

## CHRIST CHURCH CLIFTON

Small Group Resources – Teaching Series: ‘Sin and Salvation’, Spring 2018

### Key Scriptures for Study and Lectio Divina

Genesis 1 – 3

Romans 5 – 7

You may wish to read these passages in your usual translation. It can also be helpful to read them in an unfamiliar translation, as sometimes we see or hear something new ... Paul’s own translations of those passages are reproduced below.

Lectio Divina is a dynamic way of reading the Scriptures that’s been around since at least 300 AD. Its 4 components are

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

Before you read, pray a simple prayer – that the Holy Spirit, the author of scripture, will breathe afresh on his Word, bringing it alive to you in new ways; and that your hearts & minds, again by his work within us, will receive fresh insight, encouragement, challenge and direction from it.

Then read the passage quietly and slowly – pray again – and then read it over once more. On the third or fourth reading, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you specifically – this may involve

- being reminded of a long-known truth: sometimes, the timing will be pertinent to something going on in life
- seeing something you’ve never noticed before – scripture is endlessly rich and can yield new truth on each reading
- the feeling that God is highlighting a particular phrase or even one word which speaks to a particular situation you are facing at the moment.

Underline words or phrases that speak to you – make notes as you read of anything you think the Lord might be highlighting or saying. Don’t worry initially about understanding – just try to be attentive to what comes to mind. There’s nothing wrong with ‘practising’ our spiritual disciplines – just as we would practise any skill we are learning in life – and therefore there’s no problem with mistakes as we learn!

Questions as you read, pray and meditate through the passage

- What shines out to you?
- Does this passage raise any questions?
- Where do you see Jesus in this passage and what do you learn about him?
- Personal application – what is the Lord saying to me in this passage?
- Is there something I need to share with others?
- Why is this in the Bible?

## **GENESIS 1 – 3**

### **Genesis Chapter 1**

1 Before the cosmos, there was God – he made everything that exists, including our own planet, 2 which, at first, was an empty, lifeless place, swamped by water. But God’s Spirit was at work ...

3 God spoke his design and order into being. ‘Light!’ Light shone. 4 It delighted God, and he drew a line between light and darkness, 5 naming the one ‘day’ and the other ‘night’. Night fell and day dawned – One.

6-7 God spoke, creating the atmosphere, 8 and naming it ‘sky’. Night fell and day dawned – Two.

9 God spoke, and continents rose from the deep, shouldering the waters aside. So God separated 10 and named ‘land’ and ‘sea’. God was delighted. 11-12 He spoke again, and plants and trees of every kind carpeted the land. And God was delighted. 13 Night fell and day dawned – Three.

14-18 God spoke, and Sun and Moon appeared, distinguishing night from day, governing times and seasons, marking the passing of years, setting the ages in motion. Stars shimmered in the heavens. And God was delighted. 19 Night fell and day dawned – Four.

20-21 God spoke, and the seas heaved with creatures great and small. Birds of every kind filled the sky. God was delighted, 22 and spoke blessing over them all: ‘Fill the skies and seas with your offspring.’ 23 Night fell and day dawned – Five.

24-25 God spoke, and animal life raced across the land, each species determined by God’s design. And God was delighted.

26 Then God said, ‘Let us make one creature capable of reflecting our nature, to govern this new world and its life.’

27 So God made humankind, male and female, in his own image.

28 God spoke blessing on them: ‘Have many, many children. Spread over the earth and steward it. Govern all life in the seas, in the sky and on the land. 29 Eat the seeds of the plants and the fruit of the trees, is yours for food. 30 Every other green plant will feed the animals.’

31 God examined his creation – it was perfect! Night fell and day dawned – Six.

### **Genesis Chapter 2**

1-2 By day Seven, God had created the vastness of the cosmos and everything in it; so he rested, 3 blessing that day and declaring it holy.

