

# Gospel of John



A four-week study guide for you and your church

**B** BIBLE  
month

# Introduction to Bible Month

This booklet on the Gospel of John is part of a series to help you and your church focus on one book of the Bible across the course of a month. Its aim is to develop biblical literacy across the breadth and depth of your community: everyone can dig deep into the Gospel of John, at the same time!

Four weeks of sermon notes, written by David F. Ford, focus on specific chapters of John to ensure that the entire gospel is covered. There are four small group guides by Andy Fishburne, which invite participation and discussion; and four sets of interactive resources by Gail Adcock, which are flexible for use across services with imaginative all-age activities.

A reflection by Charmaine Yip on Chapter 20 that covers the wonder of the full circle of man and woman – from in the garden to the second 'gardener' (20:15) encounter in the story of the resurrection. Finally, a list of further resources invites you to dig deeper into the context and commentary of the Gospel of John.

Ministers, preachers, service and small group leaders of all denominations, discover that these Bible Month materials are invaluable in deepening both an understanding and love of scripture. The time spent together, digging deeper into God's Word, also builds community cohesion and an opportunity to share and learn together. Whether joining online or in person, everyone who is part of your church service can relate and interact with the content.

This booklet is the primary resource for equipping people to join Bible Month and is often a catalyst for personal thinking and prayer. Other resources include author videos with additional insights, training events, animations, Bible journaling resources and more. You can order the booklets and follow video links at [preachweb.org.uk/biblemonth](http://preachweb.org.uk/biblemonth). You can find links to various other resources at [methodist.org.uk/biblemonth](http://methodist.org.uk/biblemonth).

Bible Month resources are produced as a partnership between The Methodist Church ([methodist.org.uk](http://methodist.org.uk)) and the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust ([lwpt.org.uk](http://lwpt.org.uk)).

## Using this booklet

### How to plan a service

**Sermon preparation:** Sermon notes are provided each week, which dig into the relevant chapters of John. Preaching points highlight questions to help you wrestle with the text as you prepare.

**Service preparation:** Each week we include interactive resources to use in services, encouraging all generations to engage with John. These are designed to complement and give emphasis to the sermon content.

### How to run a small group

Small groups are a place to discuss the teaching from the weekly sermon. Together you can: reflect on what you've heard, read and discuss how the text impacts your life, encourage (and challenge) one another to grow as disciples.

Here are a few tips for running a small group.

**Preparation:** Review the material and decide what will be most useful for your group. Check if there is any advance preparation for the group - it might be helpful to circulate a summary of the sermon.

**To begin:** Introduce the topic and ask someone to summarise the key sermon points. Pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to a fresh revelation today.

**During:** Lead the group through your chosen questions and activities. Be open to other thoughts and queries that come from the group, while helping the group stay focused.

**To end:** Pray together for things relating to the theme and also any situations that are on people's hearts. Pray that everyone will continue to grow closer to Jesus and be open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Follow up:** Remember to check in with each other via text, email, phone and other means. Continue to pray for one another.



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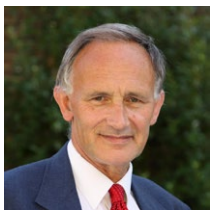
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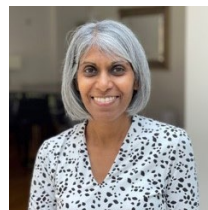
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# The Gospel of Superabundance

‘From his fullness...’

by David F. Ford

Right from the first chapter, the writer of John’s Gospel wants us to know that Jesus is the heart of life (1:1-18). The abundance of Jesus is first introduced as ‘the Word of God’, the fullest meaning imaginable, that Jesus is ‘the Word of God’. Not only that, through him ‘all things came into being’, and in Jesus there is ‘life’ that is ‘the light of all people’. Jesus, the light of the world, was rejected by his own people, yet to those who accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

He is full of grace and truth, and from his abundance, we have all received grace. His purpose is to offer us life, and John’s Gospel aims to draw readers into this boundless, everlasting love. The love between Jesus and his Father, the very love that brought the universe into existence. I believe the purpose of John’s Gospel is to draw readers into that superabundant love of God, which is new and everlasting life.

## The ultimate desire of Jesus

This is not just the purpose of John’s Gospel, but also the desire of Jesus. The night before his death, Jesus pours out his heart to the Father in prayer.<sup>1</sup>

‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them’ John 17:20-26.

Jesus is praying for our unity. That those who trust him would be united in love with him and his Father. He also desires for us to have unity with each other for the sake of the whole world. Do we want to shape our lives around desiring what Jesus desires?

## Are we open to receiving more?

As we begin this study through John’s Gospel it is worth

asking yourself, ‘am I open to receiving more of the superabundance that Jesus offers me?’

If you have not already, you must ask the even more fundamental question; ‘are you open to receiving the free gift of life that Jesus offers by trusting in him?’ Again, the headlines are there in the prologue, ‘...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace’ (1:12,16). Receiving and trusting are central to John’s Gospel, and at the heart of it is that astonishing gift of love, first hinted at in Jesus being ‘close to the Father’s heart,’ and then opened up in unfathomable depth in the final prayer of Jesus; ‘... so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them’ (17:26).

If you have accepted this gift and become a child of God, you can then go even deeper into that gift by discovering the superabundance of all that Jesus’ love is.

The great challenge of the Gospel of John is how to welcome being loved like this by accepting the gift of eternal life. It is no accident that this gospel’s disciple, to whom the gospel’s testimony is attributed (see below), is never named, but is simply called ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’, or ‘the beloved disciple’.<sup>2</sup> It is an identity each reader is invited to enter into in his or her own way, as each is called by name (10:3).

## Become a daily re-reader of John

This is an identity that we can grow into, it does not happen all at once. In fact, the superabundance of love, truth, life – and more – are utterly inexhaustible. This is for the simple reason that they are gifts from the God who is inexhaustible. As Jesus tells the Samaritan woman he meets at a well, the ‘living water’ he gives is ‘a spring of water gushing up to eternal life’ (4:10,14). And in John, eternal life begins when we receive the free gift from God that is salvation through Jesus Christ that gives us an abundant life on both sides of death. Three of the basic practices of being a disciple (we will go deeper into them in our third week, on John 13-17) are learning (‘disciple’, *mathētēs* in Greek, simply means ‘learner’), loving and praying. The striking thing about these three practices is that you can begin them at the start of your Christian life and never exhaust them.

Similarly, the Gospel of John is a book we often given to inquirers or new Christians; yet at the same time it stretches the most experienced believer. It has what I like to call ‘deep plain sense’. The deeper you go into John the more deeply you will be drawn into the rest of the Bible, and into the whole of reality in relation to God.

<sup>1</sup> In verse 20, it is very important that the Greek word usually translated as ‘believe’, *pisteuein*, also means ‘trust’ and ‘have faith’, and in our culture it is often ‘trust’ that captures its meaning best.

<sup>2</sup> (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24)



## Who wrote John's Gospel?

I have left till the end the question of authorship, as it appears in John's Gospel; 'This is the disciple ['the disciple whom Jesus loved'] who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written' (21:24-25).

Who is this disciple? Who are 'we'? Who is 'I'? There is a great deal of scholarly discussion about the authorship that every commentary engages with. The author carefully selected the testimonies about Jesus that are essential for coming to trust, believe and have faith in Jesus; and for living and maturing as his disciples (on this see 20:30-31). Words are important to John: every page of this gospel points to the superabundance of God through Jesus, the Word of God, who dwelt among us.

