

THE heart of St Paul's



**Vision for 2022
and beyond**

**Growth Group Studies
ST PAUL'S CARLINGFORD
AND NORTH ROCKS**

Introduction

Five Ms. Five purposes. Five marks of a healthy and thriving life as a disciple of our Lord Jesus. Five targets for us to aim at together as a church. Five goals for us to organise our collective efforts around, as together we labour in the Lord, bringing the good news of Jesus to a lost world for his glory.

These five words beginning with M are not meant to be an exhaustive summary of the Bible, but they are a helpful way of capturing and remembering some of the most key parts of the Christian life, both for us as individuals and corporately as a church. As God works by his Word and Spirit, these are the outcomes or impacts we expect to see in our lives.

As God works in us, we come to realise that we were made by Jesus and for Jesus, to find our joy and satisfaction in him, to enjoy him and glorify him – in short, to live a life that magnifies his name. And as we live before God, he speaks to us and transforms us by his life-giving word, renewing our minds and reshaping our hearts as he grows us towards maturity. And this flows out in transformed living in all sorts of ways. We come together as brothers and sisters, members of the body of Christ, to love and care for each other and build a community. We give of our time and energy to gladly serve one another, engaging in all sorts of ministry together. And we champion the cause of the gospel, making every effort to see people reached and saved, advancing God's mission both locally and globally, all for the glory of God.

As we begin a new year together thinking about our vision and mission as a church, we hope and pray that these studies will help you and your Growth Group to grow in your understanding of these different emphases in our life together – and more than that, to get you excited and to get you praying about how we might see God at work among us this year.

How to use these studies

These studies have been designed for use in February-March 2022, our Vision Month across St Paul's. However, note that these studies will not cover exactly the same ideas or Bible passages as our Sunday sermons. The preaching will sketch out the main contours of the mission that Jesus Christ has given us, while these studies will drill into how that mission works out in specific areas of life and church. The preaching will be seeking to show us the big picture from God's word; these studies are designed to flesh out the detail.

Here are some tips for working with these studies:

1. Remember that these studies are not meant to replace your own preparation, only to guide it. Read the Bible passage(s) yourself, work through the study on your own, and feel free to adapt it to your group as you see fit.
2. For these studies, it may also help you to read the relevant M's page in our Vision Booklet as you prepare (we are planning to release this resource on Sunday January 30).
3. These studies are designed to be both rich in biblical input and deep in application. You may feel like you can't explore each of the passages in depth with your group – that's okay. Make sure you leave plenty of time to discuss implications and goals for 2022.

Each of these studies is designed to stand alone, so your group could work through them in any order. However, we will be having some short spots throughout these Sundays speaking to different Ms, so it could be most helpful to do each study on the week following the Sunday spot on that M. If you wish to follow that pattern, here is a suggested timeline:

WEEK BEGINNING	STUDY
Jan 31	Growth Group begins – start with a meet-and-greet, a social, a meal and prayer, etc.
Feb 7	1. Magnification
Feb 14	2. Mission
Feb 21	3. Ministry
Feb 28	4. Maturity
Mar 7	5. Membership

(N.B. this order will follow the Sunday spots at the Carlingford services. At North Rocks, these spots will be in a different order – we will endeavour to let North Rocks leaders know once we know.)

1. Magnification



Peter Baker (*Magnification Pastor*) | Josh Charles (*MTS, Magnification focus*)

1. Why do you think the church exists?

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment.’ (Matt 22:37-38)

But you are 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. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet 2:9-10)

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ (Rev 7:9-10)

2. How do these verses shape or challenge our perceptions of how and why God’s church exists?

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* – a list of questions and answers historically used for instructing God’s people in the faith – helpfully encapsulates this biblical perspective in its very first question and answer:

‘Q: What is the chief end of man?’

A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.’

Magnifying God in all of life

3. Can you think of a time recently when you have ‘sung the praises’ of something or someone – whether something new in your house, an experience, perhaps really good service you encountered somewhere, or a friend or family member?

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable (Psalm 145:3)

I will extol the LORD at all times;

His praise will always be on my lips.

