



Gospel-centred church  
*What are we aiming for?*

## Bible Study

1. Word of God
2. Word of God
3. Prayer
4. Prayer
5. Baptism
6. Lord's Supper
7. Confessional Statements
8. Worship
9. Community

## Church Series: The Word of God

Aim: The overall aim of the both the bible study and sermon series is to better understand the biblical motivations for a range of church practices. The result will hopefully be a clear alignment between the bible and our practices. Importantly, we need to discover the purposes of God regarding each topic in order to not merely align our church services, but align our lives, as a result of what we learn from God's word.

Context: The importance of speech in everyday life is undeniable. It seems we are created to communicate. God presents himself as a God who speaks, and who communicates in knowable ways to his creatures. This is the most amazing aspect of all creation.

1. Why is it important to have a God who speaks?

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**The Communicative God:** *Genesis 1:1-8, John 1:1 & 14, Deuteronomy 32:1-4, Psalm 19:1-4, 2 Corinthians 4:6.*

2. In what ways does God communicate to humanity? How does this help us know God and know ourselves accurately?

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3. God's word conveys purpose. From the previous verses, what are the purposes of God's word? How does God's word achieve its purpose?

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4. The word of God also communicates the character of God, how does this occur? What characteristics of God do we discover by his word in the previous verses?

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**The word of God is active and personal:** *Hebrews 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Matthew 4:4 Ephesians 6:7, John 6:63, Jeremiah 23:29, 1 Peter 1:23.*

5. What does it mean for the word of God to be active and alive? Do you have any personal experience of God's active and alive word?

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6. Again, we are presented with God's word displaying purpose, what are the purposes of God's word in the previous verses? Have you witnessed these purposes in your life, if so, how?

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7. From the previous personal purposes of God's word, what behaviours must both Christians and the Church be actively engaged in?

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**The word of God with the Spirit and Christ:** *2 Corinthians 3:12-18, 2 Peter 1:21, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-14.*

7. How has the word of God changed from the Old to New Testaments? How is the veil lifted? What is the link in 2 Cor 3:18 between transformation, the word of God and the Spirit?

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8. What is the importance of prophecy as the word of God? What is its relevance to Christians today?

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9. Why is it important for Jesus to speak God's word? Why is it important for God to speak to us by his Son in verse 2, and the Son to be the exact radiance of God's glory in verse 3?

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10. What are the 'things' Christ is sustaining by his powerful word in Heb 1:3?

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11. What does it mean for the word became flesh? How does this increase our knowledge of God from the Old Testament?

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**The word of God as guidance and wisdom:** *Luke 11:28, Revelation 1:3, Proverbs 30:5, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:16, John 17:17, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 119:105.*

12. What guidance and wisdom have you received from God's word in your life? Have there been times when the word of God has seemed burdensome and difficult? How did this work out in your life?

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13. What are the blessings of Luke 11:28 and Rev 1:3?

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14. What are the encouragements and teachings Romans 15:4 is referring to?

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15. List ways you have personally been taught, rebuked, corrected and trained by the word of God. How did this process occur? *2 Timothy 3:16 and Colossians 3:16.*

16. How can we help others learn from the word of God?

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17. Summarise study 1 and 2 regarding

i. What is the word of God?

ii. What is its purpose?

iii. How can it be used to help non-believers?

## Church Series: Prayer

Aim: To grasp the relational beauty and power of prayer. To understand how prayer is a chosen method of God to communicate with his people. To understand how prayer is a primary means of godly transformation.

Context: Nothing makes a Christian feel guiltier than mentioning prayer. The guilt is over our lack of prayer measured against the current prayer warriors or saints of the past.

1. However, is this feeling of guilt a spiritual or carnal sign, and how could you know the difference? (2 Cor 7:9-11)

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**Prayer is asking:** *Matthew 7:7-11, 18:19-20, 21:21-22, Luke 11:9-13, John 14:12-14, 15:7-8, 16:23-24, 1 John 3:22, 5:14-15.*

2. What does it mean to ask God for 'things'? What is the 'it' in Matthew 7:7?

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3. The context of the above verses is extremely important, how does each context help us understand what 'asking' means? Additionally, some passages like John 14:12-14 give us the result of asking, namely, to glorify the father. How does understanding the result help us understand the aim of asking? (*This hopefully helps us understand why God does not grant everything we ask*).

