

SERIES OVERVIEW

SO THAT YOU MIGHT **BELIEVE**
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



st bart's

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overview

The Gospel of John is unique in the New Testament. Where the Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus' launch into ministry, Luke opens with the foretelling of John the Baptist's birth, and Matthew commences with a summary of Jesus' genealogy, John steps much further back: *to the very beginning!* In the beginning was the Word! Right from the opening words of John, he not only shows us the supremacy and glory *of Jesus*, but he calls us to recognise and respond *to Jesus*. John's intent is not only to provide a faithful account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but to cause a change in us. That we would believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. The purpose of John's Gospel—as Don Carson put it—is to make us believers.

The main device that John employs to achieve his purpose (to move us to belief in Jesus) is a focus on a series of signs by Jesus. We're confident about this, not because we've cleverly deduced John's driving purpose for writing, but because he plainly tells us in some of his closing words:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
(John 20:30-31)

So that you may believe! Not in anything, but that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Not without effect, *but in order that we may have life in his name.*

John's gospel is full of examples of people encountering Jesus. Some fail to *recognise* who he is. Others *reject* him and seek his demise. But many grasp the gravity of who he is and *believe in him*. The same invitation is open to us today.

Outline

Whilst this series focuses on the seven signs of Jesus, all twenty-one chapters are covered (albeit in varying degrees of depth, as time allows!). Because a significant portion of John focuses on the 'upper room discourse' the night before Jesus' death, additional reflections are provided for Holy Week (i.e., the week leading up to Easter).

Week 1	Word Made Flesh	John 1:1-18
Week 2	Sign 1: Water into Wine	John 2:1-11
Week 3	Sign 2: Healing Official's Son	John 4:46-54
Week 4	Sign 3: Healing Paralysed Man*	John 5:1-18
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	<i>Jesus' Burial</i>	<i>John 19:38-42</i>
Week 10	Jesus' Resurrection (<i>Easter Day</i>)	John 20:1-18
Week 11	Jesus: Do you Believe?	John 20:19-31
Week 12	Jesus: Do you Love Me?	John 21

* *First Sunday in Lent*

Context

Whilst some have debated the authorship of John's gospel, the longstanding view is that it was written by John, son of Zebedee. The author never names himself (only referring to "the disciple whom Jesus loved") but claims to be an eyewitness (John 19:35; 21:24) and was part of the inner circle (e.g., was present at the Last Supper). It was likely written late in the first century.




The “Signs” of John’s Gospel

One of the hallmark features of John’s gospel are the various signs that are recorded and referenced so that people would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God. Whilst there is some debate about which actions of Jesus precisely constitute a ‘sign’, most scholars agree that there are seven in total (with the cross and resurrection being the ultimate signs). The signs have two main purposes: (a) to publicly authenticate the ministry of Jesus and reveal his glory; and (b) to persuade people to believe in Jesus Christ.¹

1	Water into Wine	Bringer of New Covenant Joy	John 2:1-11
2	Healing Official’s Son	Life-Giver by Word	John 4:46-54
3	Healing Paralysed Man*	Lord of the Sabbath	John 5:1-18
4	Feeding the 5000	Bread of Life	John 6:1-14
5	Walking on Water	Divine “I AM”	John 6:16-21
6	Healing Man Born Blind	Light of the World	John 9:1-41
7	Raising Lazarus	Resurrection and the Life	John 11:11-44
#	Cross & Resurrection	Glorified Son of God	John 19-21

¹ cf. Köstenberger, “*Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel*”.

General Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expositional Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

St Bart’s Resources (including for families)

For the series overview, weekly sermons, small group material, and weekly children’s curriculum, visit: [stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/john](https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/john)

ADAM LOWE

St Bart’s Anglican Church, January 2026



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Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Church Library ([stbarts.com.au/library](https://www.stbarts.com.au/library))

how to use this series overview

For each week in the series, a Bible reading, “the big idea”, some reflection questions, and a prayer is provided.

- **PRAY**

Begin with prayer, for example:

Gracious God, please enlighten our minds, enliven our hearts, and shape our wills according to your life-giving Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- **READ from the Bible**

Read the part of the Bible that we are focusing on for that week. Some key verses (from that reading) are also printed—you might even like to memorise these!

- **REFLECT**

Read the ‘big idea’ and use the questions to reflect on the Bible passage. This will help prepare for the sermon and the following week’s small group questions (provided on the St Bart’s website).

- **PRAY**

Each day a prayer is provided that you may like to use. Of course, you need not to be limited to this prayer.