I will glory in the LORD;
Let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
Glorify the LORD with me;
Let us exalt his name together. (Psalm 34:1-3)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor 10.31)

Magnification starts here: God is great! We can't know the full extent of God's greatness, but we are called to praise him based on all the wonderful things we do know about him. God has revealed to us his power, wisdom, and goodness – above all in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we come to understand and experience more of God's greatness and goodness in creation and salvation, our fitting response is to love him more deeply and to praise him from the heart. We 'exalt' or 'magnify' his name by saying the very best thing we could possibly say about him: the truth!

4. Where does 'magnifying God' happen in your daily life? What kind of barriers do you think there are to making 'magnifying God' part of everyday life?

Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbour his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103.1-12)

5. How is the psalmist speaking to himself here? What is going on in his heart and mind? What kind of encouragement and help does this part of God's word offer for our own 'magnification'?

Magnifying God as we gather together

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16-17)

6. How does this passage challenge or encourage you about the way we approach our Sunday church gatherings?

7. How do you think 'magnifying God' when our church gathers on Sunday connects to 'magnifying God' throughout the week?

8. How could 'magnification' be a part of your time together in Growth Group?

Prayer praise and thanks

Spend some time listing as many things as you can think of to praise God for in his character and his actions toward us, then spend time praising and thanking God for these.

Pray for God's help to grow deeper in both knowledge of God's truth and love toward God himself

Music is a gift from God that can help train our hearts to respond rightly to the gospel. You might even like to sing a song or two together in your Growth Group (try simple, well-known songs like 'Amazing Grace' or 'In Christ Alone').

2. Mission

Rod Earnshaw (*Mission Pastor*) | Susan Everett (*MTS, Mission focus*)

Introduction

Word association game! Your leader will read out a word, and you have to write down (or say) the first thing that comes to your mind. You will then share those things with the group. (Leaders, feel free to add or adapt some of the words for your group.)

- Kmart
- Cricket
- Brother
- Netflix
- St Paul's
- Teenagers
- Coffee
- Gospel
- Evangelism
- Missionary

READ 1 PETER 2:9-12

1. What different words and phrases does Peter use to describe Christians? You may like to use a white-board or butchers' paper to write down these things and try to sketch out a sentence of what they mean.

2. What are the two responsibilities that Peter wants Christians to be engaged in as God's special people?

a. Verse 9:

b. Verse 11-12:

3. What would it look like to take on these responsibilities personally? What would a church that took on these responsibilities look like?

READ 1 PETER 3:8-18

4. What makes you afraid to share the gospel with other people?

5. Peter acknowledges the real feeling of fear that we can experience as we face the world. What are two encouraging promises from verse 12 for the Christian?

6. Looking at verses 14-15, what two actions does Peter offer as the alternative to fear? What would this look like for you when you are afraid to share the gospel with someone?

7. From verses 15-16, what three qualities should we display as we speak to people about Jesus, our hope?

READ COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

You'll notice that verses 5-6 have similar themes to what we have just seen in 1 Peter: godly living, godly speech, and wisely answering people's questions.

8. What will it look like for you to be "devoted to prayer, staying alert in it" (verse 2)?

9. What are the two things that Paul asks the Colossians to pray for?

a. Verse 3:

b. Verse 4:

Activities

1. Think about the people in your life who don't know Jesus – neighbours, relatives, colleagues, friends, hair-dressers, shop owners, children's teachers/coaches, parents of your children's friends...You don't know when opportunities to speak of Jesus might come. But by prayer, God desires to give these opportunities to you.

Together in pairs, think about 3 non-Christian people you want to commit to praying for out of this list. Decide how you want to regularly pray for them – whether its spending your Monday morning praying for each of them and opportunities this week or spending one day each week praying for a different person.

2. Out of those 3 people, pick one person that you want to try and start a Jesus-conversation with this week. Discuss how you might do it, and what your fears might be. Try to check in next week and see how your partner went!

PRAY, TAKING COLOSSIANS 4 AS A MODEL FOR YOUR PRAYERS FOR ONE ANOTHER.

3. Ministry

Sam Russell (*Ministry Pastor*) | Caleb Knight (*MTS, Ministry focus*)

Can you think of a time when you had a really positive experience of working in a team to achieve a particular goal? What made it so positive?

