

Love for the Future: Being at Home on the Earth

Exploration Group

Session 6 – On Eagles’s Wings

THEME: WISDOM AND LOVE

Wisdom is an English word that is not often used now. We talk about people being clever, smart, successful, brilliant, shrewd, and bright, but rarely about them being wise. Perhaps because we know they aren't. Perhaps because we have stopped thinking about and looking for wisdom.



In many ancient societies people did look for wisdom. Wisdom was seen as the answer to the question of how they were to live. Wisdom was about how people were to get on with each other, and about their relationship with the world, or at least the part of it with which they had dealings. It was highly prized and what was believed to be wisdom was passed on in stories, poems, proverbs and songs.

A word that is often used now is the word 'love'. There are probably more stories, poems and songs about love than about any other subject. But there can be different kinds of love. There is the love which is a fondness for some person or thing: a child, a particular place, a food or a style of music. There is the love which is a deep and strong friendship between people. There is the love which is a strong emotional and physical attraction between two people. In Greek there are different words for these kinds of love: *storge*, *philia* and *eros*.

In the New Testament a fourth word is used: *agape* (pronounced 'agapay'). This is the love that Jesus teaches and that Jesus shows. It is, says John's gospel, what God has for the world.

Love for other people might be summed up as seeing what is good in them and doing what is good for them. As such it will evoke compassion and work out in justice.

Love for God will give rise to an appreciation of God's creation and a trust in God's creative love. This love gives a direction and energy to life as it resonates with the energy, or Spirit, of God.

In the book of Isaiah there is a passage which is addressed to a group of downtrodden people, beginning to lose hope. He says that 'those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.' (Isaiah 40.31)

The rising flight of an eagle can be a symbol of hope. An eagle can also be a symbol of wisdom. An eagle is able to see over a wide area from its high curving flight. With its sharp eyesight is also able to see the detail in the land below.

In our culture of ever increasing specialism, wisdom will involve having a broad view, being able to see how different actions and possibilities fit together and how they might work out over time. It will also involve not ignoring the details of how things actually work.

Wisdom will give the view. Love will give the direction and the energy.

In this session we will share our experiences of encountering wisdom, and celebrate the love we see in Jesus and are told to live out ourselves.

READING

David Osborne, *Love for the Future: a journey* (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2013) chapters 11, 12 and Conclusion.

C.S.Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960)

M Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (London: Random House, 1983)

E.F.Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1973)

PREPARATION

Think of someone you know or have known, who was or is wise? They might be someone you have known personally; or a writer, artist or scientist you have come across; or a politician you know about. What was it about them that made them 'wise'?

GROUP SESSION

1. Introduction to theme: Wisdom and Love

(i) If all the group members have read chapters 11 and 12 of the book *Love for the Future*, or the introduction above, move straight to (ii) If not, read through the introduction now.

(ii) Discuss any or all of the following:

Are members of the group familiar with the idea that there are different kinds of love? If so, where have you come across it?

In what ways might it be helpful to think in terms of different kinds of love? And how might it be unhelpful?

Did you find it easy or hard to think of a 'wise' person? Why was that?

2. Activity

(i) Have a **simple meal** together and have a piece of **bread** or a roll and a **glass of wine** on the table, or if you are sitting in low chairs, on a coffee table in the centre.

As you are having the meal: tell each other about the '**wise**' **person** you have thought of.

(ii) After the meal: read the three short passages from the **Bible** below.

(iii) Then someone take the piece of **bread**, break it up and pass it round so that everyone can have a piece.

Then pass round the glass of **wine** and all take a sip.

(iv) After this: **read** the passage you chose from last week, and then play the piece of **music** you selected.

3. Conclusions

This is the end of the course. All tell each other what you hope to be doing as an individual and with others as a consequence of what you have discussed and shared together during the course.

4. Prayer

Finish by reading together this **prayer**:

God beyond us,
God among us,
God around us,
God within us;
you call the cosmos into being and love your creation;
help us, as disciples of Jesus,
to be open to your Spirit's gifts of wonder, joy and simplicity;
to share your compassion for the earth and its people;

to work with you for justice, peace and healing, and to live with faith, hope, wisdom, and love. Amen.

Note: the session has some resemblance to a communion service. It is an ancient Christian practice known as an 'agape meal' which may have been how the communion service originated. Agape meals have taken place many times down the centuries, particularly as a way of enabling Christians to worship God, remember Jesus and celebrate their fellowship, without the constraints of church rules.

Bible Readings for Session 6:

Isaiah 40.28-31

1 Corinthians 11.23-25

John 15.9-11

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