Week 1

Word Made Flesh

John 1:1-18

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

READ JOHN 1:1-18

REFLECT. When we read the Gospels, we always encounter Jesus as a human being. Hebrews says that he was “tempted like us in every way, and yet without sin” (4:15). Like us in every way—yes—but also much greater: he stills storms, multiplies loaves, raises the dead to life. These signs throughout all four Gospels point us to a greater reality about Jesus: he is the one who created the wind and waves, who provides food, and who gives life. They whisper, ‘Jesus is God.’ In these verses of John, however, this reality is not just hinted at: the Word who becomes flesh—Jesus Christ—is ‘in the beginning with God’ and ‘is God’. This Jesus, who became exactly as we are, is the one who has from all eternity lived in the embrace of the Father. The incarnation of the Word (God becoming flesh) is the miracle of miracles: God himself, out of his great love for us, chooses to make his dwelling with us in Jesus Christ. Whenever we encounter Jesus in the Gospels, we encounter God. This is key to understanding everything we read in John: the love of Jesus is the love of God. RE

- How does Jesus ‘make known’ (v.18) the love and grace of the Father already in this first chapter of John?

PRAY

Our heavenly Father, we thank you that you have made yourself known to us in Jesus Christ. Help us more today to see the glory of the only Son and to learn to love you more. May we also be like John, in testifying to the coming of the light of the world, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Week 2

Sign 1: Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. John 2:11

READ JOHN 2:1-11

REFLECT. Wedding celebrations in the ancient world could span days and involve the entire community. In a culture of honour and shame, the role of host was particularly weighty. To exhaust the supply of wine before the party finished was a source of potential disgrace. *But this wedding at Cana was a celebration to remember!* Even though Jesus and the disciples were merely guests invited to the wedding (i.e., it doesn't appear that they had an 'official' or special responsibility), it's peculiar that Jesus' mother alerts him when the wine has run out! *She doesn't ask him to do anything, she simply alerts him to the situation.* Jesus responds sharply, questioning *why* she would involve him (v.4). Jesus has no official role (typically the host was responsible for the wine), but it seems that Mary knows that Jesus *can* do something about it. Jesus doesn't respond by saying that it's not his responsibility, but that *his hour has not yet come* (v.7). What has Mary already recognised in her Son that most have not yet seen and some will fail *or refuse* to see? We know because of what happens next. The jars are filled (those used for ceremonial washing no less) and the water is turned into *the best* wine! This sign—the first of many — was not a party trick but so that people would see his glory and believe in him. Which the disciples did! The true bridegroom has come! AL

- What is significant about the jars being those used for *ceremonial washing*?
- How has Jesus' glory been revealed to us? Why should we believe in him?

PRAY

Gracious God, thank you that you have revealed your glory to us in your Son. Please help us to recognise and believe in him. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week 3

Sign 2: Healing Official's Son

John 4:46-54

Then the father realised that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee. John 4:53-54

READ JOHN 4:46-54

REFLECT. This second *sign* points us beyond the *sign* itself. While we could easily and superficially focus only on Jesus' miracle like the crowd (John 2:23-25), we are invited to trust ultimately a Saviour who can give life not by touch or presence, but by the bare authority of his word. Jesus encounters a father in deep distress, for his son lies at the point of death. "Sir, come down before my child dies" (v.49). Unlike the centurion who displayed great faith in Jesus' word (Luke 7:2-10), the father here believes Jesus could heal, but only if Jesus would come. Jesus answers, not by travelling, but by speaking, "Go, your son will live" (John 4:50a). No touch, no visible wonder beyond the mere word. Jesus demands a faith beyond sight and circumstances. Perhaps puzzled by Jesus' response, the official still chooses to take "Jesus at his word" (v.50b) and returns home trusting only in Jesus' promise. On his way home, behold, good news arrives! As he realised that his son's healing occurred at the exact moment Jesus spoke, his faith grew, and his whole household *believed*. The official learned the deeper *sign*: Jesus, the one who gives life by word. Blessed are those who *believe* the very Life-giving Word! JL

- How is God using this miraculous narrative to grow my trust in his word as revealed in Scripture?

