

THE
SERVANT
KING

JOHN 10-21



Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church

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Introduction

The world media has been falling at the feet of new American president, *Barack Obama*. They chorus, "A leader with vision, inspiration, energy, and ideas! Someone who can lead the world into genuine and lasting change!" But will he be able to measure up?



Politicians like *Prime Minister Tony Abbott* rise and fall in Australia depending on whether they are thought of as providing *leadership*.

Do they have a plan? Do they have the courage of their convictions? Can they deal with opposition? Will people follow them?

A leader of a different kind was on show a few summer's ago. *Graeme Smith*, the captain of the South African cricket team, broke his left hand in the first innings of the Sydney Test match. He had just received painful treatment on the damaged tendon in his right elbow. He had intended not batting, in the second innings, however with 30 minutes remaining,, and with the chance of saving the game, he came out to bat last, against medical advice. He was in so much pain, his team mates dressed him. He survived 17 balls and 26 minutes, but was finally bowled with only 10 balls remaining after 5 days of cricket. Ricky Ponting, the Australian captain said it was one of the bravest things he had seen, ""That's what every team looks to from their leader. To show that fighting spirit, to stand up when they are needed, to get out and do a job no matter how sore or tired you might be."



In the second half of John's Gospel we see Jesus, the greatest of all leaders. He is the leader who courageously, sacrificially and victoriously lays down his life for his followers, dying that they might live.

In these chapters the action slows down and the camera zooms in. While the previous twelve chapters have covered the three years of Jesus' public ministry, these nine chapters cover only a few days. Jesus' attention moves from the crowds to the twelve disciples. His emphasis changes from performing signs that reveal his glory as *the Word of God*, to teaching and actions that reveal his even *greater* glory as *the Servant King* who lays down his life for his people, and sets them the example to follow (13:14-17). Everything moves relentlessly towards *the hour of his glory* (12:23; 17:1); his crucifixion and resurrection.

John 10: The Shepherd & His Sheep

1. Advertisers sell anything from retirement accommodation to vitamin supplements using the promise of a fuller or better life. Why do you think this is a popular advertising strategy? Name some people in our culture who would be considered to have attained 'life to the full'?

This idea of a 'full life' is exactly what Jesus was on about. We'll get to that in a moment, when Jesus will say, "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full" in John 10:10. It's certainly a statement that packs a punch! But before we get there, let's understand some of the background to why Jesus said this.

The narrative in Chapter 10 runs straight on from chapter 9. Jesus has just given sight to a blind man, polarising those around him. While this man sees things more and more clearly, the Jewish leaders become more and more obstinate, unwilling to see what is blindingly obvious to everyone else. Jesus sums it up this way in v39, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Talk about red rag to a bull! Some Pharisees take offense, and chapter 10 is the continuation of Jesus' response to their question—"what, are we blind too?".

2. **Read John 10:1-6.** According to Jesus, verses 1 to 6 are a "figure of speech" in order to make a point. So what's the point?
3. Try to identify who's who in Jesus' figurative story.

Man who doesn't use the gate (thief)	
Man who enters by the gate	
Watchman	
Sheep	
Stranger	

Jesus isn't going to keep us in suspense very long. According to Jesus, he's the gate. More than that, all who ever came before were thieves and robbers. Let's have a look at the characteristics of his "gateness".

4. **Read John 10:7-10.** What's the relationship between the sheep and the gate?

5. Verse 10 lays out the massive contrast between Jesus' reason for coming, and the "thieves and robbers". What is it?

6. One commentator described verse 9 as Jesus offer of safety, and plenty. How does v9 help us to understand what Jesus means by life "to the full"?

7. Jesus famously said in Luke 12 that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." So he can't be talking about "stuff". What else do you think isn't what Jesus is talking about when he offers "life to the full"? Why?

8. Jesus' self portrait here isn't very politically correct. Who might we offend by taking Jesus seriously here?

So how can Jesus be a gate, and the good shepherd?
To answer that, Jesus explains what the good shepherd does.

9. **Read John 10 11- 21.** What does the good shepherd do for the sheep?

10. There are strong connections between the shepherd pictures in Ezekiel 34 and John 10. What parallels do you see?

11. What does Jesus mean when he says "my sheep know me"?

12. Who are the "other sheep that are not of this pen" (verse 16)? What will become of them? How do you know if you're one of them?

Israel's Shepherds.

