

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

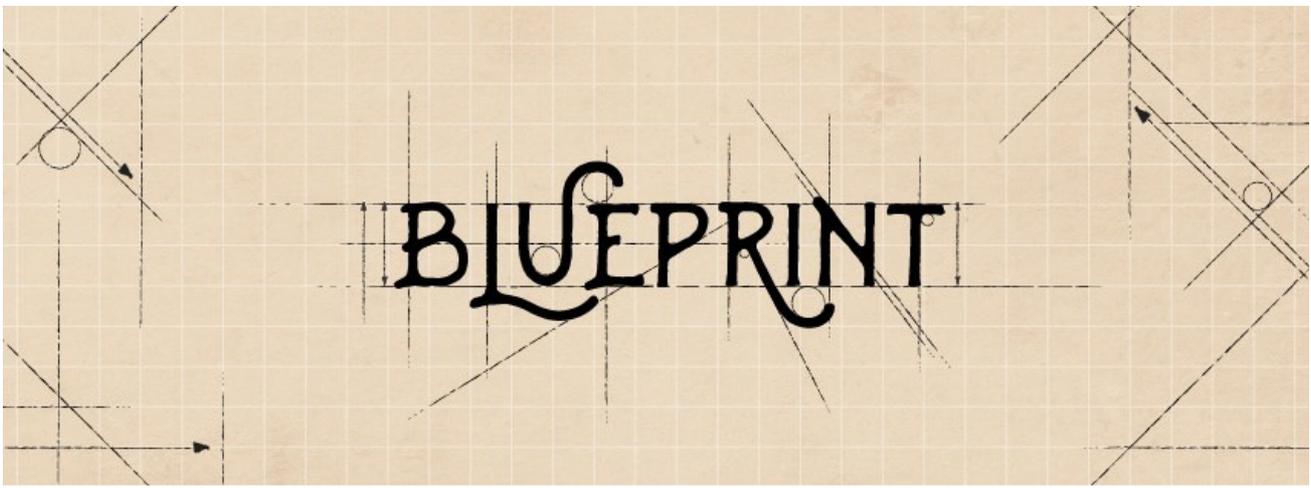
Firstly, you will notice that at the start of each lesson there are three important bits of information. These will be the basic tools you need to lead the study.

All Scripture will appear in this BLUE colour. All Scripture references are taken from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

All discussion questions are in this GREEN colour. These discussion questions are meant to help open up times of sharing in your group.

Occasionally you will see text in RED. Red text are some ideas and thoughts that you may want to use for your group.

The bulk of the text will be in BLACK. This is the script and information for your lesson. However, please do not stick to the script word for word. The information is there just to serve as a guideline. Please feel free to lead or facilitate the discussion in the way which GOD is leading you.



### **Community Group Study**

Blueprint: Dwelling In the Word - Colossians 3:15-17

Pastor Tony Read

18 March 2018

The theme of Pastor Tony's message and the study this week is "Dwell." The main point of Ps Tony's message was an encouragement to spend more time in God's word.

Before you start preparing for this study, take some time by yourself to reflect on these questions:

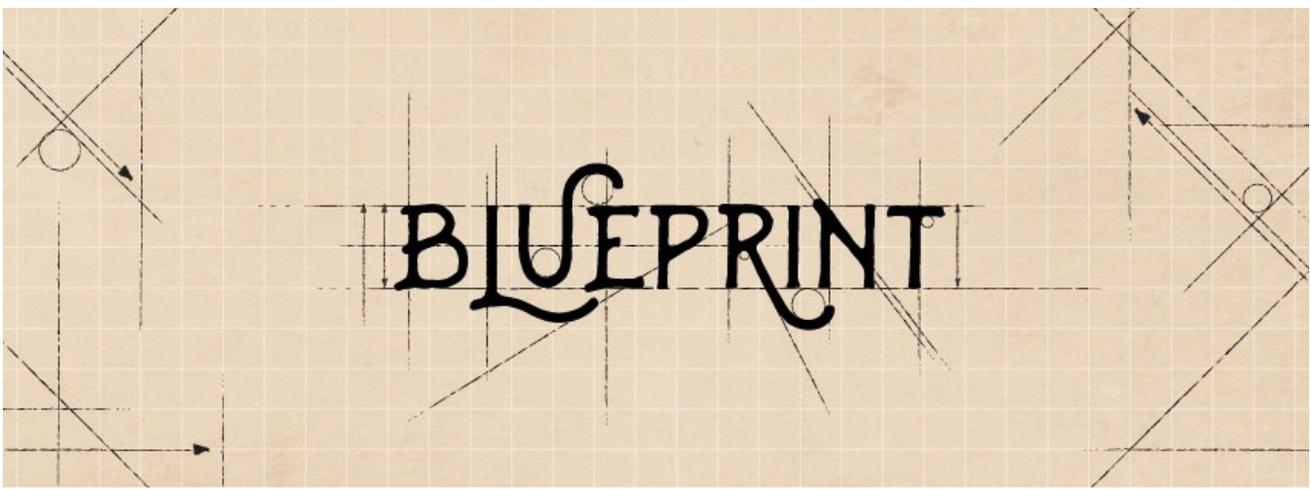
- **Why do I read the Bible?**
- **How much time and effort do I spend reading the Bible?**
- **How does what I read in the Bible impact my life?**

