

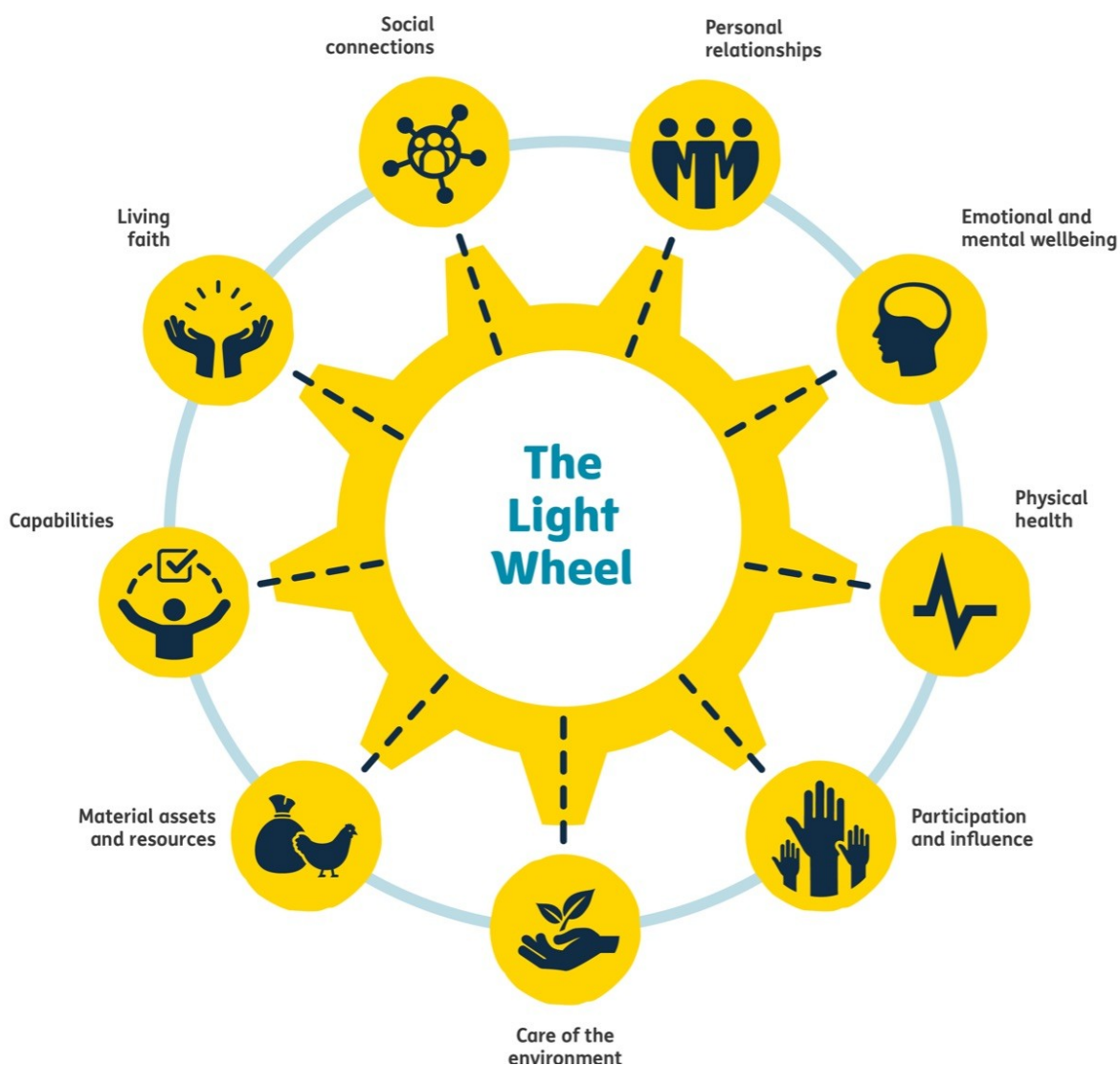


3.1.7 Light Wheel Bible studies

Introduction to the Light Wheel Bible studies

This series of Bible studies will help you to unpack and explore the theology behind Tearfund's Light Wheel framework and each of its nine aspects of wellbeing. Each session will focus on a different spoke of the Light Wheel: looking at what the Bible says about that particular aspect of wellbeing and how it helps us to understand poverty and wellbeing as holistic. Each of the aspects of wellbeing will give an insight into what whole-life transformation looks like, and how this may vary across different cultures and contexts.

You can use these Bible studies to deepen your own understanding of integral mission and holistic transformation; you could also use them during training or envisioning sessions, or with church congregations or small groups.





What is in this resource?

In this resource there are 11 Bible study sessions: an introductory session on Tearfund's understanding of poverty and mission, nine sessions covering each of the nine spokes of the Light Wheel, and a final session that considers how each aspect of wellbeing fits within the bigger picture of God's mission.

Throughout the Bible studies there are references to relevant Bible passages, and it is helpful if you have your Bible ready to refer to those readings. There will also be personal reflection moments where you will be asked to reflect on each aspect of wellbeing and how they fit with your understanding of God's mission and what it means to have life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Each Bible study has a set of Leader's notes at the end of the guide to help you, as the facilitator, to guide the discussion. If you find that participants struggle with a particular question, you can refer to the Leader's notes for prompts to help encourage more conversation or to clarify what the question is asking.

Please make it clear to participants that if at any moment they feel uncomfortable about any topics or questions raised, they do not need to participate. There should be an option to observe and listen, and if anyone would rather not contribute, that should be allowed.

Contents

Introductory session: Restoring broken relationships	4
The nine aspects of wellbeing:	
Living faith	5
Social connections	6
Personal relationships	7
Participation and influence	8
Emotional and mental wellbeing	9
Physical health	10
Material assets and resources	11
Capabilities	12
Care of the environment	13
Concluding session: How do the spokes fit together in the mission of God?	14
Leader's notes	15



Tearfund's understanding of poverty and mission

Before you work your way through the Light Wheel Bible studies, it may be useful to see them framed in the bigger picture of Tearfund's understanding of poverty and transformation. This theology is based on the belief that we have four broken relationships: our relationship with God, with self, with others and with God's creation. We believe that when God created the world, all relationships were in perfect alignment, but in today's world, these relationships are broken. We see this brokenness as the root cause of poverty.

Broken relationships

With God: After sinning, Adam and Eve hid from God (Genesis 3:8). The consequence of their disobedience was that their relationship with God changed and they were expelled from the garden.

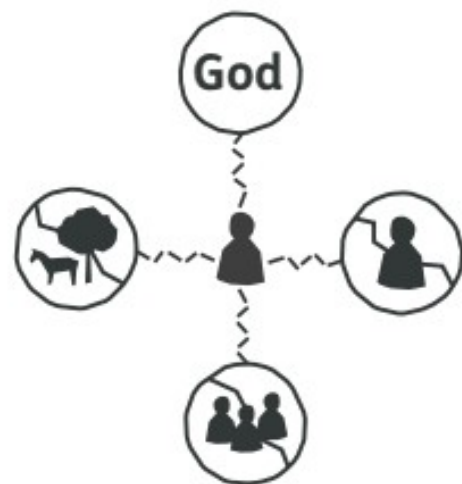
With self: God created men and women in his own image (Genesis 1:26). However, after the Fall, Adam and Eve felt shame (Genesis 3:7). Consequently, they no longer understood or felt comfortable with themselves as God's image-bearers.

