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Introduction

Welcome to our Connect Bible Study for Get Packing!

A Connect Bible Study is a small group who meet regularly to explore faith and Godly responses to life issues, growing in the things of God together as we go. Anyone can host one using these materials and contact us for support and guidance. Online or in-person, our heart is that they offer a relaxed space for faith, friendship and fun.

We hope the resources and discussion points encourage, inspire, and invigorate you on your walk with God. We have short accompanying introductory videos for each week on the Sanctuary First website:

<https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect/get-packing-connect-groups>

It might be the conversation follows the discussion as laid out or heads in a different direction, both are wonderful and we hope the outline we offer here is flexible and supportive to engage with the Bible and our faith in fresh and vibrant ways as we make our way in the world as 21st century disciples exploring the wonders of life with Jesus!

What is involved?

Each week begins with an introduction and a 'seed to sow' conversation starter. These are open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps they will inspire you to write a song or a poem, or to paint, draw, move or explore! We imagine the material for each week would work for 90 minute sessions but feel free to adapt to your group!

Additional Resources

This booklet includes a poem and prayer that explore the wildness of Jesus to reflect upon.

We have a [Resource Pack PDF](#) for this month's theme with daily Bible readings and prompts.

There are more songs, videos, podcasts and blogs linked to this theme on our [website](#) and [App](#), have fun exploring it all!

Get Packing!

It's summer, the sun is shining, and it's time to get packing!

This month the epic foundational story of Exodus is going to help us get packing with God! We ask the Holy Spirit to move us from where we have been to where we are going — into newness of life. To let go of the past so that we can immerse ourselves in the promise of the present.

We begin by asking — as the Hebrews did — what are we leaving behind? What do we want to no longer carry into our new life with God? What are we glad to be rid of and what do we need help letting go of? Following on from that, like the Hebrews hurriedly preparing for the first Passover, what are we wanting to take with us? What is essential? Often what we pack are not 'things' at all, but traits like curiosity, hope, confidence, and open heartedness that God uses to equip and enthuse us.

Then, as we join the Hebrews wandering in the wilderness, we check in with how we are going. Are we going round in circles or, worse, going backwards? Are we on the lookout for manna, and are we open to resting, re-setting and reconfiguring along the way? And finally as the theme draws to a close we look ahead to the urgent, immediate Gospel of Mark that begins in a different wilderness — but with the same people — asking insistently, 'So what now?' If we are getting packing with God are we open to our restless Messiah Jesus's call to adventure to discover the burgeoning Kingdom all around us!

- **Week 1** What are we leaving? — *Getting rid and letting go.*
- **Week 2** What are we packing? — *The essentials we need to pack.*
- **Week 3** How are we going? — *Two steps forward, one step back, and several sideways!*
- **Week 4** What now? — *Anticipating the Kingdom and revelations of divine glory!*

Poem

Get packing

door slammed
on broken hinges
yesterday crushed underfoot

backpack lighter than air

the inaudible creak of grass growing
the roar of tiny wings, vibrating out of earshot
all present

no mystery
and nothing hidden

everything expectant,
living

today is utterly new
untested
open ended

you can come too if you're asking

if you get packing

James Cathcart, Sanctuary First

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Blow away the beliefs I have that keep me from fully trusting you,
the beliefs that keep me from fully believing in you.

Blow away the beliefs that keep me from fully loving you.

Blow them away Lord.

Fill me with courage and vision as I journey with you in the light,
willing to risk all for you.

Amen

**Rev Laura Digan, Sanctuary First and Minister of Whiteinch Church of
Scotland**

Week 1: What are we leaving? *Getting rid and letting go.*

Introduction

We begin our theme by thinking about what we are getting rid of and letting go as we we Get Packing with God! This month we are going to spend a lot of time in the Book of Exodus, the sweeping foundational story of the Hebrew people escaping oppression as God delivers them from captivity in Egypt. As we ourselves step into new life with God we reflect on what we ourselves are leaving behind.

Seeds to Sow

What needs clearing out, sweeping up, and renewing in our communities? And what needs to be left behind?