Reading the Bible is a challenge for a lot of Christians. Perhaps it's because the Bible can be hard to understand at times, it may be because some parts of the Bible sound quite boring and if we are honest, sometimes we are just too busy to read God's word.

This study ought to help **encourage** you and your group to find out how we can do what Colossians 3:15-17 tells us to do and "let the message of Christ **dwell** amongst you richly."

Make sure that the tone of this study is challenging but not condemning. It is important to lead the people in your group to spend more time in God's word. At the same time, we need to understand that everyone is on a different journey. If there are people in your group who are having trouble reading and understanding God's word, this is the time to encourage them!

Please note that throughout this study, the terms '**word of God**', '**message of Christ**', '**Scripture**' and '**the Bible**' are used interchangeably. These terms are always meant to refer to the entire message of the Bible (both Old and New Testament). I hope that this isn't too confusing!



Opening Discussion Questions:

- What is your favourite book? Why is this book your favourite?
- What are your Bible reading habits like?

Reading the Bible seems to be one of those activities that can be used to define how good a Christian you are. The more Christian you are; the more time you spend reading the Bible. Those who are “super Christians” are even able to recite many Bible verses from memory!

- How do you feel about your Bible reading habits?

Whilst it is true that we should spend time reading and studying the Bible, we also need to acknowledge that this is not always an easy thing to do. Hopefully through this study we will learn how to encourage each other to read and study the Bible.

This is important because the Bible is God’s word and He wants us to spend time reading His word. When this is done in a good and healthy way, there is SO MUCH we can learn about God, who He is and how He wants us to live.

Knowing God’s word is also essential to growing as a big person in our relationship with Him. Listen carefully to The Vine’s statement of faith on what we believe about the Bible;

**Scripture<sup>1</sup>**

*We believe Scripture is the inspired, authoritative written word of God, penned by people through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Both the Old and New Testaments testify uniquely to God’s true nature and his saving acts in history. Scripture must be prayerfully interpreted both individually and corporately with the help of the Holy Spirit and with an appreciation for its historical context. The community of faith lives under the authority of Scripture, seeks to practice its life-giving teaching, and publically proclaims its saving message of truth and hope.*

- What are your thoughts on this statement regarding Scripture?

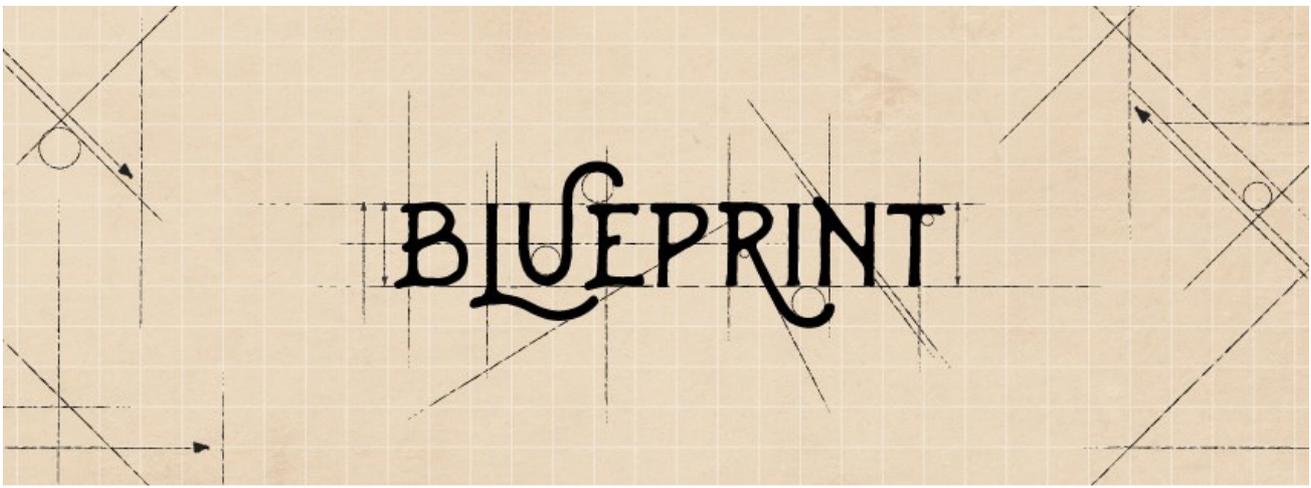
This is why in this study we are focusing on the word ‘**dwell**’. We love the word of God and take it very seriously. Therefore, we want to learn how we can allow God’s word to shape and impact our lives.