With others: The relationship between Adam and Eve was broken (Genesis 3:16). The genuine, natural harmony they enjoyed with one another was ruined and injustice entered the world.

With creation: The relationship between humans and creation was broken (Genesis 3:17). Consequently, there is no longer an ease in nature's bounty or fruitfulness.

In the gospel of John in the Bible, Jesus says, 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10) As Tearfund, we believe that this fullness of life comes through restoration of the four broken relationships, and when all four broken relationships are positively changed, we call this whole-life transformation.

We believe all Christians are called to be part of fulfilling this mission of restoration and whole-life transformation. This is also known as integral mission – a way of living out our faith and serving others that aims to bring about change in every area of a person or community's wellbeing. The Light Wheel identifies nine different aspects of wellbeing (otherwise known as 'spokes') and helps us to think about what transformation looks like in each of these areas of life.





Introductory session: Restoring broken relationships

This Bible study will enable us to think theologically about the four broken relationships that are the root cause of poverty and about our participation in God's mission to redeem and restore all of creation. It will look at how Jesus' ministry sought to be holistic, responding to the needs of the whole person. It will also consider how the Light Wheel's nine aspects of wellbeing help us to live life in all its fullness.

Reading: Genesis 1–2; John 10:10, Luke 4:16–21

Read Genesis 1–2. As you read, reflect on the four relationships: human beings' relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, our relationship with others, and our relationship with God's creation.

- What did God intend these relationships to be?
- How do we see each of these relationships broken in our world today?

Read John 10:10

- What factors do you think are important for people to be able to live a full life? Write or draw your ideas and we will come back to these in the final Bible study.

Read Luke 4:16–21

- What does Jesus' ministry look like in this passage? What does this tell you about Jesus' vision for his people?
- What relationships does Jesus talk about restoring in this passage?
- What is your understanding of integral mission?

Introduce the Light Wheel

Describe each of the nine aspects of wellbeing.

- How might transformation across all the nine aspects of wellbeing help restore broken relationships and contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?



Study 1: Living faith

This spoke of the Light Wheel looks at how people live out their faith, what it means to them, and how their lives are shaped by it. It also tries to understand how different faith groups engage with each other and if they work together for a common good. For Tearfund, this aspect of wellbeing sits at the centre of all the others, as we believe it has an impact on every other aspect. We believe that restoration of our relationship with God, through Jesus, should lead to restoration in our relationship with others, ourselves and with creation.

Reading: Galatians 2:15–21, James 2:14–26, John 14:9–14

Read Galatians 2:15–21

- What does faith add to our lives?

Read James 2:14–26

- What does this passage say faith requires of us?
- How can we honour God in our everyday lives?

Read John 14:9–14

- How should our faith affect our attitude to people in the community?
- What does it mean for faith to 'come alive'?
- Why is it important to grow in our faith?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Faith is viewed as something that should underpin every aspect of life and everyone in the community commits to putting their faith into practice, eg through acts of worship, serving the community and collaborating with others. Faith groups often work together and are seen as key contributors to positive change in the community and beyond.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing our living faith?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?



Study 2: Social connections

This spoke of the Light Wheel looks at the social networks that people are part of and how unified or fractured the community is. It asks whether the community is formed of separate cliques or groups who keep to themselves, looking with distrust at others, or whether the community is inclusive, working together across social boundaries. This aspect of wellbeing considers issues such as prejudice and exclusion, and attitudes towards social groups, and looks at whether these groups are based on ethnicity, tribe, faith or wealth. It doesn't just look at relationships within the community but also asks how well the community is connected externally, exploring its ability to access wider government services and resources, expertise and knowledge. In addition to personal relationships, the Bible also shows us that broader social relationships are important to our wellbeing.

Reading: Acts 2:42–47; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31; Galatians 3:28

Read Acts 2:42–47

- What does the church in Acts look like?
- How is the church in Acts connected with the wider community?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 and Galatians 3:28

- What do these models tell us about diversity?
- How can these verses increase the quantity and quality of connections within and across communities?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community is committed to maintaining strong and positive relationships with each other, eg most people are members of community groups that work together to benefit the community. Differences are valued and everyone feels included and supported.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our social connections?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?
- Reflect on your own community or your workplace. How can you include the most marginalised and give them a voice?

Study 3: Personal relationships

This spoke of the Light Wheel considers the existence and quality of personal relationships. These relationships are generally fewer, deeper and more private than those that will be covered in the **Social connections** spoke: for example, family relationships or close friendships. This aspect of wellbeing looks at the commitment people have to developing and maintaining healthy personal relationships, and the role these relationships play in a person's sense of resilience and wellbeing. At the start of the study, encourage everyone to think of or list a



few of their close relationships and discuss what they think a good relationship of this type looks like.

Reading: Genesis 2:18–24; Ruth

Read Genesis 2:18–24

- Why are personal relationships so important? What do they provide?
- How are they a reflection of God's character?

Recap together the book of Ruth and read Ruth 1:16–18

- Why is Ruth's level of commitment to Naomi significant?
- How does their relationship benefit each of them?
- What other close friendships in the Bible are also significant and why?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community feels happy with the personal relationships that they have in their life and these relationships are deeply meaningful to them, eg people feel respected, they make decisions together as a household, disagreements are resolved constructively, and people feel they can trust each other and talk about difficult subjects, for the common good.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing and deepening our personal relationships?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?
- Reflect on your own personal relationships. Think about how you may be helping or hindering these relationships to flourish.



Study 4: Participation and influence

This spoke of the Light Wheel explores the freedom that people have to share and express their views in different spaces, such as the household, private spaces such as churches or mosques, and public spaces such as community meetings. It then looks at how people navigate decision-making and how their views are received by those with decision-making power, and how much influence individuals or communities have to create change. This aspect of wellbeing seeks to explore people's perceived agency: how much do they feel they have influence over, and practical engagement with, decision-makers and those in positions of power or authority.

Reading: 1 Samuel 8; Matthew 14:13–20

Read 1 Samuel 8

- What level of participation does each person have in the decision-making process?
- What are the ways that influencing can be good or bad?

Read Matthew 14:13–20

- How does Jesus use his influence in this passage?
- What are the ways Jesus, the disciples and the crowd participate in this passage?
- Ask participants to think about their own lives and discuss the areas they believe they have influence in, and the areas in which they do not. Why is this?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community feels confident in sharing their views, and the voices of people from marginalised groups are always included. People are empowered and aware of how to raise their requests with decision-makers, and people in power seek out these views and work to meet the needs of all community members. There are many examples of where community advocacy has led to changes in policies and practices.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing our participation and influence?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?
- Reflect together about how you could increase your participation and influence in your church and community.



Study 5: Emotional and mental wellbeing

This spoke of the Light Wheel looks at the different factors that impact a person's mental health and emotional resilience. Emotional and mental health might be more difficult to see than physical health, but we know that the way we feel mentally and emotionally has a significant impact on our overall sense of wellbeing and on our ability to cope with difficulty when it comes. Emotional and mental wellbeing can be impacted by different factors such as the way people think about and value themselves, how they overcome past trauma and hurt, the support networks people have, and whether or not people can find a sense of hope for the future.

Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1–17; Matthew 26:37–46; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7

Read 1 Samuel 1:1–17

- How has Hannah's experience impacted her?
- Describe how Hannah, Elkanah and Eli responded to this situation.

Read Matthew 26:37–46

- What emotions is Jesus experiencing?
- What do you think 'emotional resilience' is and how does Jesus demonstrate it? Why is he able to respond in this way?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7

- What does this passage teach us about God's character?
- How can we understand mental and emotional suffering as a result of the Fall?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'People in the community have good emotional and mental health and everyone takes actions on a daily basis to maintain this and to support others. People are emotionally supported by their friends and family, are able to talk openly about feelings, and can cope with their responsibilities and stresses. As a result, people feel optimistic for a better future. Everyone has a strong sense of self-worth and believes they can contribute positively to the community.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our emotional and mental wellbeing?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?



Study 6: Physical health

God's original plan was for people to experience wholeness and wellbeing. This spoke of the Light Wheel considers the physical health of the people within the community: how well people feel and how frequently people feel sick or suffer from illnesses. It also looks at the health facilities and services that are available to the community, such as clinics, nurses and antenatal care, and asks whether everybody can access these services equally or whether some are excluded, perhaps because they are too difficult to get to or too expensive.

Reading: Matthew 8:1–17; Luke 8:40–54; Leviticus 11

Read Matthew 8:1–17 and Luke 8:40–54

- Who does Jesus heal in these passages?
- What is Jesus' approach towards the people in these passages?
- What do these miracle stories tell us about who should or shouldn't have access to health resources?

Read Leviticus 11

- Why does God provide Israel with these laws?
- How relevant are they for us today?

Think back to the discussions held in the previous Bible studies in this series.

- How can a community achieving well in other areas of the Light Wheel also increase the range and quality of health resources that are available to them?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community has good physical health and most health challenges have been resolved, eg everyone has access to safe water, observes good hygiene practices and eats a balanced diet. Everyone has access to good-quality healthcare when they need it and as a result people rarely fall ill – and very rarely from preventable illnesses.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our physical health?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?



Study 7: Material assets and resources

This spoke of the Light Wheel looks at the material assets and resources that people own and have access to, and how resilient they are. Within this aspect of wellbeing, both individual and communal assets and resources are explored as well as people's attitudes towards these resources, particularly how willing people are to share their resources with others. In this aspect, we look at people's ability to pay for essential household needs, such as food, shelter and healthcare, and whether they feel they have the resources they need to live a good life.

Reading: Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 6:19–34

Read Leviticus 25:23 and Psalm 24:1

- What do these verses tell us about God's view of the world's resources?
- How do these verses speak to us about justice?
- God is creative. If we are made in his image, how are we able to be creative?

Read Matthew 6:19–34

- What do these verses tell us about material possessions and resources?
- What does it mean to 'store your treasures in heaven'? How does this impact how we understand material assets, resources and money?
- How does our view of material assets impact our relationship with God?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community has the material assets and resources they need to feel secure and achieve their goals, eg everyone has the chance to own land, and people have secure income sources and regularly save money. This means all households are resilient against shocks, eg they have savings, bank accounts and access to credit. Everyone is able to identify and creatively use the resources around them. It is common for people to share their resources, even outside the community.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our access to, and attitude towards, material assets and resources?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?



Study 8: Capabilities

This spoke of the Light Wheel considers the skills and knowledge that individuals have that enable them to improve their quality of life and to help others. This aspect of wellbeing also explores the mindset changes that help individuals to reach their goals, create changes in their lives and develop a vision for their future. The current skills that individuals have is explored, as well as their ability to develop new skills where they need them. Underpinning this aspect is also the willingness that people have to share their skills and knowledge with others and how frequently they have opportunities to do this.

Reading: Genesis 1:26–28; Romans 12:3–8

Read Genesis 1:26–28

- What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
- What are some of the characteristics, responsibilities and capabilities that are ours because we are made in God's image?

Read Romans 12:3–8

- What are some of the different capabilities that the church is made up of?
- Why do we all have different capabilities?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'People in the community have a range of valuable skills and knowledge, and they continue to develop their expertise. They regularly share their skills with each other and others outside the community. All school-aged children attend good-quality schools. People in the community have a clear vision for their future and they are making progress towards their individual and collective goals using their own resources.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our capabilities?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?
- Reflect on your own life. How can you increase your capabilities?



Study 9: Care of the environment

This spoke of the Light Wheel explores the relationship that individuals and communities have with God's creation. It looks at the experience that individuals have with climate change and its impacts, as well as the different adaptations that people have taken to protect or restore creation. This aspect of wellbeing also explores access to and availability of natural resources (such as water, land, forests) and any conflicts that arise over access to them. It looks at how prepared communities are to withstand environment-related disasters and whether they have disaster preparedness plans in place.

Reading: Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 2:15; Leviticus 25:1–7; Romans 8:19–25

Read Genesis 1:26–28 and Genesis 2:15

- What were God's intentions for humankind's relationship with creation?

Read Leviticus 25:1–7

- How are the Israelites told to look after the land?

Read Romans 8:19–25

- How did the Fall affect humankind's relationship with creation?
- Think about our lifestyles today. What are the ways in which we each care for creation well and not so well?

At its best, this aspect of wellbeing might look like: 'Everyone in the community is aware and committed to reducing the impact of climate change. Everyone takes actions to preserve and protect the environment for today and for future generations, eg all community members are aware of disaster risk reduction plans, there is a good waste-collection system and the environment is free from pollution. Everyone has equal access to natural resources and can enjoy spending time in nature for their wellbeing.'

- Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our care for God's creation?
- How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?
- Are there any practical actions you could take to look after creation better?

Concluding session:

How do the spokes fit together in the mission of God?

This final Bible study will help draw together each of the spokes of the Light Wheel and consider how they all fit together, influence and impact each other. We will then think about how this fits within the mission of God, and therefore its relevance for us and our calling



as the church.

Reading: John 10:10

Look at the Light Wheel and the four broken relationships (with God, ourself, others and creation)

- What are some practical ways you can grow in each of the aspects of wellbeing?
- Which broken relationships would these actions help restore?

Read John 10:10. Think or look back to everyone's answers from the first session, about what they think it means to 'have a full life'.

- How has your understanding of 'full life' changed?
- How has your understanding of poverty changed?
- How has your understanding of mission changed?

Think about your church and community.

- What activities are you/your church involved in?
- Which aspects of wellbeing do they contribute to and how do these connect?
- Which broken relationships are these activities seeking to restore?
- Is there anything you have been challenged to change in your life as a result of understanding poverty and mission holistically?



Leader's notes

Introductory session

What did God intend these relationships to be?

Humankind's relationship with God was one of closeness. We are told of God walking in the garden of Eden. In Genesis 1:26 we learn that humankind is created in the image of God, and it is in God that we find our true identity. When Eve is created by God, it is because humans are not made to be alone. The relationship between Adam and Eve before the Fall was one of equity and mutual support. Our relationship with creation was intended to be one where humans recognised that the world belonged to God and we accepted our responsibility to look after it and care for it; resources were plentiful and working the land was fruitful.