PRAY

O gracious Lord, we thank you for your word is powerful! Please increase our faith as you did with that father of the dying son, so we may rest firmly in Your promises when our eyes cannot yet see. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Week 4

Sign 3: Healing Paralysed Man

John 5:1-18

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. John 5:8-9

READ JOHN 5:1-18

REFLECT. In this passage John doesn't mention a 'third sign', but through Jesus' actions and his own defence, we see in more detail who he is. A man has been waiting alongside the Pool of Bethesda for 38 years. This pool was well known by both Jews and Pagans for its potential healing properties. But when Jesus meets the man, Jesus is not interested in the pool. Instead, Jesus commands the man to “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”, the man obeys, and he is healed. To anyone sitting alongside the pool it would have been surprising to see healing not come from the pool—but a man! And the physical healing the man experienced was not enough either, for Jesus implores the man to stop sinning. This whole interaction is important—not just because we are reminded of Jesus' power to heal—but we see *the reasons why* the persecution against Jesus intensifies, and turns deadly. The Jewish leaders began to persecute him because: (a) he broke the Sabbath; and (b) he claimed that he was *equal with God*. Jesus could have healed the man on any day—he had already waited 38 years. Jesus defends himself in verse 17, saying he is working, for his Father is at work. Here he makes the audacious claim that he shares divine authority and work with the Father. He is not bound by the Sabbath, but his authority extends over the Sabbath. AN

- How do you see Jesus' authority expressed in this passage? In what ways do you respond (or not respond) to Jesus' authority now?

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus brings life and healing. Help us to see the authority he has, and respond willingly to all he says and commands. Amen.

Week 5

Sign 4: Feeding the 5000

John 6:1-14

[Jesus said] *“Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.* John 6:12-13

READ JOHN 6:1-14

REFLECT. We’ve already witnessed how extraordinary it is to be at a wedding with Jesus (John 2), *but it also would have been phenomenal to picnic with him!* As Jesus’ notoriety has grown (*many people are following him because of the signs of healing they had witnessed*, v.2), a large crowd are in hot pursuit up the mountainside to where the disciples and Jesus are sitting. John reminds us that the Passover—the great celebration of God’s rescue of his people out of Egypt—is near. But as Jesus sees the crowd, his first instinct is to feed them. They are in a remote and isolated space. There are no shops nearby and, as Philip points out, it would cost a small fortune to feed them. But that is no barrier for Jesus—he takes five small loaves and two small fish from a boy, gives thanks, and the disciples distribute the food. They started with little but are left with an abundance. It’s no wonder that people are amazed and want to make him king, *even if by force*. But what they have failed to understand, Jesus makes clear later in chapter 6. He is the bread of life. Nothing in this world can save us (not even the manna with which God nourished his people, cf. 6:49) but Jesus is the *living* bread of heaven which has come down to us. And it is by our feeding on him—through his death and resurrection—that we can know life in his name. AL

- What does it mean that Jesus is the ‘bread of life’? *How do we feed on him?*

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus is the bread of life who has come down from heaven for us. Help us to look to him, feed on him, and know life in his name. Amen.

Week 6

Sign 5: Walking on Water

John 6:16-21

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” John 6:19-20

READ JOHN 6:16-21

REFLECT. After being around thousands of people, the disciples are now alone on the lake—but without Jesus. The lake (also known as the Sea of Galilee) was a substantial body of water, measuring 21km north-south, and 11km east-west. Because of the surrounding hillsides, it was known to experience sudden, fierce storms. And this is what seems to be brewing, strong winds buffet the boat and the waters grew rough. Notably, the source of the disciples' terror is not attributed to the conditions, but seeing Jesus walking on water towards them! Jesus says to them “It is I; don’t be afraid.” (verse 20). It is not just the sight of Jesus on water which is astounding, but what lies behind Jesus’ statement “It is I”. The reason the disciples are not to be afraid is that the LORD, the “I AM” is with them. Back in Exodus the Lord revealed to Moses that he is the “I AM” (*Exodus 3:14*)—this is who Jesus is claiming to be: the Lord of all. The Lord controlled the Red Sea to deliver his people. Now Jesus now shows his control over the sea, not just delivering the disciples to safety, but foreshadowing his ultimate ability to deliver them. A second miracle appears to be squeezed into verse 21. Once the disciples *were willing* to take Jesus onboard *immediately* the boat reached the shore. The disciples show us that just marvelling at Jesus and his power is not enough. We need to receive him in faith, trusting in the one who delivers. AN.

- What reminds you of Jesus’ presence with you?

PRAY

Lord, thank you for your presence with us in Christ, and his power to save. Amen.

Week 7

Sign 6: Healing Man Born Blind

John 9:1-41

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” John 9:35-36

READ JOHN 9:1-41

REFLECT. There’s few better examples of how divisive Jesus was—*by his words and his actions*—than John’s account of the healing of the blind man.