Israel's leaders are commonly referred to as shepherds, for they are to feed, protect and take care of God's flock, His people Israel. Mostly Israel's leaders were bad shepherds who "fleeced" the flock rather than caring for them. So Jeremiah writes "*Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture... I will place shepherds over them who will tend them and they will no longer be afraid or terrified nor will any be missing.*" (Jeremiah 23:1-4)



The Lord instructed Ezekiel to prophecy against the shepherds of Israel "*Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curd, cloth yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock...*" (Ezekiel 34:2)

Ultimately, it was recognised that God himself was the only true shepherd (Psalm 80:1). King David acknowledged "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*" (Psalm 23). Isaiah reassured the exiles they could look forward to the Lord coming as their shepherd: "*See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power... He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young*": (Isaiah 40:10-11)

13. Some have ridiculed Christianity because God the Father is perceived as a “divine child abuser” for forcing his Son to die as a sacrifice. What alternative do Jesus’ words here suggest?

14. **Read John 10:22-42.** The Jews badger Jesus “... if you are the Christ tell us plainly.” (verse 24). In what ways has Jesus already made it clear who he is (verse 25)? Review events of earlier chapters in your answer.

15. What assurance does Jesus give concerning the eternal life of his followers (verses 27-30)?

16. Jesus says “I and the Father are one.” (verse 30). How do we see Jesus’ and the Father’s oneness expressed or shown in this passage?

In this passage, in what ways do we see that Jesus is “distinct” from the Father?

How does this fit into our understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God?

Share & Pray

Give thanks that Jesus came to give LIFE, life to the full!

Pray that we would know Jesus better, so that we would understand in a more real way that others things can never be the source for finding life.

Keep praying for others,, that they would come to discover life in Jesus.

Feast Of Dedication

The Feast of Dedication, today called Hannukah, was not a Biblical festival, it was not laid down in the OT. In 167 BC the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes overran Jerusalem and polluted the temple, setting up a pagan altar to displace the altar of Israel's God. Many Jews revolted and commenced a guerilla warfare against their oppressors, until eventually under Judas Maccabaeus they overthrew them.



A coin bearing the image of Antiochus Epiphanes

The Feast of Dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 BC as an annual celebration to commemorate the re-dedication of the temple.

John 11: Death Or Glory

1. In what ways is "death" sanitised or "hidden away" in our society? Is this good or bad, helpful or not?

Waiting for death:

Read John 11:1-16.

After the Feast of Dedication (10:22) Jesus withdrew across the Jordan, some distance from Jerusalem, to avoid the plots of the Jewish leaders (10:39 and 11:8). Was Jesus frightened? No! But his timetable was determined by his Heavenly Father, and he would not allow himself to fall into the hands of the Jews before the appointed time.

Bethany, where Jesus friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary lived, was close to Jerusalem. Consequently when Jesus heard the news of Lazarus' illness he was several days journey away.

2. We read of Jesus' response to Lazarus' illness. In verses 4-6. In what ways could Lazarus' illness lead to God's glory, and the Son being glorified? (See also verses 14-15)

3. A better translation of verse 6 (*Yet when he..*) is "**Therefore** when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days." How could Jesus staying two more days be consistent with his love for Lazarus, Martha and Mary (v 5)?

4. Jesus will not be frightened off doing the work his Father has given him. Jesus refers to not stumbling if he walks by the day... (verse 9). Jesus is not simply referring to natural light and dark, so what does Jesus mean?

5. What would it mean to us to walk by day or by night?

Well and truly dead!

It seems that Lazarus was dead before, Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany. In fact Lazarus' death appears to be the signal for Jesus to SET OFF for Bethany (verse 11). This meant that when Jesus arrived at Bethany Lazarus had been dead for four days. Doesn't it seem strange that Jesus should dally so much? Let's think about it.

We have seen that Jesus' intent was that through Lazarus' sickness the Father's glory should be shown and the Son glorified (verse 4). Clearly this would be through the resurrection of Lazarus. By delaying his journey it meant that Lazarus was really dead – there could be no ambiguity about his resurrection. In fact Jewish folk lore had it that when a person died, the

soul hovered over the body waiting to return to the body: the soul would only withdraw when it saw the body starting to decompose. A body would start to decompose after about three days (note the bad odour in verse 39) – after four days Lazarus was well and truly dead.

Jesus is life:

Read John 11:17-43

In Luke 10:38-42 we read of an incident that took place when Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary. Martha busies herself "in the kitchen" while Mary sat at Jesus' feet. Martha protested to Jesus at Mary's not helping with the preparations. Jesus' response: "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset by many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.*"

In this incident in Luke, we see something of Martha's pushyness, perhaps, but also her fussing and worrying over the wrong things. Now, in John, while she grieves over the death of Lazarus, Jesus will help her to "*choose what is better*".

Martha's greeting of Jesus in John 11:21 does seem a bit "aggressive" or pushy. But if there is disappointment in her tone, there is also a confidence in Jesus. However, Martha is not indicating that she looks to Jesus to raise Lazarus – that doesn't fit in with her reaction in verses 21-22 or even verse 39.