How do we see each of these relationships broken in our world today?

- Think about people in the world who experience a broken relationship with God. They might be people who do not have a relationship with God, maybe even not believing in his existence. Or they may have a distorted understanding of who God is and what his character is like.
- A broken relationship with ourselves may look like an overinflated view of ourselves – an addiction to power, too much pride or thinking we are better than others. Alternatively, it may involve low levels of self-esteem, not understanding our value and worth, or having false images of identity.
- Broken relationships with others are manifested in conflict, disconnection and division between people. It is where we see power imbalances, abuse and exploitation.
- A broken relationship with creation may arise from forgetting that the world was created by God and that we were created to look after it. Creation was made to be beneficial to humans and used for our wellbeing. Yet, as we have exploited God's creation for our own gain, it has resulted in accelerated climate change, an abuse of natural resources and unequal distribution of the world's resources.

What factors do you think are important for people to be able to live a full life?

Ask the group to think about all the different factors that help people to live a full life. As the facilitator, look at the different spokes of the Light Wheel and keep prompting people until they have given examples that cover each of the aspects of wellbeing. The aim of this question is for people to recognise that many different aspects of wellbeing are involved in people living a full life.

What does Jesus' ministry look like in this passage? What does this tell you about Jesus' vision for his people?

God's mission, most clearly seen in Jesus' ministry in the gospel, is holistic: its aspects span all four broken relationships. Jesus says, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has appointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' (Luke 4:18–19) During his ministry Jesus responded to all kinds of needs:



social,¹ physical² and spiritual (casting out of demons),³ all of which enabled relationships to be restored and people to flourish. The final 'act' of his ministry, the Cross, made the final restoration between humans and God possible. God's intention for his people is to live a life of wholeness.

What relationships does Jesus talk about restoring in this passage?

This passage helps us see that restoring relationships with God and restoring relationship with each other are interlinked. As we restore our relationship with God, our relationships and unity with each other should be directly affected as we recognise our call to engage with injustice in the world. It will help us to understand our place within God's mission and how God sees us. This will restore our relationship with ourself.

What is your understanding of integral mission?

In John 10:10 Jesus says, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' This life of 'wholeness' encompasses all aspects of life: 'being', 'having', 'doing' and 'interacting'. It is inherently relational. Whereas discussions of wellbeing are often linked to maximising one's own potential, the biblical notion of *shalom* ('peace') is about the wellbeing of the whole community, and the individual within it.

Jesus' mission was to make it possible for our relationships with God, each other and creation to be restored and made good again. He described himself as having come to bring the Jubilee. This referred to the coming of the kingdom of God: a time when people would be set free and when *shalom* would be restored. This is the holistic mission that the church has been given by Christ. The mission of the church is one of reconciliation, to restore relationships. The outworking of this we call integral mission, believing the church's approach must be holistic (just as poverty is holistic), dealing with the whole needs of the whole person within the community: physical, spiritual, emotional, economic, environmental and social, without dividing these into separate areas. This was, and still is, the work of Jesus Christ and it is the work of the church.

How might transformation across all the nine aspects of wellbeing help restore broken relationships and contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

The mission of God (*missio Dei*) throughout the Bible is his plan to redeem and restore his whole creation. For Christians, transformation is a gradual process of becoming more like Christ (Romans 12:1–2). Community transformation, in all areas, also takes time, as God's people work with God to see his kingdom come. Think about what the four relationships looked like before the Fall – the way God intended for them to be. Human beings would have a relationship with God, there would be harmony between people, and each person understood what it meant to be loved and valued by God. Creation was looked after in a way that honoured God and resources were shared in a sustainable and fair way. By using the nine aspects of wellbeing as indicators, we can think through the practical ways that we can seek to see the four broken relationships restored.

1 Luke 19:1–10; John 2:1–11; John 4:7–26

2 Matthew 9:1–3; Mark 2:1–12; Mark 5:25–42; Luke 5:12–13; Luke 8:40–56; John 6:1–13

3 Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 1:33–34; Luke 8:26–39



Study 1: Living faith

What does faith add to our lives?

The Bible reminds us that we are saved by *faith* and not by our activities or work (Galatians 2:15–18; Ephesians 2:8). Hebrews 11:1 says, ‘now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.’ Faith can help us to be better versions of ourselves, give us confidence in our circumstances, and be a place to direct our worries during times of hardship. However, particularly in the Christian faith, knowing that Jesus died for our sins and offers us complete forgiveness, as well as reconciling our broken relationship with God, inspires us to live our lives in a way that responds to that with joy, awe and appreciation.

What does this passage say faith requires of us?

Faith, as described in this passage, should impact how we live our lives and that involves actions. James is quite forthright in this passage, that if we are to genuinely understand what God has done for us, particularly through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, then our response to that should involve significant life changes. We should find ourselves responding to God’s love for us, by showing that love to ourselves, other people and to God’s creation.

How can we honour God in our everyday lives?

Even in the very small, everyday things that we do, we can honour and worship God. Think about verses such as 1 Corinthians 10:31: ‘So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.’ Since we believe that the work of the church is the mission of God, it is important that we honour and glorify God by carrying out this work to the best of our abilities. God calls us to love our neighbours and to serve them (Luke 10:25–37; Matthew 25:34–45). Some examples of honouring God in our everyday lives can include our attitude to the people whom we engage with on a regular basis, our attitude to work, and our growth in each of the fruits of the Spirit.

How should our faith affect our attitude to people in the community?

We want to show the love of Jesus to our communities just as Jesus showed us the love of God. Having a faith in God and being accountable to him should give us more concern for those in our communities, and expand our worldview to think about other people beyond ourselves. When we consider how Jesus views people, we should find ourselves growing in concern for those on the margins, seeking peace, and seeking to bring people across our communities together. We should also be building positive relationships with those in our communities of different faiths or no faith; respecting them, loving them and not proselytising, but demonstrating the love of Jesus through our whole self.



What does it mean for faith to ‘come alive’?

As we come to know Jesus more deeply, and understand the depth of his love for each of us, we begin to respond to that love in the way we live our lives (James 2:14–26; John 14:9–14). These verses in James and John are practical examples of how faith ‘comes alive’ through our actions. In James, this is much more about seeing the character of Jesus displayed through how we engage with and respond to people, how we view material possessions and money, and how we can seek to put others above ourselves (Romans 12:3–8). The verses in John emphasise the possibilities that surround us when we acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit that God has put inside of us. We too have the ability to see miraculous signs and wonders in the name of Jesus.

Why is it important to grow in our faith?

An exciting part of coming into a relationship with God is that there is always more to discover and learn about him. Depending on whatever we experience in our lives, God can continue to amaze, inspire, surprise or confuse us. Our life circumstances may become challenging and we may need to seek and rely on God in a way we have not had to before. Actively and intentionally seeking to know God more in everything we do is an important part of what it means to be a Christian.

Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing our living faith?

