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## Study 1

# Unashamed Worshipers

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### Introduction

Everyone worships something or someone. Idols are not limited to primitive society; there are many sophisticated idols as well. An idol is a God-substitute. Any person or thing that occupies the place which God should occupy is an idol.

In Acts 17 Paul is deeply distressed by the idolatrous city of Athens. As an unashamed worshipper of the true God, he wisely and passionately engages with the people of the city to point them to the true God.

What idols or God substitutes are evident in Australia today?

What alternate religions or philosophies do you encounter in your world? Are you ever ashamed of Christ and his word when you encounter these alternatives?

### Read Acts 17:16-34

1. What caught Paul's attention immediately about Athens? [v16]
2. What did he feel about what he saw?

Have you ever been distressed by the rejection of the true God by those around you? Share your experiences.

*'The clue to interpreting the nature of Paul's emotion is that the verb that is translated 'greatly distressed' is also used in the Greek version of the Old Testament to describe the reaction of the holy One of Israel to idolatry. Thus, when the Israelites made the golden calf at Mount Sinai, and when later they were guilty of gross idolatry and immorality in relation to the Baal of Peor, they "provoked" the Lord to anger. So Paul was "provoked" [RSV] by idolatry and provoked to anger, grief and indignation, just as God is himself, and for the same reason, namely for the honour and glory of his name.'*  
[John Stott, Acts Bible Study, p77]

3. What did Paul do in response to what he saw and felt?  
[v17-21]

4. How does Paul open his sermon at the meeting of the Areopagus [v22-23]?

What does his approach to the men and woman of the Areopagus model to us as we consider influencing those in our culture with the message of Jesus?

5. What five things does Paul say about the true God he worships?

v24

v25

vv. 26-28

vv. 28-29

vv. 30-31

6. What is the significance to the people of Athens that God is the Creator of the universe [vv.24-27]

7. Why is it important for Paul to tell the people that God is the Sustainer of life [v.28]?
8. In vv.29-31 Paul calls the people, the worshippers of false gods, to repentance. How does he use the resurrection of Christ to point them to the true God?
9. What different responses to Paul's message do you see throughout this passage? Is it any different today?
10. Some people sneered or mocked Paul because of his message of the resurrection. But it was the resurrection that made him an unashamed worshipper. How does the resurrection help you to stand strong for God despite mocking and opposition?

## **Prayer**

Ask God to give you eyes to see the idols around you and the holy passion to honour and worship God's name proclaiming his truth where ever you go.

## Study 2

# Unashamed Believers

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### Introduction

In Mark 8:38 Jesus said, *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

The apostle Paul, once a persecutor of the church, endured persecution, struggles and life-threatening opposition because of the gospel he proclaimed. Despite all this, he is an unashamed believer. In Romans 1:16 he writes

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*

When and how did you first come into contact with the power of the gospel?

### Read Romans 1:1-7

1. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel. What information about the gospel do you find in these verses?
2. In verses 5-6 we see that the scope of the gospel is for all nations, Jews and Gentiles. How does it make you feel to know that you **'are called to belong to Jesus Christ'**? How does this help in handling opposition?

3. In verse 5 Paul speaks '**of the obedience that comes from faith**'. What is 'faith' and how are obedience and faith naturally connected?

4. What is the ultimate goal of the gospel [v5a]

*'If, therefore, God desires every knee to bow to Jesus and every tongue confess him [Phil.2:9ff], so should we. We should be 'jealous' for the honour of his name – troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed, and all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given honour and glory which are due to it.'* [J. Stott, BST Romans, p53]

Unashamed believers have a burning and passionate zeal for the glory of Jesus.

How passionate is your zeal? How will you build that zeal in 2019?

### **Read Roman 1:8-17**

5. Unashamed and authentic believers have a genuine concern for other believers. In what ways does Paul express his affection for the Romans [vv.8-15]
6. Although Paul is an apostle he is not too proud to acknowledge his need of the blessings of Christian fellowship. In verse 12 Paul says that he hopes that he and the Romans will be "**mutually encouraged by each other's faith**". Why is this mutual encouragement by each other's faith so valuable to Christians?

7. Consider Paul's declaration in verses 16-17. What do these verses reveal about the power of the gospel?
  
8. This passage uses important words like **gospel, salvation, righteousness** and **faith**. How are these terms related to each other?
  
9. This section of Paul's letter ends with the phrase, '**The righteous will live by faith**'. What does this mean in practical terms?
  