Read Exodus 1: 8-14

Leaving suspicion, hostility and fear behind.

Exodus is the story of the Hebrews escaping persecution, animosity and resentment. They were trapped in loops of injustice, cycles of injustice.

As churches and communities of God's people packing for a new future with God what are the power dynamics we are wanting to leave behind? As we look forward as a planet, what cycles do we want to break free from?

Read Exodus 1: 15-22

Leaving behind a legacy.

In the midst of the misery the audacious Shiphrah and Puah think on their feet and come up with an ingenious lifesaving scheme! They become

agents of life and hope for every pregnant woman, leaving behind the fear of death and hopelessness.

Looking back, what are the legacies — and who are the heroes — we are grateful for? Those who have acted bravely in the face of fear for others.

And as you reflect, consider who God could be placing in your life now. And, in fact, who you can be for others.

Read Exodus 2: 1-10

Leaving troubled waters behind.

Moses did not choose to go into the Nile and he did not choose who would find him — but the river delivered him to a new future and was part of making him who he was. All sorts of circumstances that we have no control over shape who we are to become and it's with God's grace that we trust that the broken pieces can be made into a beautiful mosaic.

Moses was drawn from water — his story an analogy of birth itself — coming through peril to be delivered by compassionate women into the world. The Nile could have been the end of Moses's story, but it was only the beginning, it is part of him, but it does not define or limit him.

What do you notice in this story? What strikes you? What draws you in?

Week 2: What are we packing? *The essentials we need to pack.*

Introduction

As we Get Packing with God what are the essentials we want to hold on to? What really matters? We begin this week with Moses taking hope and confidence at the Burning Bush, and end it at the point of departure with the Hebrews hurriedly preparing for the first Passover. In both of these moments and in our own lives there is a mix of the pragmatic and the wondrous — the practical and the incredible.

Seeds to Sow

Below we begin our reflections thinking about Moses's curiosity. What role does curiosity have in the Bible and in our day-to-day faith?

Read Exodus 3: 1-6

Taking an interest.

Moses carries his curiosity with him, he sees the light and goes to investigate.

What are we taking an interest in today? What is drawing us to investigate? How can we keep our eyes open, like Moses, to catch flickers of the light of God?

Read Exodus 3: 7-20

Taking faith.

Faith — even in the face of oppression and despair — is a shining thread of continuity throughout the Bible. Fear and evil will not win out, the eternal love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has already won and is being realised through the working of God's Kingdom!

What do you make of Moses's frank honesty and vulnerability in verse 11 (and throughout) when speaking to God here? How does vulnerability and doubt affect our daily faith?

Read Exodus 3: 21-22

Taking gifts...

This foreshadowing of what will come later is a strange coda to this encounter. As we look to Get Packing with God perhaps these precious items can represent for us the things we can take with us out of difficult situations and carry into our new life.

As we get packing with God we do not go empty handed. What are the resources we carry as a community? What have we brought from our past that we can use to bless others?

Looking at this whole chapter, what did you learn about our God of love?

Week 3: How are we going? *Two steps forward, one step back, and several sideways!*

Introduction

As we Get Packing with God we can sometimes find that the way is two steps forward, one step back, and several steps sideways as we find our feet! Travelling with God (as the Hebrews were discovering) is not necessarily about going in a straight line... No real adventures simply go from A-B do they!?

This week as we join the Hebrews wandering in the wilderness, we check in with how we are going on our own walks. Are we going round in circles, or even going backwards? Are we on the lookout for manna, are we open to resting, re-setting and reconfiguring along the way?

Seeds to Sow

An adventure is about the twists and turns on the way, not simply the end destination. How are we travelling light, not packing too much, to keep us from getting discouraged?

Read Exodus 16: 6-20

Going for fresh manna? Or manky manna?

Manna is God's provision for the day (or the weekend!) it is not seed capital. The Hebrews are invited to take it but not to hoard it.