God has chosen to reconcile all things (including humankind) to himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. When we believe in what Jesus did, and realise that that act was for each one of us, and when we acknowledge that God has put the Holy Spirit within us, we restore our relationship with God. The outcome of restoring our relationship with God is that it affects how we live. As we discover we are made in God’s image (and thus restore relationship with ourself), we grow into the likeness of Jesus and demonstrate God’s love to our communities (and thus restore relationship with each other), and we start to worship God in all that we do, including how we treat our world (restoring our relationship with creation).

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God’s mission to redeem and restore creation?

The mission of God (*missio Dei*) throughout the Bible is God’s journey to restore and reconcile all creation back to him, including humankind whom he created. Restoring our relationship with him is a central and vital part of God’s mission, and the reason why Jesus came to earth to die. It is the foundation for the other three broken relationships to be restored.



Study 2: Social connections

What does the church in Acts look like?

In the New Testament we see the formation of the church as a group that support each other as a community: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.' (Acts 2:42–45)

How is the church in Acts connected with the wider community?

The early church in the book of Acts involves the disciples engaging with the communities, performing healings, and helping those in any form of need. Other verses:

Galatians 6:10: The church is called to love and serve the wider community as well.

Matthew 5:13–16: The church is called to be 'salt' and 'light' in its community.

What do these models tell us about diversity?

Positive social relationships are strongly characterised by unity and by diversity. 1 Corinthians 12 and Galatians 3:28 give a very strong image of the church as a community that is full of different kinds of people united in Christ. Refer to when the Spirit came at Pentecost and all the believers were unified and understood each other in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to remember that as humans we are all made in the image of God and we are all loved by God. In spite of huge cultural differences and viewpoints across the world, 1 Corinthians 12 is referring to the body of Christ as a whole, and even if we cannot understand the way other people live, we are called to seek unity, and to find dignity, value and worth in people who are different from us and who have different callings.

How can these verses increase the quantity and quality of connections within and across communities?

When communities seek unity and embrace diversity, it is likely that connections across societies will increase. Jesus continuously seeks out people who are on the margins of society, or challenges people to accept those who are different from them. This same inclusive model should be used when we look at the church.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our social connections?

Similar to personal relationships, relationships are restored between people as they invest time in honest relationships with each other. Good social connections can also contribute to restoring relationships with creation, as communities work together to care for resources well. It may be useful to think about examples of where our social connections are good or bad for restoring relationships.



How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

Reconciliation with God leads to hearts that seek reconciliation with others. It may be useful to look back at Genesis 4, where soon after the Fall we see the extent of broken relationships and the rise of conflict. Jesus' parables and stories (the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37 and the Samaritan woman at the well John 4:1–30) are good examples of where Jesus stands with those who are marginalised.

Reflect on your own community or your workplace. How can we include the most marginalised and give them a voice?

Ask your group: Think about your personal relationships and how you engage with your communities. Think about your community and how they engage with neighbouring and other communities.



Study 3: Personal relationships

Why are personal relationships so important? What do they provide?

The Bible makes it clear that human beings are not meant to live in isolation from each other. Personal relationships between humans are part of God's original creation. Companionship, friendships, families, marriage – these are all a part of God's intended life for us. They provide love, joy and security.

How are they a reflection of God's character?

God's own character as Trinity shows that he is a God of relationship and community. He created humans to be in relationship. God is love, and personal relationships are a way by which we give and receive love. It may also be helpful to think about the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32, which shows God's character of forgiveness and reconciliation despite the selfish ambition and rebellion of the younger son.

Why is Ruth's level of commitment to Naomi significant?

There are some significant characteristics of good personal relationships seen in the Bible, including love, humility, loyalty, trust and service. Ruth's commitment to Naomi was an act of obedience: she chose to stay with her and love her despite huge social and cultural challenges. Ruth puts Naomi before herself.

How does their relationship benefit each of them?

Discuss whether relationships in the community are positive, as in the case of Ruth and Naomi: supporting and encouraging of each other. Or are relationships exploitative and extractive, based possibly on power or fear? It may be helpful for participants to think about relationships within their own lives that may be both positive and negative. Encourage people to share those if it is appropriate.

What other close friendships in the Bible are also significant and why?

Some examples are:

- 1 Samuel 18–20 – the friendship of Jonathan and David.
- 2 Kings 2:2 – 'Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you!"'
- Jesus' disciples: Jesus chose a specific group to journey with him and support him throughout his ministry (see also John 15:12–15).
- It may also be beneficial to look at Acts 1:13–14 and discuss that each of Jesus' friends are named, and there is a strong sense of community as the group pray and spend quality time together.
- Paul travels with companions, including Barnabas, Silas and Timothy.



Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing and deepening our personal relationships?

Relationships are restored between people as they invest time in honest relationships with each other. Strong personal relationships can also restore our relationship with ourself as we experience being valued and shown worth, and are loved.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

If the mission of God is to reconcile all things back to him, unity between humans is of central importance. It is also useful to think about God as Trinity and how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit interact and relate to each other: God is a God of relationship.



Study 4: Participation and influence

What level of participation does each person have in the decision-making process?

Samuel: This is a story where Samuel participates in the decision-making process, but is outvoted by the people and their desire for a king. Samuel engages with God, and seeks God's wisdom on the matter. Samuel loses influence because his sons have rebelled (and are not supporting him), he is old (and becoming increasingly marginalised), and his way of living without a king is different from other nations.

God: God's gentle and loving nature is revealed through this story. Although the people's desire for a king comes from a place of rejecting God's rule over their land, God wants them to make this decision themselves. He wants to *influence* them rather than *dictate* or *force* them into anything: he desires to have with them a relationship like his relationship with Samuel. God emphasises the importance of listening, and encourages Samuel to listen to the people and explain what the outcome of having a king would be, but the people do not listen.

The people: The people have influence because they are part of a big group, giving them the ability to lobby Samuel for a king. They are seemingly well connected with their nations, and know how the other nations are being ruled by kings instead of God.

What are the ways that influencing can be good or bad?

Being able to influence is a powerful tool and it is important that we recognise when it can be done for good or ill. As in the story in 1 Samuel 8, the people, together, have the ability to influence Samuel for a king, despite this being against the will of God. God's response is gracious and loving, explaining clearly the implications, but without forcing anything on the people. The people still do not listen, and use their influence en masse to choose to go against Samuel's (and God's) advice.

How does Jesus use his influence in this passage?

In Matthew 14, Jesus uses his influence to draw the crowds together to hear him speaking. Although large crowds flock to him, he engages them with humility and love. It is interesting that although Jesus performs frequent and life-transforming healings wherever he goes, he often tells people not to tell anyone about it. This demonstrates Jesus' humility in his power. It shows that he recognises the importance of participating with his followers, and being credible through actions that back up and give integrity to his words. In this passage specifically, we see Jesus using a miracle, and his influence, to bring people together, build unity and serve.

What are the ways Jesus, the disciples and the crowd participate in this passage?

In the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14), we see that being willing to participate and contribute bears fruit. In the New Testament, Jesus invites people to participate in the mission of God and the work of the kingdom, calling and commissioning his disciples to love and serve God and their neighbours as themselves (Luke 10:27).



Ask participants to think about their own lives and discuss the areas they believe they have influence in, and the areas in which they do not. Why is this?

Encourage them to think about this in the context of their home, work or church life. Also, encourage them to think about the cultural and contextual background, across demographics, and how influence across relationships may change.

