

That you may believe

LENT 2019
at



That you may believe

Lent is often seen as a time to give something up – often some luxury like chocolate. But the whole idea of giving up something for Lent is to enable us to devote ourselves more fully to the Lord. We all need time when we can think about our relationship with him, and ask questions like:

- Am I continuing to grow as a Christian?
- Do I love Jesus more now than I did 5 years ago, or has my love waned?
- Is my life shaped by my faith in Jesus, or are there areas of my life where my attitudes and actions are shaped by the world around?
- Am I more eager to share my faith now that I was 5 years ago, or have I lost the enthusiasm I once had?

The Apostle John wrote his gospel '*that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*' (John 20:31) It is through believing in Jesus that we have eternal life, it is through knowing him better and loving him more that we increasingly enjoy that life now.

That should be a great incentive to read John. So whether you have read and studied it in the past, or whether it is new to you, Lent 2019 would be a great time to do so. This booklet has a reading, with a suggested prayer topic, for each day in Lent. Each section is relatively small, so as to leave you time to think about it, and to ask God to speak to you through it. It runs through till the Wednesday after Easter, so as to include John's resurrection account.

It is a great thing to read and ponder God's word, but often you can get more from it by sharing it with others. You might want to share with someone else from church what you have learned – especially if God has challenged you. To encourage that sharing, our home-

groups during Lent will be based on these readings. There is no separate home-group booklet – at the start of each week when home-groups are due to meet, the booklet contains some questions and discussion starters for the home-groups, along with prayer suggestions. There are less questions than usual, so as to allow you to think more deeply about things, and hopefully there will have been things from your readings that you will want to talk and pray about.

Throughout Lent we will also have regular prayer times:

Monday, 7.30 – 8.00 am in the Prayer Room

Tuesday – 11.30 – 12.00 am in the Drop In

Thursday – 6.30 – 7.00 pm in Church

Wed 6th March (Ash Wednesday)

(9.30 am – communion service in church)

7.45 pm – communion service in the Parish Centre)

John 1:1-18 *'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'* (v.12) Thank God for the great privilege of being his child. Pray that through us, others would come to believe in Jesus.

Thurs 7th March

John 1:19-28 *'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."'* (v.23) Rather than drawing attention to himself, John pointed people to Jesus. Pray that we will have the same attitude, both as individuals and as a church.

Fri 8th March

John 1:29-42 *'The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.'* (v.41-42) Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus, and for the courage to take those opportunities.

Sat 9th March

John 1:43-51 *"Come and see," said Philip' (v.10)* Despite Nathanael's initial cynicism, Philip didn't give up, but invited Nathanael to meet Jesus for himself. Pray especially for people you know who are cynical about the gospel, that your witness will point them to Jesus.

Sun 10th March

John 2:1-12 *'What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.'* (v.11) Pray that you read John's gospel, you will see more of Jesus' glory and that your faith will be strengthened.

HOME GROUPS – Week beginning Mon 11th March

- What does John tell us about Jesus in John 1:1-5?
- How do these things help you to understand his greatness?

- What does he mean when he says that Jesus is the light? How has that light shone in your life?

- John tells us that everyone who believes in Jesus has the right to become a child of God (1:12). What difference has it made to your life knowing that you are a child of God?

- If you are now a child of God, in what ways have you been growing in family likeness – becoming more like Jesus?

- What might hinder that happening?

- In John 1:35-51 we are introduced to 5 people: John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael. How does each one respond to the testimony he hears about Jesus? Which can you most identify with?

- In John 2, when the groom's parents run out of wine for the wedding, Jesus' mother asks him to help (2:3) What do you think she expected him to do? (According to v.11, at this point Jesus had not performed any miracles.)

- How does what Jesus did there reveal his glory (v.12)?

- In chapter 1, John records 10 or more names or descriptions of Jesus. Which of those names has most significance for you?

- Spend time thinking about each name / description, then use them to express your worship.

