



Earth-ing my Faith
in Love...

...for all seasons

The Rev'd Ron Browning



If your group purchased 10 or more copies of “Earth-ing our Faith in Love”, then you will have the password to obtain additional material on our web site at www.grassroots.com.au



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EARTH-ING MY FAITH IN LOVE

This topic focuses on the practice of Christian love in the face of some of the realities of the early 21st century. We are all involved in big changes in society. We need a vision of genuine love so that we can express love and not burn out easily. We are made aware of so much suffering in the world. We have different neighbours compared to ten or twenty years ago. We live in a time of such rapid change with IT and mobile phones. How do we express love in such a world? The title **Earth-ing My Faith in Love** reminds us that we urgently need to find a new compassion for the earth so that there is a viable future for our children on this planet.

This Lenten study will open up these themes for group discussion. The gospel reading for the following Sunday is included in order to be used as a part of each weekly study.

It is important to be reminded each

year that we take the journey to Easter through the Lenten season. This is a process for us of re-committing ourselves to God at the Easter celebration, dying and rising with Christ. It is a short journey in which through group participation we often find good surprises along the way – it's a time of discovery and grace. We put our 'L plates' on again! The 'L' is for 'learning again' and of course for 'Lent'. The Church asks us to give ourselves to the Lenten season – to turn to God afresh, and to learn again to walk with Jesus as his disciples in our time.

In your congregation you may have a few people preparing for baptism or confirmation at Easter. They have their 'L plates' on for the time, we can say. We move forward to Easter with them not as Christians who 'know it all' but as fellow travellers who are prepared to put on our 'L plates' again.

The renewal of baptismal vows, often included at Easter, can become a powerful occasion of renewal for us. We make our response of fresh faith after taking up the inspirations and challenges of the Lenten season.

We see what God is



asking of us. We do so in the company of those making the courageous step of faith for the first time in the community of faith.

So, being open to God's guidance, to challenges and delights, let's find out together about what **earth-ing my faith in love** can mean for us ... It will be an exciting few weeks of discovery! ...

Getting Ready

• Leadership:

Everyone Included

All participants need to feel from the start that they are genuinely members of the group, to receive and to give. They are called to encourage each other and be committed to the series.

- Many things get in the road of full attendance of groups – some conversation about making the series a high priority is important. Nobody should be 'cornered' for a response when he or she is not ready.

- Accustomed group participants from the past may need to watch that they don't talk too much! Some of the questions can potentially precipitate a long discussion.

- The group leader may choose to suggest an approximate time allocation for each question.

- Continued discussion can always take place over coffee.

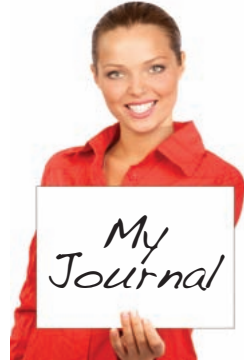
• Creative Approach

This series encourages participants to write down their thoughts and, if they feel inclined (even slightly) to draw, then at times to make rough sketches. People often say "I can't write things" or "I can't draw." What they write or draw is for themselves ... there's nothing 'good' or 'bad' ... there's no test! Be creative in this series. When you write or draw, often more will come to you about the subject at hand. The Church in the past sometimes dampened our imagination – in this series let's encourage it!

• Practical group issues

See Page 5

• Getting the best out of this study



Use the Journal space throughout
You will get much more out of this study series if you keep a notebook, sometimes called a journal, to jot down things you want to remember, thoughts that strike you as you read this booklet or words said by others in the group. The notebook is your

private ‘friend’ during the Lenten season, just for you – doodle in it, draw, express hopes, write your own prayers, maybe keep it by your bed ... add to it at any time...

• Prepare for Each Session

Take time to set aside two 20 minute slots (approximately) during the week before the group meets in order to:

- a Read the Preparation section
- b Read the appointed gospel passage
- c During each 20-minute slot jot down your thoughts including questions, thanksgivings and concerns in whatever way you want.

Today, maybe more than ever, we need a vision of real, active love so that we don't burn out easily.