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**Prayer involves Receiving:** *Genesis 20:17, 25:21, 32:11, Exodus 33:13, Romans 8:26, Phil 4:4-7, 1 Samuel 1:10-17.*

4. What can be deduced is a purpose of prayer from the above verses? What are the dangers and benefits of these prayers?

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5. Can a person pray without the Holy Spirit? A similar, but different question is, does God listen to the prayers of non-Christians?

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**Prayer involves denying:** *James 1:6-7, 4:3, Psalm 66:18, Job 35:12, Proverbs 21:13.*

6. Apart from the answer to question 5, does God answer all prayers, if not, why not?

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7. Can you think of situations in Scripture where God has refused to answer prayer? What were the circumstances? Have similar circumstances occurred in your life?

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Prayer involves crying out: *Psalm 4:1-2, 5:1-4, 39:12-13, 54:1-4, 55:1-5, 61:1-2.*

8. The Psalms are littered with prayers of anguish and hurt where the psalmist feels desolate in life and feels God is absent in prayer, why is it important these prayers are in God's word?

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9. What led the psalmist to cry out to God? Have you felt the way the psalmist has? Have you prayed this way to God, and if so, how did God respond?

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10. This is a good time to end study 1 on prayer and focus on praying. Pray as a group in a way which suits your group, focusing on aspects from the study,

- i. Ask God for help
- ii. Ask God to change your heart
- iii. Ask God to show you things he will not answer
- iv. Bring before God aspects of life which are painful
- v. Bring your petitions before him

**The Lord's Prayer:** *Luke 11:1-9, Matthew 6:5-15.*

11. What is the importance of Matthew 6:5-8 in understanding the meaning of the Lord's Prayer?

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12. What is the structure of the Lord's Prayer? How does this help shape the content for our prayers?

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13. Define the following and then discuss their importance to both prayer and life: daily bread, forgiveness, temptation and evil.

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**Prayer is ministry:** *Philemon 1:4-6, 22, 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12, Romans 1:8-11, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, Ephesians 1:15-23,6:18-19, Colossians 1:9-12, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, Philippians 1:8-11.*

14. Prayer is a sign of our desires and hopes, therefore what desires and hopes are contained in the above verses? What prayerful changes must you make?

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15. Many passages (like *Rom 1:8, Eph 1:16, Col 1:3, Phil 1:3-4, 2 Thess 1:3, 1 Thess 1:2*) mention Paul’s love of praying for his brothers and sisters in Christ, why is this important? How could we adopt these lessons in our prayer life?

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16. List all the ministry objectives in the above prayers, and then spend some time praying for similar objectives in both your life and church community (*also read John 17:9-26*).

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## Church Series: Baptism

Aim: To comprehend the biblical foundation for baptism. To apply this knowledge to both believer baptism and infant baptism.

Context: Baptism is in a spiritual quagmire in the evangelical church because of our misunderstanding regarding its importance and its sectarian history. We either neglect it totally, for fear of baptising unbelievers or we over-emphasise it in order to use it as the measure of church membership. Baptism is one of the most divisive issues in the history of the church.

1. From your knowledge (without checking the Bible), what is the meaning of baptism in the New Testament? And what does the Anglican denomination believe about baptism?

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**Baptism as repentance, conversion and regeneration:** *Matthew 3:6-11, Mark 1:4-5, Luke 3:12, John 1:24-33, Acts 1:5,2:38-41, 8:12-19, 8:36-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 19:1-5, 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 5:26.*

2. From John the Baptist in the Gospels, what is the purpose of baptism? How was this purpose achieved in baptism?

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3. How did baptism change between the Gospels and Acts? How did it stay the same? What were the reasons for these changes? How might these answers help us understand a purpose for baptism in the current church?

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4. Should every believer in Jesus Christ be baptised, why, why not?

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5. What is the link between the Holy Spirit and Baptism?

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**Baptism as metaphor:** *Romans 6:1-4, Mark 10:38-39, Luke 12:50, 1 Corinthians 10:2, Galatians 3:26-27, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 5:26.*

6. What is the metaphorical and literal understanding of Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50?  
How does this help our understanding of baptism?

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7. How is Romans 6:1-4 a logical extension of Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50?

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8. Romans 6 is talking about both a metaphoric and literal baptism, literally your physical baptism is a sign of repentance, conversion and regeneration. However, how have you been baptised into his death? And, how in verse 4 have you been buried and raised?