Prayer:

John 1 records people hearing about Jesus, meeting him for themselves, then telling others.

- Thank God for those who shared the good news of Jesus with you.
- Pray for opportunities to share that with others. Are there specific people you would like to speak to about your faith?

Mon 11th March

John 2:13-25 *'Zeal for your house will consume me'* (v.17)

Pray that we will have a similar passion for God's house, which is now not a building, but the church – the body of Christ.

Tues 12th March (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 3:1-21 *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'* (v.16) Thank God for his amazing love to you, shown supremely in Jesus' death for you.

Wed 13th March

John 3:22-36 *'He must become greater; I must become less'* (v.30) Pray that in all that you do, and all that we do as a church, God will give us grace not to do it for ourselves, but for Jesus.

Thurs 14th March

John 4:1-26 *'Yet a time is now coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.'* (v.23) Pray that as a church, all our worship will be rooted in the truth of who Jesus is, and that through it the Spirit will open our eyes to who Jesus is.

Fri 15th March

John 4:27-42 *'Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.'* (v.39) Pray that you will have opportunities to tell others about what Jesus has done for you, and that through that others will be drawn to him.

Sat 16th March

John 4:43-54 *'The man took Jesus at his word.'* (v.35) Pray that as you read the Bible, even passages which challenge you and are hard to accept, you will be able to trust it, and that you will take Jesus at his word.

Sun 17th March

John 5:1-30 *'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.'* (v.24) Thank God for those who first shared the truth of Jesus with you. Thank him that through faith you have eternal life.

HOME GROUPS – Week beginning Mon 18th March

In John 2:13-17, Jesus drove out from the temple those who were using it inappropriately, because it was God's house. Today it is the church which fulfils this (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

- Are there things within Christ Church that Jesus might say are inappropriate? How can we make sure that as a fellowship we don't do these things?

John 3:18 says that anyone who does not believe in Jesus stands condemned.

- Do you find it easy to think of your non-Christian family and friends in that way?
- Does this verse inspire you to want to share your faith with others?
- Why do people hate the light of Jesus?
- Are there areas of your life where you don't want the light to shine? What can you do to address these?

John the Baptist said that Jesus must become greater, he must become less. He recognised Jesus as superior to him.

What are some ways in which you can demonstrate Jesus' superiority over all that you are and all that you have?

In John 4 Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he can give living water.

- What did he mean?
- Has Jesus been 'living water' to you? In what ways?

- After his encounter with the woman, what specific lessons does Jesus apply to his disciples (and to us)? (v.34-38)

Prayer:

- When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, it was affirming that conversion is God's work – only he can bring someone to new birth. But he may use us as midwives! There will be family and friends who you long to see come to faith – pray that God will be at work in their lives. Pray that he will equip you to help them when the time is right.
- Pray about the areas in your own lives where you are aware of the darkness, and where you struggle to bring them into the light of Jesus.

Mon 18th March

John 5:31-47 *'These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.'* (v.39) Pray for all those who preach and teach at Christ Church, that all our teaching will point people to Jesus and help us to grow in our knowledge and love of him.

Tues 19th March (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 6:1-24 *'But he said to them, "It is I, don't be afraid."'* (v.20) Pray for any you know who are in situations which make them anxious or afraid. Pray that they will be enabled to turn to Jesus and trust him with that situation.

Wed 20th March

John 6:25-71 *'All those the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never turn away.'* (v.37) Thank God for his promise that if you have come to Jesus, he will never turn you away.

Thurs 21st March

John 7:1-24 *'For even his brothers did not believe in him.'*

(v.5) Even those who were closest to Jesus didn't recognise who he was, which must have been hard for Jesus. Pray for any known to you who have close family members who actively reject the gospel.

Fri 22nd March

John 7:25-52 *'Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent".'* (v.29) Thank God that eternal life comes through believing in Jesus, and not from anything we do. Pray for any you know who still think that being right with God depends on something they do; pray that they will see that they need to trust in Jesus.