Let's have a thought experiment... Imagine if the manna hadn't spoiled. Imagine the power and influence the early adopters could have wielded over the rest? Imagine if the fittest and biggest had scooped up the majority of the manna the next day, to bury in underground stores? Yes, the Hebrews were in danger of going backwards, into falling into the same 'have and havenot' cycles they had just escaped in Egypt!

What bothers you or unsettles you about this reading?

How do we keep each other encouraged along the road so that as a community we don't find ourselves sliding backwards?

Read Exodus 16: 21-30

Going for a lie in?

It takes time to break cycles of relentless toil. To be fair to the Hebrews, in Egypt they wouldn't have had the luxury of a day off.

How do we speak into a culture of overwork, where even leisure pursuits quickly become digitised, monetised and maximised!

How can we share our distinct Christian message of rest?

Read Exodus 32: 1-24

Going for the reset button!

As wacky as this seems, quickly cobbling together an idol is actually a pretty common human response to adversity. Sometimes our idols are physical objects and sometimes they're theories or projects. What ties them together is that they are often hastily thrown together and creak under pressure!

And how about that moment when Moses windmill slams the reset button and confronts Aaron? Aaron squirms and frames it passively: we chucked a bunch of gold in the fire and "out came this calf..." minimising his role (despite verse 4 saying that he sculpted it!) Getting packing with God can involve ongoing repacking when we realise we are trying to check a golden calf into our hold luggage!

What are the idols that society lifts up that have no place where we are going?

Week 4: What now? *Anticipating the Kingdom and revelations of divine glory!*

Introduction

So we have got packing with God, we are letting go of things from the past to be able to step into newness of life. We have considered the essentials we need with us and set off into the next chapter. So... what now? What lies ahead!?

As this theme draws to a close (and we anticipate the next one!) we take a look ahead to the urgent, immediate Gospel of Mark that begins in a different wilderness — but with the same people — asking insistently, ‘So what now?’ If we are really Getting Packing with God are we open to our restless Messiah Jesus’s call to adventure? To discover the burgeoning Kingdom all around us! Are we alert to God’s Kingdom and revelations of divine glory!

Seeds to Sow

All month we have used the metaphor of packing, so let’s consider — what would your luggage look like if you were packing for an adventure with God? Would it be a light breathable backpack ready to sling over your shoulder, or a beloved battered leather suitcase brimming with stories? Run with it — see how God uses your imagination to offer you new insights.

Read Exodus 33: 7-11

Tent of meeting.

What can we do today to make a figurative (or even literal!) ‘tent of meeting’ to come face to face with God?

Moses went into the tent to speak to God so let’s stop now and take an opportunity to pray for those you have not met God.

Read Mark 1: 1-20

Different wilderness, same people.

Once again we encounter: a restless people, a river, and a prophet... What other parallels do we see between these readings?

The insistent, urgent Gospel of Mark drops us right in the deep end. In Exodus the people are travelling to the promised land and now in Mark we are heading to the Kingdom of God.

Not for Mark the stories of Jesus’s birth and childhood, nor the cosmic poetry of John 1. No. Jesus is *here*. He is *on the move*. ‘What now?’ The recurring question of the Hebrews in the wilderness is the constant question of Mark as we rattle through the implications of the Kingdom.

As we Get Packing with God, we are responding to the call to adventure — to leave behind the stagnant and stuck and get into the vibrant and vital call of Jesus. What questions about the Kingdom are we carrying with us?

Read Mark 1: 35-39

Restless Messiah.

The incarnated, embodied Jesus knows he is on a mission. He is yearning to share the marvellous insights of the Kingdom.

We have spent a month getting packed and as we look to the horizon we ask— where is God stirring a divine restlessness in us and the church? Where — and to whom — are we called to share the excitement of the Jesus adventure?



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Sanctuary First is a vibrant, online worshipping community of the Church of Scotland. We are passionate about exploring new creative ways to connect and grow with God and one another, through all forms of digital ministry.

Our minister is Rev Ruth Kennedy, Digital Ministries Advisor, Church of Scotland.

Find out more about Sanctuary First...

sanctuaryfirst.org.uk

