



christ church
moreton

The 40 days

CHRIST CHURCH
Home Groups
Spring 2023

w/b Mon 24 April	Study 1 – on the Road
w/b Mon 1 May	Prayer meeting
w/b Mon 8 May	Study 2 – I don't believe it
w/b Mon 15 May	Free Week
w/b Mon 22 May	Study 3 – The most important thing
w/b Mon 29 May	Half Term
w/b Mon 5 June	Prayer meeting
w/b Mon 12 June	Study 4 – He ascended into Heaven
w/b Mon 19 June	Free Week
w/b Mon 26 June	Social Week?

The 40 days

Christchurch home groups spring 2023

On the first Easter Day, Jesus rose from the dead.

For Jesus' first disciples, His resurrection was a life transforming event. But it was also one that they had to struggle to understand. For 40 days after his resurrection Jesus met with them and taught them, preparing them to go out and tell the world about him.

This short series of home-group notes follows the disciples through those 40 days, so that we too can learn more about what it means to be disciples, ready to share the good news that Jesus is alive.

These notes are adapted from homegroup notes that Graham provided to us in 2015.

At the end of each study, we would ask that you take some time to pray for the appointment of the new Rector. The topics given are based upon where we expect to be in the recruitment process, but at the time of writing that timetable has not yet been finalised. However, prayer is never wasted. We will keep the church updated as to where we are in the process.

1. ON THE ROAD

WELCOME

What is the biggest surprise you have ever had?

WORSHIP

Colossians 1:15-20 is wonderful picture of how great the Lord Jesus is. Read it together as an act of praise, then continue to praise God for the things this passage tells you about Jesus.

WORD

From the earliest days of the church, Easter has always been the greatest Christian festival. The early Christians, who were all Jews, would have been used to meeting for worship on Saturday (the Sabbath), but very soon they started meeting on Sunday, because that was the day that Jesus rose. And it seems that long before Christians started making anything big of the celebration of Christmas, the annual celebration of Jesus' resurrection was the high point of the year.

But for the disciples, it must have been very different. The first Easter was a time of confusion – following hot on the heels of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and then his arrest and crucifixion. Even though Jesus had told them that he would rise again, that was something that they just didn't understand, and they certainly didn't expect to see Jesus alive again, in fact the reports of the empty tomb just added to their confusion. But gradually it did dawn on them, - the impossible had happened.

Read Luke 24:13-27

- Why were the disciples disappointed? (Other than the obvious disappointment of losing their master.)
- Why did they fail to understand what had taken place?
- What two things did the scriptures predict about the Christ?
- How do these relate to what happened in Jerusalem?
- What three things had happened that amazed the disciples?

Read Luke 24:28-35

- How did the disciples come to recognise Jesus? What part did the Scriptures play in that?
- What do you think it means that their hearts were “burning within them”, as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them? Has that ever happened to you?

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12

This passage was written centuries before Jesus was born, but it is still about him. What do each of these sections tell you about Jesus:

- Isaiah 52:13-15
- Isaiah 53:1-3
- Isaiah 53:4-6
- Isaiah 53:7-9
- Isaiah 53:10-12

Some Christians seem to think that all we really need is the New Testament. But passages like this one are vital if we are to really grasp who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

Read Luke 24:36-49

In verse 34, all the disciples were aware that Jesus had risen. But now, in verse 37, just moments later, when Jesus appears they think it is a ghost.

- What does Jesus do to convince them that he really is alive?
- What was it that Jesus wanted his disciples to understand?
- What task did he give them (v48)?
- How does all of this apply to us as disciples today?

WORK

“You are witnesses of these things.” Luke 24:48. Although we aren’t eyewitnesses of the resurrection, we do have the witness of the disciples recorded in the Bible. We should also have our personal experience of the difference which Jesus has made to us.

Who are the people you would like to be able to share the news of Jesus with? As a group, can you covenant to pray for these people, and to pray for one another, for opportunities to speak to these people?

What is it that you would want to say to them? (It always helps to... *‘be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.’* 1 Peter 3:15)

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- Thank God for those who have applied and for wisdom for the selection panel choosing who to interview.

2. I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

WELCOME

If you go on holiday, do you prefer to go back to somewhere you have been before, or to go somewhere new?

WORSHIP

Psalm 73 gives us the words of a believer who is struggling with doubt – his feet had almost slipped – but when he turns his eyes to the Lord and the hope that he has in him, that doubt is resolved. Use the psalm together.