Sat 23rd March

John 8:1-30 Jesus said *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (v.12) Being disciples involves following Jesus, but all of us can have areas in which we struggle to leave the darkness of sin. Pray for grace to turn from the darkness and to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Sun 24th March

John 8:31-59 *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (v.31-32) Real freedom comes through trusting and obeying God's word. Pray about any areas of your life where you struggle to do that.

Mon 25th March

John 9:1-34 *"One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."* (v.25) We can be worried that if we speak to anyone about Jesus, we might not be able to answer their questions. This man didn't worry about that, he was just ready to tell others about the difference that Jesus had made to him personally. Pray that you will have opportunities to do the same.

HOME GROUPS – Week beginning Mon 25th March

In John 5:39-47, Jesus says that the people he was talking to made a big mistake by putting their confidence in obeying the Scriptures as rules, rather than seeing that they were to lead them to faith in Jesus.

- In what ways might we be tempted to allow rules to take the place of a living relationship with Jesus?
- What can you do to avoid slipping into the kind of religion that is outwardly pious but inwardly bankrupt?

Towards the end of John 6, the crowd start to find Jesus' teaching too challenging, and *'from that time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him'* (v.66).

- Are there parts of the Bible's teaching that you find hard to accept?
- Have you ever been tempted to turn your back on Jesus? Why? What stopped you (or – if you did turn away from him, what brought you back?)

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, large vats of water were poured out on the pavement of the temple court as a reminder of God's provision of water in the wilderness. How does this help to explain what Jesus says in John 7:37-39?

- To what extent has Jesus been a source of spiritual refreshment for you?

Jesus said that if you hold to his teaching, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32)

- In what ways has knowing the truth set you free?
- Are there still things that you feel trapped by? What can you do so that the truth can deal with those things?

Prayer:

- In John 6:44 Jesus says that no one can come to him unless the Father draws them. Thanks God for drawing you to Jesus, and for giving you eternal life through him.
- Quietly ask God to bring the refreshment of living water to your heart and mind.
- Do you feel in danger of turning back from following Jesus? Ask him to help you to go on trusting Jesus.
- Do you know anyone in that position? Pray for them, and ask God to equip you to help them stay true to Jesus.

Tues 26th March (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 9:35-41 *'Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."' (v.39)* Jesus' words judge us – when we depend on our own wisdom, it shows that we are really blind, when we depend on him and his truth, it shows that we can see. Pray that you won't be blind in that way, and pray for others you know who are blind to the truth about Jesus.

Wed 27th March

John 10:1-21 *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me and I lay down my life for the sheep." (v.14)* That God for his love for you – that Jesus laid down his life for you.

Thurs 28th March

John 10:22-42 *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." (v.27)* Pray that you will be strengthened to listen to Jesus' voice – to trust his word – and to follow him even if it means being out of step with family, friends and colleagues.

Fri 29th March

John 11:1-16 *'Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days.'* (v.5-6) It was because he loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, that he didn't do what his disciples expected. Pray that when God doesn't do what you want or expect, and when your prayers seem unanswered, you will still be able to trust that he is acting out of love for you. .

Sat 30th March

John 11:17-44 *'Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."' (v.25)* Thank God that eternal life comes from trusting in Jesus. Pray for any you know who are trusting in anything else for eternal life.

Sun 31st March

John 11:45-57 *'He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.'* (v.51-52) Thank God that Jesus died for you. Pray that as Jesus died to make us one, we will experience and show that unity within the life of Christ Church.

HOME GROUPS don't meet week beginning Mon 1st April – Prayer meetings on Wed 3rd April

Mon 1st April

John 12:1-11 *'Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.'* (v.3) Pray that we would have that extravagant costly passion for Jesus.

Tues 2nd April (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 12:12-36 *"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life"* (v.25) Pray that God will help you to have right priorities in this life, and not to love the world in a way which alienates you from God's good eternal purposes for you.