Jesus initial words of response to Martha are ambiguous – clearly Martha takes them not as referring to Lazarus being raised immediately, but to the end time resurrection.

Like many Jew's (but excluding the Sadducees who didn't believe in life after death) Martha believed in "the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24).

6. What do Jesus' words in verse 25 challenge Martha to believe.

I AM...

Yet again Jesus describes himself in terms of an "I AM" statement which challenges us to associate him with the great I AM (Yahweh, God's personal name, means something like "I am what I am" - Exodus 3).

Here Jesus declares **I AM the resurrection and the life**. Jesus is not only the source of light and life (John 1:4ff) but is the resurrection life. In saying I am the RESURRECTION and the LIFE, we should perhaps see two elements.

Firstly, Jesus is the one who will raise his people from the dead – he has resurrection power.

And secondly, immediately a person comes to faith in Jesus he comes into new life, a life that will last into eternity, a life in relationship with Jesus and his Father, and that will not be extinguished by death.

7. In what sense is Martha's response in verse 27 adequate or not?

8. What does Jesus' weeping show us about Jesus (35)?

9. What does verse 41-42 tell us about the relationship of Jesus with his Father?

Life for a life :

Read John 11:45-54.

10. Again we see Jesus actions divide the Jews. Some believe in Jesus as a result of the raising of Lazarus. Others plot against him. Why is the Sanhedrin so worried about Jesus and what he is doing (verses 47-48)?

11. Caiaphas, the High Priest, said of Jesus *that "it is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish"* (verse 50). Caiaphas was probably more concerned for his own job and power than for the people..

In what way were Caiaphas' words (unknown to him) such a powerful prophecy (verses 51-53)?

12. Do you have COMPLETE CONFIDENCE that :

(a) You already have new life in Jesus, that you have been born again through him (John 3)?

(b) You will be raised again on the last day?

13. The resurrection of Lazarus glorified Jesus in a powerful way. How may we glorify Jesus in our new lives?

Prayer Points:

John 12: Death And Glory

1. What leaders, political or otherwise, have we seen at some stage be praised and held in high honour only later to be ignored and put down. Why did it happen?

Before the Passover:

Read John 11:55 - 12:11

Frequently in John's gospel we see events in Jesus ministry centre around the various religious feasts. Chapters 8 & 9 describe events that took place at the Feast of Tabernacles, chapter 10 at the Feast of Dedication and now in chapter 12 at the Feast of Passover. It was natural that Jesus as a devout Jew should attend these festivals, and again it is not surprising that at major celebrations centred on the Jerusalem temple we should hear Jesus teaching, and also read of opposition from the authorities.

This is the third Passover that is mentioned in John, the first occurring at the beginning of Jesus ministry (2:13ff), the second during his Galilean ministry (which he did not attend) and now this the last, occurring at the climax of his ministry. Thus the three Passovers span the whole of Jesus' active ministry, and point to his ministry lasting around two to three years (perhaps running from AD 28 to AD30). (There is the possibility of a fourth Passover in 5:1)

The Passover commemorated the salvation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and reminds of God sparing his people as the angel of death "passed over" the homes of the Israelites who had daubed their homes with the blood of a lamb as prescribed by God through Moses.

In the week before the Passover proper, many Jews went up to Jerusalem for ceremonial cleansing from "ritual defilement" (11:55). Again we see the curiosity of the people in Jesus, and the possibility of his attending the Passover in Jerusalem, and also the antagonism of the chief priests and Pharisees who were looking for an excuse to arrest him (11:57).

Prior to the Passover, however, Jesus attends a dinner given in his honour. John doesn't say at whose house the dinner was given, but Lazarus, Martha and Mary were all there.

2. What does Mary's pouring oil over Jesus feet (see verse 3) tell us about Mary's attitude to Jesus? What does Jesus say Mary's act signifies (7).

Jesus' Anointing

We also read in each of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) an account of Jesus being "anointed with oil". The incident record in Luke's gospel seems to be another incident that took place earlier in Jesus ministry in the house of a Pharisee (Luke 7:36-38).

However, the incidents in Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9) appear to be the same one that John tells us about here. There are some differences in the details reported. For instance John does not tell us in whose house it happened (we are told Lazarus is a guest, not that it's his house) where as in Matthew/Mark we are told the house belonged to Simon the Leper. In John the perfume was poured on Jesus feet, in Matthew/Mark it is poured on Jesus' head. On

this point, however, in Mark Jesus himself says his "body" was anointed – so it seems the perfume was poured on his head body and feet – all of him. Presumably John drew attention to the feet in anticipation of chapter 13 where Jesus washed his disciples feet. Matthew/Mark presumably drew attention to the head to signify Jesus' anointing as King, as well as his body being "anointed" for his burial.