Which broken relationships are being restored by increasing our participation and influence?

First, this aspect of wellbeing enables restoration with other people, as people participate together, see value in each other's views, and make decisions as a group. This can help increase peacebuilding and unity, which is vital for living in right relationship. Participation in the church and in our communities is a way of fulfilling the potential that God gives us in our gifts and skills to transform our communities. It also enables us to speak out on behalf of those who are not able to participate, as an example of our love for our neighbour (see Proverbs 31:8–9). Second, as we discover and increase our capabilities, we can be inspired to participate and influence decision-making within our communities and circles, seeing our value, worth and ability within our communities and the unique part we each play.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

The real shift towards integral mission, away from traditional definitions of mission that separate words and actions, was the shift from seeing mission as something you *do* to something that God is already doing and that we each *participate in*. Our participating and influencing abilities are important for our participation in the kingdom of God. If we want to see all things reconciled to God, we have an important role as Christians to participate and influence in making that possible.

Reflect together about how you could increase your participation and influence in your church and community.

Encourage participants to think of the areas of their lives where they participate and have influence and how these can be increased. Think of practical examples and challenge people, if appropriate, to make a change. Think about who in the community is able to participate and influence. Think about the different groups in the community who are more marginalised or do not get a voice. Think about how to help others increase their participation and influence too.



Study 5: Emotional and mental wellbeing

How has Hannah's experience impacted her?

Hannah's inability to conceive a child causes her mental and emotional pain and that affects her relationship with her husband and the way that Eli perceives her. Consider the impact that events in the past may have on people, and attitudes towards the future as a result. Think about how Hannah deals with the trauma.

Describe how Hannah, Elkanah and Eli responded to this situation.

Encourage participants to consider Hannah's situation not only from her perspective but from the perspective of Elkanah and Eli as well.

Hannah: How would the provoking that came from Peninnah have made Hannah feel? Mention Hannah's sadness but also the Lord's response.

Elkanah: Think about Elkanah's feelings towards Hannah at the beginning of the passage, and the double portion he gives her (verse 5).

Eli: Think about Eli's impression of Hannah, and why it is important to understand the context.

What emotions is Jesus experiencing?

Jesus himself experiences mental and emotional suffering, particularly before his capture in the garden of Gethsemane. He is feeling stressed, anxious and separated from God. On the cross he says, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46) Emphasise that, in our own lives, difficult times are an inevitable part of life but it is how we respond to them that is the key.

What do you think 'emotional resilience' is and how does Jesus demonstrate it? Why is he able to respond this way?

Emotional resilience is the ability to adapt to challenging situations, without lasting negative consequences. Jesus' prayer shifts from asking God to 'take the situation away' from him to instead praying 'not my will but yours', showing his commitment and trust in God despite his circumstances and his pain. His response shows that no matter what the outcome of the events to come, he has the resilience to deal with it, a resilience that is rooted in God.

What does this passage teach us about God's character?

God provides a mental, emotional and spiritual strength for us, even if we cannot always feel his presence during times of pain. Emphasise that God is with us, even when mental and emotional wellbeing are challenged in the long term. It is important not to associate mental or emotional ill-health with a lack of faith or a weak relationship with God.



How can we understand mental and emotional suffering as a result of the Fall?

God does not want us to suffer, and in the new creation there will be no more suffering. The most common command in the Bible is 'Do not fear'. Fear and anxiety are emotions that we should bring to God, trusting that he is faithful and he is able to bring good out of all situations. In the New Testament, we see Jesus casting demons out of people who have been made mentally unwell and excluded from society. It is essential to remember that while spiritual warfare is real, a lack of emotional and mental wellbeing is not often a sign of demonic influence, and should not be attributed to personal sin or a lack of salvation. A lack of wellbeing may stem from mental illness, from difficulties in other areas of life, or from trauma of some past event – consequences of the fact that we live in a sinful, broken world. The church needs to be a support system and a united body.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our emotional and mental wellbeing?

Strengthening our emotional and mental wellbeing is predominantly about restoring our relationship with ourselves. Being made in the image of God is to understand that our identity is found in Christ and not in our worldly possessions and circumstances. This encourages greater levels of self-esteem and confidence because we understand that God has made us with intrinsic value and worth; we are inherently loved. This knowledge, and experiencing God's love, changes our worldview. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!' Restoring our relationship with ourselves helps us to thrive in other areas. Think about how that impacts our relationship with God and our relationships with others, and with creation. Often through times of trial and suffering, we lean on God more than when life is going well.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

All human beings are made in the image of God. As Christians we have a role to play in God's mission to redeem and restore creation, and we will be more effective at this when we embrace our identity in Christ but also see and relate to others as also made in God's image. However, we must remain rooted in God, knowing that our strength and refuge is found in God – we cannot do this without him.



Study 6: Physical health

Who does Jesus heal in these passages?

Jesus heals all types of people, from many different illnesses. In John 4:43–54, Jesus heals an official's son: someone who would be wealthy in their community. Jesus also healed the man with leprosy (Matthew 8:2–4), someone who would have been isolated in his community. In the passage in Luke, the woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years would have been marginalised by her community, unable to participate in the life of the community or feel like she was contributing positively. Jesus' focus towards those who are poor and marginalised is significant.

What is Jesus' approach towards the people in these passages?

Jesus approaches people with compassion and love, even when that is not what they would be used to from others in the community. There is no performance or show: Jesus often tells people not to tell anyone what has happened. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus makes it clear that helping those in need – truly loving your neighbour – often means crossing social and political boundaries.

What do these miracle stories tell us about who should or shouldn't have access to health resources?

Jesus' emphasis on those who are marginalised must encourage us that healthcare should not be something only available to the wealthier members of society. It should also make us realise that people should not be marginalised from their communities just because they are not physically healthy. Physical health is something that Jesus wants for us as we are called to offer our bodies as 'living sacrifices', as an act of worship to God (Romans 12:1). Jesus calls us to engage with those in our communities who have poor physical health and to love them, look after them, support them and pray for them.

Why does God provide Israel with these laws?

God gives the Israelites laws about the food that they should eat; these are primarily about holiness and purification and their relationship with God, but teaching the Israelites how to pay attention to their food also enables them to live physically healthy lives. It is also worth touching on Leviticus 4, which talks about priests and instructions about offerings to atone for sin. Discuss how the responsibility of the priests reduced the impact of sin on the health of the communities.

How relevant are they for us today?

In the gospels we see many instances of Jesus healing the sick. The apostles are also able to heal people through the power of the Holy Spirit and we still see miraculous healings today. We have been given the same Holy Spirit as the apostles had, so seeking God and praying for healings should be a central part of our faith. However, it is also important to seek good health through medicines and healthcare, looking after the body and health that God has given us. The concept of healing in the Bible is multifaceted: the healing Jesus offers has physical, social and spiritual aspects. Healing contributes to God's plan of reconciliation: when Jesus healed people physically, he was also healing them in terms of their inclusion in their communities and transforming their identity.



How can a community achieving well in other areas of the Light Wheel also increase the range and quality of health resources that are available to them?