10. Paul says in verses 15-16, '**I am so eager to preach...I am not ashamed of the gospel.**' What can you do that expresses a similar enthusiasm for Christ?

## Prayer

In verse 8 Paul says, '**I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.**' What can you thank God for and why? Take time to do that right now.

## Study 3

# Unashamed Followers

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### Introduction Questions

I (Brett) have been a proud Western Sydney Wanderers (WSW) follower since their foundation in April 2012. For those who don't know they are the best football/soccer team in Sydney, in my opinion. However, there have often been times due to their performance, or the behaviour of fellow fans, that I have been ashamed to say I follow WSW.

Has there ever been a time where you've been ashamed of 'following' someone or something? What caused, or was really at the heart of this shame?

### Read Mark 8:27-30

1. Jesus asks his disciples a couple of questions, really it all boils down to one, 'who am I?'

Why is this an important question to answer?

2. How would people you know answer Jesus' question in v.27 and how does that then change the way they relate to him?

### Read Mark 8:31-33

3. In v.29 Peter answers correctly... well at first. How does he get it so wrong in v.31-33?



## Read Mark 8:34-37

4. Jesus takes this opportunity to ensure *all* present understand what it means to follow him. What makes it difficult to follow in the way that Jesus describes in v.34?
5. In v.35-37 Jesus gives an explanation.  
Why is his explanation an uncomfortable one for us?

## Read Mark 8:38

6. Jesus words continue to be awkward, or uncomfortable in v.38.  
What makes them so awkward for us?

By this statement, Jesus makes following *him* and following *his words*, what he teaches, inseparable. Most people won't shame you for following Jesus, particularly if they can determine *who* he is. However, following his words, and all of them, for most, well that's a different thing.

7. What are some of Jesus' words that you find difficult to acknowledge, to be unashamed of?
8. Given his words, it really matters *who* is speaking these words and *what* happens to those who follow. How does v.38 remind us of who Jesus is and the wonderful promise for those who acknowledge Jesus and his words?

Jesus claims to be the Son of Man, a title that only he himself uses for and about himself! What does Daniel 7 teach us about the Son of Man, ultimately Jesus, and how does this add weight to what Jesus said in Mark 8?

### **Read Daniel 7:13-14**

How can you be tempted to be ashamed of Jesus?

How can you be tempted to be ashamed of his words?

How does the reminder of who he is, the Son of Man, help you to live as an unashamed follower?

### **Prayer**

Use your responses to these final questions to direct your prayers and ask God that all of you might be Unashamed Followers of our Lord Jesus Christ and His words.

## Study 4

# Unashamed Proclaimers

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### Introduction

The apostle Paul languishing in a cold dungeon wrote to Timothy, a young pastor, '**So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner...**' [2 Timothy 1:8] because of the wonderful grace of God.

An American Airlines pilot tried to be an unashamed proclaimer and apply his evangelistic zeal to his work life. As flight 34 took off from Los Angeles headed for JFK Airport in New York, the captain welcomed the passengers over the PA and then announced: "Ladies and Gentlemen, would the Christians on board today please identify themselves by raising their hands." The pilot then urged the rest of the passengers to use the four-hour flight to discuss Christianity with those who had identified themselves. He added that he would be keen to discuss the faith with any who were interested. In wake of September 11, there was serious concern and fear by many on the plane. Some rang their relatives. Some thought it was a veiled threat – become a Christian now because I am in charge of the plane.

What do you think of the captain's evangelistic strategy?

### Read Colossians 4:2-6

1. What is the role of prayer in proclaiming the gospel?
2. What is the content of prayer? [See also Eph.6:19-20; 2 Thess.3:1-2]
3. What are Paul's [and other missionaries/evangelists] obligations regarding evangelism [vv.3-4]?

4. What are the Colossians' obligations regarding evangelism [vv.2, 5-6]
5. What do you think it means for our conversation to be 'full of grace, seasoned with salt' [v.6]

### **Read 1 Peter 3:13-16**

6. Why is it that Christians should not fear or be silenced when they face persecution? [vv.14-15]
7. What should Christians always be ready to do? What is the hope that we have?
8. What would it look like to give an apt reply to those who ask us about Christ with gentleness and respect?
9. Why are Christians often reluctant about mentioning their faith to others? How can recognising that Christ is Lord help us to take the opportunities that God gives us?

## **Read Matthew 28:18-20**

- 10.** As we go into the world we are to focus on making disciples of all nations. We must realise that less and less people are linked to a church in Australia and so we must see ourselves as a 'sent' people. We must go to them and not simply be involved with Christian friends.

