prowling (3v2). Meanwhile, Epaphroditus, who preached alongside Paul, was ill and almost died (2v30). And there are internal conflicts among church leaders (4v2-3).

3. What reasons do we have to always rejoice in the Lord, even through anxiety? (see also 1v3-6, 2v5-11)

4. What are two ways that the 'Lord is near'? (see 3v7-11, 3v20)

5. Why do you think prayer is the thing Paul says to do when we're anxious?

6. How should we pray when we're anxious?

7. How might God's peace guard us, like a Roman sentinel? (see also 1v2, 3v1, 4v9)

8. What difference can it make to hold onto the truth of the gospel, in times of anxiety? (4v8-9)

growing disciples

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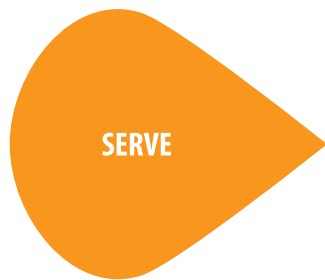


Spend a minute by yourself thinking about the things that are making you anxious at the moment.


How can you rejoice in the Lord?

How can you be more deliberate to pray?

What truths of the gospel do you need to hold on to?




How can Paul's words to the Philippians help you when you're talking with someone who is anxious?

 **WATCH** *Reading the Bible with those who are hurting — interview with Caroline Litchfield — 8 min*

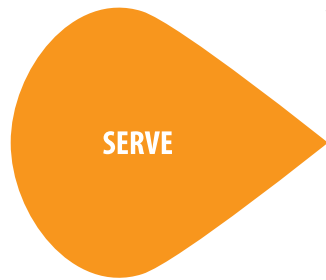
NOTES

9. What stood out to you about why or how to read the Bible with others?

 **WATCH** *Tips for praying with people who are hurting — Ian Porter and James Macbeth — 5 min*

NOTES

10. What stood out to you about why or how to pray with others?



What is a next step for you, given what we've learned today?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Rejoice in the Lord's goodness to us always. Praise him that Jesus didn't use his equality with God to his own advantage, but he made himself nothing, dying a shameful death as a criminal to bring us God's grace and mercy. Rejoice that Jesus is raised to the highest place as Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.
- Praise God that the Lord Jesus is near, that we can know treasure in him as we look forward to his return.
- Confess when you've been slow to pray. And ask that in times of anxiety, we would be thankful and pray.
- Pray that we'd hold onto the truths of the gospel, putting them into practice.
- Pray that God's peace would guard us, so that we might know his love and show his love to others.
- Pray that we would be able to show empathy to others, and sit with them in their distress. Ask for wisdom to share God's word sensitively and to pray with one another, because he is the one we depend on.

GETTING STARTED

Have you noticed a difference between Christian and non-Christian funerals that you've been to?

What did you see and hear at the funerals of non-believers?

What do you think that reveals about our society's attitudes to loss and grief?



WATCH 5.1 *How do I care for someone who is experiencing loss and grief?* — 4 min

NOTES



WATCH 5.3 *Understanding loss and grief* — 8 min

NOTES

Spend a couple of minutes reflecting on these questions for yourself. Think about the two most significant griefs in your life.

1. What was helpful to you during these times?

2. What was not so helpful?

3. What have you learned about God through these experiences?

READ MATTHEW 26v36-46

4. How is Jesus suffering in the moments before he was arrested?

5. What were his attitudes and actions as he suffered?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1v3-7

6. How is God described here?

7. How are our sufferings and Christ's related?

8. How does God use our suffering for the sake of others?

Sometimes we say to those who are grieving things like 'God won't give you more than you can handle'. This is an attempt to comfort the other person. But it is a misapplication of 1 Corinthians 10v13 where we're told to flee idolatry and trust our faithful God who provides a way out of testing/temptation. Telling someone that God won't give them more than they can handle focuses the person on themselves, rather than on God. It sets up an expectation that they should get a grip and get on with life. It's also in direct contrast with Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Paul's in the riots of Ephesus (see Acts 19).

