

Stromlo

START UP

Name:

Stromlo
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Introduction

‘Stromlo Start Up’ is an initiative designed to introduce you to Stromlo Christian Church. It is intended for both newcomers and attendees who want to know more about church and its ministries, and how to get involved.

Through 4 sessions, you will learn about Stromlo: our beliefs and values, what the Bible teaches about Christian community, and what it means to belong and partner with us at Stromlo.

Stromlo’s **mission** is to *‘be a Christ-centred community of disciple-making disciples in the Molonglo Valley and beyond’*. In undertaking our mission, our **vision** is *‘to proclaim Christ to every home under the shadow of Mount Stromlo’* by 2025. A central goal of this course is for you to be actively engaged in our mission and inspired by our vision as a church.

Session 1

Belief: the centrality of Christ

Pray

Getting started

1. How do your non-Christian friends or colleagues tend to view Jesus?
What relevance does he have for them?

Getting into the text

Read Colossians 1:3–6

2. What do these verses tell us about the recipients of Paul's letter, especially regarding their relationship to Jesus?
3. What do you think it means that they have 'truly understood God's grace' (see 1:13–14)?
4. Would you say that you are like the recipients of this letter?

Read Colossians 1:15–20

- Underline each time that Paul mentions Jesus ('Jesus', 'Christ', 'him/his', etc).
 - Circle each time Paul uses the words 'all', 'every' and 'full'.
5. What general picture of Jesus is being painted? Summarise Paul's main idea in one sentence, or in a simple drawing/diagram.
6. List each individual description of Jesus, and try to paraphrase what each means.¹
7. Does this picture of Jesus in Col 1:15-20 feel 'right' to you?

¹ The phrase 'firstborn' (v. 15, 18) is tricky to understand.

'It refers to an heir or ruler, as in the 'first born son' who inherited all the father's property in the ancient world. It is about pre-eminence. In this sense, Jesus is an heir or ruler of all creation (v. 15), as well as the supreme and pre-eminent one in the age of the resurrection (v. 18). He is the 'heir' of the age to come.' Phillip Jensen & Tony Payne, 'The Complete Christian: Colossians', 1991.

Read Colossians 1:21–29

8. How does Paul describe what we all once were in v. 21?

9. How does Paul describe Christians in v. 22, and how did this change?

10. What does daily life as a Christian look like in verse 23? How is this encouraging and/or challenging for you?

11. How does Col 1:15–29 motivate you to ‘proclaim’ Christ like Paul in v. 28?

Thinking through implications

12. What would you say to a friend who thinks Jesus is irrelevant?

13. If it wasn't for Jesus, how would your life be different right now?

Pray

- Give thanks for the centrality of Christ, and the gift of reconciliation with God.
- Ask for strengthening of your trust in Christ and courage to proclaim Christ.

Session 2

Community: the context for belief and service

Pray

Getting Started

1. Briefly recap what you learnt last week.
2. Imagine that the church is like an artwork. How could you describe it?

Getting into the text

Read Romans 12:1–16

3. Remembering last week's study, what does Paul mean by 'the mercies of God' (v. 1)? Have you accepted God's mercy towards you?
4. How could it be possible to be a 'living sacrifice' (v. 1)?
5. 'You don't have to go to church to be a Christian, but it's hard to remain a Christian if you don't go to church'. Discuss.²

² It may be helpful here to also read Hebrews 10:19–25 to aid your discussion.

6. How does Paul's description of Christian community as a body with many members (v. 3–8) help us to understand our involvement with church?

- Underline each time Paul says 'one another' in v. 9–16.
- Circle each time Paul says 'with' in v. 9–16.

7. What does it mean to 'love one another deeply' (v. 10)? Is it a feeling?

8. What does it mean to 'pursue hospitality' (v. 13)? Is it only Sunday lunch?

9. What factors in our cultural context make it hard to do 'one another' community like in v. 9–16?

10. What will motivate us to persevere in cultivating a community like this?

Thinking through implications

11. What are some specific and practical ways that we can cultivate a great church community of love and sacrificial service?

Pray

- Give thanks for the mercies of God, that he has made us a community in Christ.
- Ask for deepening of love for one another & diligence in putting it into practice.

Session 3

Disciples: costly living as Christ's people

Pray

Getting started

1. Briefly recap what you learnt last week.
2. Share with the rest of the group someone (other than Jesus) who has been very influential on you. Why are they influential?

Getting into the text

Read Luke 9:18–26 (optional reading Gal 2:19-21)

3. What question does Jesus ask his disciples in v. 18–20? Why do you think he asks them this question?
4. Peter rightly answers that Jesus is 'God's Messiah' (literally – 'the *Christ* of God'). What does it mean that Jesus is 'the Christ'?³

³ For a taste of the huge expectations surrounding the coming 'Christ' in the OT, look briefly at Luke 2:11; then Isaiah 9:6–7. If you have time, you may also like to read 2 Sam 7 and Ps 2.

