

HOME

AT HOME IN GOD'S WORLD SMALL GROUP SESSION

The resources here are more than enough for one meeting, so do pick and choose, making sure there is a mixture of Bible basis, activities, discussion and prayer.

WARM UPS

First, some not too strenuous activities to introduce the theme...

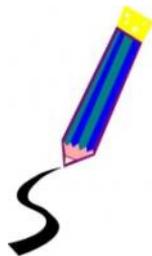
Home from home?



Place a large **world map** or **country map** on a table and, with pins and cotton, get everybody in the group to mark their 'home journeys' or pilgrimages i.e. all the places they have lived in, linked by cotton thread.

- Talk about which places have felt 'most like home' and why
- What are the essentials to feeling at home somewhere?
- What does moving do to us emotionally, relationally and environmentally?

Dream homes



Give everybody a **sheet of paper** (or iPad / tablet!) and ask them to spend 10 minutes drawing their 'perfect home'. Don't give any further instructions, but when everybody's finished compare the pictures.

- What is common to the group's idea of the perfect home?
- Did people draw the inside of a home, or the context of a wider community – and if so what kind of community?
- Do the pictures of 'home' have elements of nature, gardens, rivers, parks or not?
- How different are the 'perfect homes' to your local community? How does that make you feel?

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BIBLE FOCUS: 1



Read **Matthew 8:18-22**

“¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, ‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’ ²⁰ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ ²¹ Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ ²² But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’”

- In English Bibles this passage is often headed ‘The cost of following Jesus’. Does following Jesus always mean leaving home and loved ones?
- From Jesus’ words in v.20, which is God’s usual, normative, pattern in nature – to be settled in a home or to be homeless?
- Why did Jesus have ‘nowhere to lay his head’? Was this particular to his ministry or does it form a pattern for us? For instance, is it normal or unusual for God to call people to leave family, home and work to follow him?
- Discuss the biblical tension between wandering / journeys / pilgrimage on the one hand, and home-making / Promised Land / settled place on the other.
- How can we get the balance between being deeply committed to the place God has put us, and being prepared to move on if God calls us to?
- Is it wrong to constantly think of moving on? What less-than-godly motives might we have? Are we simply following our culture rather than being counter-cultural?

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VOICES ON HOME



These are a selection of quotations by a mixture of theologians, poets, thinkers and scientists. Once again, give everybody a copy, and let them be read through aloud and then thought about quietly before discussion.

Simone Weil: “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul... Uprootedness is by far the most dangerous malady to which human societies are exposed, for it is a self-propagating one.”¹

E. S. Casey: “The world is nothing but a scene of endless displacement. The global village has become a placeless place.”²

Dave Bookless: “In a rootless world, Christians believe in a God who put us in a garden and told us to work it, put his people in a land with instructions to care for it, and sent his Son to spend 30 years getting to know a local place and community. It is a vital part of worshipping God to get to know the place where he has put us. Bloom where you’re planted!”³

Salman Rushdie: “When individuals come unstuck from their native land, they are called migrants. When nations do the same, the act is called secession. What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations? I think it is their hopefulness... And what's the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history from memory, from Time.”⁴

Professor Tim Gorrige: “to be human is to be placed.”⁵

Bishop Bill Ind: “As our experience of the world becomes increasingly global, so it becomes increasingly important for us to know where we belong, where our home is.”⁶

- Which statements do you agree or disagree with most?
- What are the factors that make today’s world so rootless?
- Do you believe it’s part of the Christian calling to encourage stability and belonging?

¹ Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, London: Routledge, 2001

² Casey, E. S., *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p.xiii

³ Dave Bookless, *Planetwise*, Nottingham: IVP

⁴ Salman Rushdie, *Shame*, New York: Aventura / Vintage, 1984, p.91

⁵ Professor Tim Gorrige, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*, Cambridge: CUP, 2002, p.1

⁶ Rt. Revd. Bill Ind, *With God we Can*, Truro: Truro Diocesan Board of Finance, 2007 p.18

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BIBLE FOCUS: 2



Read **Jeremiah 29:4-11**. This is the passage that the Sermon in this pack is also based on, so your discussion will vary depending on whether or not people have heard the sermon.

“⁴This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’ ⁸Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,’ declares the Lord. ¹⁰This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”



Questions for discussion:

Do let discussions continue naturally and don't feel every question has to be covered.