3. The raising of Lazarus was attracting many to Jesus (verse 9). In what ways is the reaction of the leaders to the raising of Lazarus intensified (see 11:48ff as well as 12:10-11)?

The triumphal entry:

Read John 12:12-19

The Passover was typically attended by many hundreds of thousands of people, there was a festive air, people came rejoicing and singing psalms in praise of God. Now they direct their praises towards Jesus and bless him as one who they recognise as coming in the name of the Lord.

John doesn't record any details of the acquiring of the donkey that we find in the other gospels, but he does refer to it as fulfilling a Messianic prophecy (see Zechariah 9:9).

4. What are some of the conflicting reactions we see from the disciples, people, and Pharisees to these events:

(a) Disciples (verse 16)

(b) People (verse 18)

(c) Pharisees (verse 19)

Jesus predicts his death:

Read John 12:20-36

5. In what way do we see the fears of the Pharisees (verse 19) coming to pass in verse 20.

6. The arrival of the "Greeks" somehow signals to Jesus that his "hour had come".

(a) In what way will Jesus be glorified (verse 23)?

b) In what sense will Jesus' death be to his glory?

7. Jesus faces death, for the sake of his flock (10:11). How should his flock/disciples live (verse 25-26)?

How will God the Father react to those who serve Jesus (verse 26)?

8. Describe Jesus' reaction to the prospect of dying on the cross (verse 27).

The Voice From Heaven

In response to the Son's desire and determination to glorify the Father even through his death, the Father speaks from heaven "I have glorified (my name) and will glorify it again" (verse 28).

Whilst Jesus affirms God spoke not for his benefit but for the benefit of the people, many were confused over the "noise" (verse 29). Nevertheless, if some thought they only heard thunder, this should have alerted them to some "heavenly signal" as to what was happening here. Of course Jesus' disciples, told more clearly by Jesus later what was said, would have been greatly encouraged. As no doubt we are, knowing that the Father speaks even verbally from heaven affirming his Son.

9. Jesus speaks of being "lifted up" on the cross (verse 32-33):

(a) In what different sort of way is Jesus "lifted up" in his death?

(b) In what sense is his death "time for judgement on the world" (verse 31)?

c) In what sense is the prince of this world driven out (verse 31)?

The crowds are confused by Jesus' words (verse 34), their hearts are still hardened against him. He challenges them once more to "*put their trust in the light while you have it*" (verse 36) – and then withdraws as if to signal that they will only have the light with them a little longer, for he is the light (verse 36).

The hardness of unbelief:

Read John 12:37-50

John explains the unbelief of the Jews, despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, by quoting the words of Isaiah (verses 38-40, quoting Isaiah 6). The quotation refers to the Lord hardening the hearts of the Jews so that they could not believe. In reflecting on this we should remember:

1. That whilst God is sovereign in all things, and in that sense "stands behind" the hardness of men's hearts, his sovereignty does not detract from man's responsibility and free will.
2. God's hardening is the reaction of a holy God towards those who stand condemned before him: God gives people over to their own sinful desires.
3. God still stands ready to forgive those who would turn to him: God's heartfelt desire is to see people turn and be saved.

In what ways did Isaiah see Jesus' glory (verse 41)? It's not entirely clear. In the passage quoted, from Isaiah 6, Isaiah sees a magnificent vision of the glory of God. Since Jesus is the revelation of God in the world (Jn 1:14), the "glory" that Isaiah saw could well be, in effect, the glory of Jesus. Or perhaps he saw Jesus' glory when he prophesied concerning the "suffering servant" (particularly Isaiah 53),

10. In verse 42-43 John summarises some of the themes that he has written about earlier in his Gospel account. List some of them, as found in these verses:

Verse 42-43

Verse 44-45

Verse 46

Verse 47a.

Verse 47b-48.

Verse 49-50.

11. Are there times when you doubt Jesus Christ or your relationship with him?

What is the reason, what is the antidote?

Prayer Points:

John 13: Are You Being Served?

There were two things on Jesus' heart the night before his crucifixion—his Father and his disciples. In John 13-17, we have the privilege of listening to his conversations with them both. However, before Jesus can instruct his disciples about his death, he has to act out a lesson in servitude. Jesus also shows us the spirit he expects in those who follow him. Greatness in Christ's eyes does not come from having many servants but from being the servant of many.

1. Have you ever been asked to do a demeaning, lowly job? What thoughts went through your mind at that time?
2. **Read John 13:1-17.** According to John, what did Jesus know about himself (vv. 1-3)? In light of that knowledge, what is remarkable about what Jesus did next (vv. 4-5)?
3. Foot washing was normally done by servants or slaves. Why do you think that Jesus washed his disciples' feet instead of simply talking to them about love?
4. Was Peter simply being humble when he refused to allow Jesus to serve him (vv. 6-8)? Explain.
5. What spiritual truth was Jesus trying to communicate to Peter (and to us) in verses 8-11?
6. Based on Jesus' words in verse 17, how would you describe the relationship between knowledge, action and joy in the Christian life?
7. In what specific ways can you model the humility of Jesus toward those with whom you live or work?

