

Painting Caption

Before Alastair Duncan was minister at St George's Tron, he spent 25 years in a rural parish. However, in contrast to what many would expect, he soon began to see the city centre as a much lonelier place than the countryside. Regardless of the hustle and bustle, many people often experience a deep sense of isolation in the centre of Glasgow.

One of the key differences at this church, compared to many traditional parishes, is that lots of people come to church as individuals, rather than part of a family group. There is no "secret formula" to a successful church, each church needs to reflect on the dynamics of the people they encounter to consider what successful ministry will be in that context.

Study

Read the text twice

Look at the painting

Read the Painting Caption

Questions

- What jumps off the page at you? *FGP*
- List the things the text says about John the Baptist. *3s/FB*
- What does this text tell us about the mission of John? *3s/ FB*
- In what ways is our city, town or village a "wilderness"? Is our context any more/less ideal than John's for proclaiming the good news of the gospel? *FGP/ GPS*
- In what ways do we as individuals, and as a church, point people to Jesus? *FGP/GPS*
- What does calling people to practical repentance look like in our context? *3s/ FB*

Study Key

3s / FB - Groups of 3 with feedback to whole group

FGP - Full Group

GPS - Larger groups of 6 (if desired)



The Project

The Gospel Sketchbook is a three-year project based in St George's Tron, Church, Glasgow, in which Artist in Residence Iain Campbell is painting 24 canvases from Luke's Gospel, one for each chapter.

Key to each painting is reflecting on the Biblical text and how it might apply to contemporary Glasgow.

The Study

The following Bible Study considers both the Biblical text and the painting on which it is based, encouraging participants to think about how to apply the Biblical text to their context. The study is designed to be used with *The Portrait Gospel*, a special edition of Luke's Gospel that features Our Last Supper on the cover, the first canvas painted as part of this project.

Conversations Bible Study

Each of the individual studies uses the Conversations style. Conversations is a method of Bible study developed by the Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual

Bible Study Group. Conversations seeks to encourage people to actively engage with the Bible and apply it to life.

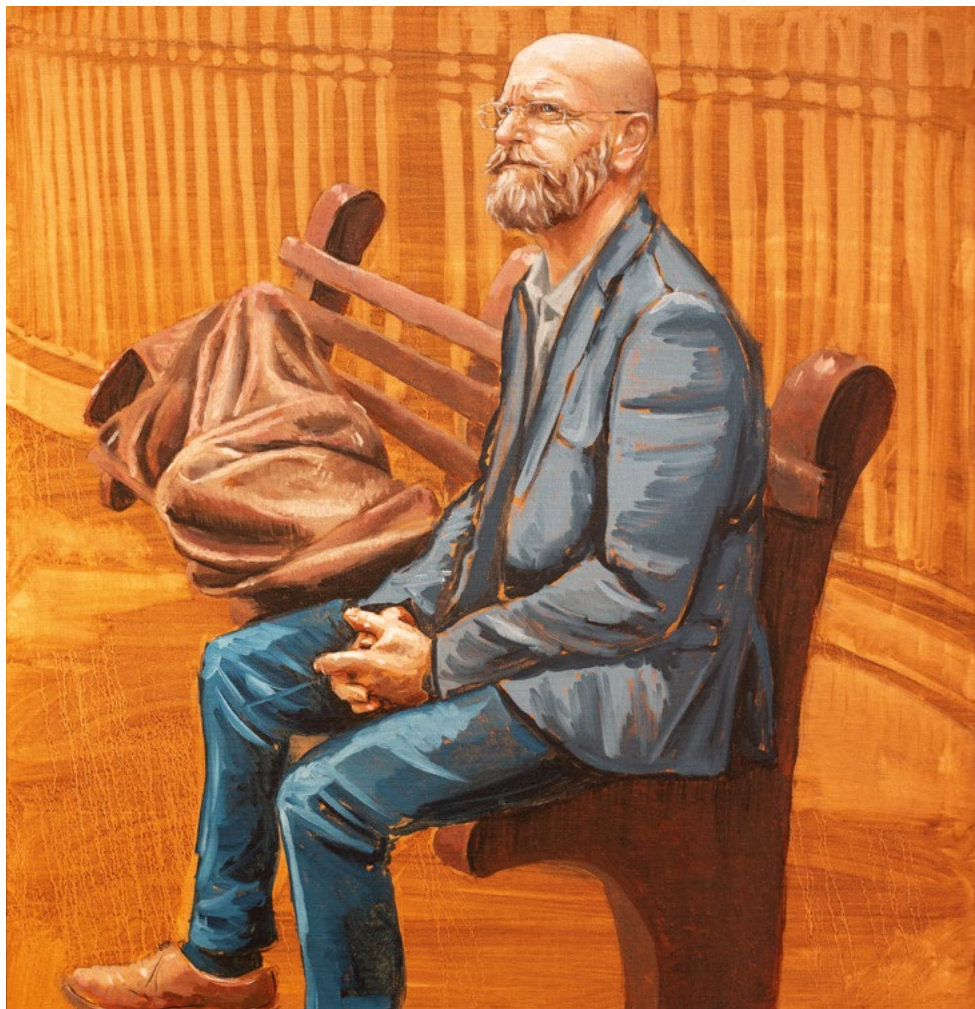
The questions are designed to stimulate conversation within groups where people may have varying backgrounds and knowledge of the Bible. You will notice a similar pattern of questions used throughout the studies. All of the questions are 'open' questions which don't presume an answer but instead invite people to reflect personally on the text. The first question is always, "What jumps off the page at you?" – an opportunity for people to begin to share their thoughts on a passage. Then there are 'listing' questions that encourage a closer reading of the text, 'theological' questions that seek to understand the meaning, and finally 'contextual' questions that begin to apply the text to life.

We hope you find this a refreshing and stimulating way to study the Bible.

More Bible study resources that utilise the Conversations method can be found at: scottishbiblesociety.org/equip

The Wilderness

Study 3 • Luke 3:1-18



Text: Luke 3:1-18 Pages 20-22 of *The Portrait Gospel*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Taconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene - ² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism

of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

‘A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

“Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.

⁶ And all people will see God’s salvation.”

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’

¹⁰ ‘What should we do then?’ the crowd asked.

¹¹ John answered, ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptised. ‘Teacher,’ they asked, ‘what should we do?’

¹³ ‘Don’t collect any more than you are required to,’ he told them.

¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, ‘And what should we do?’

He replied, ‘Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely – be content with your pay.’

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, ‘I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.