

Is Jesus...?

1: ...who he said he was?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share one thing that you enjoyed over the Easter period... and something that made you think.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Draw a picture of what difference the Easter story makes to you.

Someone say a short prayer thanking God for the difference that Easter makes.

WORD

SERIES INTRODUCTION

In this series, we are exploring who Jesus is. We are looking at some of the things that he said about himself in John's Gospel including the 'I am' sayings.

BEFORE READING TODAY'S PASSAGE

Individually: If a non-Christian friend asked you '*Who do you think Jesus is?*' How would you answer? Be honest! Take a moment to think about it. Then write down some of the words you would use. You may also want to write down what you think you *ought* to say!

Now talk about what you've written as a group.

Read John 4:1-30

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?

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- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

There is a lot to discuss about this story, but here we're focussing particularly on who Jesus is.

- In verse 25: 'Messiah' means 'anointed one' in Hebrew. Christ (christos) is the same word translated into Greek. It refers to God's chosen or special one. What words or images might you use in today's language and culture to describe someone so special?
- In what ways do you think Jesus' behaviour in this story fits with what the woman might expect of God's Messiah?
- In what ways does Jesus' behaviour not fit with her expectations?
- How does Jesus' behaviour fit/not fit with your expectations of God's Messiah?
- How would you describe Jesus' approach and way of talking to the woman?
 - * How does this compare with how you talk to people about Jesus?
- Why do you think the woman come to the conclusion that this could be the Messiah (v29)?
 - * Why else do people come to that conclusion about Jesus?
- What is special about Jesus in your opinion?

WHAT NEXT?

- Andrea Chatterley has produced a prayer guide for things to pray about as a church. Extracts are in the notice sheet each week, but why not get a copy and use it to help pray in Growth Groups.
- Pray for one another in 2s-3s for any matter that's particularly bothering you.

Is Jesus...?

2: ...the Way, the Truth and the Life?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each describe a time when you got lost. How did it feel? What about when you were found or found your way out?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Take some stones or similar objects. Each take one. Have 2 minutes of quiet (or with some quiet music). Each think of something that is troubling you. Place the stone in the middle of the room, making them into the shape of a cross. Go round the room in turn. For each person, everyone else read out the words of Proverbs 3: 5-6 together to that person. Finish by reading Jesus' words in John 14:1.

WORD

Read John 14:1-17

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Take 'The Way', 'The Truth' and 'The Life' one at a time. For each, discuss...

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1. What does Jesus mean by this descriptions? Why do you think he describes himself in this way?
 2. What differences does this description mean for you in your life?
- Why do you think that Jesus puts these three descriptions of himself together? What effect do they have as a group?
 - How do you feel about Jesus' statement that 'No-one comes to the Father except through me' (v6)?
 - Even Philip (v8-9) and the disciples have difficulty in understanding Jesus' relationship to his Father. What do you find particularly difficult about understanding who Jesus is?
 - * How does this passage help?
 - Do you ever relate to Thomas (v5) in your life: You want to know the long term plan of where Jesus is leading before taking the next step in following him?
 - How do you feel about what Jesus says in verse 12? (Bear in mind the context of verses 12-17)
 - Verse 14: Some people treat the words 'in Jesus name' as a magic formula to get what they want. What do you think Jesus means? What difference does the context of verses 12 & 15 make?

WHAT NEXT?

- Discuss together: Verse 1 & verse 27 sound good in theory, but at the moment in your life, when do you find trusting God easiest or most difficult? Now use this to pray for one another.
- Remember! Try using the church's prayer diary for ideas for prayer.
- At home: You may like to pin up somewhere for a couple of weeks the words Jesus said 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' as a reminder of the things you've talked and prayed about this week.

Is Jesus...?

3: ...the Resurrection and the Life

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

If you could bring one person back to life, who would it be and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Find a poem about Jesus (book/internet). Read it out. Allow people to reflect & pray quietly, then discuss what you think about it as a group.

WORD

Read John 11:1-44

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What do you think of the disciples' reactions in verses 8, 12, 16?
- How do you feel about Jesus' knowledge of the situation (v14-15) and what he does (or doesn't do) in response (v6, 7, 15)?
- Unlike many characters in John's gospel, Mary, Martha and Lazarus are named personally. Jesus loves them as close friends (v5). How do you feel about Jesus having special friends when there was a whole world in need of him? What does this show about Jesus? ...and therefore about God?

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- Go through the story step by step from verse 17-44. What do you learn about the faith and beliefs of Mary, Martha and the crowd? How do you think you would have reacted in their shoes?
- What are the implications of Jesus' declaration about himself in v25-26? How do the events in the story support this?

Here, we hear how Martha recognises Jesus as the Messiah (anointed one) and the Son of God (v27). Compare this with Mark 8:27-30, Mark 15:37-39, John 4:42 & John 11:45

- What do you think has drawn these different people to their conclusions about Jesus?
- In your own experience, what events have particularly shaped your own picture of who Jesus is?
- Why would Jesus weep in verse 35?
- In 12:10, the chief priests' response is to try and re-kill Lazarus! (You'd think they'd have learnt!) Are there any times when you have experienced people who have encountered Jesus and reacted in a negative way? What were their motives? How did you feel towards them?

WHAT NEXT?

- Use the 'Growing Stronger' leaflets (available from the church porch/office/website downloads). Divide into 2s/3s. In turn, each choose a question for yourself & answer it to the others. Then all pray for that person. Repeat for other group members.

Challenge! Growing Stronger is a tool to help people deepen their faith here at Christ Church. We have adapted from discipleship and leadership material elsewhere in response to requests for resources to help deepen faith. It might not suit everyone, but please do encourage people to give it a try with 1-3 other people from the group/church.

