

Glimpsing the Glory of God: a study series for fellowship groups

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The Christian life is about building relationships, rather than about adopting roles, and this series of studies is about coming to know God better and having a deeper relationship with him.

(4) Glimpsing God's Glory as the Way is Prepared

Q 1 What are the things that you hope to get done at home before some guests arrive for the weekend.? Who in the group would hope to make an extra effort if it was someone special coming, or if it was a special occasion that marked the visit?

Q 2 Sometimes, we don't get a chance to prepare, like the owner of The Cross Hands Hotel, a charming old posting house in Gloucestershire, dating from the 14th century. Queen Elizabeth II was caught in a blizzard in 1981 and called there, unannounced, to stay the night. Are we prepared, to a degree, for the unexpected? I wonder whether a few rooms would have had a lick of paint if the owner had known!



Read Isaiah 40:1-11 This is a beautiful passage which encourages us to be prepared for God's plans to be worked out in our own experience, but first notice the tenderness with which the words of the Lord come to those who are suffering and oppressed. The people of God are in exile in Babylon but Isaiah is looking forward to the end of this 70-year period in their history (Is 40:1-2, 9-11).

In due course God moved King Cyrus to permit a return and a rebuilding programme (Ezra 1:2-3) but it was only those in whose hearts God was moving that responded to the call to go ... even after such a long period of exile ... or perhaps because of it! In all, less than 50,000 went (Ezra 2:64).

Q 3 Sometimes people can feel so downtrodden that they just cannot find it within themselves to respond to the help on offer. Have members of the group come across this, or even experienced it themselves?

Look especially at verse 11 where Jesus is portrayed as the shepherd and see that there is a special care taken of the young ('lambs') and of those those caring for young. This should encourage any working in the church with the young or with young Christians and who may occasionally feel discouraged.



In Bristol there is the longest aircraft runway in the world, 7Km., and used today for the testing of performance cars. It was rolled out in 1949 for a huge double-deck aircraft called the 'Brabazon' built in the aircraft works alongside. Ironically, it didn't need that length for take-off in the event, and also didn't make it into commercial service due to the arrival of faster jets. Nonetheless, the preparation was made, as it had to be, if the project was to be completed.

There is a central thrust to this passage, to make preparation for Jesus in our lives and in our church. The words were prophetically directed at the role of John the Baptist whose job it was to literally prepare the way for Jesus (read Luke 3:1-16). The words can be equally true for us, in that there is a separate calling to each one of us that means making changes to allow Jesus to work through us.

Q 4 What sort of changes do members think ought to take place in a Christian's life to pave the way for the ministry of Jesus to be effective through us?

Are we as a church, and as a cell group, also (figuratively speaking) rolling out the runway for the Lord's return. What the Jews were expecting of their Messiah, establishment of a kingdom, was not accomplished by Jesus in his coming at Bethlehem. (OPTIONAL STUDY: A comparison of Is 61:1ff with Luke 4:18 shows that Jesus stopped citing the Old Testament prophecy when he had read the part accomplished in his first coming, and before going on to talk of his coming in judgment on the nations at his second coming. The same sense is created by adding Lk 3:17 to the passage we read earlier). Jesus will come again to set everything right, and we have a responsibility to be ready for that event (Lk 12:38-40; Rev 19:7)

Q 5 In what ways can we make ourselves ready, as individuals, for Jesus' return, and in what ways as a group or as a church?

Next study: (5) Glimpsing God's Glory in Declaration (1 Chron 16:11-36)