



christ church
moreton

With Jesus
in
the Upper Room

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Lent 2011

With Jesus in the Upper Room.

It was Jesus' last evening with his disciples. As they gathered in an upper room to share a meal together, Jesus knew exactly what was going on in his disciples' minds. He knew about their hesitancy and fear. He understood them and knew just what lay ahead. He knew that he was going to the cross; he knew he was going to rise from the dead and ascend to heaven; he knew that he would ask the Father to send the Spirit and that this fearful, hesitant, frightened, ignorant group of disciples would be transformed.

But they did not know this, so he was patient with them. What he told them that night were key to bringing frightened, hesitant and puzzled disciples through a confusing, life-threatening and desperately hard situation to a place of secure, settled and mature faith.

It is that last evening that we will be following from John's gospel:

W/b Mon 14 th March	John 13:1-30
W/b Mon 21 st March	John 13:31-14:14
W/b Mon 28 th March	John 14:15-15:17
W/b Mon 4 th April	John 15:18-16:15

Wednesday 13th April is our AGM, so Home Groups won't meet that evening. But if you are able to fit in a extra meeting, either that week or the week after, there is one extra study for you to use:

Extra Week John 16:16-33

Week 1- The Servant King

WELCOME

Of all the jobs you have to do, either at work, at home or in church, which is your least favourite?

WORSHIP

Read / sing or listen to Graham Kendrick's song The Servant King (From heaven you came).

- Praise God for the things it tells you about Jesus.
- Thank God for times when other Christians have served you.

WORD

Evening was drawing on as the twelve men began to arrive. Outside it was still hot, and it was pleasant to come into the house, with its shade and coolness. There was only one thing missing. It was a hired house, in fact just a hired room, and there were no servants. And that meant no-one to take the sandals off each of the arrivals and wash their feet. Which was a pity, because all the roads in the city were nothing more than dust trails. The dust on the road was always two or three inches deep; always, that is, except when it had been raining. Then there was no dust — just two or three inches of mud.

When they had all arrived they sat down to dinner. 13 couches were set out around the table, and each man rested on a couch. That meant that each man had his neighbour's dusty, dirty feet just a

little way from his face. Not the sort of thing you really want to be looking at, or smelling, just before dinner.

And then, one of the 13 got up. He took off his outer robe, wrapped a towel round his waist, got a bowl of water, and went up to the first of the others. He took off his sandals, he washed his feet, and dried them. Then he moved on to the next one. And the next. Right round the table.

- How would you feel if you had been one of that group?

Read John 13:1-17

- What things does John tell us that Jesus knew about himself (v.1-3)?
- How does that make what Jesus does next remarkable?

'Do you understand what I have done for you?' Jesus asked them (v.12).

- Certainly he had washed their feet, but do you think that there was anything else Jesus meant by that question?

In the next chapter, Jesus tells his disciples that he and the Father are one, and that everything Jesus does is what the Father does (see John 14:9-10)

- What does this incident tell you about God's attitude to you?
- What truth do you think Jesus is trying to communicate to Peter (and to us) in verses 8-11?

Week 2 - The Father and the Son

WELCOME

What is the best journey you have ever been on?

WORSHIP

Either read Psalm 23, or sing a version of it.

Psalm 23 pictures life as a journey, with happy times and sad times along the way.

- Look back on your own journey with God.
- Thank him for the happy times, and for any experiences you have had of knowing God's help when you have gone through times of suffering.

WORD

It seems that almost every month there are new figures showing that church attendance is in decline, and that less and less people in this country relate to any organised religion. But ironically, at the same time it has also been recognised that more and more people are interested in 'the spiritual.' If you go into the search engine 'Google' and type in 'spirituality in the UK', you will be given a staggering 18,800,000 websites to visit. In the mix you will find every major monotheistic faith as well as Buddhism, Hinduism, Zen, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Sufism and a multitude of other 'ways of being' that now swamp the UK.

The important question no longer seems to be 'what do you believe' but rather, 'do you believe what you believe with sincerity'. But of

This is a helpful picture of an experience that is fundamental to the Christian life. Those who are 'in Christ', by belief and baptism, are forgiven people; yet day by day they also need to seek cleansing from the bits of rubbish that have stuck to them in the course of each day's journey, through their own 'negligence, weakness, or deliberate fault'. It explains why many Christians follow the discipline of an act of repentance and confession at the end of each day, and enjoy the assurance of forgiveness that goes with it.'

David Winter in 'With Jesus in the Upper Room'

Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.
(v.17)

- Have you any experience of being blessed through serving someone else?

Read John 14:18-30

Jesus had washed Judas' feet, even though he knew that Judas was about to betray him. What does that tell you about Jesus' love?

