

- 6 *Genesis 1-50*
To what extent does the book of Genesis demonstrate the possibility of a personal relationship with God?
- 7 *Psalms 8*
I shared the story of being in the desert at night, staring up at the sky and marveling at the ‘celestial paradise’ of stars that was on show. It can lead us to praise the God who lies behind it all, yet who cares for each one of us.
Does this resonate with any experience of your own?
- 8 *Psalms 10*
In contrast, when you’re downcast (*verses 1,14*), perhaps because of the actions of others, acknowledging our helplessness before God can often mark the first step on the road to recovery. Has this too been true for you?
- 9 *Habakkuk 3*
Continuing with this theme, the prophet prays that he’ll yet rejoice even when life is extremely hard (*verses 17-18*).
Is this something you are able to do yourself?
- 10 *Psalms 12*
Exaggerating the truth, deception, boasting and lying can all cause us trouble. Are any of these a challenge for you?
How about when you need to give feedback to someone about something they’ve done but you know it may be hurtful for them to hear?

Closing

Light a candle, reflect on the things you’ve shared, and pray for God’s help in addressing any specific matters that have arisen for you personally. Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 3

Opening Prayer

O God,
bring new life where we are worn and tired;
new love where we have turned hard-hearted;
forgiveness where we have wounded;
and the joy and freedom of your Holy Spirit
where we are prisoners of our selves.
Amen.

(John Bell, Iona Community, extract from a longer prayer)

General Questions

- 1 By following the SACRED scheme, you've now read 90 chapters of the Bible.
Are you surprised by the progress you've made?
Has it become an important part of your routine so that you find that you miss it if you don't manage to read the day's chapter? Or is it still a struggle to find the time?
- 2 It's good to develop the habit of making some notes as you go along about anything that has particularly stood out for you, or challenged you, or that you've struggled with.
Has there been anything like that for you in this month's readings?

Activity

If you are able to do so, play an extract from the DVD of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (the version starring Donny Osmond). The extract is the song 'Close Every Door' (starting at 27:39, ending at 32:03). Notice the interplay of light and dark, reflecting the same interplay within Joseph's heart and mind. What sustained Joseph? What sustains us when at our lowest ebb?

Further Ideas

Spend time on a selection of these questions as the group decides.

- 1 *Genesis 1-50*
A theme running through Genesis is that of individuals abandoning roots to make long journeys, uncertain as to how it will all turn out. Think, for example, of Abram being called by God to set out for a distant land (*chapter 12*), or Jacob fleeing from Laban (*chapter 31*).
Have you ever had to make such a journey?
How did you feel about it both before you set out and after you'd arrived?
- 2 *Genesis 1-50*
Another recurring theme is that of sibling rivalry and favouritism in families. We've seen this with Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and perhaps most graphically in the Joseph saga.
Have you experienced this in your own family?
What lessons we can learn from the way family jealousy was handled by the characters in Genesis?
- 3 *Genesis 33, 45*
On the flip-side of family feuding is forgiveness for all that is past. We see some fascinating examples of this with Jacob and Esau and with Joseph and his brothers.
What did you make of these stories?
- 4 *Genesis 44*
Why do you think Joseph needed to test his brothers?
- 5 *Genesis 1-50*
Having completed the book of Genesis, did you have a favourite character overall? What in particular will you take from their examples in your own walk with God?