Jesus' words about his disciples following his example are not intended for them all – he knows those who belong to him. He also knows those who DON'T belong to him.

Read John 13:18-38.

8. Why does Jesus warn the disciples about his betrayal (v. 19)?

9. Why does the kind of love Jesus describes convince all of humanity that we are Jesus' disciples (v. 35)?

10. Do you think Peter's declaration in verse 37 comes from pride or from sincerity? Explain.

11. Three people stand out in this passage—Jesus, Judas and Peter. What one character quality of each—good or evil—impresses you the most?

12. John later wrote: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 Jn 3:16). In what practical ways can you exhibit this sacrificial love?

Prayer Points

John 14: Coming Home

1. What's troubling you at the moment? How can you trust God for his comfort?
2. **Read John 14:1-11.** Is Jesus' focus on where he is going, or on the disciples' remaining behind? Is there a connection?
3. What might have upset the disciples in Ch 13 that would cause Jesus to command them not to let their hearts be troubled (1)?
4. How would the promises Jesus makes in verses 1-4 bring comfort to his disciples?
5. Put Jesus' statement in 14:6-7 in your own words.

What is the force of the claim Jesus makes here?

6. In light of verses 5-14, why is it crucial for our focus to be on Jesus himself?
7. If the disciples can't follow where Jesus is going (13:36), why does he comfort them with details about how he will come back and take them to himself (14:3)?
8. **Read John 14:12-31.** Jesus' focus moves from the relationship between the Father and the Son to the disciples themselves. What is the connection between these two concepts?
9. According to Jesus, how will the Spirit bring comfort and help to his followers (vv. 15-27)?
10. The word for the Father and the Son making their *home* in the believer (14:23) is the same one as the *rooms* in the Father's house (14:2). What are these two dwellings referring to? How are they similar? Different? Connected? What is our part in allowing the Father and Son to make their home in us?
11. What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus and his love and presence in our lives (vv. 15-24)?

12. How does the peace Christ offers differ from that which the world offers (vv. 25-31)?
13. Any ideas why Jesus says “Come now, let us leave” (14:31), but keeps speaking for another three chapters, only leaving the Upper Room in 18:1?
14. Think of a friend who is going through a personal crisis. How could this chapter help you to minister to that person?

Prayer Points

What is troubling you at the moment? Give it to God, and wait before him to receive his comfort.

Ask God to comfort someone you know who is troubled.

John 15:1-17: The Vine & Branches

THE FINAL WEEKEND before Christmas is not the time to go shopping. If you are fortunate enough to find a parking spot, the press of people inside makes shopping almost impossible. A mother gave these final instructions to her young son before plunging into the crowd: "Stay close to me and hold my hand all the time. We won't get separated if we hold on to each other."

As Jesus prepared his disciples to face life without his visible presence, he impressed on them the importance of staying close to him spiritually. He said, "Remain in me." If you've ever longed to understand the secret of spiritual growth, you will find it in Jesus' words to us in John 15.

1. Have you ever felt far from Christ since becoming a Christian? What circumstances made you feel that way?
2. **Read Jn 15:1-17.** Jesus' instructions to his disciples in this passage revolve around three symbols—the vine, the gardener and the branches. What is Jesus trying to communicate by calling himself *the true vine*? Look for example at Ps 80:8-16; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21.
3. The word for prune is the same as the word for clean (15:3). In what way does the Father prune fruitful branches (2)? How are the branches made clean (3)?
4. What does it mean for the Father to cut off branches that don't bear fruit (2)? See 15:6.
5. What does it mean to *remain in Christ* (v. 4)?
6. What spiritual benefits result from remaining in Christ (vv. 7-11)?
7. What are the requirements and benefits of friendship with Christ (vv. 14-17)?
8. What is the connection between the promise about prayer in 15:7 and the promises in 14:12-14?
9. How are *remaining in Christ*, *love*, *bearing fruit*, and *obedience* connected in these verses?

10. There are three categories of branches described in this passage—those bearing no fruit, those bearing some fruit, and those bearing much fruit. In which category would you place yourself and why?

11. If you are not bearing much fruit, what is Jesus' counsel to you in these verses?

Prayer Points

Ask God to help you bear the fruit he wants you to bear

John 15:18-16:33: Another Counsellor

JESUS CONTINUES TO equip the disciples for life without his physical presence. He moves from discussing their relationships with each other (15:12-17) to their relationship with the world (15:18-16:4).