# Gospel of John: A reflection on Chapter 20

by Charmaine Yip

If John had not been a theologian, he could have been a playwright. His gospel reveals profound truths through vivid stories, the narrative bursts with signs, symbols, imagery and metaphors. Commentators remark how dramatically he has arranged his material; for example, that the text and themes of his resurrection narrative (John 20) draw us back to his opening chapter. Reading the texts side-by-side highlights the recurring themes between the two: the central question of Jesus' identity, the motifs of his going unrecognised, of seeing and believing, revelation and eyewitness. Jesus' first words 'What are you seeking?' to the two disciples in 1:38 becomes 'Whom are you seeking?' to Mary in 20:15, just as John the Baptist's 'I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God' (1:34) conflates Mary's 'I have seen the Lord' and Thomas' 'My Lord and my God' (20:18, 28).

Consider John's allusions to the creation narrative throughout his gospel, specifically for our purposes in John 20. God speaks into the darkness in Genesis 1:1, light, life and order emerges from the nothingness. Here in John 20, daybreak dawns as a new Adam emerges from the earth, his light dispelling the darkness. Creation and new creation. The breath of God breathes life into both.

## Full circle

A man and a woman in a garden. The first word spoken by the risen Jesus is 'Woman,' echoing Adam's words when waking from sleep, 'She shall be called Woman.' Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener in verse 15, dramatic irony for Jesus is indeed the true gardener. NT Wright says this, 'the new Adam... come to uproot the thorns and thistles and replace them with blossoms and harvests.'<sup>1</sup>

The striking difference in this second garden encounter is that whereas Eve obeyed the serpent, Mary obeys her Lord. Eve is expelled from Eden in shame under judgment but Mary leaves exultant and affirmed, hand-picked to

proclaim the most momentous message the world will ever hear. By evoking the creation account, John is signposting the seismic implications of Jesus' victory over death: renewal and redemption of all the earth. On the first day of the new creation David Nash says, 'the first act of the risen Lord is to reverse the judgment of Eve'.<sup>2</sup>

Mary of Magdala, once slave to seven demons, now apostle to the Apostles. Woman, once excluded from full temple worship, now exalted to full apostolic ministry. NT Wright again says, 'Something has happened in the renewal of creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus which has the result, as one of its multiple spin-offs, that whereas before Jesus only ever sent out men, now – now of all moments! – he sends out a woman'.<sup>3</sup>

## The beloved disciple

Notice how elegantly John packs this superabundance of meaning into a powerfully personal scene, distilled into two words: "Mary"... "Rabbouni!" in verse 16. Words containing worlds. One of the keywords John has been using throughout his gospel is 'believe,' and although he doesn't apply it to Mary here, the reader can almost hear the cogs whirring in her mind. The missing corpse. The graveclothes laid out as if Jesus' body had simply resurrected through them. The double-meaning of the angels' question. That voice. That face. The pieces fall into place, and she falls at his feet in worship.

Some distinguish the disciple whom Jesus loved as a model for us to emulate, but John's narrative seems to favour Mary. The disciple whom Jesus loved looked at the graveclothes, believed and left. Mary remained. Augustine describes it so, 'For while the men returned, the weaker sex was fastened to the place by a stronger affection'.<sup>4</sup>

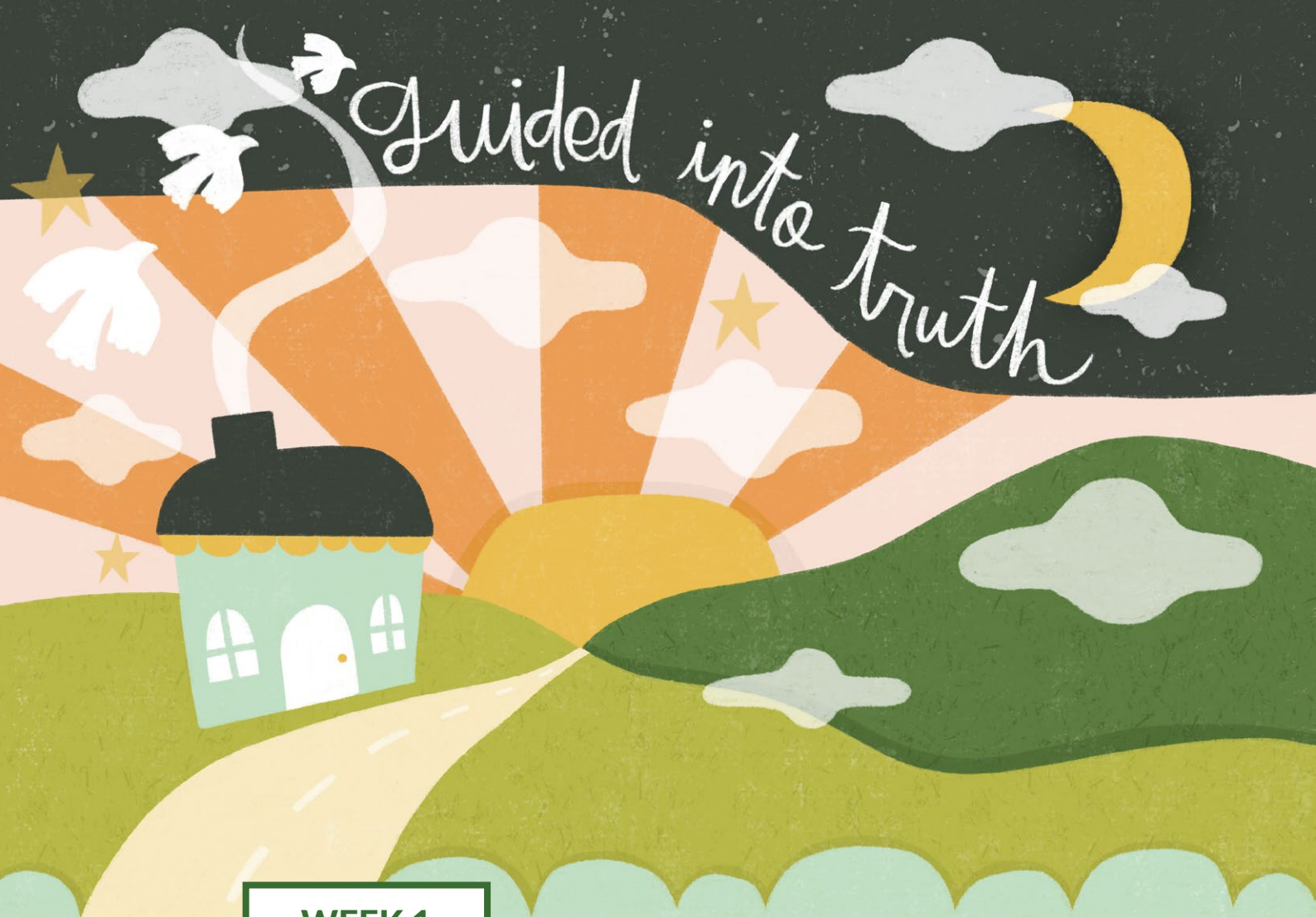
Perhaps it is in our abiding too that we are transformed to not only being disciples Jesus loves, but to disciples who love Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> NT Wright, *John for everyone Part 2: Chapters 11- 21* (SPCK, 2014) p146

<sup>2</sup> David Nash, 'Mary Magdalene and the reversal of Eden', (2020), *Trinitas Blog*: <https://trinitasblog.wordpress.com/2020/01/25/mary-magdalene-and-the-reversal-of-eden/>

<sup>3</sup> NT Wright, 'The Easter Vocation', (2016), *NT Wright Page*: <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/03/30/the-easter-vocation/> See also <https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-gets-wrong-with-genesis-1-3/>

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Tractate 121* (John 20:10-29)



## WEEK 1

# Embracing God and all reality

## John 1

### Essentials for a Christian worldview

The prologue of John (1:1-18) has probably been the most influential short text in the history of Christianity – and with good reason. As well as showing us how the Gospel of John is one of superabundance of love, truth and life in Jesus Christ, it also gives us a framework of how we are to understand Jesus and our part in history and reality.

