

Discipleship Pathways



This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman to use at home as we continue to explore the remaining six Discipleship Pathways. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening hymn: STF 403

God is love His the care
God is love: His the care,
Tending each, everywhere.
God is love, all is there!
Jesus came to show him,
That we all might know Him!

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!
Sing aloud, loud, loud!
God is good! God is truth!
God is beauty! Praise Him!*

None can see God above;
We can share life and love;
So may we Godward move,
Seek him in creation,
and in every nation.
Sing aloud,

Jesus lived on the earth,
Life and hope brought to birth
And affirmed human worth,
For He came to save us
By the truth He gave us.
Sing aloud,

To our Lord praise we sing,
Light and life, friend and King,
Coming down, love to bring,
Pattern for our duty,
Showing God in beauty.
Sing aloud,

Opening prayers from Psalm 31

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me.
Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.
Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have taken heed of my adversities,
and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,

and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,¹ and my bones waste away.

I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbours, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.

But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, 'You are my God.'
My times are in your hand;
 deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.
Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on you;
O how abundant is your goodness
 that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
 in the sight of everyone!
In the shelter of your presence you hide them
 from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.

Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me.

1st reading Psalm 8

O LORD, our Sovereign,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth, You have set your glory above the heavens.
² Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals^[a] that you care for them?
⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.
⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,
⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
⁹ O LORD, our Sovereign,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!

2nd Reading 2 John 3:16-21

¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

Today's Message

As the election looms in just a couple of weeks time, one of the things that might help to determine which party / person you will vote for (and please use that democratic freedom to vote!!!) is considering just what are the issues you care passionately about?

Is it education, the NHS, immigration, the cost of living, taxes, the environment, the elderly, the homeless, justice & equality or perhaps the issues that you care about the most is pot holes.

All of those things are things that we should care about but there are other important things too. We should care about our relationship with God, care about our relationship with others and even our care about our relationship with ourselves.

Why care about God?

Well simply because God cares about you. Passionately. God cares about every little bit of you. And God wants the best for you.

One commonly heard phrase these days is 'Live your best life,' an exhortation to live the best life that you can, one that makes you happy and allows you to reach your full potential.

And that is exactly what God wants for you. Because God cares.

And sometimes it's easy to forget that. It's easy to think of God as all powerful, all knowing, all wise and wonderful, someone who can create gnats (small insects) and galaxies with equal measure. But to also think that such a great big God also cares for us, all of us, is perhaps harder to grasp.

And yet we have read in John's gospel, possibly one of the, if not the most famous verse in the bible...for God so loved the world (cared for) that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.(John 3:16)

God cares about us, cares about how we care for each other and even cares about how we care for ourselves.

So Let's sing about this Great Big God, who holds us in his hands!!

Hymn - STF 61

Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
And He holds us in His hand

He's higher than a skyscraper
He's deeper than a submarine
He's wider than the universe
And beyond my wildest dreams

Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
And He holds us in His hand

**He's known me and He's loved me
Since before the world began
How wonderful to be a part of
God's amazing plan**

Why care about others?

Well simply because we are commanded to do so. When Jesus came into the world I think he did so with a purpose...to restore our broken relationship with God but also to deepen and strengthen our relationships with each other. And throughout his ministry he demonstrated just how we should care for each other in and through how he cared for those he came into contact with.

Quite often they were people who had been pushed to the very edges of society, people who had been made outcasts, people who were told repeatedly that they were unworthy and as a result possibly started to believe that about themselves.

And yet these are the very same people that Jesus appears either to make a B line for or else invited to come and gather round him...widows, orphans, children, those with mental health issues or physical disabilities. Not only does he do that but he expects his disciples to do the same so much so that he offers the ultimate demonstration of what it means to carry out a servant ministry.

During the very last night he spends with them, he takes on the role of the very lowest servant in a household and washes their feet...now as you think about that, just imagine what state your feet would be in if you had walked about your local area in a pair of loose fitting sandals all day...yuck!!!

And after doing this menial task, as the disciples look on God-smacked, he tells them that this is how people will know they are his disciples, if they love others as he has just loved them. If they care for others as he has just cared for them

So let's sing about that new commandment now

Hymn - STF 242 A new commandment

A new commandment I give unto you,
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall all know that you are my disciples,
if you have love one for another;

By this shall all know that you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another.

Why care about ourselves?

Hand up here how many people like to be pampered? How many people like to be looked after? How many people like to know that they are cared for?
All of us I suspect. We all like to offer care to those we know and love and we also like to know that others care for us.

Now what I don't mean is when we often use the phrase 'someone has gone into care' which implies that an individual is no longer mentally or physically able to care for themselves and that they need help to do that task.

What I am talking about is the day to day care we all enjoy receiving and can give to ourselves. So what form might that take?

Taking care of yourself by thinking about what things we put into our bodies...food, drink, harmful substances

Taking care of yourself by thinking about your mental health and maybe taking time off our screens and social media where we can fall into the trap of just comparing ourselves to the 'perfect' lives everyone else seems to be living. And I haven't even mentioned the trolls on social media who can make lives a living hell.

Taking care of ourselves by treating ourselves...a trip to the hairdresser or having our nails done...despite the cost of living that is one area where business has boomed.

Taking care of ourselves by setting aside time and space for a hobby. Making sure we get the school / work / home life balance right.

And sometimes taking care of ourselves involves saying No. Saying 'no' to things we are asked to do because to say yes would mean we are taking on too much, spreading ourselves too thin and simply not looking after ourselves.

Caring for yourself is about learning to love yourself...just as you are. It's about allowing yourself to be and become, the very best version of you that you can be. It's about allowing the person God created you to be, the one made in God's image to flourish and grow. One designed to have a heart for God and for others, a heart full of joy, peace and love.

So today as we begin week 4 of this six week journey though these Discipleship Pathways, let us think about how we can care about God, care about God's world, care about each other and care about ourselves. Amen

Let's pray...

Let's pray for all those working in the caring professions and for those they are caring for

Let's pray for all those unpaid carers looking after loved ones

Let's pray for all those who are struggling to receive the care they need.

Let's pray that we can be channels of God's care

Let's pray for our own self-care

And let's join our voices together to say The Lord's Prayer....Our Father

Hymn - STF 409

Let's conclude this act of worship by singing just a few verses from a hymn that captures just what a caring family of faith might look like

Let us build a house where love can dwell, and
all can safely live.
A place where saints and children tell,
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions.
Rock of faith and vault of grace.
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions,
All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach,
beyond the wood and stone.
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger,
bear the image of God's face,
let us bring an end to fear and danger.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard.
And loved and treasured, taught and claimed,
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

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Blessing

Go from this place knowing how much God cares for you. Go sharing that care with others. And remember to also look after yourself so you can become the best version of 'you' that you can be.

Amen