Can we apply Jesus' example to the way we should treat those who betray us, or was this a unique situation that doesn't really apply today?

WORK

If we are to put what Jesus says here into practice, then as a group we need to be willing to serve one another, but also to allow others to serve us. In what ways can you do that this coming week?

course, the problem is that you can be sincere about a belief in something, but still be sincerely wrong.

Read John 13:31-38

'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.' (v.31)

- How was Jesus going to bring glory to God, and how would God glorify his Son?
- In this context, why was it so important for Jesus to remind his disciples to love one another?
- Why should our love convince people that we belong to Jesus?
- What about us at Christ Church? Do we show the sort of love that will show others that we are disciples of Jesus? How could you do better?

Read John 14:1-14

The words which start chapter 14 are very well known, but are seldom read in their context. That's partly the fault of the chapter divisions, which weren't part of the original text. Chapter 13 ends with Jesus warning his friends that he would soon be leaving them, and that where he was going they couldn't come, followed by his telling Peter that he would deny Jesus three times. No wonder the disciple's hearts were troubled!

- How might Jesus' words in John 14:1-4 comfort the disciples in the face of all he had just told them?
- How might those words comfort us when we are facing suffering?

Jesus' words in John 14:6 are very well known.

- What does it mean to you that Jesus is 'the way, the truth and the life'?
- After being with Jesus for three years, what had both Philip and Thomas failed to realise about him (v.5-14)?
- How does what Jesus says to Thomas and Philip help us to understand what God is like?

All the teaching of Jesus makes it completely clear that we can talk of knowing the Father in terms of an intimate, experiential, personal relationship..... Jesus wanted nothing more than for his disciples to know his Father personally, living in his house, eating at his table, and feeling his arms around their shoulders, knowing his tender forgiveness and caring acceptance as returning and deeply loved prodigal children. The privilege of every returning prodigal in the Kingdom of God is to be welcomed into his father's house, reshod, reclothed and celebrated.

Rob Shimwell in 'Knowing Christ'

WORK

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Do you know of those who are struggling to find the way, or who are searching for the truth, or who need to find life? Are there ways in which you can help these people? Take some time to pray for them.

Week 3 – The Secret of the Vine

WELCOME

What is your most satisfying accomplishment ever?

WORSHIP

Have one of the group read Romans 8:28-39 slowly. As they do, allow this wonderful picture of God's love to speak to you. Then, in the silence, thank the Lord for loving you, and for any ways in which you have been especially aware of his love.

WORD

Soon after we moved to Moreton, we began doing some work in the garden at the Rectory. I was getting carried away chopping down old shrubs, and managed to pretty well demolish one plant that we intended to keep. So I quickly stuck some branches into the ground, in the hope that they would grow. A few months later we were tidying up around that part of the garden, and there were the branches — all completely dead! Just bare sticks. They could not grow on their own. Unless they were connected to the parent tree, they were dead. And from what I have read, it is just the same with grape vines. Unless a branch is connected to the vine — it is dead.

Read John 14:15-31

- What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus and his love and presence in our lives?

If you love me you will obey what I command. John 14:15

Once in chapter 13 (v.34), and twice in chapter 15 (v.12, 17) Jesus gives his disciples a command.

- How does obeying this command show that we do love Jesus?

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid John 14:27.

- How does the peace that Jesus gives differ from the peace offered by the world?
- Have you any experience of the peace that Jesus gives helping you to conquer something of which you were afraid?

Read John 15:1-17

Jesus' instruction to his disciples in this passage revolves around three symbols – the vine, the gardener and the branches.

- Why does Jesus call himself the vine?
- What does it mean for us to be branches?
- Instead of commanding us to bear fruit, why is Jesus' only command 'Remain in me'?

Week 4 - The Promise of The Spirit

- What does it mean to remain in Christ?
- How is remaining in Christ linked to the command to love one another?
- What are the things that can work to prevent us from remaining in him?

The fruit produced by the branch is sometimes viewed as referring to new converts. But branches produce grapes, not other branches.

- What other possible meanings are there for the fruit?
- What is the relationship between remaining in Jesus, and effective prayer(v.7)?

The Father prunes fruitful branches to make them more fruitful (v.2).

- In what ways does God prune us?
- Have you had experience of the Father's 'pruning' in your life? What were the results?

WORK

The life of the vine is something that we share, and at times we need one another's help to remain fruitful, or to be pruned for more fruitfulness. Think of a friend who is going through a testing time, or who is drifting away. Plan to do something this week to encourage them. A phone call, a card, a small gift, an invitation to a meal might be a real blessing in their life.

WELCOME

If you could spend a day with a celebrity who would it be, and why?

WORSHIP

Find some songs / hymns about the work of the Holy Spirit, and use these.

Praise God for giving us his Spirit.