John gives us the essentials of a Christian worldview. Whether we could put it into words or not, each of us have a worldview that affects how we understand, imagine, and inhabit reality. At no point in Christian history have all Christians agreed. There have been many different worldviews held by those claim to know Christ. This diversity should not be surprising in the face of all the complex issues we find in our fallen world. We have problems like nuclear warfare and global pandemics, and political challenges such as communism or capitalism. There are a range of genuinely Christian responses to complex issues.

In the face of these enormous challenges and whatever our worldview as Christians, the prologue of John gives us some key essentials which can help in two ways: they help us rediscover the foundation of our faith and equip us to face new and unprecedented challenges.

### God, the Creator

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things came into being through him... What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people' (1:1-4).

Let's consider why John uses 'the Word' (Greek, *logos*) as his opening phrase:

- 'The Word' God is free to express himself fully in the way he chooses. Our words only express who we are in part. And God expresses himself by coming to earth as flesh, as Jesus Christ.
- 'In the beginning...' are the opening words to the Bible in Genesis 1:1 as well as the first words in John's Gospel. The rephrasing draws us back into the Old Testament in order to understand more fully the meaning of the Word of God.
- 'All things came into being through him... the life was the light of all people.' Jesus, as the Word of God, is both the creator of all things and the source of life and spiritual light for all people. His life illuminates

the human condition, guiding people towards understanding, truth and ultimately salvation.

We are called to love God with all our minds and hearts, open to being guided 'into all the truth' (16:13), as we follow Jesus Christ, through whom all things and all people have been created.

## The deepest love

'God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart' points to the relationship of love at the heart of all reality, into which we are invited to enter by trusting, believing and having faith in Jesus. The farewell discourses (John 13-17) in Week 3 will sound the depths of this. Any Christian worldview needs above all to ring true with the centrality and ultimacy of deep love.

## Jesus Christ in fullness

'... the Word was God... All things came into being through him... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth...'

Jesus Christ is fully at one with God and fully at one with us as vulnerable, mortal flesh. He unites in person the deepest meaning and the deepest love. He is truth in person, the glory of God's love shines through him and he is 'among us' now, present as God is present, in all time and place. This extraordinary, superabundant good news is what the rest of the gospel opens up for the readers who are open to receive it.

### PREACHING POINT

If these three things are true, how does that change the way we think about contemporary issues, like the climate crisis?

## Forming a learning community around the deepest questions

John 1:19-51 is about how Jesus gathers a community of disciples. 'Disciple' (Greek, *mathētēs*; Latin, *discipulus*) means 'learner', so this is a learning community. Any worthwhile learning community has at its heart, deep questions that inspire them to continue seeking love, truth and life. The prologue opened up a horizon of unlimited meaning and the rest of the chapter poses questions that can, if we are gripped by them, lead us deeper into who and what matters most.

The next three questions we look at are relevant not only to every chapter of John, but also to every day of our lives.

## Identity: 'Who are you?' (1:19)

The first question is, 'Who are you?' (1:19) It is addressed to John the Baptist, but he redirects it to Jesus in chapter

1:23.<sup>1</sup> In the rest of the chapter there is a further avalanche of identity-descriptions of Jesus - count them and reflect on each. The central concern of every chapter of John is: 'Who is Jesus?' And it is answered most intensely and profoundly by Jesus himself in his 'I am' statements. Who Jesus is remains central to our identity as his disciples.

### PREACHING POINT

Who is Jesus for you? How would you describe Jesus to someone interested in exploring Christianity?

## Desire: 'What are you looking for?' (1:38)

The first words of Jesus to his first disciples are, 'What are you looking for?' (1:38) - What are you searching for? What do you desire? In a culture where we are inundated by stimuli to our desires, what does it mean to desire in line with the desire of Jesus - as summed up, for example, in his final prayer in John 17:14-16, 'I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.'

### PREACHING POINT

What are your deepest desires and how do they align with the desires Jesus expresses in the gospel?

## Home: 'Where are you staying?' (1:38)

The first disciples (one of whom may well be John) ask a counter-question, 'Where are you staying?' (1:38). The verb in Greek is *menein*, which also means to abide, dwell, live, continue, endure, last, and is very important throughout the Gospel, reaching its greatest intensity in the parable of the vine (15:1-11). The reader of the prologue has already been given a clue to where Jesus abides, where his true home is (1:18). And the whole gospel is an invitation to dwell there with him and each other, again summed up in John 17. As we abide in and with Jesus.

### PREACHING POINT

Where do you imagine Jesus to be dwelling, right now?

The three questions are deeply interconnected, and a wisdom-seeking faith can lead individuals and communities deeper into the 'fullness' (1:16) that Jesus came to bring.

<sup>1</sup> Then 1:26-27; then most dramatically in 1:29, repeated in 36; also in 1:30-34



# Week 1: Interactive resources

## Embracing God and all reality



### EXPLORE

#### Drama class

Choose one of the verses, for example verse 14, and divide it up into 5 or 6 phrases. Give each phrase to a small group and ask them to dramatise it, using words, sounds and actions. Then as a whole group recite the verse together.



### ASK

#### Names

In your group, read through the passage again and ask these questions to open your knowledge and deepen your understanding:

1. Jesus is called a number of different titles and names in this passage – write each one of a large sheet of paper and invite people to jot down their responses to each of them. Do they have preferences for a particular name? What does it tell them about the person of Jesus?
2. If we encountered Jesus today, in similar ways to those first disciples, what questions or thoughts might we say to him?
3. The words we speak matter, they say something about us and who we are. What do you think God was trying to say or tell us by sending his 'Word', Jesus?



### CREATE

#### Find the light

**You will need:** A tray of slime or bubbly water, various small toys. A3 sheets of black paper, scissors, coloured tissue paper, tea light or electric candle.

1. In a sand pit or deep tray full of slime or bubbly water, place an item which relates to each of the seven titles and names given to Jesus, for example, a crown, a toy lamb, a small doll or male figure. Encourage everyone to search for one and then guess what it represents. Wonder together about what the name or title means and tells us about the person of Jesus.
2. Create a simple improvised drama of verses 19 – 28 where John the Baptist is scrutinised by Jewish leaders and Pharisees, perhaps in the style of a modern-day press conference where the media are cross-examining him. Different groups in the room could ask the questions. Afterwards discuss what was learnt about the person of John.
3. Using A3 sheets of black paper, fold into four and then in half to make a triangle. Cut shapes along the folds and use coloured tissue paper to cover each of these 'windows'. Roll the paper into a tube and place over a tea light or electric candle. Reflect how the light is shining through, making a connection with verses 4–9.