This week we are focusing in on the Ministry Purpose area and how it fits into the vision for our church. Ministry is all about helping every member of our body gladly serve in the work of the Lord. In order to see thousands of people from Carlingford, North Rocks and their surrounds saved, we need to resource that work!

In the ministry Purpose area, our goal is to mobilise a multitude of saints to make disciples in Jesus name. And we want these saints to be serving together in teams, because of the power of teams to have a greater impact than any one person alone. But before we get to what it looks like in practice, let's turn to the Bible together.

Why do we serve?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-58

1. What great hope does Paul celebrate in verses 51-55?

a. What makes it so wonderful?

2. What does Paul encourage people to do in light of this hope (v58)

3. What do you think 'Labour in the Lord' refers to?

a. 1 Cor 3:5-9

b. 1 Cor 16:8-9

4. What do you think it looks like to give yourself 'fully' to the work of the Lord?

5. Why do you think the effort of labouring for the Lord is 'not in vain'?

There are so many different ways to get involved in the work of the Lord at St Paul's! But before we come to these, let's consider some possible flawed attitudes toward serving. What would you say to someone with these heart attitudes?

- I'm not really that gifted
- I serve because church won't function without me
- I've got enough struggles of my own to serve right now
- I'll serve as soon as I have my study/work/career/kids sorted out
- I'm only responsible for my area of ministry
- Serving is not about excellence, mediocrity is ok if done with good intentions
- I'm drawn to ministry that people will notice

6. Are you tempted toward any of these attitudes?

Getting involved in the Body.

READ ROMANS 12:1-8

7. What motivation does this passage give us to use our lives in service?

8. What kinds of gifts does Paul list?

9. Why has God given us gifts? Who are they to be used for?

READ SOME OF THE MINISTRY TESTIMONIES FROM PAGES 11-12 OF THE VISION BOOKLET.

10. How are you planning to labour in the work of the Lord this year? Do you have a role in the body at St Paul's? (If not, what is holding you back?)

11. St Paul's has lots of different ministry teams. What do you think are the benefits of serving with others in a team? If you are part of a team, how can you be a blessing as a team member this YEAR?

12. What do you enjoy about serving? What do you find challenging about serving?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER THAT GOD MIGHT USE YOU IN HIS SERVICE IN THE YEAR AHEAD.

4. Maturity



Jack Day and Candy Grice (*Maturity Pastors*) | Josh Everett (*MTS, Maturity focus*)

Think back to when you first became a Christian. How have you changed over the months or years since you first encountered Jesus?

What things have helped to bring about these changes?

The vision for St Paul's is...Jesus. Reach. Love. Serve

*Captivated by **Jesus** as the Saving Lord we:*

*Boldly **reach** all people with the life-changing gospel, locally and globally*

*Sacrificially **love** each other and build each other up*

*Gladly **serve** together practically to build Christ's body*

Christian maturity looks like all of the above, to be a mature, God glorifying Christian is to be a missionary, a member and a servant.

Our Maturity Purpose area though focuses on the root of our mission, love and service - and that is being captivated by Jesus. How are we captivated by Jesus? We become captivated as we see him, in particular by being deep in the word and prayer.

So, Maturity is an 'M' that seeks to see all of church transformed by being deep in the word of God and prayer. Our goal is to be people who love the bible, are shaped by what it says, and are coming to know and rely on Jesus more richly each day. (Romans 12:2).

But before we get to what it looks like in practice, let's turn to the Bible together

READ EPHESIANS 4:11-16

1. What is the ultimate goal from these verses?

2. What does that mean? How can you tell when someone has reached that goal? What are the dangers that maturity guards us against?

3. Whose job is it to do the work of maturing Christians and how should they do it?

4. Where have you seen the above (being equipped, truth spoken in love) happen for you in the past? Any ideas for how we, as St Paul's, can do that better in the future?

Application

5. With Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 and Col 1:9-12 in mind, what do you think God wants your life to be like in 10 years time?