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**Baptism as covenantal identity:** *Matthew 3:13-17, Galatians 3:27, Acts 10:47-48, 16:15,33, 19:1-5, Colossians 2:11-13, 1 Corinthians 1:16,10:2.*

9. Baptism is a sign of identity, a sign of which team you are aligned to. This concept originated with Jesus' own baptism. How is the baptism of Jesus a sign of which team he is on?

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10. Historically, baptism became a covenant marker much like circumcision was in the Old Testament. From your answers regarding the meaning of baptism, how might this transfer from circumcision to baptism have occurred?

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11. Infant baptism originated in order to convey a child's membership of the covenant. What are the positive and negative implications of this view of baptism?

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## Church Series: Lord's Supper

Aim: To understand the Old Testament Passover and its significance to Jesus' Last Supper. To understand how the Last Supper became the biblical Lord's Supper. To apply the Later New Testament understanding of the Lord's Supper to our congregational setting.

Context: The most divisive words in the history of the church sadly are those designed by Jesus to be glorious, 'this is my body.' The name which you ascribe to the Last Supper in church tradition conveys the understanding that tradition holds regarding the meaning of that phrase and others. Each of the names, 'Communion' 'Lord's Supper' 'Remembrance Meal' 'Fellowship Meal' 'Mass' 'Eucharist' all convey a theology of both doctrine and practice.

1. What is your understanding of what happens to the bread and wine during the consecration of the Lord's Supper?

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**Old Testament Context: The Passover** *Exodus 12:1-20, 43-51.*

2. What are the aims of the Passover?

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3. What does the lamb, the bread and the blood symbolize in the original Passover? Why do they symbolize these realities in Exodus?

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4. What did it mean for the people of God to enact Exodus 12:14?

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**The Passover/Last Supper in the Gospels:** *Matthew 26:26-30, Luke 22:14-23, Mark 14:12-26.*

5. Are there any differences between the Gospel accounts which affect the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

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6. What is the basic outline of events of the Lord's Supper and their meaning in the text?

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7. Jesus introduces the movement away from a Passover understanding with his phrase in Mat 26:26, "take and eat: this is my body." In the Gospels what are the options in understanding that phrase and what is the most likely answer to its meaning.



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8. Mat 26:28 links the Last Supper to two important ideas, first the wine as symbolic for the blood of Jesus and second, the supper as symbolic for a covenant. What are the options for understanding, “this is my blood of the covenant?”

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9. The phrase, “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” gives a result or purpose of the pouring out of wine/blood. What is our understanding of that phrase in its original context and second, when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper?

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**The Eucharist in the Later New Testament: 1 Corinthians 11:20-26.**

10. The word ‘eucharist’ means to give thanks, does this word help us understand the nature of the Lord’s Supper?

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11. The concept of Passover restrictions from Exodus 12 occur in 1 Corinthians, what is the importance of the Lord's Supper restrictions and warnings?

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12. Answer from the Gospels these debated historical issues which have formed the backdrop to lots of historical debate,

- i. Is Jesus present in the Eucharist after his ascension?
- ii. Does the wine and bread become the physical body of Jesus at consecration?
- iii. Can children share in the Eucharist?
- iv. Can non-believers take the Eucharist, and what are the consequences?
- v. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist?
- vi. Do any of our church practices need changing regarding the Eucharist?

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## Church Series: Creeds and Confessional Statements

Aim: To understand the biblical reasons creeds and confessions are recorded as Scripture.  
To understand their importance for both individual and congregational faith.

Context: The Latin word credo means “I believe” and simply affirms the content about God the Trinity from the Scriptures is true. Creeds are both informal statements affirming the veracity of what must be believed, and formal statements aimed at codifying that belief.  
We’ll begin with the informal statements about belief and see how they can help us in our faith.

1. Summarize in your own words the 5 most important facts about Jesus Christ. After completion, answer, how did you decide what to include and what to leave out of the list?

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**Belief in Scripture:** *1 Corinthians 11:28-31, 16:13, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Colossians 1:23, 2:7, Jude 3, 20, 1 Timothy 6:12-14, Philippians 1:27, Galatians 6:4, Lamentations 3:40.*

2. What ways does Scripture state are the methods for Christians both acquiring and maintaining knowledge of Jesus Christ? How could we as individuals and a church implement these ideas?

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**CreeDs in Scripture:** *Deuteronomy 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Ephesians 4:4-6, Colossians 1:15-20, Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Timothy 1:15, 3:15-16, 2 Timothy 2:11, Jude 24-25, Romans 16:25-27, 2 Corinthians 13:14.*

3. What are the aims in Scripture of creeds?

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4. What are the foundational beliefs about Jesus contained in the creeds? Which of those foundational teachings do you struggle to believe the most and why?