### PRAY

#### Find the light

1. Use the black paper tubes from the previous activity as a focus for prayer. As we gaze at the light and colours, ask Jesus to be a light for each of us, giving us life and hope.
2. Read verse 32 which speaks of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove. Using fingers and thumbs, create a dove action. As hands flutter down place them on our hearts and invite God to be at work in us, helping us get to know Jesus better.

# Week 1: Small group guide



## SHARE

What are you looking for?

The first words of Jesus to his first disciples are, 'What are you looking for?' (1:38).

Ask people to share what they are searching for in this Bible study series. What do they really desire, deep down? Make a note, as these can be used to pray at the end.



## EXPLORE

The three essentials

**Read:** John 1:1-4.

**Discuss:** John uses 'the Word' as a title for Jesus. What does the phrase 'Word of God' mean to you? What might John mean in referring to Jesus as the 'Word of God'? Is there a connection with the way Genesis says that God spoke the universe into existence?

**Read:** John 1:18.

**Discuss:** 'God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart' points to the relationship of love at the heart of all reality. How do you experience the love of God?

**Read:** John 1:14-17.

**Discuss:** In what ways do you feel that Jesus is among us, today?



## REFLECT

Who is he?

**Re-read:** John 1 with a focus on how it relates to the presence of Jesus in your life.

**Discuss:** Who is Jesus for you?

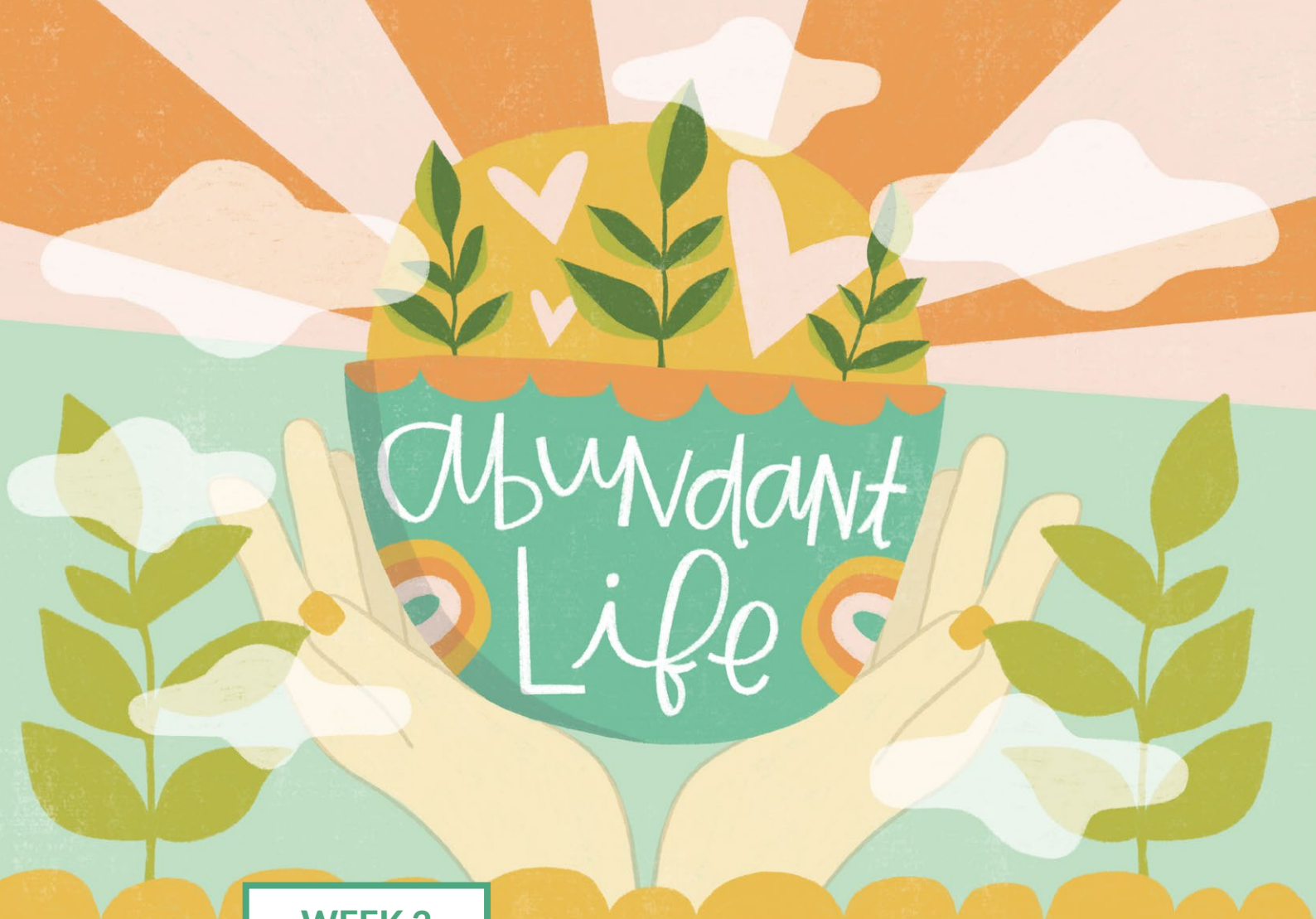


## PRAY

Praise God for creation.

Pray for each person in the group, and ask that they will get a new sense of God's superabundance as they study John's Gospel.

Pray that God might fulfil their desires (use the list created in the 'Share' part!) and even surprise them.



## WEEK 2

# Signs, conversations and controversy

## John 2-12

### Signs of abundant life for all

John chapters 2-12 opens with a quiet sign of superabundance, unique to John's Gospel: Jesus responds to a wedding that is running out of wine by turning a huge quantity of water into high quality wine (2:1-12).

It is a short story that is dense with meaning. Connecting to the previous chapter, Jesus speaks as the Word living 'among us', through whom all things came into being, in deep relationship with creation, free to spring surprises, and beginning to reveal his glory (2:11). Here is a sign that 'from his fullness we have all received...' (1:16). And he is present with his disciples who 'believed in him' (2:11) – one of the meanings of this Gospel is to learn to trust in him (1:12; 20:30-31).

Weddings, feasting and wine are embedded imaginatively in all four Gospels. Likewise, they are there all through the Old Testament, and go to the heart of the covenant

relationship of God and Israel. And a new picture of Christ and his bride, the church.

This universal relevance for all people is especially appropriate to the signs of Jesus in John. Perhaps the best way of summing up this sign and the others that John describes is that in his public ministry Jesus is concerned to do signs of abundant life for all. As he sums up his own vocation, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (10:10). A profound question for his followers, who are sent as Jesus was sent (17:18; 20:21), is if we have that life that Jesus has given us, how do we live in light of it? How do we point to Christ and his gift of life in the way we live? The signs of Jesus in this gospel account are about celebration, healing, feeding and restoration of life itself. Their spirit is one of not only actively responding to those in need (whoever they are, not just his followers or his family), but doing so in ways that go beyond the basic necessities. So much wine, and such quality! (2:6,10) So much food left over! (6:12-13)

### PREACHING POINT

What does it mean for someone who struggles daily with basic needs to understand and experience God's abundance?