WORD

What would it have been like to be with Jesus — to talk with the One who created the galaxies, to hear him teach as no one has ever taught before or since, to witness him feeding the crowd, or healing the sufferer, to see his quiet power over life and death. What questions would we ask him? How amazing just to be with him!

It is easy to envy those who had these privileges. But for the disciples, that joy was about to end. As their last evening progressed, the one thing that was becoming clearer and clearer was that they would not have Jesus with them much longer.

Saying goodbye to a dear friend is always hard. But as this goodbye approached, Jesus stunned them once more by telling them that his departure was good news! And now, 2000 years later, we

experience something that the disciples never knew during Jesus' time on earth. We know what they were only beginning to grasp.

Read John 15:18 —16:4

In the section we looked at last week, Jesus was talking about love. But now the subject is very different.

- Why do you think that Jesus turned straight from talking about love to talk about hate?

Jesus seems sure that Christians would always face opposition from 'the world'

- Why does this opposition happen?

- Have you ever experienced the world's hatred as a Christian?

Jesus says that if he hadn't done among people what no-one else did they would not be guilty of sin (15:24).

- What did Jesus mean? How do the words apply to our mission to our society today?

Read John 16:5-15

Jesus then turns again from the world's hatred to the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The word Counsellor (v.26) means one who is called alongside to help.

- In what ways does this passage describe the help the Holy Spirit gives?

- Have you experience of the Holy Spirit helping you in these ways?

Because Jesus is going away, the disciples are filled with grief (v.6).

- Why is this 'bad' news about Jesus actually good for the disciples and for us?

The Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment (v.8)

- Have you had experience of this conviction?

WORK

Most Christians in democratic societies face very little persecution for their faith. Christians in other parts of the world, however, often have to endure imprisonment, poverty, slavery and even death for their commitment to Jesus.

Two organisations which work to support persecuted Christians are The Barnabas Fund (www.barnabasfund.org) and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (www.csw.org.uk) Check them out for information. Pray for your brothers and sisters.

Week 5 – Peace in a Time of Trouble

WELCOME

What kind of things make you feel anxious or afraid?

WORSHIP

Either using your own words or words of songs praise God for what you have leaned in the past few weeks about him.

WORD

You've probably heard the story of the mum whose little daughter came up to her one day and asked, 'Mummy, do all fairy stories begin "once upon a time"?' 'No dear', the mum replied. 'Some fairy stories begin "when I became a Christian, all my problems were over"!'.

Those who follow Jesus are not shielded from life's deepest problems. The disciples were about to face bereavement and personal failure. And we must still face sorrow, rejection and heartache. We see our loved ones die, we see relationships fail, and sometimes our children go their own way rather than God's way. In this passage, Jesus gives us some very practical help for facing life's crises. He doesn't answer all our questions, but he does give us tools to help us survive.

Read John 16:16-24

It is obvious that the disciples are confused and concerned about what Jesus has told them (v.16-18). Try to put yourself in their shoes — why do you think that are so upset?

In verses 19-22, Jesus doesn't answer their questions, but instead he gives them a promise.

- What is the promise?

- Why would it bring them joy in the middle of their grief and confusion?

- How can this incident help us when we have questions that seem to go unanswered?

In v.23-24, Jesus gives another promise — this time to do with prayer. Jesus would no longer be with them, they would no longer be able to ask him the sort of questions they had been asking.

- Instead, what were they to do?

- Does Jesus mean that God will give us anything we ask for? If not, what do his words mean?

To pray in the name of Jesus has a richness of meaning that is almost beyond our human grasp. The first implication is this: having come to know Jesus, we can pray as he would pray. We know something of his eternal relationship of love to the Father, and we know of his absolute obedience to the Father. We know that this meant for Jesus a servant ministry leading to the cross. We know of his exalted position as King, Prophet and Priest at the right hand of the Father. As the Holy Spirit teaches us this in increasing depth, we learn to pray to the Father imitating Jesus, his eternal Son. Encouraged by Jesus to pray as children to a father using the intimate language of the home, everything we ask will have as its purpose the deepening of our relationship of love and obedience with our Father.

Rob Shimwell in 'Knowing Christ'

WORK

Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
John 8:31-32

Which part of Jesus' teaching in John chapters 13-16 have you found most challenging?
Pray that the Lord will help you in that area.

Read John 16:25-33

- How would Jesus assurance of the Father's love help the disciples in the days just ahead of them?
- Have there been times when you have doubted that the Father loves you?
- How can this passage help someone in that position?

Jesus ends by telling his disciples that he has overcome the world.

- What does this mean?
- How can Jesus' words encourage us when we face problems and persecution?

CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him

an **E**vangelising Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear the
Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples, and
disciples must always be learners*