4 This is the story of life, the origin of everything.

5 When God first made planet earth, nothing grew, because there was neither rain nor anyone to care for it; 6 the earth was watered by streams. 7 So God created humankind, moulding a man from dust and breathing life into him. God named him ‘Adam.’

8 God planted a garden for Adam, in the East. 9 'Eden' was full of trees, whose beauty dazzled the eye, and which groaned under the weight of mouth-watering fruit. At the heart of the garden stood two special trees. The fruit of one gave long life; and the other the ability to distinguish right from wrong.

10 A river ran through it, watering the garden, and flowing out to become four rivers: 11-12 the Pishon winds throughout Havilah, a land rich in gold, sweet-smelling resin and onyx; 13 the Gishon flows throughout the land of Cush; 14 the Tigris marks the eastern border of Asshur; and the fourth is the mighty Euphrates.

15 God placed the man in the garden to care for it and to harvest its bounty. 16 'Eat what you like from any tree in the garden,' God said, 17 'except the tree which enables you to distinguish right from wrong – its fruit will kill you.'

18 God said, 'Man isn't quite the finished article. He needs a soul mate to be fully human.'

19 God had already created all other creatures, and invited the man to name them. 20 So man gave names to all the animals. But he found no soul mate among them.

21 So God put the man into a deep sleep, removed one of his ribs, and healed the wound. 22 God fashioned the rib into a new creature and presented her to the man.

23 'Wow!' exclaimed Adam, 'Now you're talking! She's my own flesh and blood, so I name her ... woman.'

24 And so the timeless pattern of human relationship was established. Generation after generation, men and women leave their childhood homes, commit themselves to one another, and become one. 25 Adam and Eve hid nothing from one another – they were completely at home in their own skin.

### **Genesis Chapter 3**

1 But there was a snake in paradise, more sly and cunning than any other creature God had made. 'Can you really take God at his word?' he asked the woman. 'Did he really ban you from eating any fruit in the garden?'

2 'No,' she replied. 'He said we can eat what we like, 3 except from one tree at the heart of the garden. God said we would die if we even touched it.'

4 'You surely don't believe that, do you?' hissed the snake. 5 'God doesn't want you to know the truth. He knows that if you eat fruit from that tree, you'll be just like him, with the ability to distinguish right from wrong. And he wants to keep that to himself.'

6 So the woman went to the tree and gazed at it. It was beautiful, and its fruit made her mouth water. And if it really could make her like God, well ... She stretched out her hand, plucked one of the fruits and ate it. Adam was with her, watching what she did, and when she offered him some fruit, he too ate it. 7 As they ate, their innocence evaporated, and, suddenly embarrassed in front of one another, they covered themselves with leaves.

8 It was God's habit to walk with them in the evenings once the heat of the day had passed. But now, at the sound of his approach, the man and woman hid, 9 and the garden rang with God's cry, 'Where are you?'

10 Adam replied, 'I heard you coming, and I was embarrassed to be seen naked. That's why I'm hiding.'

11 'What's happened?' demanded God. 'Who told you to be embarrassed? You've not eaten the fruit I told you not to, have you?'

12 The man replied, 'It's not my fault – in fact, you've only got yourself to blame: the woman you made for me gave me the fruit. All I did was eat it ...' 13 So God turned to Eve. 'Well?' he demanded. 'What do you have to say for yourself?'

'It's not my fault,' she protested. 'The snake tricked me into eating it.'

14 God said to the snake, 'A curse on you for what you've done. From now on you'll be the most despised and hated of any animal and spend your life slithering from hiding place to hiding place. 15 Snakes and humans will be mortal enemies for the rest of time. They will fear your bite, and crush you without hesitation.'

16 God turned to Eve: 'Childbirth will be agony for you and the women who follow you; men will dominate and disempower you, even as you continue to desire them.'

17 To Adam, God said: 'You shouldn't have listened to her! But because you did, and ate the forbidden fruit, the very harmony of the planet is disturbed. Rather than sit back and harvest the earth's bounty, you'll have to earn every mouthful by sweat and toil, 18 wrestling your food from among thorns and weeds. 19 Your life will be one of drudgery and hard labour, until your life ends, and your body crumbles back to the dust from which you were made.'