There is a further dimension: Jesus does things his way, often with an unexpected twist (study each of them for this). Jesus repeatedly springs surprises. In sign after sign more layers of his identity are revealed (study each of them for this, noting especially John 6 and John 11). The ultimate surprise comes in what is called 'the Hour', when the great climactic 'signs' happen: the culminating events of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. These are anticipated all through the Gospel of John, as in the first sign at Cana during the puzzling exchange of Jesus with his mother, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come' (2:4).

#### PREACHING POINT

How do the surprising elements in Jesus' miracles and teachings challenge your expectations of how God should work in the world? Are there areas in your life where you need to be open to unexpected blessings or changes?

### Deep conversations

John's Gospel selects fewer events in the life and ministry of Jesus than the other Gospels, but usually goes deeper into the ones it describes. This is true of the signs Jesus does, and also of the conversations Jesus has.

Some of his conversations are connected with signs – see, for example, the discussions in Chapter 5 surrounding and following the healing of the man who had been lame for thirty-eight years, or the story in Chapter 9 of the man born blind showing us what it means to grow in trust and understanding of Jesus. There are also the interactions in Chapters 11 and 12 between Jesus and 'he whom you love' and 'Our friend Lazarus' and his family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany (11:3, 11:11).

Others are simple but profound conversations. There is a stark contrast between some of them, for example the one between Jesus and Nicodemus in chapter 3:1-21, and between Jesus and a Samaritan woman in chapter 4:1-42.

The named, respected, orthodox Jewish leader and teacher, a Pharisee, comes secretly by night to sound out Jesus. He is radically challenged by the astonishing teaching about the kingdom of God, about being born again from above, and about the Spirit like a wind blowing 'where it chooses' (3:8). His final words are, 'How can these things be?' (3:9). After this there is a further wave of teaching that can be read as a summary of John's Gospel, and significantly includes the first explicit mention of love: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who trusts, believes, and has faith in him may not perish but may have eternal life' (3:16). Sadly, we never learn how Nicodemus responded to the offer of a radical new birth and everlasting life.

#### PREACHING POINT

What conversations have changed your life for the better? How do we get better at real talk?

The conversation of Jesus with an unnamed Samaritan woman is doubly surprising and counter-cultural, not only because of the deep religious division between Jews and Samaritans but also because she is a woman. It is a dramatic encounter in several scenes, touching on the deepest matters – how Jesus satisfies the desire for deep, lasting life and what it is like to be known by him; how the Father seeks people who will worship in spirit and truth (4:20-24); Jesus as Messiah (Christ) and 'I am' (4:25-26) and eventually as 'the Saviour of the world' (4:42). And, unlike Nicodemus, the woman's final question, 'He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' is her springboard for a 'Yes!' that transforms her life and her community.

#### PREACHING POINT

How can you engage with people from different backgrounds or beliefs in a way that reflects Jesus' approach of inclusivity and deep understanding?

### Intense controversy

Another theme in John 2-12 is the growing controversy surrounding the identity of Jesus. This controversy has led to sharp divisions among interpreters, some of whom see John as encouraging anti-Judaism, possibly linked to the split between his community and the synagogue.

The main focus in this controversy is the question of who Jesus really is (as it is in the signs and the conversations already mentioned). In John's Gospel, this has the intensity of a family quarrel among Jews, which did indeed split the Jewish followers of Jesus (among them, John and his community) from other Jews. Later, the largely non-Jewish Christian church frequently used the bitter language of John and other New Testament writings in appallingly anti-Jewish, antisemitic ways, and often to justify discrimination, persecution, murder and even genocide. It is an utterly shameful, tragic history. But it will not be healed by Christians denying who Jesus is according to John. The challenge for us as Christians is embracing and appreciating our Jewish heritage, while recognising and welcoming that the Word of God is for everyone – Jews and Gentiles alike – as children of God.

#### PREACHING POINT

How can we disagree well with people in our faith communities? How can we foster conversations that deepen our relationship with Jesus as well as the relationships with our fellow man?

# Week 2: Interactive resources

## Signs, conversations and controversy



### EXPLORE

#### Feelings

Listen to John chapter 3:1-17 on the Dwell app (choose the 'kids' reading aloud voice found under the version and voice tab). Imagine being Nicodemus and searching Jesus out that night to ask your questions. What thoughts and feelings might he have had?



### SHARE

#### Look, eat, speak

In your group, ask these questions to open your knowledge and deepen your understanding:

1. In Jesus' ministry that we hear and learn about in chapters 2-12, he performs many signs and wonders. Why do you think he did this? You can look through the gospel to find some examples.
2. As well as talking about 'living water', Jesus describes himself as 'the bread of life'. Talk about the kind of bread you like to eat and why you think Jesus chose this image to describe himself. What ideas come to mind?
3. The Samaritan woman heads back to the town after speaking with Jesus and tells others all about her experience and what he's said. On a continuum line from 'easy' at one end to 'difficult' at the other, ask people to stand in response to how easy they find it to talk to others about Jesus. In pairs talk about why you stood in a particular place.



### CREATE

#### Conversations

**You will need:** paper, pens, modelling clay or Playdoh, pencils, ribbon.

1. In these chapters of John's Gospel we find out about lots of conversations that Jesus had with people. Imagine you bumped into Jesus one day, what would you want to ask or say to him? Give everyone paper speech bubbles to jot down or draw their responses on. Gather in small groups to share what we've noted on these bubbles.
2. Using air dry modelling clay or Playdoh, shape flat pieces that look like slices of bread. With a pointed tool (a pencil would also work) write John 6:35 on one side and 'the Bread of Life' on the other. Make a small hole in the top and tie a piece of ribbon through so the ornament can be hung up somewhere.



### PRAY

#### Pour

Fill a bowl with fresh, cold water. Invite people to come and using a small cup, fill and pour it back into the bowl. Ask Jesus to give you more 'living water' that will become 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life'.

## Week 2: Small group guide



### SHARE

#### Superabundance

Invite people to share a story of a time when they have been surprised by someone's generosity or hospitality. How did it make them feel?



### EXPLORE

#### A wedding and a healing

**Read:** John 2:1-12.

**Discuss:** Can you see any connections between this story, and the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-14)?

John's gospel doesn't have a 'last supper' with bread and wine as found in the other four Gospels. It has been suggested that these two stories fulfil a similar role. What do you think?

**Read:** John 5.

**Discuss:** What exaggeration-words are used in this story to emphasise the abundance of God? How does this story make you feel?

How can we as a community cultivate a spirit of abundance and generosity, even in difficult times?



### REFLECT

#### Love your neighbour

In the notes on p11 David F. Ford notes how the church has historically used the words of John to justify discrimination against Jewish people. He invites us to consider how we might use scripture to strengthen healthy relationships with people who may seem different from us. What have you found that brings people together when there has been division?



### PRAY

Take turns to call out things that you are thankful for. They can be big things, or small but significant things. Don't feel ashamed! Try and go around the group ten times.

Praise God for abundant blessings.

Praise God for signs of new hope.

Pray for all people experiencing poverty and lack of companionship.





## WEEK 3

# Jesus' discipleship course

## John 13-17

The setting of these chapters is the intimate gathering of Jesus with his disciples at the Last Supper on the night before his death. They are often called the 'farewell discourses', where Jesus prepares his disciples for his death and guides them for their future mission after his resurrection. The headline for all five chapters is in the first verse, 'Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end' (13:1).