Jesus had his vision for his work and ministry. It was made clear to him as he was tempted in the wilderness for the forty days before his baptism. His baptism in the Jordan River was a commissioning and an empowering for his ministry.

Notice how short this reading is! Mark leaves us room to imagine how the devil tempted Jesus and how he arrived at having a vision of the Kingdom of God to be lived out on earth. Having left home he was asking himself what his real calling was. If God was giving him power, what was this power to be, and how was it to be used? In the rugged terrain of the wilderness – we might say the outback – he found a vision for his work. He found it through struggle and temptation with the evil powers. He was tempted to use his power in a dominating way and not in the way of love. But he triumphed and became committed to the way of love.

His vision to be put into practice was the Kingdom of God coming on earth.

Spend some time with these few verses imagining Jesus in the wilderness. What do you think it was like for him?

Matthew and Luke give a more detailed story of Jesus' days in the wilderness. The devil led him up a high mountain and to the top of the Temple in Jerusalem in order to tempt him to use his power in a dominating way.

To Think About

In times of aloneness, whether in remote or outback places, or just by being on our own, our minds can go in various directions: we can vividly recall good times and bad times, we can be tempted to go in negative directions, or we can gain a purified vision for the future. When we move through all these things it is like being on a mountain top – you can see yourself and your life more clearly. Sometimes we come to this point after passing through a difficult period of life.

How important times alone really are. God's people need a rhythm of time apart and coming together, of solitude and community. It's good to acknowledge our fear of being alone. We all have this fear. When



we acknowledge it, especially together, we find a way to get over it...

Thinking Especially About the Environment

One of the things for us to focus on,



as a part of our Christian vision to life today, is about nature (the future of our wildernesses and all that sustains life). Because the environment is in so much danger we need to ask ourselves how do we really relate to it in a loving way? What new ways of thinking and behaving is God calling us to?

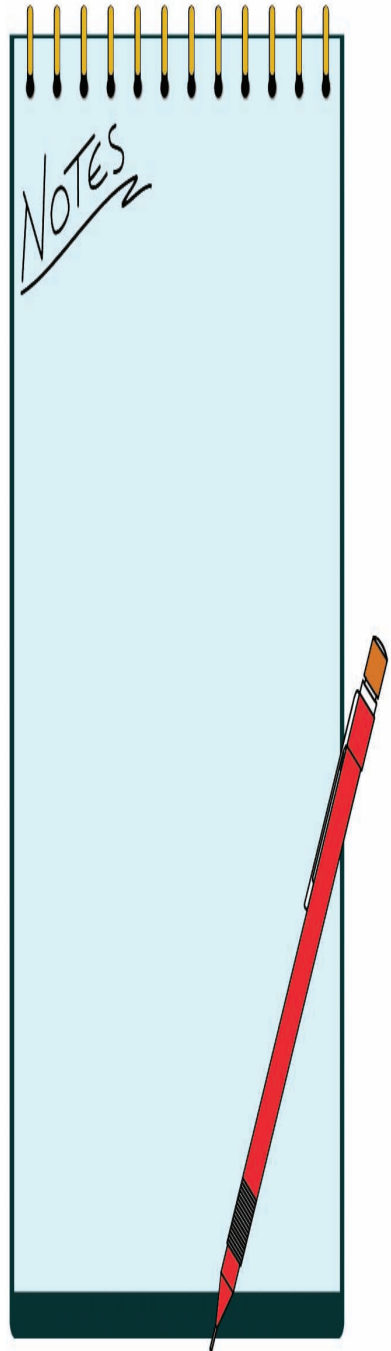
During a Lenten season, in her own small way, one Christian decided to give up driving as her discipline until Easter.

Suggestion:

Jot down your thoughts about these things ... or you may be inclined to draw something ...

As we gather ...

Members will need to spend some time together on the Getting Ready (for the series) on page 5



Focus:

A Vision for Practising Love

**Welcome and Introduction:**

As this is the first time you have come together as a group, each of you might introduce yourself and tell something about yourself, or alternatively, say why you have decided to come along to this study group.