How do the following verses help us to understand this truth?

Mark 2:13-17

Acts 1:8-9

Rom.10:10-15

- 11.** Where do you rub shoulders and do life with unbelievers? Share any stories you may have of sharing Christ or answering people's questions about the hope that you have? How can you create further opportunities to share the gospel with others?
- 12.** God can use your personal testimony or story of coming to faith to open up opportunities to share the gospel – at youth group, football field, craft group, English classes, kids clubs, at work etc. When was the last time you shared your personal story? What effect did it have? Is there someone you can share your story with in the next week?

## **Prayer**

Pray for God-given opportunities to give a reason for the hope that you have in Christ.

## Study 5

# Unashamed Sufferers

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### Introduction:

Are we “persecuted” today? *[See 5min introductory video online, OR leaders’ notes.]*

The principles found in New Testament texts about persecution can still very much speak to us (despite our relative lack of true persecution) because how we deal with our suffering (big or small) is the same. We need to address the same basic question: when we suffer for following Jesus, how can we remain *unashamed*?

1. In what ways have you suffered (no matter how small you might think they are) because you follow Jesus?

2. What is it about suffering for our faith that can cause us to feel shame?

To counter the shame of suffering for the sake of Jesus, the New Testament gives us a radically different way of interpreting it. It provides a number of reasons for that suffering, as well as assurance that, in the end, we will be vindicated. Let’s look at some of those now.

### Read 1 Pet 2:21; Phil 3:10-11

3. According to these two texts, why do we suffer as Jesus’ followers?

**Read Acts 5:40-41; Heb 12:1-3**

4. How should we respond to the shame of suffering for the sake of Jesus? Why?

**Read 1 Pet 1:6-7**

5. According to Peter, what is one reason we might suffer as Jesus' followers? How have you seen this in *your* life?

**Read 2 Cor 1:5-7.** Then read both Col 1:24 and 2 Tim 1:8, 11-12, keeping in mind that both Colossians and 2 Timothy were written while Paul was imprisoned.

6. According to Paul, what is one reason we might suffer as Jesus' followers? How have you seen this in *your* life?

The famous "by faith" chapter 11 of Hebrews is all about enduring shame and hardship for a reason. See if you can pick it up as you read some edited highlights: Heb 11:24-26; 11:33-40; and also 13:12-14

7. What is the reason all these people endured suffering as God's people? How does this help us to endure shame and mistreatment for being God's people today?

Beyond just Hebrews, whenever suffering and persecution is mentioned in the New Testament, nearby is the promise of future glory. Read the following examples slowly, so you can be encouraged by their (very similar message):

- 1 Peter 4:12-14
- 1 Peter 1:6-9
- 2 Cor 4:16-18
- Rom 8:17
- Phil 2:5-11

8. How has this study helped you rethink how you can be an *unashamed* sufferer for the sake of Jesus?

**Pray:**

- That our own perspective on suffering for our faith will be shaped by the New Testament
- For those whose experience is far different from ours in the type and severity of their suffering



## Study 6

# Unashamed Spirit-filled Servants

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### Introduction

The Holy Spirit who dwells within in all believers of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9) gives us the ability to live as He did. To live a life that blesses, that serves others. This Spirit-filled life is more than counter-cultural. It is life transforming and makes us Spirit-filled servants.

In his first letter, Peter paints a beautiful picture of what it means to live as unashamed Spirit-filled servants. He writes:

*'If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.'*

Do you think it's becoming easier or more difficult to live as Spirit-filled servants in Australia? Explain and discuss.

### Read 1 Peter 4:7-9

There are three exhortations in these verses. Each exhortation could be summed up in a word; we will look at each of the exhortations below

### Spirit-filled servants pray:

1. When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost, Peter quoted the Prophet Joel who called it a pouring out from God in 'the last days'. In v.7 he picks up this same language. Why would this prompt Peter to call the people, and us, to what he does in v.7?

**Spirit-filled servants love:**

2. In v.8 what is the effect of showing love to one another? How does this happen practically in relationships as we love each other? (*See Proverbs 10:12 for help*)

**Spirit-filled servants are hospitable:**

3. What do you think it means to be hospitable to one another? How does this contrast 1 Peter 4:3?
4. How are the practices of prayer, love and hospitality present amongst your friend group, Home Group, Church and even beyond?

**Read 1 Peter 4:10-11**

Peter now addresses the people's spiritual gifts; though he may not call them 'spiritual gifts' they are clearly of God, and so, the same thing.