20 Adam named his wife 'Eve' because it means 'first mother.'

21 God made animal-skin clothes for Adam and Eve, 23 and drove them out of Eden, so that they couldn't take the fruit of the tree of life. So Adam began to work the earth from which he'd been formed. 24 God placed a guard of angels with flaming swords over Eden – and so the way to the tree of life was lost.

## **ROMANS 5 – 7**

### **Romans Chapter 5**

<sup>1</sup> Because our faith gives us good standing with God, we are at peace with him. It's all because of Jesus, <sup>2</sup> who made it possible for us to experience the free and undeserved love of God, which fills us with the joy of knowing we'll spend eternity with him. <sup>3</sup> We even rejoice when we suffer, because suffering teaches us to endure, <sup>4</sup> which forges character and breeds hope. <sup>5</sup> This hope is continually renewed by the love God pours into our hearts through his Holy Spirit.

<sup>6</sup> The cross is the turning point of history, when Jesus died to save us all. Not only were we helpless to save ourselves, we didn't even deserve saving. <sup>7</sup> It's just conceivable that someone might be willing to die in another person's place if it were crystal clear they deserved it. <sup>8</sup> But God showed that his love for us is unconditional when Jesus took our place, dying the death our wrongdoing deserved.

<sup>9</sup> Jesus' blood paid the price for us to be set right with God and means that we will escape judgement. <sup>10</sup> We were once God's enemies, but Jesus has reconciled us through his death and resurrection, giving us new life, <sup>11</sup> and every reason to rejoice.

<sup>12-13</sup> The disobedience of our original ancestor, Adam, trapped the whole human race in a pattern of rebellion which enabled death to stake its claim on all of us. <sup>14</sup> Death is inescapable: no one has ever evaded its clutches.

<sup>15-16</sup> Jesus broke that pattern by replacing Adam's death-giving life with his own life-giving death. There's no comparison between the death which Adam's sin brought to the whole human race and the new life which Jesus now offers through his saving death. <sup>17</sup> If death came through Adam, how much more will life now flourish through Jesus? God's lavish gift, freely restoring our good standing with him through Jesus, enables us to share his life and reign with him.

<sup>18</sup> If Adam's one sin condemned the whole human race, so Jesus' one perfect sacrifice offers life to the whole human race. <sup>19</sup> Adam's sin made sinners of us all, but Jesus' death sets us right with God again.

<sup>20</sup> When the Law came, all human wrongdoing became glaringly apparent. But as wrongdoing became more evident, so did God's unconditional love, which is far more powerful than human disobedience. <sup>21</sup> Sin may have resulted in death, but grace triumphs over it all, bringing eternal life to all who place their faith in King Jesus.

## **Romans Chapter 6**

<sup>1</sup> So what does this mean? Am I saying that we should sin as much as possible, in order to see more and more grace? <sup>2</sup> Of course not! Sin belongs to our old life; and you do realise we've died to all that, don't you? <sup>3</sup> The water of baptism represents the grave. <sup>4</sup> We go down into it, united with Jesus in his death, and

rise back out of the water into our new life in him, by God's glorious power.

<sup>5-6</sup> Once united with Jesus in his death, our old self nailed to the cross once and for all, we're guaranteed to join in the wonder of his resurrection life, <sup>7</sup> set free from sin's clutches.

<sup>8</sup> I repeat: if we share King Jesus's death, we will also share his new life. <sup>9</sup> Jesus has beaten death at its own game and it has no more hold on him. <sup>10</sup> Having defeated sin once and for all, Jesus lives for ever.