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1v8-11

9. How did this experience drive Paul towards God and towards others?

 **WATCH 5.6** *Guiding principles for helping an individual who is grieving* — 9 min

NOTES

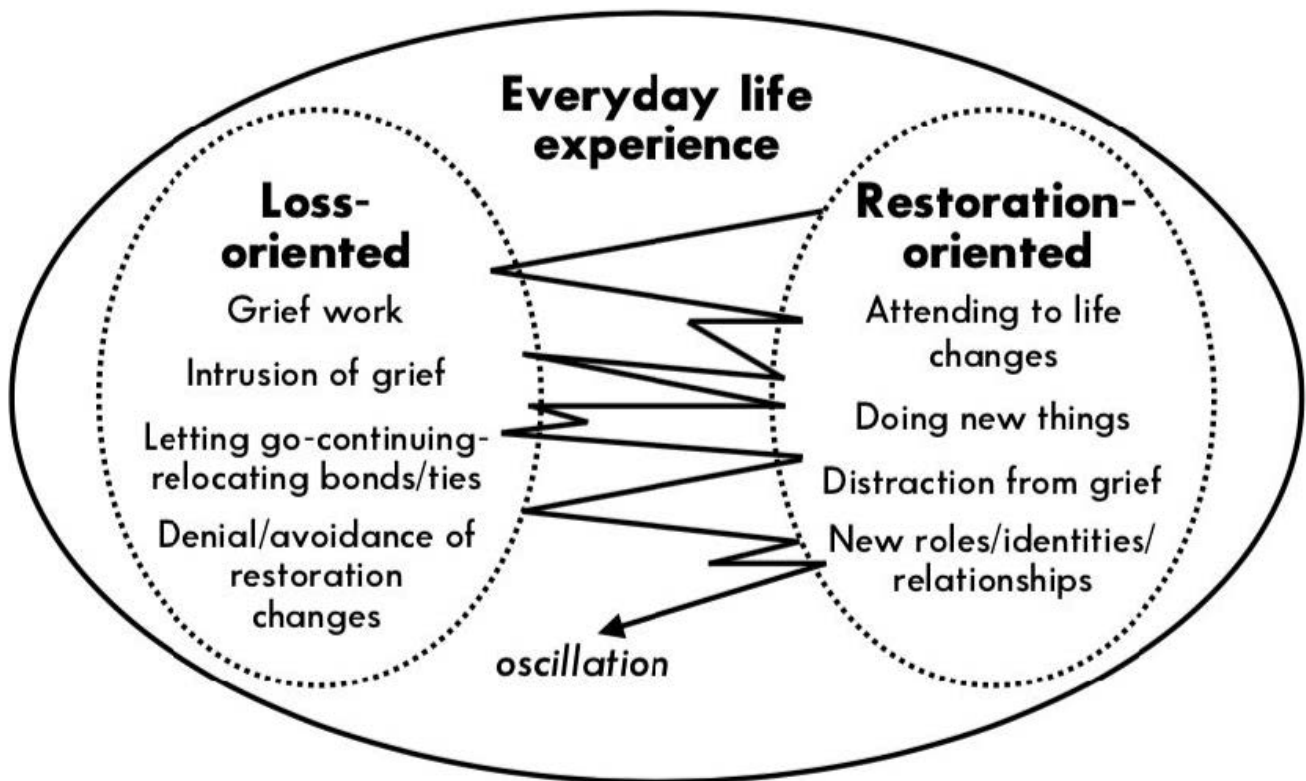
PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God as the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. Praise him that his comfort abounds in all our troubles. Praise him as our Saviour and firm hope. Ask that he would produce patient endurance in us. Ask that our loss and grief would drive us to rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.
- Thank God that his comfort overflows from us to others. Pray that we would stand with others in despair. Ask God's help to pray for others and thank him that he delivers over and over again.
- Pray for sensitivity, wisdom and insight when we're caring for someone who is grieving. Ask that we'd listen well, cry together and help them remember their loved one.