6. What is the purpose of Christians having gifts from God?

What might this mean for:

- a) God's church?
- b) those outside the church?

7. How does being 'spirit-filled' further impact the way we should speak and serve? Peter makes bold declarations, what does this look like in our everyday interactions' with people?

8. What do we learn about being unashamed Spirit-filled *servants* from the example of Christ? How did he serve?  
Consider John 13:1-17 & Mark 10:35-45
  
9. What is the purpose behind all of these behaviours and how does v.11 ensure God's people keep the correct perspective about the end and remain unashamed to live as Spirit-filled servants?  
(See also 1 Peter 5:8-11)

**Pray:**

Choose a couple of the exhortations and ask that God might strengthen you to keep serving him. You could share some reasons why it is difficult to pray, love and offer hospitality. Also, work through some of the barriers that prevent us from using our gifts, or speaking and serving like God would intend us to. Ask that barriers and difficulties might be removed.

## Study 7

# Unashamed Gatherers

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### Introduction

A family member or friend says to you, '**Why do you waste your time in church on Sundays? You can follow your God without going to church.**'

What would you say?

1. Love is to be key in the Christian church. What does **John 13:34-35** teach us about the quality of love and the impact of love in the gathered community?

How have you seen this love draw people to Christ?

2. In **Acts 2:42-47**, after the conversion and baptism of 3000 people, the church gathered together regularly. What did they do when they met and how was God powerfully at work amongst them?

How can we increase our devotion to the things they were devoted to?

3. Read **Hebrew 10:19-26**. What are the 5 exhortations that spring from Jesus' provision for our reconciliation with the Father?  
v22  
v23  
v24  
v25a  
v25b

How do our gatherings [Sunday services, Bible study groups, youth groups] help us to hold onto the hope of the gospel?

How can we spur one another onto love and good deeds?

Why do we need to meet together and encourage each other?

- 4. Read Galatians 6:1-5.** In living for Christ together there will be times when we fail and need each other's support. Although we are responsible for our own lives [v5] there is also a role to '**carry each other's burdens**' [v2].

How would you feel if you were 'caught in a sin' by a Christian brother or sister? How would you want that brother or sister to treat you?

How can we restore someone with gentleness? Why is it that only spiritual people should engage in this process of restoration [v1]?

- 5. Read Colossians 3:12-17.** What helpful attitudes and characteristics should God's people put on to build a Christ honouring community?

How can we let the Word of God dwell in us richly?

What opportunities exist in our church or groups to teach, admonish and sing as described in verse 16?

How would doing everything '**in the name of the Lord Jesus**' transform what you have to say and do this week within the gathered community and in the wide society [v17]?

**6. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.** Every Christian has a unique part to play in the body of Christ. We all need each other. What does this passage teach about this truth?

Where and how are you using your talents and gifts for the good of the body of Christ? Or where do you think you may be able to serve?

## **Prayer**

Pray with thanks for Christ's church and the privilege of being part of it. Pray that we will 'hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And that we will consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as we see the Day approaching.'

## Study 8

# Unashamed Intercessors

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### Introduction

I've often read the prayers in Scripture, particularly those in the New Testament authors and the stories of Acts; the boldness with which they prayed, and thought, 'I want to pray like that!' But, have I? Do I? Could I pray like them, with that confidence and such boldness?

I wonder if you've felt the same?

It really is an odd practice, prayer. But, true prayer is distinctly Christian because we pray or intercede with *the* living creator God of the Universe. The one who made a way for us to know and so speak to Him through Jesus Christ. Prayer is simple really, but easily complicated.

As Paul Miller puts it in 'A Praying Life':

*Prayer is simply the medium through which we experience and connect to God... Oddly enough, many people struggle to learn how to pray because they are focusing on praying, not on God... focusing on the conversation is like trying to drive while looking at the windshield instead of through it. It freezes us, making us unsure of where to go.*

In his book on prayer he continues:

*Conversation is only the vehicle through which we experience one another. Consequently, prayer is not the centre of this book. Getting to know a person, God, is the centre.*

### Read Acts 4:23-31

1. As we come to this passage, it is important we look at the context. What causes the early Christian church to pray, and how do their circumstances relate and differ to ours?

2. Look closely at the way they address God, why would they start this way? How do they know they can address God this way?
3. The disciples will continue to remember who God is, in prayer. But I wonder how do you/we address God? What picture do you set in your mind when you first begin to pray, individually and also when we pray corporately?
4. In v.25-26 part of Psalm 2 is quoted but the whole Psalm would be in their minds, you might help to read it. How does this reveal God as 'in control' and why would they think of this given their circumstances? (Note v.27-28 are directly linked)
5. How do you understand God's 'power and will' being at work, and how does this passage help correct our understanding and view of God? This helps to prepare us to pray!