<sup>11</sup> Do you see just how radical this is? Your old way of life is dead and buried. In Jesus, God invites you to live the life he designed you to live. <sup>12</sup> Don't let sin back into the driving seat. Your body

isn't neutral; you can use it either for bad or for good. It's your choice. <sup>13</sup> Choose to offer yourself to God, so that he might use you for good. <sup>14</sup> Sin can no longer dominate. Rather than standing beneath the accusing finger of the Law, you now stand under the cleansing waterfall of God's grace.

<sup>15</sup> Don't read this as another excuse for sin. <sup>16</sup> You haven't been set free to do as you please: you have a new owner to obey. <sup>17</sup> Your wholehearted acceptance of the good news has shattered the chains of sin's deadly hold, <sup>18</sup> allowing you freely to offer your obedience to God himself.

<sup>19</sup> Here's an analogy to make it easier for you to understand. We can all remember the addictive power of wrongdoing: it led us further and further away from what is right and the darkness coiled ever more tightly around us. Now we can become healthily addicted to doing good, as we practise habits of holiness. <sup>20</sup> When you look back to that old life, you can see how much damage it did. <sup>21</sup> What did you get out of it but shame and the certainty of death? <sup>22</sup> Now you've got the chance to live God's way and then, when this life is over, to live with him for ever.

<sup>23</sup> Sin pays all right – it pays death. But God offers the free gift of eternal life through King Jesus.

## **Romans Chapter 7**

<sup>1</sup> Once you die, no legal system can lay a hand on you. <sup>2</sup> Married couples, for example, are legally bound together for life. <sup>3</sup> But if your spouse dies, you're free to marry someone else.

<sup>4</sup> What I'm saying is that as far as the Law is concerned you've joined Jesus in death, so it has no more claim on you. And because Jesus rose from the dead, you've now got a new life in which you're free to take a new partner – Jesus himself!

<sup>5</sup> Imagine a tree choked with ivy, stunted and unable to thrive. Its fruit tastes of poison. Our old lives were like that, wrapped in sin, stunted, poisonous. <sup>6</sup> But we're dead to all that now and it's like being a new tree. The ivy has been ripped off and we're free to live and grow as God's Holy Spirit leads us, bursting with fruit that makes life taste better for everyone.

<sup>7</sup> I'm not saying that the Law and sin are one and the same, simply that the Law made us aware of sin. If there'd been no law against greed, for example, I'd never have known that greed was wrong. However, as soon as the Law told me greed was wrong, <sup>8-11</sup> sin seized its chance, filling me with more greed than I'd ever have thought possible. So the Law proved incapable of fulfilling its purpose. Designed to bring life, it actually caused death, because it opened the door for sin to enter our lives. Sin saw its chance, grabbed me by the heels and pulled me under. <sup>12</sup> The Law was designed by God for his good purpose.

<sup>13</sup> So I'm not saying that the Law is evil. On the contrary, the Law was God's gracious gift. We can't say its standards aren't noble! Nor can we accuse it of harm, because in fact it showed up sin for the terrible thing it really is.

<sup>14</sup> You have to understand the power that sin exercises over human nature. <sup>15-17</sup> It drives us to do the very things we long to be free of, and does everything it can to prevent us doing the things we know to be good. It muddles our thinking so that we can't distinguish right from wrong. <sup>18</sup> We long

to do good things, but instead we find ourselves doing the very things we don't want to do. <sup>19-20</sup>  
Do you see the power it has? We desire one thing; sin makes us do the opposite.

<sup>21-25</sup> It's futile trying to live God's way in our own strength, even with his Law to guide us. Our human nature simply isn't strong enough to win. It's like living in a war zone. The enemy's always there, ready to attack, invading us, setting our bodies against our minds. The 'real me' might long to live God's way, but try telling my body that! Sin makes us prisoners of war, forcing us to fight against the very things we long for. What a mess! Can anyone rescue us? Yes, yes, yes! God can, and has, through Jesus.

The bottom line is this: without Jesus we're casualties in a war we could never hope to win, torn limb from limb by our desire to live God's way on the one hand and by the power of sin on the other. So sin drags us bleeding from the battlefield, captives to its own evil ends.