**Opening Prayer:**

Gracious and merciful God, help us to know more of the height, depth, length and breadth of your love for us and the world – the love that embraces us with glory, that goes to the depths of earthly suffering, that stirs us to go the extra mile with others, and which knows no bounds. May we grow in this love, both in our thoughts and our deeds; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Getting Started:**

- You are invited to share something significant to you that happened during the past week.
- What is a favourite place in nature for you? You could either do a quick sketch of it, or write down a few words about what is important to you about it (colours, associations, memories, etc.).

**Read the Scripture Passages:**

Mark 1 : 12-15.

- Can you imagine what might have been going through Jesus' mind as he entered the wilderness? Share your thoughts.
- Why do you think it was such a difficult time for Jesus?

**Share your comments**

1. Share your thoughts about the comments above to do with Jesus being in the wilderness.
2. When did you experience a good time of 'being alone'?

3. A Christian vision of living is about loving and not dominating others. What are some of your thoughts about how to live this out in the community and in your own life?

4. Picture this:

Peeling the carrots!

As usual wasting no time Jane arrives home from work to cook the dinner for her family. Suddenly but quietly she found that while she was peeling the carrots she felt some moment of inner harmony... "I've been rushing to get home, but here I am holding this simple, beautiful vegetable grown in the ground, what colour! and I'm simply still for a moment... I'm privileged to have food and I'm getting ready to be with my family whom I love ..."



What is your reflection about this picture for your own life? Have you had similar experiences in your day-to-day life?

What are the significant points of such stories for being a Christian today?

5. What are other important aspects of this first study for you that maybe have not been drawn out?



My Journal(Page 8)

This is a great opportunity to jot down your thoughts during or after a study session. It will be of great benefit when you look back on this study later on during lent. It also helps to jot down some of the comments others make during the sessions.



Closing Prayer - *To be said together*

If you are comfortable about it, would you like to share a word or phrase that expresses what you have most gained from this study?

A silence, then a short prayer follows. (You may like to include farmers in the prayer.)

The Grace is said together: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, Amen.



Hospitality:

Relax over a cuppa and biscuit or cake!

NEXT WEEK!

- For supper, ask someone to bring along a plunger coffee and desert to share with the group
- Read the material for Study 2 on pages 12-13



After you have undertaken your preparation for next week's study group, give yourself a ✓



The following are out of print or available in very small quantities. They can be purchased as a .pdf document to reprint in your own quantities.

1. My Journey - Topics include Temptation, Conflict, etc - Pdf

2. Wood to the Weave
A very popular study using the symbols of The Passion. - Pdf

3. Prayer - Music to God's Ears
Communication with God, and a practical prayer life. - Pdf

4. Ministry begins with Me
Based on enabling parishioners to exercise their own ministry. - Pdf

5. Lord, Tune me
How to avoid Christian blindness. Living a resurrected life. - Pdf

Other Books still available

6. Nurtured to be Free
Considers the essentials for the task of Evangelism.

7. Good News is still Catchy
A practical look at the task of telling the good news in uncomplicated jargon.

8. Lent with Luke
Based on the book of Luke

9, 10, 11. Being Christian ...

- in the 21st Century
- in the Secular World
- in the Church

The "Curnow Trilogy" are written by Bishop Andrew Curnow. The titles of the three books speak for themselves. Each week deals with the difficulties of being Christian in this world we live in.

12. Lent Re-Visited
This allows us to revisit, re-focus and redirect our Christian lives.

13. Loving God and each other
The title says it all - Written by *Bishop Philip Huggins*

14. A Fresh Start
"A Fresh Start" gives us this opportunity of going back to the basics - *The Rev'd Frank Watts*

15. Staying on Track
A study to aid us in our Christian Journey. Based on Year 'B' OT & NT readings - *Bishop Bill Ray*

16. Anglican Today
A look at what it means to be an Anglican. *Bishop Curnow*

17. Easter Journey
Based on year 'A' Lent readings
Bishop Bill Ray



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