- How did the people of Israel feel about being in exile in Babylon, and where did they consider home to be?
- Are there communities in your area who are in ‘exile’ caused by political, economic or environmental factors?
- What do you think the Israelites’ reaction would have been to God’s command to be ‘rooted’ in Babylon and to invest every part of themselves in their new home?
- Have you had experiences of dislocation, uprooting, migration, homelessness – and if so how have these affected you? Do they make it harder to put down roots again?
- What dimensions of life in Babylon did God ask his people to engage in?
- *(In the sermon these are listed as environmental v.5, social v.6., economic and political v.7, and spiritual v.7.)*
- What practical examples of each of these areas would be possible for you *(as individuals, a group, a church)* to engage with locally?

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PERSPECTIVES ON 'HOME'



Listen to Poetry: Poet John Roff has kindly given permission for the following poems on the theme of 'Home' to be included in this pack. They are included to encourage imagination and discussion ... and perhaps inspire people to write their own poetry on 'Home'. They could be read whilst some suitable 'mood music is played, with each person ideally having a copy so they can really dwell on the words.

Home

I may have hatched out in a hospital bed
but I was born in the open space
of wilderness;

there is more to me than this
temporary stay in the hotel of suburbia,
beyond the measured street lights,
untamed wisdom waits.

© John Roff

Price on Application

FOR SALE:

magnificent Fig tree, centuries old.

Mature tree, in large wooded suburb,
significant potential for continued growth,
well watered by mists and a small stream.

Roots are thriving and occupy most of the garden.

Healthy neighbourhood community includes

- several other large trees nearby,
- numerous fruit-eating birds,
- regular visits by Bushpig and Genet and
- a large termite nest.

In close proximity to several nature reserves,
on three major bird flight paths,
and a Steppe Buzzard migration route.

Includes house with large windows.

© John Roff



HOME

Very early morning

The dark and silent mornings are beautiful,
before birds flicker into song,
before cars are on the road,
before the invisible hum of people starting the day in a hundred
thousand homes across the city begins.

It is in this steel silence that the soul may flow
with less encumbrance towards its source,
where the longed-for voice of hope,
of truth, of beauty, of meaning,
may be heard.

In the still, almost living hours that
stretch through silence and let go at dawn,
softly longing for me as I long for them,

I am a stone,
falling home,
gently tossed
into the deep deep hollow
of a giant hand.

© John Roff

- Leave some silence after reading each poem, to allow the words to sink in.
- Discuss which words or phrases particularly connected with you, and why.
- Are the poet's perspectives on home different from yours? How so?

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Musical Interlude...

Listen to / watch the YouTube video of Feast of Joy (Paz e Comunhão) sung by Gladir Cabral (and suggested by the A Rocha Brasil team)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4QDBmPWwWA – in English (translated)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_7bAF8Je-c (in Brazilian Portuguese)

The song includes these words:

“Care for the little birds and for the flowers too
They need the tender love that comes from you
Plant everywhere the seeds of life, of peace and worth
Created a home embedded in the earth...

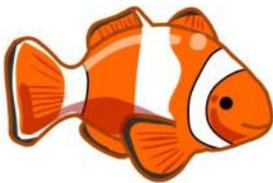
Build up a house anew upon the rocks of this sunny land,
Invite your neighbour to enjoy life together...

Set up walls to serve as home, as resting place, and common shelter

Take care of your little home now

Take care of this little planet

Reach out, bring your neighbour closer, closer.”



A View from the Reef...

If possible, show the PowerPoint presentation “Home – A view from the Reef”, which looks at coral reefs and how they form a home for many species. There is a separate document with the script.

- Think about the interdependence of creatures in a coral reef. Are we similarly dependent on healthy ecosystems and, if so, why do we often act as if we’re not?
- How can we care better for marine life?

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



A final discussion and prayer-time around the themes of home. Again, the questions do not all have to be covered, but are to encourage discussion.

- What feelings has this discussion on 'home' provoked?
- Are there any actions you feel called to take locally?
- Can we be 'rooted' in more than one place? (e.g. where we live, and where we used to live, or where our family lives; parallel of migratory birds which have two 'homes')
- How can your church be more 'rooted' locally, ecologically, socially, economically, politically and spiritually?
- Can we be both 'rooted' where we are, and 'restless' in terms of appreciating other places?

Close with a time of prayer. Pray for each other's homes, for your local community and local environment, and for God's Kingdom to come in your local area. There are some prayers you could use or adapt in the 'Home – Prayers' document.