Wed 3rd April

John 12:37-50 *"The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me"* (v.45) Thank God that because of Jesus we can know what God is like. Thank God for all that Jesus reveals about God's character, and pray that he will help you to see him more clearly as you read about Jesus.

Thurs 4th April

John 13:1-17 *"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."* (v.14) Pray for opportunities to serve others in Christ Church in that sacrificial way.

Fri 5th April

John 13:18-38 *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (v.35) Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to love the other members of Christ Church in a way that will demonstrate to others that you are following Jesus.

Sat 6th April

John 14:1-14 *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (v.6) Our community is full of people who think that they don't need Jesus. Pray for opportunities to point them to their need. Pray that as a church we will be faithful in standing up for the uniqueness of Jesus as the only way to God.

Sun 7th April

John 14:15-31 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (v.27) There are many things in this life that can trouble us, and the world has many ways of trying to deal with those issues. Pray for any you know who are troubled – that God will help them to look to Jesus and find the peace that only he can give.

HOME GROUPS – Week beginning Mon 8th April

In John 12:1-11, we read of Mary's extravagant acts of devotion.

- How do you think you would you have reacted if you had been there?
- Do you feel attracted by her devotion to Jesus, or does it make you feel uncomfortable?
- What does this passage show us we can expect if we are extravagant in our devotion to Jesus (both negative and positive)?

In John 13, after washing his disciples' feet, Jesus asked them *'Do you understand what I have done for you?'* (v.12).

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

In John 14, 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)

- So what does Jesus washing his disciples' feet tell you about God's attitude to you?

Several times in John 13-17, Jesus stresses the need for his followers to love each other.

- Why do we find it difficult to love?
- How can we deepen our unity and love for others in Christ Church?
- In John 14:15-31, in what ways does Jesus describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

- Have you experienced the Spirit working in these ways in your life?
- What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus and his love and presence in our lives (John 14:15-24)?

Prayer:

- 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.
- One of the most important (and sometimes most difficult) things we can do for one another is to pray for each other. Spend some time doing that.

Mon 8th April

John 15:1-8 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (v.5)* Pray that God would help you to remain in Jesus and not to be drawn away from him.

Tues 9th April (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 15:9-17 *"My command is this: love each other as I have loved you." (v.12)* Jesus' love for his disciples was costly. Pray that as we approach Easter you will understand more of Jesus' love for you, and that God will help you to see the other members of Christ Church with his eyes, and to love them as he has loved you.

Wed 10th April

John 15:18-27 *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." (v.18)* Pray for any you know you are facing persecution because of their faith in Jesus.

Thurs 11th April

John 16:1-15 *"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth." (v.13)* Thank God for the Bible, through which the Holy Spirit guides us. Pray for all those at Christ Church who teach the Bible – that all they do will be faithful to God's word and inspired by his Spirit.

Fri 12th April

John 16:16-33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (v.33)* Pray about any things that are causing you trouble. Ask God to give you his peace in those situations.

Sat 13th April

John 17:1-19 *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (v.17) Pray that as you study the Bible, God will be making you more like Jesus.*

Sun 14th April

John 17:20-26 *“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” (v.21) Whilst it is always good to apply this to the unity of the church around the world, it is important to apply it to ourselves at Christ Church. Pray that God will helping us to grow in unity.*

HOME GROUPS don't meet week beginning

Mon 15th April

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John 18:1-14 *‘Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”’ (v.4) Thank God that Jesus went willingly to his arrest, trial and crucifixion. Thank him that through that your salvation is secure.*

Tues 16th April (7.30 am Prayer in Parish Centre)

John 18:15-27 *“You aren't one of that man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter. He replied, “I am not.” (v.17) Pray for courage so that if you get the opportunity to speak about Jesus, you won't respond like Peter.*

Wed 17th April

John 18:28-40 *“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (v.37) Pray that you would always listen to and trust what Jesus says in his word. Pray that God would be changing others you know so that they would recognise Jesus' words as the truth.*