EXTRA READING ON GRIEF THEORIES

Over the last 40 years or so, a number of theories have been developed to describe the grieving process. The following two theories have been found to be particularly helpful when caring for those who are grieving:

1. **Stroebe and Schut's (1995) Dual Process Model**



Stroebe, M.S. & Schut, H.A.W. (1999). *The Dual Process Model of coping with bereavement - Rationale and description*. *Death Studies*, 23 (3), 197-224

<https://www.uu.nl/staff/msstroebe>

Stroebe and Schut describe how the grieving person oscillates or jumps back and forth between two different ways of coping; loss-orientated and restoration-orientated behaviour. We cry, think about how much we miss our loved one or recall a particular memory, and then we switch to a restoration-focussed activity such as making a shopping list.

2. **WILLIAM WORDEN'S (1983) TASKS OF MOURNING**

According to William Worden the process of adapting to the new normal involves four tasks – the tasks of mourning – which can be approached at any time, in any order, and may need to be revisited:

- I. To accept the reality of the loss. This may take weeks or months.
- II. To experience and express the pain of the loss. Working through the painful feelings of grief is essential for healthy grieving and involves staying with the feelings, acknowledging and expressing them until they begin to lessen in intensity. It's not uncommon for those who suppress their feelings to experience depression at a later date.
- III. To adjust to the world without the loved one. There are many personal adjustments to be made and we may also have spiritual adjustments to make. Sometimes the God we thought we knew, turns out to be different in the face of suffering. More often than not he turns out to be better, but we can have all kinds of questions in our grief.
- IV. To reinvest in the new reality. There's a shift from focusing on the death of the loved one, to focusing on the memory of them and investing in the new normal. There may also be recognition that growth has occurred. Grief isn't meaningless; grieving is the healing process God has given us to adapt to loss, and it is one of the life experiences God uses to sanctify us. Loss provides an opportunity for spiritual growth; to trust God more, to rest in his grace and to put our hope in Jesus and to anticipate the life to come. Life takes on a deeper meaning because of loss and grief, and reminds us that we are not in control and that sooner or later we will all die.

What have you found discouraging in caring for others? What has been draining for you?

READ LUKE 10v38-42

1. What has Martha got wrong? What has Mary God right?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

How can the story of Mary and Martha help us think about our own care ministry?

What actions do you need to take, or habits do you need to form, as a result?



READ 1 CORINTHIANS 4v11-17

2. What did Paul go through, so that he might share the gospel and care for the Corinthian Christians?

3. Can we expect caring to be easy? Why/why not?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 4v6-13

4. Paul is in prison for sharing the gospel and knows he will die soon. What is his perspective on his life and death?

5. As he keeps this big picture in mind, how does Paul show he is a bodily creation? v9-13

How do you need to expand your view of serving and caring for others?



As you serve, how are you going at remembering that you are a creature with a body?
Are you getting sleep? Eating properly? Getting out of the house? Meeting with people?



How can caring for your physical self express your trust in God? see also Psalm 121



'Robert Murray M'Cheyne was a nineteenth century pastor in Scotland with an impressive list of accomplishments including enrolling Edinburgh university at age 14, graduating and continuing studies at Divinity hall by age 18, being ordained as a pastor at age 22, and pastoring a church of 1,100 in his twenties. He's probably best known for his Bible reading plan, which is still widely used today. He died at age 29 during a typhus outbreak.

When you look at M'Cheyne's life, it is clear that he worked hard. Maybe too hard. Several times over the course of his short life, his health would fail from overwork and he would have to stop. Inevitably he would come back, work at the same pace, and exhaust himself again. On his deathbed, he reportedly said "God gave me a message to deliver and a horse to ride. Alas, I have killed the horse and now I cannot deliver the message."