### A massive imperative: Loving service

It is hard to overstate the importance of 13:1-20. Take note of how both Jesus and John highlight 'loving service' in various ways. Humble service to each other in mutual, tender love: is how we follow Jesus' example. What does it mean in our own lives to 'do as I have done to you' (13:15)? And how does this connect with the 'new commandment' (13:34-5)? And what about the astonishing promise, 'Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me' (13:20).

### A discipleship drama: Love received, betrayed, denied

Jesus has lovingly washed the feet of each disciple. The drama of the Last Supper, as John tells it, is about love and its violation, as seen in the beloved disciple, Judas and Peter. The disciple 'whom Jesus loved' is introduced for the first time, in a deep relationship of mutual trust and love with Jesus. Judas refuses and betrays the love of Jesus. Peter is told he will deny Jesus. The deepest questions arise about divine and human freedom, responsibility for sin and evil that goes beyond the individual ('Satan entered into' Judas - 13:27). There is a triple, dramatic realism; about evil, about human responsibility and about the love of Jesus - in which we are all involved whether we realise it or not, and whether we choose or not. And there is implied a radical call to be like the beloved disciple; or if (as most do), we fall short, the way Peter did - note the way Jesus restored him fully later on (21:15-19).

### Learning

Disciples are learners, Jesus is 'your Lord and Teacher' (13:14), and the farewell discourses give us teaching with extraordinary characteristics, two above all.

First, it is teaching to be identified with who Jesus is and what he says and does. The new commandment is that 'just as I have loved you, you also should love one another' (13:34). Soon after, Jesus says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life' (14:6). The whole of John's Gospel reinforces

and deepens this. Our first question about truth and teaching should always be this 'who?' question. The primary call is to go deeper into a relationship with Jesus, deeper into who Jesus is, deeper into the meaning of his life, death and resurrection, deeper into unity in love and truth with him, with his Father and with each other, for the sake of the world God loves.

It makes a crucial difference whether a Christian group keeps its main focus on who Jesus is, or lets other issues become more important. Today, it is often 'what?' questions or 'how?' questions concerning behaviour and ethics that threaten division among Christians. John too was written for a church experiencing division, John repeatedly points to the essentials: the 'I am' of Jesus; enabling life in all its abundance; and mutual love and service (whatever the cost).

Second, and just as extraordinary, is what follows in John 14, Jesus promises the amazing gift of 'another Advocate [*paraklētos*, also meaning Encourager, Helper, Comforter] to be with you forever... the Spirit of truth... [who] abides with you, and he will be in you' (14:16-17).

There follows further waves of teaching on the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>, culminating in 16:13-15, with the promise that 'he will guide you into all the truth'. This makes learning, within the limitless horizon of God and all of reality presented in the prologue, a core, ongoing Christian concern and tells us to expect to learn new things.

#### PREACHING POINT

How open to learning and surprises are you?  
What new learning can you encounter within the Word of God?

### Loving

Loving has already, in chapters 13 and 14, emerged as being at the heart of the farewell discourses. Chapter 15 goes deeper still through the parable of the vine, 'Abide in me, as I abide in you... As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love' (15:4, 9).

But there is more, 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer...' (15:13-15). In John the love language of family is joined with the love language of friendship. Jesus was a daring friend, crossing deep divisions in his day. What sorts of friendships are we called into today?

#### PREACHING POINT

What kinds of friendships are you being called to cultivate today, especially those that cross social, racial or cultural divides? How can you actively seek to build these bridges in your community?

And yet more; the ultimate and all-encompassing significance of love comes in Jesus' prayer in John 17. Even beyond the language of family and of friendship is that of mutual indwelling. This has already been introduced in 6:56 (very important for understanding the key Christian practice of celebrating what is variously called Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper), through the parable of the vine and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (14:17), but 17:20-26 is the most radical, comprehensive and astonishing of all.

#### PREACHING POINT

What do you learn about love from these passages?

### Praying

That prayer of Jesus is the culmination not only of loving and of learning<sup>2</sup> the truth, but also of astonishing teaching on prayer<sup>3</sup>. So the intimate relationship of Jesus with his Father and the intensity of the divine life of glory<sup>4</sup>, truth and love, are opened up to readers who trust this testimony, for whom Jesus himself prays (17:20).

How can we ever understand the depth, height, breadth and length of such a reality? In my personal experience there is a two-part practice I have found to be helpful in grasping these concepts.

- The Lord's Prayer is central to the Sermon on the Mount, the most substantial body of teaching by Jesus in Matthew 5-7, just as John 17 is the pinnacle of the farewell discourses, the most substantial body of teaching by Jesus in John's Gospel. Make a habit of praying the Lord's Prayer in the light of John 17 and of thinking through the Sermon on the Mount and the farewell discourses together.
- The prayer central to the letter to the Ephesians is Chapter 3:14-21. Make a habit of praying this prayer in the light of John 17 and of thinking through the letter to the Ephesians and the farewell discourses together.

Regardless of what you do, you can learn, love and pray daily, trusting in Jesus' final prayer: '... so that the love you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.' Jesus in us is our true identity – loving, loved and united in community, praying, filled with his Spirit and sent as he was (20:21-22).

#### PREACHING POINT

What do you learn about prayer from these passages?

<sup>1</sup> Study 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:4b-11

<sup>2</sup> Read 17:3, 6, 8, 17, 19

<sup>3</sup> Consider 14:12-14; 15:7, 16:23-24

<sup>4</sup> Refer to 17:1-5, 10, 22

# Week 3: Interactive resources

## Jesus' discipleship course



### EXPLORE

#### Highlights

Print a large font size version of chapter 13, where Jesus washes the disciple's feet. In small groups take it in turns to read aloud, being alert to people's reading abilities, and giving them the option to opt out. Afterwards, use bright coloured pens to highlight words which strike us or stand out. Talk about why we find these meaningful.



### SHARE

#### Washing feet

In your group, ask these questions to open your knowledge and deepen your understanding:

1. Why do you think Peter resisted Jesus washing his feet?
2. What do you think Jesus means when he says 'remain in me' when talking about the vine and the branches?



### CREATE

#### A grape vine

**You will need:** paper, pens, paint, tissue paper, leaves etc.

1. Using a long roll of paper, create an illustrated and decorated vine which everyone is able to contribute to. Some people could paint the vine itself, others make bunches of grapes to stick on from scrunched up tissue paper, or leaf prints, cut out fabric leaves or attach leaves found nearby. Talk about what this picture of growing and fruitfulness means to each of us.
2. Use three large hoops (or draw circles on paper) and give each one a heading of: learning, loving and praying. Invite everyone to suggest ideas of how to do these things – simple acts that can be done on a daily basis. Maybe ones we do ourselves and would recommend. If all three hoops/circles overlap in the centre (like a Venn diagram) how would we describe that place in our lives as disciples or followers of Jesus?



### PRAY

#### Reflection

Ask everyone to choose one idea from each of the three hoops or circles from the previous activity. Make a note of these and ask Jesus to help you grow in these things.

Based on Jesus' prayers in chapter 17, create some simple prayer stations with the headings 'Give thanks and worship to God', 'Help as we follow Jesus day by day', 'Help as we tell others about Jesus' and 'Being together in unity'. Invite people to pray silently or aloud at each one, make a response out of playdough or draw a simple sketch.