Preceding this encounter, Jesus has made some extraordinary claims about the extent of his authority and his equality with God. People were outraged; stones gripped in their fists, ready to put Jesus to death. But before they could express their wrath, Jesus slips away from and encounters a man blind from birth. The disciples ask Jesus whose sin caused his blindness: was it the man’s sin or his parents? But surprisingly, Jesus says, “neither”. *“This happened so that works of God might be displayed in him.”* In a way that *parallels* God’s creation of humankind (cf. Genesis 2:7) and *challenges* the prohibition to even make mud on the Sabbath, combining dirt and saliva to wipe it on the man’s eyes. When Jesus tells the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, he *believes, obeys, and is healed!* As the Pharisees investigate the healing (even seeking to verify that the man was blind from birth by calling on his reluctant parents) they are divided: some think Jesus a sinner and others are compelled by the sign. What they have failed to see is that whilst the man *was* physically blind, they suffer from a much more serious condition: a *spiritual blindness to Jesus*. AL

- What do you think causes spiritual blindness? *What helps us to see clearly?*

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us and helping us to see the truth. Please open the eyes of the blind that they may know Jesus as Lord. Amen.

Week 8

Sign 7: Raising Lazarus

John 11:11-44

Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” John 11:43b-44

READ JOHN 11:11-44

REFLECT. In the Book of Common Prayer, The Order for the Burial of the Dead begins with these words: “I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” The crafters of the prayer book recognised that though the resurrection of Lazarus is not identical to the resurrection of Jesus—Lazarus would die again one day—it is nevertheless a *sign* of the resurrection of our Lord and of the power of the one who raises the dead. God’s resurrection power is a source of great comfort to the one who believes, both now and on the day of our death. To go further: In this passage, we hear the Word of the Father (John 1:1-3) speak with power: “Lazarus, come out” (v.43). Whereas in the beginning the Word of the Father *creates* (“let there be light”), here the Word of the Father *re-creates*. At the word of Christ, the dead are not only raised to life, but also made anew. By the power of Christ, we who were dead in our sins now live in him—and will be raised up on the last day to behold him face to face. RE

- How do you think the resurrection of Lazarus reflects the ‘glory of God’ (v.43) to his sisters, and to us?

PRAY

O Father, we humbly ask that even now you would raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart from this life, we may rest in Christ and on the last day be raised to reign with him in glory. In his name we pray. Amen.

Week 9

Jesus' Triumphant Entry

John 12:1-19

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:3

READ JOHN 12:1-19

REFLECT. It is a time for celebration, yet many miss the point. Mary pours out expensive perfume on Jesus' feet, quietly honouring his burial. Judas, standing nearby, speaks loudly of money and misses the moment. His greed blinds him to the true worth of Jesus Christ. Not far away stands Lazarus, a living proof that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Yet the chief priests miss the point and make plans to even kill Lazarus. When hearts are hardened, even life-giving *signs* become a threat.

It is a time for celebration, the Passover crowds gather to see Lazarus and the One who raised him. They rightly welcome Jesus as the promised King, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (v.13b). Yet they see a King riding not on a war horse but a lowly donkey, paving the path to his own death on the cross. This does not take Jesus by surprise. He comes to fulfil what was prophesied through the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9). In fact, it is God's will that he comes as a "grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies" (John 12:24), so that many, including us, may live. This is his triumphant glory! JL

- It is time for Easter celebration. Are we welcoming Jesus as the humble and triumphant King, or have we missed the point?

PRAY

Almighty God, open our eyes that we may receive Jesus not on our terms, but as the crucified and risen King and Saviour, trusting in His triumphant name. Amen.

deep dive into holy week

MONDAY

Jesus' Servanthood (John 13)

READ JOHN 13

REFLECT. The time for Jesus' glorification had arrived! However, no one - except Jesus—had anticipated that his true glory would be shown through the events surrounding the cross and all that followed. Throughout John's Gospel, the 'hour' is a recurring symbolic reference pointing to Jesus' hour of glorification through his death, resurrection, and ascension (cf. John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). But now, as Jesus shares this meal with his friends, he has the sobering presence of mind that the long-awaited hour has come. This is the moment. There was no turning back. Jesus is committed to his saving cause that would come at great cost. Jesus lovingly prepares his disciples for what lies ahead, knowing his words and actions at the meal will shape their understanding of his death and their future mission. He begins not with explanation but with a shocking act of service: washing their feet. By taking the role of a servant, Jesus reveals that his death will be the ultimate act of humble service, cleansing sin through the cross. Jesus calls his disciples to mirror this love by serving one another, showing that true discipleship is expressed through costly, self-giving love that points back to the cross. As Jesus speaks of glory, he reveals that the cross—though confusing and scandalous to the disciples—is the place where God's glory is most fully displayed. *True glory is found in Christ crucified for the salvation of the world.* AL