6. What could stop you from growing as a Christian?

7. How do you think other Christians could help you grow at this time?

8. How can you help other Christians grow at this time?

Challenges

These are some challenges we hope will help you forge habits in growing yourself and others in maturity through the word and prayer.

1. Commit to reading the bible 5 times a week for 5 weeks.
2. Commit to sharing with someone (either on social media, email, phone, txt or face to face) what God has said to you through his word once a week
3. Commit to sharing with someone – your Growth Group Leader or a Christian friend – where you want to grow and what you are going to do about it
4. If you are not already in the habit, commit to going to a growth group every week in term 1 today, put it in the calendar now as a non-negotiable, so that you can be deep in word and prayer with one another.

PRAY COLOSSIANS 1:9-12 FOR ONE ANOTHER AND THAT ST PAUL'S WOULD BE A CHURCH THAT IS A CHURCH THAT IS TRANSFORMED BY BEING DEEP IN THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER.

5. Membership



Mike Everett (*Membership Pastor*) | Hamish Coy (*MTS, Membership focus*)

Can you remember the first time you came to St. Paul's? Share your first impressions and what it was that made you want stay.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

Let's focus in on verses 24b-27

1. According to verse 24b (and v.18), who has put "the body" (the church) together?

2. According to verse 25, why does God put the body together the way He has?

3. According to verse 26, what does "no division" and "equal concern" look like in practice?

4. Do you see yourself as an integral part of the body of Christ at St. Paul's (c.f. v27)? Why?/Why not?

At St. Paul's, we long to actively and intentionally live out our identity as the body of Christ, building a church where each person is fully connected into a caring, vibrant community of faith and love. This is what Membership is all about. With God's help, our vision is to;

- 1. Connect new people with Jesus at St. Paul's.** We want each person who walks through our doors to be warmly welcomed and thoroughly informed about who Jesus is and who we are as a church.
- 2. Foster a vibrant community within each congregation.** We desire to be an active and vibrant community where all people are included and loved. We also want to provide many opportunities for fellowship and encouragement.

3. **Provide care for people in times of need.** We seek to build a culture where members actively love each other in the same way Jesus did; by putting other people first. We want to be aware of the real needs people have so we can work together to provide practical assistance, prayer, encouragement, and a helping hand.

Divide the amount of time you have left in this study into 3 (remembering to leave time to pray at the end if that is your habit). Spend a third of your time interacting with each of the 3 definitions above (Connect, Community and Care). Below are some suggested questions to ask if you need help. Otherwise, just feel free to discuss more generally.

1. Connect new people with Jesus at St. Paul's.

a. In what ways do you think we do well at connecting new people?

b. In what ways do you think we could do better at connecting new people?

c. Image you see a new person at church this Sunday, how would you go about connecting with them?

2. Foster a vibrant community within each congregation.

a. Would you describe your congregation at St. Paul's as a "vibrant community"? Why?/Why not? How would you suggest we can become a more vibrant community?

b. Would you describe your Growth Group as a “vibrant community”? Why?/Why not? How would you suggest we can become a more vibrant community?

c. Where/how do you received “fellowship” and “encouragement” the most within St. Paul’s?

d. Where/how do you seek to give “fellowship” and “encouragement” within St. Paul’s?

3. Provide care for people in times of need.

a. In what ways does St. Paul’s seek to care for people in times of need?

b. Can you share a time when you have experienced care from someone at St. Paul’s?

c. In what ways do you think we can improve in caring for people in times of need?

PRAY

Some suggested prayer points:

1. Thank God for putting the body together the way He has
2. Pray that we, the people of St. Paul’s would actively and intentionally live out our identity as the body of Christ,
3. Pray for unity (“no division”) and love (“equal concern”) to ever present in everything we do at church

4. Pray for opportunities to bring new people to St. Paul's.
5. Pray that we would actively and intentionally welcome all new people who walk through our doors.
6. Pray that we would actively and intentionally offer love, fellowship and encouragement to everyone we can at St. Paul's.
7. Pray that God would strengthen us to actively and intentional love and care for each other sacrificially as Jesus did.
8. Pray for those who are suffering and in need of care at this time. (You could also let them know that you have been praying for them afterwards)