

Care-Fully Living
Small Group Study by B. Callen, June 2021

Introduction (*From June Chats*)

In year 7, my nieces were given a day-old chick as a class project. Their job was to keep it alive for a month. It was a project designed to teach them responsibility, managing and caring for other creatures. Life lessons. If they could look after a small chick, they could be trusted with looking after bigger things. Many named their chicks immediately, they gave them shelter and warmth, and a lucky few enjoyed watching their chicks grow from cute, fluffy things to fruitful backyard hens. Many more students discovered how fragile life is. A day-old chick can easily not be a two-day old chick. It can be trampled, get too cold, not eat, be too weak, get squashed or eaten by dogs. This taught the children other lessons, such as grief and loss, and also taught some parents where they could find more similar-looking baby chickens.

For my niece 'Dixie 2.0' eventually grew up. It liked warm porridge in the morning, loved people, followed you around, was surprisingly personable and became part of the family. It laid fresh eggs every morning... until a fox decided to join them for breakfast too.

It was an exercise in stewardship.

Do you want to live a life that Jesus promises: one that is full and abundant? Do you want to tread on this earth with care? Being respectful, taking care of the good things God has given us?

I think we all realise that a full abundant life treats the gifts of God as being precious, rather than having a single-use, disposable attitude. This stewardship series is all about Care-Fully Living. How do we treat with great care the gifts of people, possessions, our planet, our prowess and the peace we find in Jesus?

God gives us many wondrous gifts, such as time, treasure and talents, and places them in our outstretched hands and says, "*There you go... let's see what you do with that*".

For us at BCUC, June is going to be stewardship month. Now for some this phrase may bring memories of elders knocking on doors to talk seriously about how much more money your household is going to commit to the work of the local church. You may be pleased to know that is not what's going to happen.

What we are going to do is look at the concept of biblical stewardship in a far more holistic way. A key verse is from 1 Peter 4:10 "*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*" The Greek word for steward is from 'oikonomos' in reference to the manager of the household. It's where we get the word 'economy'. It is also used in reference to our Christian faith. Paul says "We are to be household managers of the mystery of Christ that is the Gospel"(1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

So what are the various gifts we have? When our eyes are focussed on Jesus, we see all of life as a gift. James 1:17 says "*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights*". Relationally, stewardship is about caring. For five weeks, we will have a series

called: **"Care-fully Living: stewardship for all of life"**. God has gifted us abundantly. Are we making the most of what God has given us, with great thankfulness and praise? We will look at the 5 P's of Care-fully Living:

- **People** (relationships and friends)
- **Possessions** (particularly our financial resources)
- **Prowess** (our gifts and talents)
- **Planet** (caring for creation and our environment)
- **Promise** (living out our faith)

Question: What topics from this list are unsurprising? Which ones are unexpected? What topics would you want to add? Which topic are looking forward to most and why?

The passage from 1 Peter 4 finishes with (verse 11) *"If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

We may not be able to protect every baby chick from every fox but we certainly can make the most of every opportunity God gives us. Join us for this adventure in Care-Fully Living together.

In each study we will explore the content together using a basic format:

- **Opening prayer:** I will provide a written one that can be read out, however I encourage groups to be flexible as some may wish to begin with a longer time of worship. The aim is to acknowledge God's presence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the priesthood of all believers. Also to humbly prepare ourselves for God to speak to us through scripture and other members of the group, and, importantly, that we will have the ears to hear.
- **An introductory question:** This will introduce the topic and get conversation flowing.
- **Reading of the bible passages:** This can be done as creatively as you like, use Bible Gateway to download different versions to bring out other meanings or use a narrative version. Be aware of those who have English as their second language and be prepared to take time or even play the reading from a Bible app or search for a dramatized version on YouTube or GodTube).
- **Some explanation and unpacking** of the topic and the scripture: Some questions are provided as needed.
- **Questions for further discussion**
- **Application** and group accountability.
- **Final prayer time:** There will be some set closing prayers but I encourage groups to pray for each other as the Spirit leads. First, acknowledge with thankfulness God's character as revealed through the time together. Second, pray for each member of the group to continue to learn, listen and put into practice what has been revealed. Finally, pray for other needs of the group and community that might have been raised during the time together.