Each aspect of wellbeing can influence, affect and be affected by the other aspects. By understanding poverty as holistic, more sustainable approaches to health will be considered. Increased personal relationships will make sure people are being cared for and supported in the best possible way. Social connections will increase learning and knowledge from others, and improved mental and emotional wellbeing will help heal physical illnesses because the body itself is holistic. Participation and influence will give people a voice to advocate for suitable health resources in their communities and equal access to them. Increasing material assets (the next study) will create more wealth to spend on healthcare.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our physical health?

A desire to look after our body and actively seek to keep ourselves healthy contributes to a restored relationship with ourselves; as we increasingly understand our self-worth, gifts and abilities. This can increase self-confidence and self-esteem. Good physical health often means that we are more productive in, and engaged with our communities, able to contribute in many ways and participate positively to the body of Christ. This can help restore relationships with others, more so than if people are isolated and marginalised. Seeing miraculous healings and witnessing the presence of God on earth can be a powerful demonstration of God's character and help restore relationships between humanity and God.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

It is important to acknowledge that sometimes healings do not happen, or that physical illnesses can stay with people throughout their lives. This does not mean that they cannot be whole in God. We know that the mission of God is to reconcile all things back to him, and our growing relationship with and identity in God, our participation in his mission, is the most important thing. Our relationship with God, or confidence in him, should not be reliant on our physical health. But we should be motivated to do whatever possible to maintain our health, for the sake of participating in God's mission to the best of our ability.



Study 7: Material assets and resources

What do these verses tell us about God's view of the world's resources?

The Bible reminds us that everything in creation belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 24:1), and we must remember that although we are called to take care of the earth, we must maintain that the earth belongs to God and not us. Leviticus is very clear that assets must be distributed fairly, in particular through the model of Jubilee; there should be a limit to the amount of resources that should be accumulated, and no one should be left without.

How do these verses speak to us about justice?

God is very clear that although owning property, buying and selling things, and making money are good things, they should not contribute to injustice. Leviticus 25:35–37 emphasises that the Israelites were forbidden from charging interest between themselves and that we are called to use our resources to help others.

God is creative. If we are made in his image, how are we able to be creative?

God's creation contains many natural resources for humans to use and we have used our God-given creativity to make many other resources, including material assets and money. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30 helps us to understand creativity and initiative when it comes to multiplying resources and investing wisely. It may be helpful also to consider Deuteronomy 8:18, and discuss the context of this verse and where in modern culture this has been used to justify consumerism and the exploitation of resources.

What do these verses tell us about material possessions and resources?

Jesus is very clear in the story in Luke 12:13–15 that it is not through material possessions or wealth that human beings will find life. Although material possessions are good, they are not what will fulfil us and they can act as a distraction from God. Jesus asserts that material possessions can also lead to greed, and people should be continually aware of this. In Matthew 6:19–34, Jesus emphasises again that our fulfilment and identity should be found in God and not in our material resources.

What does it mean to 'store your treasures in heaven'? How does this impact how we understand material assets, resources and money?

Although material possessions are good, and allow us to flourish as human beings, our identity and security should be in God. Jesus is making a distinction between what is temporary and what is eternal, and what can be destroyed and that which cannot be destroyed. He also emphasises that where our heart is indicates what is most important to us, and he challenges us to turn our hearts to God rather than to what the world can offer. Ask your group: Think about the places where you find your security and satisfaction, and the times when it may be tempting to store up treasures on earth.



How does our view of material assets impact our relationship with God?

If appropriate, think about the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20), and the anger they felt when they realised they were all being paid the same for different amounts of work. This parable emphasises that God's grace is an incredible gift, for each one of us, and it is more than enough for each one of us. We should not claim to deserve more grace, or more of God's gifts, according to how we have lived our lives or because of how many years we have been a Christian. It is helpful to think about this within the context of material assets, to think about what we deserve and what we should earn. Another helpful parable may be the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21–35. Here again we see Jesus emphasising the goodness of God's grace and forgiveness that has been given to us, and our responsibility to pay forward that same grace and forgiveness to others. Think about what other topics or issues the same principle can be applied to.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our access to, and attitude towards, material assets and resources?

A right attitude towards material assets and resources restores relationships across all four areas (self, God, others, creation), and stewarding resources well can be a form of worship to God. The model of the early church in Acts is also a way to restore relationships with each other: showing love, generosity and unity via the resources each has. However, this is also the aspect of wellbeing that has contributed most negatively to the continued breakdown of relationships: putting wealth higher than God, and power imbalances and exploitation. The desire to create excessive wealth has also caused environmental degradation across the world.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

Material assets and resources were given by God in the beginning and are a part of what humankind needs to thrive. God's desire to bless people through material resources is a good – pre-Fall – thing, but humankind must remember that these resources, and our ability to create more of them, must be understood within the bigger picture that everything belongs to God. This means there is a mandate for people to use these resources with integrity and justice, ensuring that those around them are cared for.



Study 8: Capabilities

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Being made in the image of God means that we have intrinsic value and worth bestowed on us. It means that we have a calling to grow into the character and nature of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit that is in us. Our journey as a Christian is to grow into the likeness of God more and more each day, through everything that we do. We do not find our identity through material and worldly possessions, security or abilities, but through God, who sustains us. However, through growing into the likeness of God, it is important to recognise the gifts, talents and capabilities that God has given us, and to increase these, both as a form of worship, but also as a practical way that we can live out God's mission on earth, being made in his image.

What are some of the characteristics, responsibilities and capabilities that are ours because we are made in God's image?

Characteristics: We possess some of God's characteristics, such as love, generosity, kindness and the ability to relate to one another. The fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22–23 are a very practical and simple explanation of what we should aim for. If we have the character of God in us, we have the capability to grow into his likeness in each of these ways. Other characteristics may also include humility, being servant-hearted, and forgiveness.

Responsibilities: Our responsibility as God's representatives on earth is that we participate in his mission that began at the dawn of creation. This means stewarding creation, pursuing justice and loving our neighbours as we love God. We also have a responsibility as Christians to spend time with God, proclaiming that the kingdom of God is near.

Capabilities: Capabilities include creativity, wisdom and power. Human capabilities are first seen in Adam's naming of the animals, and throughout the Bible we see people making use of the skills and talents that God has given them to serve him. Also, look at what having the Spirit of God in us means for us in John 14:9–12: 'Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.'"



What are some of the different capabilities that the church is made up of?

Romans 12:3–8 encourages us to think carefully about how we view our capabilities alongside other people in our churches and communities. Although it is important to continue to try to become more like Jesus in our characters and actions, and therefore increase our capabilities, we need to be careful that our motivation for continually improving ourselves is rooted in serving God, not ourselves. This passage makes it clear that we are to view others with the value and worth that God views them with, that we must always remain humble, and the fundamental truth about the body of Christ is that it only works when all the different parts work together. We will only be capable, in the eyes of God, if we work together with other people, seeing different gifts, talents and capabilities as equally valuable and important.

Why do we all have different capabilities?

We are called to recognise that we are all different and that it is our differences, together, that make us the body of Christ. We therefore encourage the uniqueness in each of us, understanding our specific place on earth and the part we each have to play within the mission of God. However, it is essential to remember that while our capabilities are important to our thriving, and a gift from God, they are not on their own the source of our value as humans. Our value comes from the fact that we are made in God's image. Ask participants to think of the skills they each have, and how those skills, passions or talents equip them to be more capable.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our capabilities?

