

Howard's Weekly Blog on the On-line Group Meeting to Consider- A Rule of Life for Lockdown

7 May 2020

This blog will run for the next six weeks as we navigate the end of lockdown. It will report on the previous night's Bible study and give some brief notes for the coming week.

History

The group was set up as an initiative of the New Creation JLT and PCC wishing to offer a virtual home group on-line for anyone in New Creation Churches and further afield who is interested in exploring how to create a Rule of Life amidst the restrictions of Lockdown. We agreed to start with a Bible Study looking at 1 Thessalonians when the early Church worked out how to live in a time of lock down and persecution. We expect to go on to consider our daily living and working towards establishing a communal rule of life. If this takes off, we will look at the insights of the Celtic saints and begin to build a Communal Rule (The Rule of St Congar?) that will consider how we build habits of worship, service and mission. Who knows, we might emerge from lockdown with greater balance than before.

Anyone can be a part of the group, if they can prioritise an hour each week from 7.30-8.30pm on Wednesday evenings, have access to a current computer to get on-line (for LifeSize using Chrome), has a Bible and a desire to change.

(We are using LifeSize which means that needs to download Chrome onto your computer Download Google Chrome here: <https://www.google.com/chrome/> and then visit my Life Size room <https://call.lifesizecloud.com/2179772>)

Blog on First Session (6th May)

It was a heart-warming turn out of 15 people who were clearly delighted to see each other on-line (We were Ian and Sonya Stocker, David and Beth Ashton-Hilton, Nick and Sarah Jarrett-Kerr (from nearby Blagdon), David Kemp, June Collins, Baz and Jenny Nottage (just moved into Banwell), Kirsty Bowles, Liz Chappell, Frances Urwin, Matt Thomson, Howard Worsley all on LifeSize and with Kay Friend listening in but not on video). We were nearly joined by Margaret Hamilton but her computer would not accept Chrome.

The format was simple;

- 1) Check in (say 'Hi' and catch up generally and Prayer)**
- 2) Flight Time (Sharing insights about the rule of life (good habits for godly living), and looking at the overview of 1 Thessalonians)**
- 3) Check Out (prayer)**

Our Flight Time was divided into two parts;

- 1) Discussion on the Rule of Life**

- a. We looked at the rule of life as being a gift of grace not a return to the law
- b. A useful metaphor was considered for the rule of life, namely 'a silk glove not a hair shirt'
- c. We considered how a rule of life might have daily, weekly, monthly and annual expressions.
- d. We also noted that the rule of life might have seasonal variations (and we are currently all adapting our life patterns due to lockdown)
- e. We shared examples of our own personal rules of life (we will do this each week with a view to developing a communal one later)

2) Consideration of 1 Thessalonians

Howard offered some overview thoughts on this letter by Paul written shortly after his visit to Thessalonica in 52AD. Thessalonica was a strategic seaport with a famous harbour and at a key juncture on the road travelling east to west. As such Thessalonica was a major trading post and one of the most important cities in Macedonia. We recalled that Alexander the Great hailed from this area.

We read Luke's account of Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16 v 6-10) where Paul felt compelled by a dream to go to Macedonia and then (Acts 17 v 1-10) where Paul spent a few weeks there before he was attacked by a mob. A power point presentation accompanied these comments to allow us to see the geographic route travelled by Paul. It seems that the letter was written by Paul because of certain problematic issues arising in the infant church at Thessalonica.



- Having heard (and believed) Paul's teaching about the second coming, many were giving up work (1 Thess 4 v 11)
- People at Thessalonica were expressing anxiety about what happened to those who died before Jesus returned (I Thess 4 v 13-18)
- The democratic culture of Thessalonica was in danger of despising Paul's apostolic authority (1 Thess 5 v 12-14)
- The prevalent culture in Thessalonica tended towards immorality (1 Thess 4 v 3-8)
- Some people in Thessalonica were misrepresenting Paul as being dictatorial (I Thess 2 v 6, 7 and 11)
- There seemed to be emergent division in the church (1 Thess 4 v 9 & 5 v 13)

We then outlined some of the themes in the letter.....

- Love for each other (1 v 1-10)
- Common suffering (Persecution) (2 v 1-6)
- Perseverance (2 v 7-20)
- Encouragement (3 v 1-13)
- Holy & simple lifestyles (4 v 1-12)
- Expecting Jesus to return (4 v 13- 5 v 11)
- Rule of Life (5 v 12-22)

As a group we shared our thoughts.

Notes for Second Session (13th May)

I Thessalonians 1-2:16

I have sent out some 6 pages of William Barclay's commentary (also on the website).

The format will be the same as before....

- 1) Check in (say 'Hi' and catch up generally and Prayer)
- 2) Flight Time (Sharing insights about the rule of life (good habits for godly living), and looking at I Thessalonians 1-2:16)
- 3) Check Out (prayer)

- a) 1 Thessalonians 1 v 1-10 Paul's loving introduction

How did Paul greet the Thessalonians in their new Church community?

How did he convince them about the gospel he preached?

What does this say to us in New Creation as to how we engage with each other and our villages?

What does this say about our emergent Rule of Life?

b) 1 Thessalonians 2 v 1-12 Paul's Defence of His motivation in coming to Thessalonica

What is Paul being accused of?

How does Paul defend himself?

What does this say to us in New Creation as to how we engage with each other and our villages?

What does this say about our emergent Rule of Life?

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