Read Colossians 3:15-17 and remind yourself what it says.

**Colossians 3:15-17**

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<sup>1</sup> From The Vine Church Statement of Faith - <http://www.thevine.org.hk/what-we-believe/#1517365626618-416dcaa2-36a6>



*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Remember what was said in last week's study? The message of Christ is not just the words that Jesus himself spoke but it is the overall message of the gospel. In fact, we can expand that even more to say that, for Christians today, the message of Christ includes the whole Bible, both New and Old Testaments.

- What images or emotions come to mind when you think about the word 'dwell'?
- What do you think it means to 'dwell' on 'the message of Christ'?

When you think of the word 'dwell' you are probably **not** thinking about a short period of time.

If you are dwelling it means that you are probably spending a significant amount of time there. In his message, Pastor Tony used the analogy between welcoming a house guest and welcoming a new member of the family into your home.

If you have house guests visiting your house, they will stay for a short while and then (hopefully) leave. However, if you are welcoming a spouse or a new-born baby into your home, it's permanent.

In the same way, the Bible shouldn't be something that we visit every now and then. The Bible needs to become a permanent and integral part of our lives. Perhaps this does mean that you need to spend time in God's word on a frequent and regular basis.

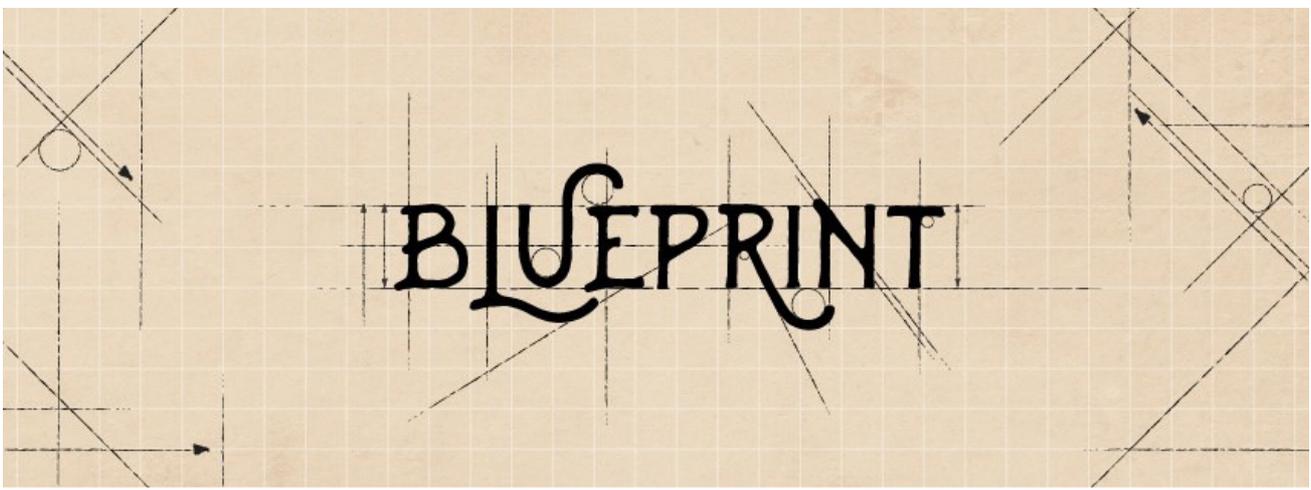
- How much time do you spend on reading and studying the Bible?
- How does this compare with your other activities?

Not only does the Bible need to become a permanent part of our lives, it also needs to change our lives. Once you welcome a new born baby or a spouse into your life, you cannot live as you lived before.

Similarly, when we make the Bible a part of our lives, we have to allow God's word to change us.

- How has the Bible changed the way you live your life?