Recognising what it means to be made in the image of God will restore our relationships with ourselves. Working together with others who have different capabilities than us can contribute to a bigger goal and will help restore our relationships with others.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

When we embrace what it means to be made in the image of God, we learn what it means to be made with gifts, skills and talents and we have a responsibility to develop these in order to further God's kingdom.



Study 9: Care of the environment

What were God's intentions for humankind's relationship with creation?

In Genesis, humans are given the use of creation and its resources to sustain their lives and are told to care for it. Although humans are told to 'rule' over the animals and the plants, our 'rulership' is shaped by the fact we are made in the image of God. This means that we are called to take care of the earth in ways that reflect the nature and character of God. Therefore, humans should not overwork the earth or live in a way that is detrimental to creation.

How are the Israelites told to look after the land?

The land laws in Leviticus 25 are given to ensure that everyone is able to benefit from the land but also to ensure that the land is not overused. It emphasises that although God gives us the ability to make wealth, and the creativity to do so, resources ultimately belong to God and must be used in a way that benefits wider society. Good care considers the status of creation and all its resources that the community can make use of, such as water, land, pasture, woodland or fuel supplies; it asks whether the availability of, and access to, these resources are increasing or decreasing. This needs to be understood within the context of the whole community and not just from the perspective of a few. Consider Deuteronomy 8:18: 'But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.' This verse should be understood within the context of Israel's land laws. It is clear how this verse has been taken out of context in different economic and political capacities around the world.

The year of Jubilee refers to the intentional 'resetting' of resources and assets. This is done within the wider understanding and implementation of Israel's land laws, ensuring that justice and equality remain at the heart of the economic system. Jubilee is supposed to occur within the regular rhythms of everyday living. This rhythm also helps build resilience, as it builds in a plan for the future, for humankind to continue thriving despite the resetting of resources and allowing the land to rest.

How did the Fall affect humankind's relationship with creation?

After the Fall, humankind's relationship with creation was damaged. God says to Adam that working the land will be increasingly difficult (Genesis 3:17–19). This does not mean that humankind's call from God to care for the land is any less important, but sin has made it far more difficult and will continually impact it until God restores the earth in the new creation.

Think about our lifestyles today. What are the ways in which we care for creation well or not so well?

Ask participants how much they consider their care of God's creation as a part of their everyday lives and even as worship to God. What is our attitude to God's creation and to what extent do we consider the sustainability of its resources as we use them, and how equitably they are distributed? Ask participants also to consider how resilient they are in relation to the resources available to them and what impact the use of these resources may have on future generations.

Which broken relationships are being restored by improving our care for God's creation?

Relationships between humankind and creation are restored as we make an active effort to



treat the earth in a way that reflects our love of God as creator. By seeing creation as God's and not ours, it helps restore our relationship with God too. Caring for the earth can become an act of worship. By seeing the world as it was designed in the beginning helps us to understand our identity as being made in the image of God, which can help restore our relationship with ourself. Finally, for the earth to be well cared for, it demands a contribution from the whole of society. Ultimately, it also means that communities work together and relationships between people are restored too.

How could transformation in this aspect of wellbeing contribute to God's mission to redeem and restore creation?

God's creation is where the Bible begins and ends, and the journey of restoring creation after the Fall is a foundational part of understanding God's mission. Focusing on creation helps us to expand our understanding of God's mission beyond ourselves, and see that it encompasses the whole created world (see Colossians 1:20).

Are there any practical actions you could take to look after creation better?

Depending on your contexts, these life changes will look very different. In some contexts it may include changing what we eat or what transportation we use. In other contexts it may involve considering how resources can be used more sustainably, ensuring their availability for future generations.



Concluding session:

How do the spokes fit together in the mission of God?

What are some practical ways you can grow in each of the aspects of wellbeing?

Think about small actions relating to each aspect of wellbeing that people could start doing straightaway. As a church and community, you could also think about bigger actions that may require people working together. Consider how taking an action relating to one aspect of wellbeing may also have an impact on another aspect.

Which broken relationships would these actions help restore?

All actions are likely to impact more than one broken relationship and hence more than one aspect of wellbeing. Each of the nine aspects of wellbeing will relate to each of the four relationships in some way and it is important to continually reflect on the interconnectedness of the aspects. Here are some ideas of how each of the aspects of wellbeing relates to the four broken relationships:

- Living faith: with God, with self
- Social connections: with others, self
- Personal relationships: with others, self
- Participation and influence: with others, self
- Emotional and mental wellbeing: with self
- Physical health: with self
- Material assets and resources: with creation, self
- Capabilities: with self
- Care of the environment: with creation, with God, with others

How has your understanding of 'full life' changed?

Encourage participants to think about what it means to change holistically; this means growing and developing across each of the aspects of wellbeing. If development or mission focuses on only some of the aspects, and ignores others, then the outcome may not be sustainable. It is important to look at the 'whole change' of the person and community. When Jesus talks about fullness of life in John 10:10, he is claiming that his death and resurrection provide the means to restore our relationship with God. This is a mechanism for making restored relationships possible. Living life in all its fullness means to participate in a restored relationship with ourselves, God, others and creation. We cannot pick and choose between these: it requires a whole-life response.

How has your understanding of poverty changed?

Poverty is not a lack of something, but a result of broken relationships between ourselves, God, others and creation, which has separated us from the life God intended for us. Poverty exists in many different forms: it is complex and has many aspects. We should not be restricted to thinking that poverty is simply a lack of material possessions. The Light Wheel shows us the



many ways that poverty can be identified, and how it may look very different across different contexts.



How has your understanding of mission changed?

It is important to recognise mission, not as something that we do, but as God's mission that we are participating in, seeking to restore relationships and see people flourish holistically. Being made in the image of God means that we have the ability to care for the world as God intended for us, and we have a biblical mandate as a church to see God's kingdom come. Participating in God's mission, by seeking to restore relationship with ourselves, God, others and creation, helps us understand what it means to be 'whole' and live the life God intended for us. The spokes of the Light Wheel are a helpful tool to recognise each of the many areas that God wants us to grow in.

What activities are you/your church involved in? Which aspects of wellbeing do they contribute to and how do these connect? Which broken relationships are these activities seeking to restore?

Encourage people to think how each of these activities relates to the aspects of wellbeing and which broken relationships these will help to restore. Remember that transformation is a gradual process and will take time. Transformation can and does take place in communities without the restoration of relationships with God, and non-Christians contribute to the transformation of communities. However, *whole-life* transformation of individuals and communities includes a spiritual transformation that we, as Christians, believe is marked by our salvation and restored relationship with God. Jesus' death and resurrection promise that individuals and communities can be released from poverty and injustice, including entering into a restored relationship with God and thriving in all spheres of life.

Is there anything you have been challenged to change in your life as a result of understanding poverty and mission holistically?

The Light Wheel provides us with a tool for assessing where transformation is happening, for understanding how it is happening, and for identifying what work the church might do in future to seek further transformation. Encourage people to continue to reflect on the aspects of wellbeing regularly after the end of this Bible study series. People can reflect where they are individually, as a church and as a community.