5. In what way might v. 21–22 have been alarming for the disciples to hear? On the other hand, in what way should it have been expected?⁴

6. Who does Jesus address in verse 23 onwards?⁵

7. From v. 23–26, create a ‘profit-loss’ table. Fill in what we gain and lose as disciples of Jesus.

Thinking through implications

8. Being as specific as possible, what does being a disciple of Jesus cost you? Or: what difference would it make if Jesus wasn’t in your life?

9. Do you feel like being a disciple of Jesus is worth the cost? Why?

10. ‘The choice to be a disciple rests with individuals, but discipleship is always nurtured corporately. Discipleship is... fostered in a community of interdependence, support, teaching and admonishment. The local church is the nursery for discipleship.’ Discuss.

Pray

- Give thanks for Jesus’ costly sacrifice of his own life to bring us life.
- Ask that by His Spirit we would be his faithful disciples, whatever the cost.

⁴ Check out Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

⁵ It may be useful to briefly discuss the meaning of the word ‘disciple’ (μαθητής – ‘*mathetes*’) here. The Greek word refers to a learner or student, someone who is apprenticed to a teacher to learn from him. Tony Payne helpfully refers to Christian discipleship as ‘learnership’. A Christian is ‘a forgiven sinner who is *learning* Christ in repentance and faith’, *The Vine Project*, 74.

Session 4

Partnership: on mission to make disciples

Pray

Getting Started

1. Briefly recap what you learnt last week, and share honestly about how you have found this partnership course.

Getting into the text

Read Matthew 28:16–20

2. What do we learn about Jesus' identity in this passage?
3. What does Jesus tell his disciples to do?
4. How does Jesus' identity and provision help his disciples in their task?
5. 'Where a person or group is not spreading the gospel in order to make new disciples, they are losing their grasp on what the gospel actually is'. What do you think this means? To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Read Ephesians 6:13–20

6. In these verses, Paul urges us to stand firm as disciples of Jesus. What role might wearing 'shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace' play in standing firm?

7. What is the imprisoned Paul's main prayer request to the Ephesians in v. 19?

8. What do these verses teach us about partnering in mission to make disciples?

Thinking through implications

9. Do you feel commissioned by Jesus to make disciples? Why/why not?

10. What are some practical ways that we can partner together as a church community in making disciples?

Pray

- Give thanks for being included in Jesus' awesome mission to make disciples.
- Ask that we would feel the weight of it and would partner together in this mission.

Next steps

Each of us begins our journey with Stromlo Christian Church in a different way, and we each come from a different life background. Moreover, each of us brings with us different gifts and abilities which by the Spirit we can use in loving service of others. As a church, we are committed not only to seeing each person introduced to our mission through this partnership course, but also to enter into a deeper experience of church community, and to discover, grow and utilize their gifts in serving others and partnering in mission.

The following is an overview diagram of the structure we as a church have put into place. The goal is that as you move through this structure, you will be greater integrated into the life of Stromlo Christian Church.

Welcome Lunch



Start Up Course



Life Group



Ministry Team

Appendix A

Brief History of Stromlo Christian Church

Stromlo Christian Church belongs to God. We've been purchased at a price and that price is nothing less than the death of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We exist because of God and in order to bring honour and glory and praise to God.

Our closest church relatives are Crossroads Christian Church in the north of Canberra. They had the vision to reach further into the south of Canberra and planted a congregation in Weston Creek in 2010. We have undergone a couple of name and location changes, but our vision to glorify God and reach south Canberra with the gospel remains the same.

Stromlo and Crossroads are both member churches of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). This is a growing network of churches throughout Australia who share a common goal to see more churches planted to reach this nation.

Appendix B

Statement of Beliefs

God

There is only one God, who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Spirit, in perfect unity. He is the almighty and loving Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

The Bible

The Bible, as originally given, is the God-breathed and infallible word of God. This precious, life-giving word is sufficient for our knowledge of God and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Humanity

All people, men and women, are created in God's image and are called to love God with all their beings. However, since the fall, all people are guilty of rebellion against God and human nature is thoroughly corrupted by sin. This makes everyone subject to God's righteous anger and condemnation.

Jesus Christ

God demonstrated his love towards us by sending his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He died on the cross, rose from the dead, and in his resurrected body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as ruler over all.

Salvation

Salvation is entirely the gracious gift of God and cannot be earned or deserved. It is accomplished through the atoning death, once for all time, of our representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and sinners. By Christ's death God's anger is turned aside, we are redeemed from sin and death, and we are declared to be righteous in God's sight. This salvation is offered in the gospel and received by turning to God from sin and trusting in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven by the Father and the Son. He enables people to turn to God, the Father, and to trust in Jesus Christ, the Lord. He makes the death of Christ effective to individual sinners, imparting spiritual life. God's Spirit dwells in all those he has regenerated, producing in them likeness to Christ in attitudes, actions and speech.

The Church

The Lord Jesus Christ builds the church, his people, through the proclamation and teaching of his word. All who have been saved through the work of Christ are members of his church and united with one another. God has equipped his people with gifts to be used for mutual edification in the church and for the proclamation of the gospel to the world.

The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return from heaven. He will welcome his people into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God, free from all sin, suffering and death, and he will execute God's condemnation on all who have not received him. God will be glorified forever.