1. Can you think of a time when you have experienced the world's hatred as a Christian?
2. **Read John 15:18-16:4.** If love is to characterize our relationship with other believers, hate will characterize our relationships with the world.
 - a. Who does Jesus mean by "the world"? (See Jn 1:9-11).
 - b. What reasons does Jesus give for the world's hatred?
3. What does Jesus mean when he says that without his coming, his words and his miracles, the world "would not be guilty of sin" (15:22-25)?
4. In what specific ways will the Counsellor and the disciples themselves continue the ministry begun by Jesus (15:26-16:4)?
5. What kind of treatment can the disciples expect from those who do not know Christ (16:1-4)? What kinds of persecution are more probable for us in our society? Explain.
6. If we as Christians are not persecuted in some way, what might that imply about our spiritual commitment?
7. **Read John 16:5-33.** Jesus said that it was for the disciples' good that he go away and that the Counsellor come. Why was the Spirit's presence more profitable to the disciples than Jesus' presence?
8. What did Jesus say the Spirit's ministry would be toward the world (vv. 8-11)?
9. The Spirit's ministry is one of communication. What specific things did Jesus say the Spirit would communicate to the disciples (vv. 13-15)?

10. Why are the disciples confused and concerned (16-18) by Jesus' words?
11. Jesus answers the questions the disciples ask in verses 17-18, not by giving them an explanation but by making them a promise (vv. 19-22). Why would Jesus' promise bring them joy in the midst of their grief and confusion?
12. How can Jesus promise both trouble and peace for his disciples (33)?
13. How can this incident help us when our questions to the Lord seemingly go unanswered?

Prayer Points

Pray for those around the world who face persecution for their faith.

John 17: Knowing Me, Knowing You

THE APPROACH OF death has a way of bringing our priorities into focus. People who know death is imminent also know what is really important in life and who they really care about. In Jesus' final prayer with his disciples, he prays for himself, for them and even for US! Every believer is on Jesus' mind as he faces the greatest trial of his life—the cross.

1. The *hour* (time) has finally arrived (17:1) that Jesus has been talking about since 2:4 (See also 4:21-23; 5:25; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32). When have you had to wait for a long-expected event to finally arrive? Was waiting easy or hard?

Read John 17:1-5

2. In Jn 12:23 Jesus calls it the hour for the Son of Man to be *glorified*.
 - a. What will it involve for Jesus to be glorified (12:23-33)?
 - b. So what is Jesus praying for in Jn 17:1-5?
 - c. Jesus makes only one request for himself—that the Father would glorify him so that he might glorify the Father. In what way would each one glorify the other?
 - d. Why is this so important to Jesus?
3. To what extent is God's glory foremost in your mind on a daily basis? How can you cause him to be glorified?
4. How is Jesus' definition of eternal life (3) different from merely living forever?
5. In what ways do you actively seek to know the Father and the Son better?
6. **Read John 17:6-19.** What specific ministries did Jesus have toward his disciples?
7. Twice Jesus asked the Father to protect his disciples from the evil one (11, 15). Why would that protection have been so important in Jesus' mind as he faced the cross?

8. Why is there power to protect the disciples in God's name – the name he gave Jesus (11)? See 8:58; Exod 3:14.
 - a. What do the events surrounding the original revelation of this name (Exod 3:7-10) show about its power to save?

9. Jesus also asked the Father to sanctify his disciples through his word (17).
 - a. What does Jesus mean by this?

 - b. How can we allow God's Word to have that kind of effect on our lives?

10. **Read John 17:20-26.** Jesus prayed that those who believe in him would be one "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (vv. 21, 23)? Why is our unity a powerful argument for the reality of Jesus?

11. What kind of unity exists between the Father and the Son that we should copy? How does this affect others?

12. In what practical ways can we demonstrate our oneness with other believers?

13. Can you think of a situation where unity may not be possible?

14. What is Jesus' ultimate desire for us (24)? How does this reveal his love for us?

15. Jesus obviously prayed this prayer out loud to bring comfort and assurance to his disciples. In what particular ways do Jesus' words encourage or assure you?

Prayer Points

Ask God to bring unity to your church or fellowship.

John 18: Kings & Kingdoms

MOST OF US would hate the thought of being arrested and brought to trial. If we were guilty of a crime, being arrested would be humiliating. But if we were innocent, it would be devastating. Yet in what should have been a demeaning experience for Jesus, we see again his majesty and glory. Jesus uses an experience of attack, betrayal and abandonment to demonstrate his confident trust in the Father, and to reveal his glory.

Read John 18:1-40.