<https://www.harvestchurchcalhoun.com/devotional/2020/4/23/killing-the-horse>



WATCH 6.3 *Boundaries - 6 min*

NOTES

NOTES

SAFE MINISTRY

rockypc takes the safety of children and other vulnerable people within our church COMMUNITY seriously. 'Vulnerable people' includes those who are unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation. Examples include under 18s, seniors, people with impaired intellectual and physical functioning, people from a low socio-economic background and people who are not native speakers of the local language. Harm can include sexual, emotional, physical, spiritual or financial abuses. It's the responsibility of our whole church COMMUNITY to make sure **rockypc** is a safe place for everyone.

If you have any questions, or concerns that harm may be occurring, please speak directly with **rockypc's** Safe Ministry Co-ordinator, Matt Stewart (matt@rockypc.org.au), or our Senior Pastor, Andrew Poyser (andrew@rockypc.org.au). If you are concerned that a child is at risk of sexual abuse, you must immediately report this directly to the police (131 444).

Anyone working with children, or overseeing that ministry (such as elders and managers), must have a Working With Children Check (this is a legal requirement), be interviewed and undergo regular training in our denominational safety program, PresSafe. Those in ministry to children agree to the Code of Conduct below. This is specifically for ministry to children, however, it applies to any ministry to vulnerable people, including informal care ministries that we are all involved in.

PresSafe Code Of Conduct

The following principles provide guidance on the expected behaviour to create a safe environment and ensure children are protected from harm and abuse. (Taken from the Presbyterian Church of Australia, National Safe Ministry Framework)

Foundational Principles:

- 1 In our aim to create a safe environment and in our quest to ensure that children are protected from abuse and harm, the following principles must guide the behaviour expected of all persons involved in ministry-related activities:
 - 1.1 Become familiar with and act in accordance with the National Safe Ministry Framework (including its Principles, Policy, and Procedures) and any Code of Conduct and specific Procedures established by the relevant State Church
 - 1.2 Understand that perpetration of any physical, psychological or emotional harm or neglect, or sexual abuse or exploitation is unacceptable, that it will be treated seriously and sensitively, and that it must be reported in accordance with the Church's Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedure.
 - 1.3 In all aspects of personal life and relationships and at all times, strive to act according to the highest standards, demonstrating courtesy, consideration and good judgement
 - 1.4 Treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of age, culture, gender, religious affiliation, personal circumstances or any other point of differentiation
 - 1.5 Accept and exercise the duty of care appropriate for each and all participants
 - 1.6 In accord with Scripture, engage only in lawful activity and never assist persons engaged in illegal activities
 - 1.7 Strive to carry out all relevant roles in accordance with the doctrines and values of the Presbyterian Church of Australia
 - 1.8 Respect the authority of leaders and act in accordance with reasonable directions
 - 1.9 Only engage in actions and activities that are appropriate for children where ministry-related activities involve children.
 - 1.10 Complete any and all training required by the Church in relation to ministry roles; and
 - 1.11 Create and maintain appropriate resources for use and training in ministry.

As we've seen over the past 6 weeks, caring for one another is everyone's responsibility at **rockypc**. But you may wish to have a more formal caring role. You can investigate being part of our PASTORAL CARE TEAM by speaking with our SERVE PASTOR, Matt Stewart (matt@rockypc.org.au)

Spend a couple of minutes individually, thinking back over what we've learned through this course.

What do you need to believe in your *heart*? How will you go about this?

What do you want remember with your *head*? What do you need to investigate further? How will you do this?

What do you need to do with your *hands*? What steps will you take?



SEEKING GOD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that he gives us everything we need to serve him and care for one another. Pray that we'd remember to sit at Jesus' feet.
- Ask God's help when caring is costly and hard. Pray that we wouldn't shy away from caring, but that we'd pour ourselves out for the sake of others.
- Ask that we would keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who is the righteous judge and has a crown of life in store for us. Pray that we would finish the race and keep the faith.
- Pray that we'd remember we are creatures with physical bodies. Pray that we'd trust God to be at work. And that we'd show this by caring for ourselves — eating, sleeping and resting well.
- Pray that **rockypc** would be a safe place for everyone, especially those who are vulnerable. Pray that we'd care for others with integrity and thoughtfulness.