TUESDAY

Jesus' Promise (John 14-16)

READ JOHN 14-16

REFLECT. As Jesus continues to prepare the disciples for his going, he assures them that he *must* go in order to prepare a place for them. Full of anguish and dread, Thomas is puzzled as to how they can follow Jesus if they don't know the way to where Jesus is going! Thomas is looking for a map! But Jesus is the way—and *the truth and the life*. The way to forgiveness and life is found by believing in the one who paved the way for us by the cross. That does not mean that following him is easy (Jesus warns of the difficulties and hatred that they will face), but it does mean that we can go with confidence and in the power of the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised to the disciples and is given to all who believe today. Jesus warns them that they will face trouble, but that we can take heart, for he has overcome the world! AL

WEDNESDAY

Jesus' Prayer (John 17)

READ JOHN 17

REFLECT. “Father, the hour has come”. The darkest hour, anticipated at the beginning (John 2:4) is finally here. At the dawn of his death, Jesus holds his people, you and me, close in his longest recorded prayer. Our Lord begins by asking the Father to glorify him, and he may glorify the Father. Then the prayer draws us into our Lord's tender heart for all who *believe*. Imagine the One to whom all the *signs* have pointed—the Word made flesh, the Giver of life, the glorious Saviour, lifts his eyes to God the Father for you. Jesus longs for you to know the Father, because “this is eternal life” (17:3). He prays that you would be protected (17:11-12), filled with his joy (v.13), sanctified by the Word (vv.17-19), united in love (vv.20-23), and the love the Father has for Jesus may be in you and that Jesus himself may be in you (v.26)! JL

THURSDAY (Maundy Thursday)

Jesus' Arrest (John 18)

READ JOHN 18

REFLECT. The betrayal that Jesus had forewarned (John 13:21), has now come about. One of his very own disciples, Judas, is leading the detachment of soldiers and officials. Jesus is not caught off guard by their appearance, but he knows what is ahead and still willingly identifies himself. This is not a moment where Jesus is out-manoeuvred by Judas, or even Satan. Jesus even rebukes Peter's feeble attempt to defend him. Jesus' arrest by the Jewish leaders is part of God's plan, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (verse 11). As Jesus is taken away to be tried, it looks like darkness has won. Even his closest disciples desert and deny Jesus. And yet as Jesus plunges into further darkness, we see "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). AN

FRIDAY (Good Friday)

Jesus' Death (John 19:1-37)

READ JOHN 19:1-37

REFLECT. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus warns of his death (through his words and actions) as an inevitable and essential part of his saving mission.

- *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."* John 2:19
- *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up."* John 3:14
- *"The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."* John 6:51
- *"I am with you only a short time..."* John 7:33
- *"Where I go, you cannot come."* John 8:21
- *"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* John 10:11
- *"I lay down my life... No one takes it from me."* John 10:17-18
- *"...unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies..."* John 12:24
- *"When I am lifted up from the earth..."* John 12:32
- *"Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world..."* John 13:1
- *"Where I am going you cannot come."* John 13:33

- *“In a little while you will see me no more...”* John 16:16
- *“This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.”* John 18:32

Despite a sham trial, the betrayal of a friend, the evil motives of some leaders, the false testimony of some, and the shock of the disciples, Jesus’ crucifixion wasn’t a hiccup or detour in God’s salvation plan, but was the very means through which we can have life.