Is Jesus...?

4: ...the Light of the World?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

How would being blind change your life? (If you are blind, share what differences that makes)

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Look up the story of John Newton, who wrote the hymn 'Amazing Grace' (or find the clip from the film). Share a bit of the story & then sing Amazing Grace together. You could use CD/DVD or just voices or encourage someone who has a 'hidden' musical talent to play!

WORD

Read John 9:1-41 (you could divide it into parts – Narrator, Jesus, blind man, disciples, neighbours/parents, Pharisees)

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

There are a number of themes that reoccur through John's gospel. Often the practical actions ('signs') that Jesus does also link to a spiritual meaning or teaching alongside them. We see a few of those themes in today's passage (you may spot others):

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1: Light and Darkness: For example, see John 1:1-9 & 8:12.

- Jesus describes himself as 'the Light of the World'. What different things could he have meant by this?
- Can you share any situations recently have you experienced this 'Light' shining into your life?

2: Blindness and Vision: For example, see John 3:2-3, 12:37-46

- How does this story contrast the physical healing of the man with the growing blindness of the Pharisees?
- In what ways today is our culture blind to the Light of the World in a similar way to the Pharisees?

3: Sin: The disciples accuse the man or his family of sin (v2); the Pharisees accuse Jesus of sin (v16); Jesus accuses the Pharisees of sin (v41)!

- What do we learn about sin from this passage?
- How do people today react to the idea of sin?
- Share situations you know today where sin has left a lasting impact on someone? Can they be healed?
- Can you think of examples today of people living with 'false guilt' (perhaps like the man here) –i.e. feeling guilty when they shouldn't?
- Can you think of examples today when people convince themselves that their sin is actually OK, when it's not? Does being found out ('coming to light', 'being exposed') make a difference? How should Christians respond?

WHAT NEXT?

- Try using 'Growing Stronger' again (see last week's notes)
- **Exploring More:** If you want to explore more about who Jesus is, you could try reading a book such as 'The Jesus I never knew' by Philip Yancey or 'Simply Jesus' (heavier going!) by Tom Wright.

Is Jesus...?

5: ...the Bread of Life?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Someone make some bread & bring it to eat together.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Use Isaiah 55. You could read this out taking 2 or 3 verses at a time, whilst eating the bread.

WORD

Read John 6:1-14 & 25-51

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Why do you think Jesus asks Philip the question in v5?
- How do you think the disciples felt at each point in this story?
- Some of the crowd are only interested in miracles and set conditions on Jesus before they will believe (v30). Have you ever experienced people doing the same? How can Christians respond lovingly and effectively?

Growth Group Notes

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- Once again, the miracle that Jesus does is not only practical, it is also a signpost to a 'spiritual' meaning.
How many ways can you see that the miracle shows what Jesus means when he describes himself as 'the Bread of Life'?
- Bread was the staple diet in Jesus' context, as it is in ours. In what different ways might we 'feed on Jesus' on a regular basis to sustain us, like staple food?

Jesus compares himself as the 'bread of life' with God providing manna in the desert to feed the Israelites (Exodus 16).

- In what ways are the manna and Jesus similar?
- The Israelites depended on the manna provided by God to survive. How is our survival dependent on Jesus?
- The Israelites in the desert were dependent on the manna day-to-day. How should we be dependent on Jesus day-to-day and in what ways does he expect us to be 'independent'?
- In v41, Jesus is unpopular with the Jews for describing himself as 'the bread of life'. It is hard to imagine this statement upsetting people today so much, but what claims that Jesus makes might upset people more today? (John 14:6 could be one starting point.)

WHAT NEXT?

- If you haven't already, as a group, choose one of the 'Far Out' organisations that we support as a church and pray for it together.
- What practical action could you take as a group to support the work of this organisation?
- Make sure you share with one another needs and pray for one another – people in the room as well as outside!

Is Jesus...?

6: ...the True Vine

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Enjoy a glass of wine or grape juice together!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read John 15:1-17. As you do, pass round a bunch of grapes & each take one at a time and eat it. You could use a song based on the passage –some might know the vintage(!) 1985 one by Danny Daniels

WORD

Read John 15:1-17

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below

Leave a bit longer for the 'What Next' section today

- What do you think Jesus means by 'bearing fruit'?
- How do you feel about being measured by the fruit you bear?
- Are there any pruning experts in the group? If so, let them describe how you prune a vine (or similar plant) & why. What aspects of pruning are helpful in understanding what Jesus means here?

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- The healthy fruit-bearing branches are all pruned by God (v2). Have you had experiences when you have felt like you have been 'pruned' by God to be more fruitful?
- The vine was an Old Testament picture of Israel (eg Psalm 80). Jesus is saying that he is now the true vine. What does it mean to 'remain' in Jesus (v4-6)?
- How would you describe the ways that God shows his love for you? What would it mean to love others in the same way? (v12)
- Jesus makes clear that remaining in him is not an end in itself. The purpose is to 'go and bear fruit that will last' (v16). What does this mean in practice for how we see our faith?
- Today in the UK, we value choice highly, but v16 says that Jesus chooses his disciples, rather than them choosing to follow him. To what extent do we choose to follow Jesus or does he choose us? (NB: This has caused much theological debate over the centuries!)
- v7 and v16 refer to our requests being answered by God. What do the conditions that he sets mean in practice?

WHAT NEXT?

Review the Series (so far, if we're still continuing on Sundays)

- Which descriptions of Jesus that we've looked at so far have you found most helpful?
- In what ways has your picture of Jesus changed or developed over the last few weeks?
- How has your understanding of Jesus changed the way you live?

Share:

- Share with one another in 2s/3s how close you feel to Jesus at the moment. Pray for one another that you would grow closer.