1. Why would Jesus go to a place where Judas knew he might be found (vv. 1-3)?
2. Why do you suppose the Pharisees want to take advantage of the night to arrest Jesus (see 3:19-20; 12:35; 13:30)?
3. When the soldiers say they are seeking Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus replies "I am he" (lit. "I am"; v. 5). How would you explain the reaction of the soldiers (v. 6)?
4. How does Peter respond to the arrest of Jesus (18:10)?
 - a. How does this continue a pattern of behaviour of Peter jumping in "boots and all"? (Mt 14:28; 16:22; Jn 13:9, 24, 36; 20:6)
 - b. Is this a positive or negative character trait?
 - c. How does Jesus respond? What do we learn from this?
 - d. When have you attempted to "help God out" in your own strength and wisdom?
5. Given Jesus' pacifism (6, 11) why is Jesus' bound (12)? Who is afraid of whom? Why?
6. What specific events in 18:15-27 display
 - a. Jesus' courage,
 - b. his power and

- c. his obedience to the Father?
7. Annas' questions (18:19-24) give the pretence of finding out the truth. How does his interaction with Jesus show that it is Jesus who is on the side of truth?
 8. How do you account for the difference between Peter in v17 and in the garden (10)?
 9. What can we learn from Peter's failure about being ready to stand against the world's challenges?
 10. A Roman trial included four basic elements: the accusation (18:29-31), the interrogation (search for evidence) (18:32-35), the defense (18:36-37) and the verdict (18:38). What events or statements from the text are included in each?
 11. What is ironic about the behaviour of the religious leaders in 18:28? How does this behaviour serve to illustrate Jesus' charges against them in 5:39-40 and 7:24?
 12. How do we see God's hand behind the wickedness of the religious leaders (18:32)? See also Acts 2:23; 4:28.
 13. What reason do the religious leaders finally give Pilate for bringing Jesus to him (33-34)? Why would Pilate take this seriously?
 14. Who is part of Jesus' kingdom (18:36-37)?
 15. What do you make of the tone of Pilate's question (38)? How has Jesus embodied truth (14:6; 18:20-23)?

Prayer Points

Praise God for his plans in Jesus. Praise him for his obedience and courage. Thank him for being truth about the Father.

John 19: Jesus' Coronation

WHO KILLED JESUS? Down through history, the blame has fallen at the feet of the Jewish people. The New Testament does blame the Jewish leaders for condemning Jesus to die. But they weren't acting alone. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, also condemned Jesus to die. There is a sense, too, in which we killed Jesus. He died for *our* sins. The most amazing answer to the question of who killed Jesus is that no one did! Jesus said, "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own choice."

1. **Read Jn 19.** The first question Pilate asked Jesus was whether he was a king (18:33). Jesus said that he was a king, and that he was born to be crowned, but that his kingdom didn't belong to this world (18:36-7). What evidence do you find in Ch 19 of this theme of kingship, in particular that Jesus' crucifixion is described as a form of coronation, or crowning, of Jesus as King?
2. The Jews' true charge against Jesus comes out in verse 7—"He claimed to be the Son of God." Why do you think Pilate reacted to that statement as he did (vv. 8-9)?
3. The trial before Pilate continues. Pilate obviously was trying to release Jesus. What specific attempts did he make (18:39; 19:4, 6, 10, 12, 15)?
4. Why didn't Jesus say more to Pilate (vv. 9-11)? Shouldn't he have defended himself more vigorously?
5. What can you conclude about Pilate's character after reading this passage? What kind of man was he?
6. What does this passage tell you about how you should respond when you are treated unjustly?
7. You may be tempted to think that Jesus' death was a cruel mistake. It wasn't. Jesus' life was not taken from him; he laid it down willingly. What indications do we find in this chapter that this takes place according to God's plan, and that Jesus is dying in obedience to his Father?

8. Three groups were involved in Jesus' death—the soldiers, the Jewish leaders and Pilate. How would you characterize each one's attitude toward Jesus? In what ways do their attitudes toward Jesus parallel those of men and women today?

The soldiers

The Jewish leaders

Pilate

9. What do you make of Pilate's insistence on the wording of the sign above Jesus' head (19:19-22)? Why all three languages? (See also 12:32).
10. How is Jesus' tender care for Mary evident even while he is dying (vv. 26-27)?
11. What was the significance of Jesus' cry "It is finished" (v. 30; see Jn 17:4)?
12. Any thoughts on why the writer is so emphatic that the man who saw the blood and water flowing from Jesus' side gave true testimony (19:34-37)? See Jn 4:10; 7:38-39.
13. The disciples are not mentioned at the crucifixion; they were probably not there. When it comes to public identification with Jesus, under what circumstances are you tempted to respond in the same way?
14. Why do you think Nicodemus and Joseph, as secret believers, chose to risk public exposure now (19:38-42)?
15. What aspect of Jesus' death has made the deepest impression on you, and why?

Prayer Points

Ask God to help you follow his example of grace when you are under pressure. Thank God for providing salvation to you through Christ's death.