Using the beautiful vine artwork created by everyone, give people a blank leaf to write or draw their prayer to God on about their own place within the vine.

## Week 3: Small group guide



### SHARE

Friends

Invite the group to share what they think are the hallmarks of a good friend.



### EXPLORE

Learning, loving, praying

**Read:** John 14:16-17 and 16:13-15.

**Discuss:** Learning is a core activity for Christians. How have you experienced God as a teacher, guiding you into truth?

**Read:** John 15:13-15

**Discuss:** Jesus regards us as friends. How does that make you feel? What sorts of friendships are we called into today?

**Read:** John 14:12-14, 15:7, 16:23-24.

**Discuss:** How do you understand these incredible words about prayer?



### REFLECT

Humble service

**Read:** John 13:1-20

**Discuss:** What does this passage teach us about divine love? How do you feel about humble service like this? How do you do this?



### PRAY

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 as a prayer together.

Afterwards, invite each person to share the word or phrase from it that they like the best





## WEEK 4

# ‘The hour’ and the resurrection and our drama

John 18-21

John never lets readers forget that even the profound teaching and prayer of the farewell discourses is not enough, ‘The Word became flesh and lived among us’. The verb translated ‘became’ also means to happen, to come into being and is used nine times in the prologue.<sup>1</sup> The good news unfolds in the realities of life – facing death, suffering, violence, sin and evil – where Jesus’ true identity is revealed.

That is why this ‘hour’ *has* to happen, the final weekend in which Jesus is arrested, tried, flogged, crucified and resurrected. It is essential to know who Jesus actually is. It is not enough to say that something decisive happens – that suffering, violence, sin, falsehood, enmity, evil and death do not have the last word. *Someone* decisive happens. Suffering, violence, sin, falsehood, enmity, evil and death all happen to Jesus. But Jesus also happens to these forces. In this, the reality is that Jesus is completely at one with us and at one with God.

So the decisive outcome of this climactic hour is this crucified and resurrected person, the human self-expression and self-giving of God in love, newly alive and present as God is present. Thomas cries out, ‘My Lord and my God!’ (20:28). Jesus happens anew to his first disciples and to anyone else who receives him. And he sends those of us who trust and love him to happen to the people and situations in our lives now, inspired by how he was sent in love for the whole world (17:18; 20:21).

The story of what happens in ‘the Hour’ is best understood by reading and repeatedly rereading chapters 18-21 slowly, attentively and prayerfully, alone and with others. You will never exhaust the meaning. John’s careful crafting of these chapters resonates richly not only with all the earlier chapters of this Gospel, but also with the other Gospels, with the rest of the Bible, with the whole vast horizon of meaning and truth opened up by the prologue and with the realities of life now. So we are drawn deeper into all those further sources of meaning too, as 16:13 promises.

Here are just a few pointers that may help you on your way as you join the rest of us who seek to enter more fully into the most important event in human history.

## Arrest and trial

During his arrest, note the repeated emphasis on who Jesus is: 'I am' (Greek, *egō eimi*) comes three times (18:5, 6, 8); and 'Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?' (18:11) affirms the relationship of trust and love that is at the heart of his identity.

In his trial, Jesus gives another fundamental statement about his identity and mission. Is he a king? 'For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice' (18:37). It's significant for our time that, in confronting the religious, political and military powers of his day, Jesus focuses primarily on truth!

### PREACHING POINT

Do you find truth-telling hard? What is the need for truth-telling today? Who gets to tell the truth and control the narrative?

## Passion and death

Truth is one element in this confrontation with the powers of his day. But it is in what happens next that is most revealing. Jesus is flogged, mocked, hit in the face, condemned to death, stripped and crucified. This is the actual happening of suffering, injustice, humiliation and death to Jesus.

How does Jesus respond? He receives it all. He bears it for us.

Yet he is not passive. He not only says why he was born, but also challenges Pilate's power with God's power (19:10-11). Then on the cross he speaks momentous words and does a final act.

He speaks to his mother and his beloved disciple, uniting them in a new household centred on their relationship with him (19:25-27). Earlier he had promised: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself". He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die' (12:32-33). Now, lifted up on the cross, begins the process of attraction into a community of love, and when he is raised up in resurrection and ascension this will continue as the ongoing drama of his followers.

He cries out 'I am thirsty!' (19:28) What does this mean in the light of previous passages in John<sup>2</sup> and the many Psalms<sup>3</sup> that cry out in thirst?

### PREACHING POINT

What do you thirst for? How does Jesus' statement 'I am thirsty' offer to quench our soul's thirst?

His last words are, 'It is finished' (19:30). What does that mean in the light of all the rest of this Gospel, but

especially of 13:1 and 17:4, 23 (where 'completely' is from the same verb)?

Then comes his final act. Its literal translation is: 'He handed over the spirit [or Spirit - the original manuscript gives no guidance about capitals]' (19:30). What might that mean?

## The resurrection of Jesus and our ongoing drama

The resurrection of Jesus is a God-sized event, as Thomas' cry testifies (20:28). The only adequate parallel is the creation of the universe. As God is free to create out of nothing, so God is free to resurrect Jesus from death. So Paul talks of a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17), and here in John the new beginning is with a man and a woman in a garden.

That first, deeply moving encounter, "Mary!"... "Rabbouni!" (20:16), highlights the intensely 'who-to-who' reality of the whole event.

### PREACHING POINT

What significance does the 'who-to-who' reality of Jesus calling Mary by name hold for you in your spiritual journey?

This happens in a new way in the next appearance of Jesus to his disciples (20:19-23). Key elements – peace, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, joy, the sending of the disciples, the gift of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness – have been prepared for in the earlier chapters. Now they happen together to create the triple dynamic thrust of Christian life in the Spirit:

- Our intimate ongoing relationship with Jesus, who shares himself, his relationship with his Father, his words and his Spirit, inviting us deeper into learning, loving and praying;
- Our ongoing relationship with each other in this community of learning, love and prayer; and
- Our mission in the world, sent in love and truth as Jesus was sent, for the sake of abundant life for all, open to where the Spirit leads.

John 21 can be read as an epilogue that mirrors the prologue, marking the beginning of our ongoing journey. As we respond to Jesus' surprises, follow him, do what he says, share meals with him, love him, carry on his work, testify to him and abide in him. For some, this even means glorifying God by laying down our lives (21:18-19). As Jesus said, 'If any one of you would follow me, let him deny himself, pick up his cross and follow me' – following Christ means dying to ourselves and living fully for his glory.

<sup>1</sup> Three times in v.3, and then in vv.6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17

<sup>2</sup> Refer to 4:10-15, 6:35, 6:53-56, and 7:37-39

<sup>3</sup> For example, Psalms 42:1-2, 63:1, 3, 143:6

## Week 4: Interactive resources

### 'The Hour' and the resurrection and our drama



#### EXPLORE

##### New life

Listen to John 20:1-18. We might have heard this part of the Easter story many times before, is there anything new that strikes us when hearing it today?



#### SHARE

##### Jesus and the people

In your group, ask these questions to open your knowledge and deepen your understanding:

1. Spend time reflecting on John 18 and the different parties who are involved in these events: the religious leaders, the disciples, the soldiers and Jesus himself. What might their thoughts and feelings have been as this took place?
2. As we've explored John's Gospel over these past few weeks, what one new thing have we learnt about Jesus?



