

- 6 *Song of Songs 7*  
The notes refer to customs in other wedding traditions.  
Have you come across any special rituals in weddings you have attended or seen in film or on television?  
Is there room for more flexibility in our pastoral offices to make them more ‘personal’ for the individuals concerned?
- 7 *Psalm 66*  
Each member of a church congregation has a unique relationship with God, and so a unique part to play in the local church? Do you agree with this?  
Does it mean you *have* to get involved, or is there a place for anonymity where someone simply attends services and then returns home?
- 8 *Ephesians 1*  
How do you view the doctrine of predestination (vv.4-5)?  
Did you choose God, or did God choose you, or both?
- 9 *Ephesians 3*  
“I pray that you may ... grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (vv.17-18).  
  
How does Paul’s prayer above impact on you personally?
- 10 *Ephesians 6*  
Have you memorized the six pieces of God’s ‘armour’ (vv.10-18)? Imagine putting each one on in the morning.  
Do some parts fit more easily for you than others?  
And are one or two quite a struggle to ‘accept’ and therefore ‘wear’? Which ones?

### **Closing**

*As usual light a candle, and quietly reflect on the discussion you’ve had and on any challenges that have arisen. Close with the Grace.*

# SACRED

## Group Resources

## Month 18

## Opening Prayer

Lord of my darkest place; let in your light.  
Lord of my greatest fear; let in your peace.  
Lord of my most bitter shame; let in your word of grace.  
Lord of my oldest grudge; let in your forgiveness.  
Lord of my deepest anger; let it out.  
Lord of my loneliest moment; let in your presence.  
Lord of my truest self – my all; let in your wholeness.  
Amen.

*(Alison Pepper)*

## General Question

- 1 Did God speak to you in any special way through any of this month's readings?

## Activity

The 'activity' two months ago was to consider the place of the sense of 'smell' in worship, both in Old Testament times and today. This month we consider the sense of 'taste.' As one of our senses, it is important to our identity. In *Song of Songs*, it is the presence of her lover that is "sweet to the taste" of the girl (2:3). Elsewhere, the Psalmist urges, "taste and see that the Lord is good" (34:8). So, how about in worship? Does it need to appeal to our sense of taste?

To help dwell on this, hold a tasting session of different communion wines. I suggest 3 or 4 alcoholic ones including red and amber (all are easily available) and a couple of non-alcoholic ones (perhaps using blackcurrant juice as one). Sample each (small samples only!) and rank your favourites. Discuss them together, as well as whether you think alcohol should be used at all, and, more pertinently for our purposes here, whether 'taste' actually matters in our worship.

## Further Ideas

*As usual, take on just some of these questions as the group sees fit.*

- 1 *Ezra 3*  
The task of rebuilding the temple created a genuine enthusiasm and emotional engagement in the people.  
  
How do we feel about our local church or cathedral?  
Does it have the same depth of emotional response for us?  
Does the building even matter?  
Do we get involved when there are working parties to tidy the church or churchyard (if your church has one)?
- 2 *Ezra 7*  
What qualities of leadership did you notice in Ezra?  
Can we apply them in church leadership today?
- 3 *Ezra 8*  
Ezra proclaimed a 3-day public fast prior to setting out on the long journey back to Jerusalem.  
Has this something similar ever happened in your own church prior to some momentous event or decision?  
Why not? Have we become too soft in our spirituality?
- 4 *Psalms 62*  
Have there been times in the past month or so when life's circumstances threatened to overwhelm you (e.g. vv.3-4), but somehow your faith in God sustained you (v.2)?  
What happened?
- 5 *Song of Songs*  
What did you make of this book?  
Why do you think it is included in the Bible?  
If you were planning a sermon series on it, what key applications would you draw out for life today?