John 20: The Son is Up!

SOME OF YOU know that when Robert Toohey suffered a heart attack last year, he, technically, died. Paramedics were able to resuscitate him, and, thank God, he is recovering well. He came back from the dead! Other people are able to tell a similar story. Only one person, however, has been resurrected; not just restored to life, but with an eternal, incorruptible, perfect body. Jesus' resurrection opens the door for those who follow him to also be resurrected. This is the glorious, unique Christian hope.

1. **Read John 20.** John records three witnesses to the empty tomb: What important details do we learn from each one (vv. 1-9)?

Mary Magdalene,

Peter,

"the other disciple" (John himself).

2. John also records three appearances of the risen Christ: to Mary, to his disciples and to Thomas. Why do you think Mary doesn't immediately recognize Jesus (vv. 10-15)?
3. After she does recognize him, what impresses you most about their encounter (vv. 16-18)?
4. How does Mary's return to the disciples in v18 contrast to that in v2?
5. What term does Jesus use for his disciples in v17?
 - a. What is new in their relationship from now on (see 15:15)?
 - b. What does it mean that Jesus is your brother?
6. If Mary, and presumably Peter and John, had told the disciples that Jesus had risen, why were they still fearful, and meeting behind locked doors (19)?
 - a. If Jesus has risen, why are *you* sometimes fearful of others?

7. When Jesus appears to his disciples, what specific gifts and promises does he give them (vv. 19-23)?
8. Why does Jesus, three times, say, “Peace be with you” (19, 21, 26)?
 - a. How does this relate to their fears?
 - b. To their being sent?
9. Finally, Jesus appears to Thomas (vv. 24-29). Why do you think Jesus waited a week to appear to Thomas?
 - a. How does Thomas's attitude—both before and after Jesus appears to him— add credibility to the resurrection?
10. Is believing that Jesus rose from the dead as important as believing that he died for our sins? Explain.
11. What do you learn from Jesus' encounter with Thomas about dealing with people who have doubts about Christianity?
 - a. Who could you help to understand and believe the claims of Christ?
12. John tells us why he has written his Gospel in verses 30-31. What has Jesus said about having life in his name? See 1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 5:21, 24; 6:35; 8:12; 10:10; 11:25; 12:25; 14:6; 17:3.
 - a. Of all the "miraculous signs" John has included, which have been most convincing to you? Why?

Prayer Points

Praise God for what he has done in Christ.

Pray for the courage to stand up for Jesus that comes from understanding his resurrection power.

John 21: A Walk with a Resurrected Man

MOST OF US find it easier to forgive than to forget. We may be ready to forgive someone who has hurt us deeply, but we have a hard time trusting that person again. Peter failed Jesus miserably. He promised to give up his life if necessary to protect Jesus, but denied him a few hours later. Peter knew Jesus had forgiven him. But would Jesus still trust him? Could Jesus still use him to bring glory to God? Will Christ still use us after we've failed?

1. How do you feel when someone you have hurt refuses to forgive you?

Read John 21.

2. What was the significance of Peter's decision to return to fishing?
3. What was Jesus trying to show the disciples by allowing them to catch such a large number of fish (vv. 4-6; see Lk 5:4-11)?
4. When Peter hears that "it is the Lord" (vv. 7-8), he jumps into the water and begins swimming ahead of the boat.
 - a. What does this reveal about Peter and his relationship with Jesus?
 - b. How would you have responded if you had denied Jesus only a few days earlier?
5. Where did Jesus get the fish from in v9?
 - a. What is their significance?
 - b. How would you feel when you saw them if you had been fishing with the disciples all night?
6. How does Jesus preparing breakfast for them relate to what he did for them in 13:1-17?
7. What subtle differences do you notice in Jesus' three questions and Peter's responses (vv. 15-17)? Is there any significance?

8. Why do you think Jesus chose this particular time to predict the kind of death Peter would die (vv. 18-19)?

9. In light of 10:14-15, what would Jesus' "shepherd" imagery have meant to Peter? What are its implications for his future ministry?

10. What does Jesus' answer to Peter (v. 22) reveal about the danger of comparing ourselves with other Christians?

11. What can we learn from this passage about the steps involved in restoring a Christian who has sinned?

12. How does it help to know that you can still serve and glorify Jesus no matter what your past failures have been?

13. The summary and conclusion in v25 begins in the same way as the summary and conclusion in 20:30-31.
 - a. How are they different?

 - b. Similar?

 - c. Why might John have included both?

14. Look back over Jn 13-21.
 - a. What aspect of Jesus' character and ministry has impressed you most?

 - b. What responses have you made in your heart and life to Jesus as a result of that deeper understanding?

Prayer Points

Commit these responses to God, asking for His strength to see them through.