#### CREATE

##### The Easter story

**You will need:** various props

Create a model Easter garden using items found around the home.



#### PRAY

##### The Tomb

Present Richard Bavin's artwork: The Empty Tomb so everyone is able to spend time looking at it quietly. It can be found here or scan the QR code: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/browse-the-collection/the-empty-tomb-richard-bavin/> Talk about it in pairs and share what thoughts and feelings it brings to mind. Can we turn these into a prayer to God?



Spend time talking to God, giving thanks for all that has been discovered about the person of Jesus during this time in John's Gospel. Begin each prayer by saying 'Jesus' in British Sign Language where each forefinger points to the palm in the other hand.

# Week 4: Small group guide

## The God who confirms and safeguards divine purposes



### SHARE

Our ongoing drama

Invite the group to share what they have learned and absorbed from this Bible Month series so far.



### REFLECT

The hour

Individually re-read chapters 18-21, slowly, attentively and prayerfully. What do you notice afresh this time?



### EXPLORE

Passion

**Read:** John 4.10-15 and then John 19:28.

**Discuss:** There are several passages in John's Gospel that speak of desire, expressed bodily as thirst (see page 19). How do they affect the way you read the account of Jesus' thirst on the cross?

How do the themes of thirst and desire in these passages speak to the needs you see in your life and in the world today?

**Read:** John 20:19-23 - the resurrected Jesus appearing to his disciples.

**Discuss:** What does this story tell us about

1. relationships with Jesus,
2. relationships with each other,
3. our role in spreading love and truth in the world?

**Read:** John 21.

**Discuss:** Are there connections between this final story and the prologue in John 1:1-18? Look for themes like abundance, light, glory and love.



### PRAY

Praise God for resurrection and new life.

Pray for peace among the people in your church.

Pray for people and places which need peace to come to them.

'But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one were written down, I suppose that the whole world itself could not contain the books that would be written' (21:25).

Ask Jesus to continue to be involved in the story of your life.



# Further Resources

If you have found the notes in this booklet helpful and would like to explore the Gospel of John further, here are some suggestions of resources that might help you:

## Key:

\* Introductory

\*\* Accessible

\*\*\* Advanced

## Books

### Guide books:

- Ruth Edwards, *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. 2nd Ed. (SPCK, 2014) \*
- Alan Ecclestone, *The Scaffolding of Spirit: Reflections on the Gospel of St John* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987) \*
- Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40* (New City Press, 2009) \*\*\*

### Study books:

- David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John. A Theological Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2021) \*\*
- C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2nd Ed. (SPCK, 1978) \*\*\*
- Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. (Baker Academic, 2015) \*\*\*
- Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Baker Academic, 2007) \*\*\*
- Jo-Ann Brant, *John* (Baker Academic, 2011) \*\*
- Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2 volumes, Anchor Bible 29, 29A (Doubleday, 1966, 1970) \*\*
- Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2012) \*\*
- Margaret Daly-Denton, *John: Supposing Him to Be the Gardener*, Earth Bible Commentary (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017) \*\*
- Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd Ed. (Fortress, 2003) \*
- Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Crossroad, 2002) \*

- Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (Hendrickson, 2005) \*
- Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Handsel, 1982) \*\*
- Gail O'Day and Susan Hylen, *John* (Westminster John Knox, 2006) \*\*

### Wider understanding:

- David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Baylor University Press, 2016)
- Thomas Gardner, *John in the Company of the Poets: The Gospel in Literary Imagination* (Baylor University Press, 2011)
- Ashley Cocksworth and Dave F. Ford, *Glorification and the Life of Faith* (Baker Academic, 2023)

### Useful websites:

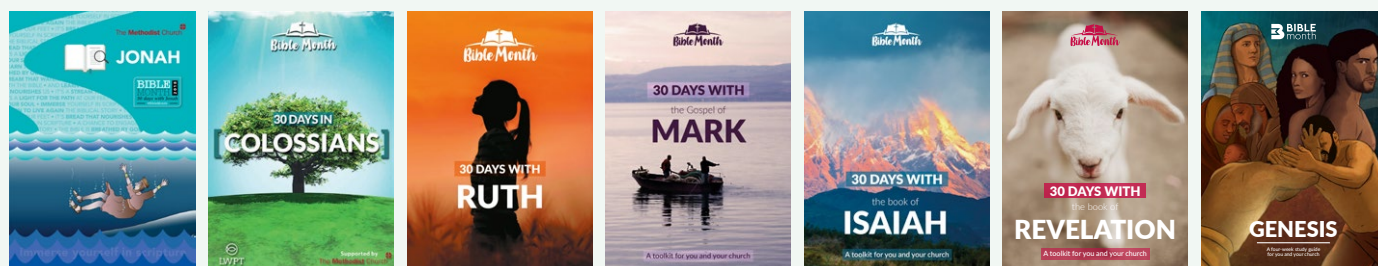
- [www.bibleproject.com](http://www.bibleproject.com) \* Includes many videos, blogs, notes to help you explore the Gospel of John.
- [www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/bible-book-club/john/](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/bible-book-club/john/) \* Part of the Bible Society's 'Bible Book Club', their breakdown of John reveals a shareable resource that resonates with all members of your congregation.
- [www.ntwrightonline.org/three-ways-john-is-different-from-the-synoptic-gospels-and-three-ways-its-similar/](http://www.ntwrightonline.org/three-ways-john-is-different-from-the-synoptic-gospels-and-three-ways-its-similar/) \*\* Explores the similarities and differences between John and the other Gospel accounts.

# Further Resources

## Resources for you and your church

Bible Month is an opportunity for communities – from whole churches, small groups to study partners - to spend four weeks focusing on a single book of the Bible.

Other booklets in the series available in print include the Book of Genesis, Book of Revelation, Book of Isaiah, Gospel of Mark, Book of Ruth, Book of Colossians, Book of James and Book of Jonah.



## Order the booklets here

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For further queries, please contact the LWPT/Preach office on tel: 01923 231811 or email [lwptoffice@lwpt.org.uk](mailto:lwptoffice@lwpt.org.uk)

## Running Bible Month

- Promote your own Bible Month with a resource pack at [www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth](http://www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth)
- Plan your preaching and teaching using a black and white PDF version available from [www.preachweb.org/biblemonth](http://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth) and [www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth](http://www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth)
- Join an active online group, see [www.facebook.com/biblemonth](http://www.facebook.com/biblemonth)
- Find useful videos by the Bible notes authors: Dr Rachel Starr (Book of Ruth), Dr Kent Brower (Gospel of Mark), Rev Dr Helen Paynter (Book of Isaiah), and Dr Helen Miller (Revelation) follow links at [www.preachweb.org/biblemonth](http://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth) and [www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth](http://www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth)

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[www.preachweb.org/biblemonth](http://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth)  
[www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth](http://www.methodist.org.uk/biblemonth)

Bible Month provides a study resource for you and your church to engage with the Gospel of John over the course of four weeks. It includes sermon Bible notes with preaching ideas, small group study guides, interactive resources, a reflection on the John chapter 20 and suggestions for further study.

Written by David F. Ford (Bible notes) with a reflection by Charmaine Yip, Gail Adcock (interactive resources) and Andy Fishburne (small group guides).

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