Thurs 18th April (6.30 pm Passover Meal)

John 19:1-16 *“Here is your king.” (v.14) Pray that God would help you to recognise Jesus as King over every area of your life. Pray that your witness will help others to recognise him as their King.*

Fri 19th April (11.00 am – Joint Service

at Moreton Methodist Church

2.00 pm – An hour at the cross – in church)

John 19:16-37 – *‘When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.”’ (v.30) Thank God that on the cross Jesus did everything necessary for your salvation, that there will never be anything else needed, because ‘it is finished.’ Pray that you will understand more of what that means not only for your forgiveness*

but also for your day to day life, and that God will enable you to increasingly live out that salvation.

Sat 20th April

John 19:38-42 The first Easter Saturday was a time of despair for Jesus' disciples. Pray for any you know who are despairing at the moment.

Sun 21st April

John 20:1-18 *'Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!"' (v.18)* We might not be eye-witnesses of the resurrection, but we have the witness of the apostles, and we know the transformation that Jesus' resurrection brings. Pray that others will see that in us over the coming weeks.

HOME GROUPS – Week beginning Mon 22nd April

In John 15:5, Jesus said: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

- What does it mean to remain in him?

- What things might separate us from him, and what can we do to remain in him?

- What does the fact that we can do nothing without him tell you about the Christian life?

- In John 18, Peter 3 times denied knowing Jesus.
- Have there been times in your life when you have hidden your faith?

- What can you do to more clearly express your loyalty to Jesus when you around other people?

- What aspect of Jesus' death has made the biggest impression on you? Why?

- In 20:30-31, John tells us why he has written his gospel.
- Of all that you have read about Jesus during Lent, what has spoken to you most clearly?

- John says that it is as we believe that we have life in Jesus' name. What has this meant for you personally?

Prayer:

- Thank Jesus for enduring the cross so that you could be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with the Father.
- Have there been situations where, Like Peter, you are aware of having failed Jesus? In the quiet, confess those, then pray for strength for one another to be faithful in following Jesus, even in difficult situations.

Mon 22nd April

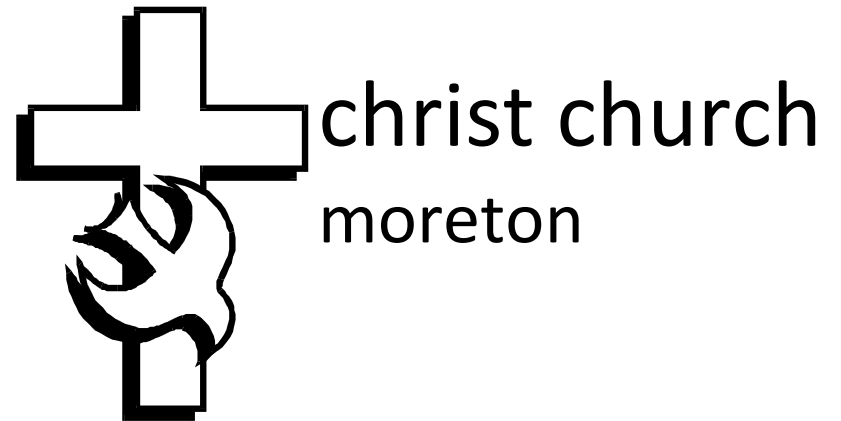
John 20:19-30 *'Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."' (v.21)* We are now those who are sent. Pray that as God sends you into the world, there will be opportunities to witness to him.

Tues 23rd April

John 21:1-14 *'Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.'* (v.13) When his disciples were confused and disillusioned, Jesus came to them and restored them. Pray for any Christian you know who feel like that – that the risen Lord Jesus would meet with them and restore their faith.

Wed 24th April

John 21:15-25 *'Jesus answered, "If I want him to stay alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."' (v.22)* As we end John's gospel, that is the challenge to each of us. You must follow me. Pray that God will help you to do that faithfully.



making disciples

growing disciples

being disciples