The disciples clearly believe that God was in control of all things. It is only after their view or vision of God is clarified, that they begin their bold requests.

### **Read again Acts 4:29-31**

6. Identify the three main requests. How do the disciples unashamedly and boldly start with God and then deliberately pray in relation to their context?



7. This prayer was immersed in God's word. How did God's word drive their prayer and embolden them? What are some dangers in detaching our prayer from God's word?

Tim Keller writes, 'We can define prayer as a *personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God.*' (Prayer, Timothy Keller p.45) When we couple this with Miller's words it is clear that God must always be the starting and end point for prayer.

8. Discuss some difficulties people have with prayer. Why do you think people find prayer difficult?
9. The stories we read in the early chapters of Acts are set in a unique time, the breaking in of the 'age of the Spirit'. Miracles, like the building shaking (v.29), show that this was a special and unique time in history. Though it *can* still happen, we shouldn't expect buildings to shake whenever we pray. How can we be confident that God is answering our prayers that we too are filled with the Holy Spirit? (Remember back to Unashamed Spirit-filled Servants)

### **Pray:**

A key application to this study will be to actually pray. We can spend lots of time talking about prayer and little in the act. So let's pray!

Take time to try and fashion a prayer like the Acts 4 prayer. Think about our context, use Scripture to get the right picture of God and then pray boldly. You pray to the God of the universe, the one who made all things, who has ordered history, including bringing salvation through his Anointed One Jesus. He will reign and rule for all eternity and *you* can know and speak to him!

After this, spend some more time praying through personal requests and asking that God might help overcome the difficulties we have in prayer.

## Study 9

# Unashamed Givers

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### Introduction

We are called to be unashamed givers. To give our lives completely to Christ. **'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'** [Mk. 8:34]

Therefore, in the local church, we all need to be contributors, not consumers.

Mark Conner in **'Transforming Your Church'** [p132] writes,

*'I have a dream of churches all across the land filled with people using their gifts for the glory of God. Ordinary people touching other people for God. Action people, equipped, fervent and mobilized in ministry with a mission in every heart. People who refuse to let life pass them by and who have made a decision to make their life count for God. People of destiny who make a difference in the world around them. You can be one of them.'*

In what ways are you giving yourself to God's purposes?

### Read Romans 12:1-8

1. What are some ways God's grace and mercy [v.1] has been demonstrated in Romans 1-11 [See, for example, 3:24; 4:16; 5:2]
2. Why do you think Paul uses the imagery of *living sacrifices* to describe our proper response to God's mercy?

Why is this kind of worship pleasing to God?

3. J.B. Phillips paraphrases verse 2 as, '**Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mould.**' How are we influenced and pressured to conform to the world?

How does this pressure negatively impact us from being unashamed givers or our time, talent and treasure to God's work?

4. What are some ways we can renew our minds [v2] and so be transformed?
5. How can the realization that we are members of a body [vv.3-8] prevent us from thinking too highly of ourselves [v3]?

Why is humility so important in life and ministry?

6. Some people have a low opinion of themselves and their gifts. How do verses 4-5 encourage such people to be unashamed givers?
7. As you think 'with sober judgement' about yourself, what gift [or gifts] do you think God has given you [vv.3-8, see also 1 Cor12-14; Eph.4:11-13]

How can you use it [them] to benefit the body of Christ?

Read **Matthew 25:14-30**

8. What does this parable teach us about using our gifts and abilities for God-glorifying purposes?

9. Leon Morris [The Gospel According to Matthew, p632] writes that in v29 Jesus *'is laying down a principle of the spiritual life, a principle of great importance. Anyone who has a talent [using the word in the modern sense] of any kind and fails to use it, by that very fact forfeits it. By contrast, anyone who has a talent and uses it to the full finds that the talent develops and grows. This is a law of spiritual life, and we neglect it at our peril.'*

Have you seen this truth played out in your own life or in your church?

How does using our gifts and talents help to develop them and make them more fruitful?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-9**

10. The sermon in this series focussed on being unashamed financial givers to God's work. What does excelling in the grace of giving demonstrate about your lives?

What things can help us grow in to be more generous people?

### **Pray:**

Pray that we will unashamed givers of our lives to God and his purposes in the world.