People have never seen a king like this. Many would sooner mock and crucify him, than recognise and bow their knee. But for those who do believe in him, they can delight in the finished work of Jesus. AL

SATURDAY

Jesus’ Burial (John 19:38-42)

READ JOHN 19:38-42

REFLECT. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both secret followers of Jesus who were afraid to make their allegiance known because of their position in the community. Earlier in John’s Gospel, we read of Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night (3:1) and later attempting to defend Jesus before the religious leaders (7:50-52). But whilst the other disciples had abandoned Jesus, they both take a risk now in order to provide a proper burial for Jesus. This could have had all sorts of consequences for them, but they take the risk and honour their master. As we anticipate celebrating Jesus’ resurrection at Easter, it’s timely to consider whether we hide our following of Jesus? As we remember and celebrate Jesus’ death and resurrection, do the people in your life (across all of your frontlines) know that you are a follower of Jesus? As we rejoice in all that God has done for us, it is a great weekend to share your love for God and let people know that you love Jesus. For Christ died not only for us, but in order that the whole world might be saved through believing in him. AL

Week 10

Jesus' Resurrection

John 20:1-18

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). John 20:16

READ JOHN 20:1-18

REFLECT. The news of Jesus' resurrection is met with a range of responses from the first eyewitnesses. The first responder to the empty tomb—Mary—is distressed when she discovers the body is gone. She fears that someone, perhaps even the authorities, have taken it away. When two of the disciples hot foot it to see for themselves (be sure to note that "the one Jesus loved" outpaced Peter!), they too believe that the body is not there (but do not yet understand that Jesus had risen). Whilst the disciples return home, Mary remains at the tomb crying. If the events of the last three days haven't been painful enough, it's hard to fathom the complexity of her grief as the body—which she has come to care for—is now missing. When two angels appear and ask her *why* she is crying, she simply responds by asking them (thinking one of them is the gardener) if he has taken the body somewhere else. She had not yet recognised that this is Jesus. But as he says her name, her grief gives way to exhilarating joy! Jesus has risen from the dead! Jesus has conquered the grave—not only for him, but for all who believe in him! Throughout the Gospels we witness a range of responses to the resurrection: suspicion, doubt, and fear. But Mary shows us the best response: *to recognise the risen one, to rejoice as we trust in him, and be keen to share this news.* AL

- What evidence gives you confidence that Jesus truly rose from the dead?

PRAY

Living God, we thank you for the extraordinary news that as Jesus conquered the grave he has also defeated sin and death. Please help us to believe in him and share this news. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week 11

Do you Believe?

John 20:19-31

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:28-29

READ JOHN 20:19-31

REFLECT. The disciples are together gathered, afraid of the same leaders who have just executed their teacher just days before. Mary Magdalene has brought them the strange news that she has seen the Lord, and now in this locked room Jesus suddenly stands among them. “Peace be with you!” Here is their Lord—alive! Their joy is palpable. As Jesus repeats his greeting, the words Jesus spoke to them just days before would have come to mind, how in Jesus they can have peace, for he has overcome the world (John 16:33). Jesus commissions his disciples to be witnesses to him, sending them into the world. It is through this work of witnessing to Jesus’ death and resurrection, that people are able to receive God’s forgiveness. If the disciples withhold the news of Jesus, then they withhold the opportunity for people to have their sins forgiven. One week later Thomas meets Jesus. Thomas is adamant that he needs physical proof to believe—and yet his scepticism turns to belief as he sees Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” All the signs of Jesus recorded in John are that we would have the same confession of faith as Thomas. That we too would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing we would have life in his name. AN

- What is the ultimate sign that Jesus has overcome sin and death? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Who can you bring this news to?

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you for our risen Saviour! Help us to be witnesses to Jesus’ death and resurrection, that others would believe in him and receive life. Amen.

Week 12

Do you love me?

John 21

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. John 21

READ JOHN 21

REFLECT. In the closing chapter of John, it might be surprising to read that even though Jesus has appeared to the disciples, they are found back fishing. At first they don't recognise Jesus, but then—*through a miraculous catch*—John recognises their Lord. Once again, Jesus invites them to share in a meal. But at this meal, instead of Jesus telling them of the cross-shaped mission that he must embark upon, John tells us of Peter's commissioning. It's a personal end to John's Gospel, as the story focuses on an intimate conversation between Jesus and Peter. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, pushing deeper to the heart of the matter. Peter may have denied Jesus three times previously, but now his commitment to following Jesus is imperative as he is sent into the world to proclaim the Gospel and nurture God's church. As Jesus predicts (v.18), this following will involve great cost, even ending in martyrdom. As we revel in the Good News of Easter, we all have an important role in sharing the Good News of Jesus, that many may come to believe that he is the Messiah, Son of God. In God's kindness, we go empowered by his Spirit and equipped with the witness of the Scriptures. *Praise God, that even though Jesus did many more things (than that recorded in John), that we have every cause for confidence that Jesus truly is the Messiah.* AL

- Who are you praying for that they might come to believe in Jesus?

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you that you have given us every cause for confidence in your Son, as attested to by your Word. Strengthen us in belief and witness. Amen.