To quickly summarise what we have said so far:



- God's word needs to become a permanent part of our lives.
- We need to let God's word shape and change the way we live.

Paul says that the message of Christ is to dwell amongst you **richly**. The word 'rich' means wealth, abundance and plentiful. Our time spent in God's word needs to be abundant and plentiful.

God's word should also shape and change us. Paul says that we ought to '**teach and admonish**' each other. In other words, the message of Christ should have a profound impact on our lives.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, these two things should be no surprise to you. If we are serious about our relationship with God, these are goals that we should already be aiming for. The real challenge is **HOW?**

Remember that Paul is writing to a community of Christians, not just an individual. Therefore, I think that we have a responsibility as a community to encourage each other to reach these goals.

*Split your group into smaller groups of three. This will allow more people to share their ideas. In their groups of three ask them to discuss these questions with each other:*

- What struggles have you had in your journey of reading and studying the Bible
- What suggestions do you have to help set aside time in your schedule to read and study the Bible?
- How can we support and encourage each other in this journey?

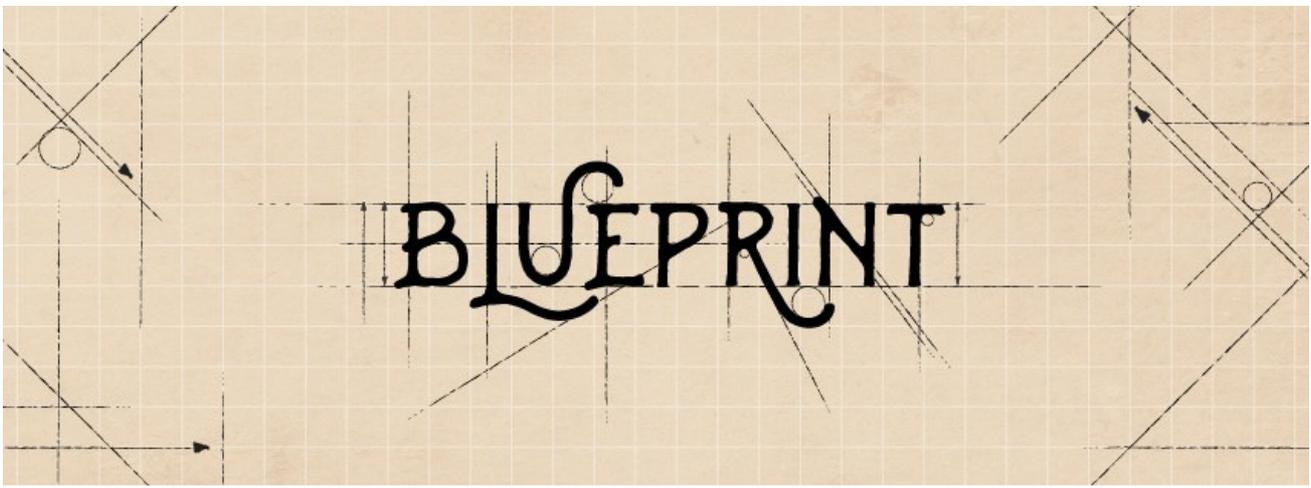
*Give these small groups some significant time to discuss these questions. Ask them to write them down. Each group should then take turns to summarise their thoughts and ideas with the entire group. Hopefully, everyone will come away from this time with a few new ideas about how to let the Bible impact their lives.*

## **A FEW HELPFUL RESOURCES**

In 2 Peter 3:16 the author says

*"He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."*

Did you catch what this verse is saying? Even the writers of the Bible say that the Bible can be hard to understand. As Ps Tony pointed out, one of the reasons why we may not have a healthy relationship with the Bible is because we find reading and studying the Bible to be quite intimidating.



Whilst it may take a little effort, with the right help and guidance, everyone should be able to get enough of an understanding so that studying the Bible can become an enjoyable process. Here are some resources that you might find helpful:

[How To Read the Bible for All It's Worth](#) - *Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart*

An introduction to the nature of Scripture and how to read and best understand each of the key literary forms in the Bible.

[How to read the Bible Book by Book](#) - *Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart*

A basic commentary and contextual notes for every book of the Bible. Ideal as a companion to readers.

[The Bible Project](#) –*Online Resource*  
(<https://thebibleproject.com/>)

A free, well produced and researched video series that visually walks its audience through books of the Bible and other key themes. Ideal for visual learners. Some study resources are also provided.

These resources will hopefully help you in your journey of dwelling in God's word!

Pray

End