



Northern Saints

Notes for episodes 1-4

Northern Saints

episode one notes

Bede

Bede entered the monastic life from a very young age and this gave him a love of scripture and a desire to learn.

-When did you first read the bible for yourself and how do you think this has shaped how you engage with it now?

-What are your favourite parts to read? Which bits do you find most challenging?

-What rhythms, if any, do you have of reading scripture?

-How have these helped you in other parts of your life?

It was through Bede that the terms A.D and B.C (although in Bede's time this was A.C.N - Ante Christum Natum) became popularised. As Bede was writing history to help people learn through events in our past, he needed one hinge point to help frame time. He decided the birth of Jesus is the pivotal moment in history from which all other events find their meaning.

-How does viewing history through the lens of the life of Jesus change how we see events of the past?

-How does viewing your own life through the same lens alter how you see it?

-What do you think the relationship is between Bede's passion for history and love for the bible?

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episode one notes

Bede

Bede was incredibly influential in helping non-academics understand ancient scripture through his writing of commentaries. Seeking to find ways to join the dots between the old and new testaments as well as presenting the bible in a way that is applicable and relatable to modern life was a life's work for Bede.

What resources have you used in the past to help you understand the bible better?

What examples have you got of other people helping you to gain a clearer understanding of scripture?

How can you incorporate the use of commentaries, videos, and other resources into your regular study of the bible?

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the entirety of the bible and is a love song about scripture. Verses 9 and 10 say:

**How can a young person stay on the path of
purity? By living according to your word.
I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.**

Spend the rest of your time together praying and thanking God for not leaving us alone but giving us a map and a guide for life in the bible.

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episode two notes

Caedmon

Caedmon was a humble shepherd who God spoke to in a dream. In the dream he heard a voice encouraging him to sing. He replied, 'But I don't know what to sing about'. The voice returned, 'start with the beginning of all things.' He then, in his dream, sung a song about creation. He then remembered it upon waking and it is the first Christian song we have written in colloquial English rather than imported Latin!

Singing is a central part of Christian worship. Why do you think this is? What happens when we sing together?

What is your relationship with corporate singing in church? Is it your preferred style of worship? Do you have any stories of where it really helped in a situation or changed your perspective on something?

Have you ever written a poem, song or any other form of spoken word to help you process or proclaim your relationship with God? How has it helped in your own spirituality?

Caedmon was not seeking out an encounter with God. He was simply looking after sheep in the land surrounding an abbey in Whitby. Yet time and time again in scripture we see God interrupting the normal routines of people to use them for His glory.

Have you ever been 'interrupted' by God in this kind of way? Have you ever felt him speak to you, comfort or encourage you on your commute, at work, when making breakfast with the kids or walking in the park?

Have you ever felt any dream you had was more than the result of cheese before bed? What did you feel God was saying through it? How did it feel?

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episode two notes

Caedmon

To sing in our first language was not a privilege that was widely accepted in corporate gatherings until the reformation in the 1600s. Until then, Latin was the norm. This meant that unless you could speak Latin, which only wealthy educated people could do, you would be excluded from engaging with God in song.

How has Caedmon's example changed how we can engage with God?

Even when we run out of words the bible says in Hebrews 8:26, 'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.' Have you had any experience of this? How did it feel that you didn't even need the right words to get through?

The voice in Caedmon's dream prompted him to simply start with the beginning of all things. Does being in creation or thinking of creation inspire you to worship? Why do you think that is?

**End your time together
individually writing a
song of praise to God.
If in doubt, start
with the beginning
of all things.**

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episode three notes

Paulinus

Paulinus was a missionary from Rome who, after moving to England, found himself in Royal courts impressing pagan leaders. He then baptised the King of Northumbria, Edwin and his High Priest, Coifi. This led to a succession of Christian kings finding faith in Jesus

Paulinus gave up a life of wealth to become a missionary from Rome to England. Do you have any examples of extreme sacrifice to follow the call of God?

Moving from Rome to England in 601AD would have been a huge cultural shock. How do you think a Christian missionary can translate the gospel to the people of rural England?

It is easy to think all missionaries are incredibly successful and never hit problems. Some of those converted under St Paulinus' teaching returned to paganism, some went on to establish abbeys. How should we view success as evangelists in God's Kingdom?

Evangelism is a scary word in the church. It brings up all kinds of mixed and unhelpful imagery for most of us so we find the whole concept off putting.

At the time of St Paulinus, there was an urgency behind their work. Why was this? Are we missing some of that in 2020's UK?

How do you find the idea of evangelism personally? What have been examples of helpful models of evangelism in your own life?

Do you think of yourself as evangelistic? How has it felt when you have shared your faith with someone? Do you have any tips for others in the group who may struggle with this?

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episode three notes

Paulinus

St Paulinus is the only one of our spiritual giants in this series not originally from the North. He seems to have been adopted by the North so much that he became the first bishop of York and was welcomed into the differing royal families of the north when the British Isles was split into 5 different kingdoms.

Is everyone in the group originally from the North? What about parents and grandparents? How do you feel the North has benefitted and been enriched from people making home here and genuinely becoming part of its makeup?

Did you know just what a spiritual legacy the North has? How does that identity change how you feel about the North?

What are some of your favourite things about living in the North? How do you think that helps churches flourish here?

Spend the rest of your time together dreaming together ideas of how to release evangelists like Paulinus to share the message of the gospel in our everyday lives and how we as churches can welcomes those that the evangelists bring in!

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episode four notes

Hild

Hild was a Northumbrian princess who gave up her wealth and founded an abbey that housed both men and women who put aside their material wealth to pursue a life devoted to worship and communal life. Out of the abbey that Hild established, a total of five others were sainted who had followed her example.

Living together is not easy! It certainly was not easy in 657AD! Eating together, worshipping together, serving together, cleaning and reading together.

How does this idea of communal life excite you or terrify you? What elements of it do you feel are achievable when not sharing a house?

The church is described in Acts chapter 2 as having this kind of life as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. What do you think the role of the Holy Spirit is in this kind of communal living?

How is this kind of life a testimony to the world about the gospel of Jesus?

Part of communal living is being prepared to be vulnerable, open and accountable to one another.

Accountability is the idea that there are people who know the uncomfortable truths about us so we no longer carry burdens alone. Is there anyone in your life that knows this level of truth about you? How would that change the quality of your relationship with God?

What are the challenges and benefits of this kind of relationship?

Jesus said in John 13:35, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' How would this kind of relationship tell the world about Jesus and us being his disciples?

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episode four notes

Hild

Giving up wealth, starting a religious community of both men and women, living closely, preaching in a largely pagan world. All of these things were and still are incredibly counter-cultural.

What is the church's role in pushing back against cultural moves for the things of the Kingdom of God?

How could communities like ours give the world another way to live? What are the counter cultural markers we see in our own churches that are attractive to the world?

The North has often been a counter-cultural part of the UK in history. Moving against the grain, giving prophetic insight, fighting for the oppressed and marginalised. How can we recapture that courage and bravery in our churches as we are led by Jesus?

Spend the rest of your time together praying that God will move in all Christian communities, churches and worshipping groups up and down our country. May we be filled with boldness, courage and confidence that He who has called us will be faithful and we will see in our time a revival like never before.