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5. How were creeds used by the authors to teach and encourage their readers? How can creeds in Scripture be used by the current church?

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6. Creeds were often set to music, what was the benefit of this process and should we be doing the same?

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**Creedal Statements in Congregational liturgy:**

7. Creedal and Confessional Statements are both denominational and congregational, for example there are the 39 Articles of Faith for the Church of England and there is the Nicene Creed which is used in congregational situations. What are the positives and negatives with both of these types of creedal statements?

8. Read the Nicene Creed below and highlight and discuss any theology or information you either don't understand or think is difficult to believe and then discuss as a group. How can we at St Marys use creeds in a congregational setting and what factors affect our decisions?

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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## Church Series: Worship & Liturgy

Aim: To learn the scope of the biblical definition of worship and apply it to our life.

Context: Worship is a difficult concept to define because it is often tied to our understanding and experience of God. Some have a wide definition which includes walking in the bush or standing on a beach whilst others have a narrower definition which is narrowed to singing and prayer. An interesting video on YouTube by Bob Kauflin is listed below as an aide, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTGQFwWrNXQ>,

1. What is worship? What is liturgy? What 'healthy or unhealthy tensions' do we have at St. Marys?

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**Worship in the Old Testament:** *Genesis 24:48, 47:31, Exodus 4:31, 12:27, Deuteronomy 6:13, 11:16, 26:10, 30:17, Judges 7:15.*

2. Summarize the early Old Testament's understanding of worship? How does this understanding help us at St Marys?

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3. What is the link and its importance between worship and serving God?

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**The Worship of Jesus:** *Matthew 14:28-33, John 2:13-21, 4:22-26.*

2. What does it mean to worship Jesus in Matthew 14? How can this help our worship of Jesus?

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3. Why did Jesus drive out the money changers in John 2? How does this event help us understand Jesus' worship of God the Father?

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4. What does worship in John 4:23-24 mean? How are we to worship in Spirit and truth?

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5. Some usages of worship in the New Testament after the Book of Acts are negative, for example Romans 1:25 and Colossians 2:18, 33. How do these examples inform us to the meaning of the word worship? What must be avoided?

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**Worship in the New Testament:** *1 Corinthians 14:25, Acts 13:2, 24:11, Romans 12:1, Colossians 3:14-17, Revelation 4:10, 5:14, 7:11.*

6. Define how worship is used in the Later New Testament? Is there any difference between the Old Testament, Jesus and the Later New Testament, and if so, what is it and what is the importance?

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7. What behaviours flow from Scriptures understanding of worship?

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Liturgy: *Exodus 12:25-28, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16-17.*

7. Outline some of your experience with liturgy? From the readings, what are the benefits of liturgy?

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8. How should we decide if liturgy is God honouring or not? What is our motive in changing or keeping liturgical practices?

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## Church Series: Community

Aim: To understand how Jesus Christ affected the building up and sustaining of the early Church. To learn if there are aspects of this understanding we can appropriate for our context.

Context: The concept of 'church community' has almost become its own doctrinal God in evangelical circles. This means people are just as likely to leave a church over not being welcomed as they are for doctrinal reasons.

1. What are the positive and negative aspects of being part of a church community?

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2. What are the differences between a church community and a non-church community like a sporting group or Lions Club? How are these differences manifested in the aims of the church community?

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**Old Testament Community:** *Genesis 28:3, 35:11, 48:4, Exodus 1:1-7, 34:31-35:5, Leviticus 4:13-15, 20-21.*

3. What are the characteristics of the Israelite community? Why did God construct the community this way?

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4. Is individual responsibility or autonomy ruined by God's understanding of community, why or why not?

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**Disciples as Community:** *John 13:1-20, Mark 9:34-35.*

5. What are the characteristics of the community of disciples and why?

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6. What is both the meaning of Mark 9:35 in its original context and in our modern context?

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7. How could we appropriate the teaching from John 13 to our community at St Marys?

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**Acts as Community:** Acts 2:42-47, 4:31-37.

7. Should we be looking to copy the Acts community in both character and practice and how do we decide?

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8. Summarise the traits of community from the Later Testament (*Romans 15:26, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 8:1-4, 9:13, Philippians 1:3-6, 2:1-2, 3:10, Philemon 1:6, 1 John 1:3-7*)

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9. What are some practical improvements we could make in order to foster a biblical community at St Marys?

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