WORD

The disciples were commissioned by Jesus to be witnesses – to be ready to tell other about his death and resurrection. But before they could do that, they needed to be sure about it themselves. You can never really tell someone else about something if you don't understand it, or if you aren't really convinced about it yourself. Luke tells us at the start of Acts that: *'after his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.'* Acts 1:3. The 40 days Jesus spent with his disciples after the resurrection were not just times for teaching them, it was time to allow them to be completely convinced that Jesus had risen.

Read John 20:1-18

John identifies three witnesses to the empty tomb: Mary Magdalene, Peter and 'the other disciple' (who was most likely John himself.)

- What important details do we learn from each one?

It has been said that the reason the stone was rolled away was not so that Jesus could come out, but so that the disciples could see in, and know that the tomb was empty.

- Why is it so important to prove that the tomb was empty?
- Why do you think that Mary didn't immediately recognise Jesus (v10-15)?
- After she does recognise him, what impresses you most about their encounter?

Read John 20:19-31

When Jesus appears to his disciples,

- He shows them his hands and his side,
 - He greets them with his peace,
 - He blesses them with the Holy Spirit.
-
- Why do you think that each of these is significant?
 - Which seems most important to you?
 - Finally, Jesus appears to Thomas. How does Jesus' meeting with Thomas help us to deal with the doubts that we and other people might have about the Christian message?
 - How does Thomas' exclamation: *'My Lord and my God'* (v28) make a good climax to John's gospel?
 - Is believing that Jesus rose from the dead as important as believing that he died on the cross for our sins?

WORK

Mary Magdalene wanted to hold onto Jesus, but Jesus sent her on a mission to tell others that he was alive. Similarly today, while we might want to stay holding onto Jesus, our mission is to go and tell others about him.

This is something that all of us should be involved in. Studies have found that despite big differences in the way in which people come to faith, one of the things that linked most of them was the importance of other people. The research showed that you didn't have to be a minister, and elder or a theology graduate to play this role. Everyone – 'our son ... my sister ... my gran ... my ex-girlfriend ... this family I teach ... my wife's colleague' – did their part.

Who is the risen Jesus sending you to? Following on from last week, pray together for opportunities this week to say something to them about Jesus.

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- This week the panel will shortlist the applications please pray for the interview panel as they meet this week.

3. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

WELCOME

What is the most important item in your house? Why?

WORSHIP

When Thomas finally met the risen Jesus, his response was to say: '*My Lord and my God.*' Jesus is Lord and God of the whole universe, but he is also 'my Lord and my God' personally. Praise him that this is true for you, and for what it means to you to know Jesus.

WORD

- Many 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 had failed Jesus miserably. He promised to give up his life if necessary to protect Jesus, but then, a few hours later, denied even knowing him. The question that must have been on Peter's heart was: would Jesus ever trust him again? It is a question that many Christians face at some time, when they know that they have let the Lord down.

Read John 21:1-14

- What do you think is the significance of Peter's decision to return to fishing?
- What do you think Jesus was trying to show the disciples by allowing them to catch such a large number of fish? (See Luke 5:4-11)

When Peter hears that 'it is the Lord', he jumps into the water and begins swimming ahead of the boat.

- What does that tell you about Peter and his relationship with Jesus?
- How would you have responded if you had denied Jesus just a few days earlier?
- Could Peter have ever been the same if Jesus had not returned from death and met with him?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-20

- What, according to Paul, are the essential elements of the gospel (v3-5)?
- Why is each important?
- If there is not the resurrection, what are the consequences for us?
- Could the Christian faith still exist if Jesus' body was found still in its tomb?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-34

- How should belief or disbelief in the resurrection affect a person's lifestyle?
- How can your lifestyle affect your witness to a world which is hooked on 'eating and drinking'?

WORK

Have someone in the group read John 21:15-19 slowly. As they do, allow what Jesus says to Peter to also be said to you.

'Do you truly love me?'

'Take care of my sheep.'

'You must follow me.'

The three things have to link together. Unless we love the Lord, we won't be able to serve him, or to grow to love him more. And if we are following him, he has work for us to do.

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- Pray for the candidates who have been chosen for interview that God will enable them to prepare well.
- Pray for the church, for God's protection over us and God's peace within us and between us.

4. HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

WELCOME

What do you think is your greatest achievement? What makes it so special to you?

WORSHIP

Hebrews 4:16 tells us that through Jesus we can approach God with confidence, and that we can 'receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.'

Praise God for any times when you have been aware of his help in difficult situations.

WORD

Thursday 18th May was Ascension Day. I guess it would be fair to say that of all the great Christian festivals, the Ascension is the most neglected. We celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas (though sometimes it is a struggle to remember what Christmas is really about!), we celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but the Ascension is all too easily forgotten.

That is sad, because it is the Ascension that brings the earthly ministry of Jesus to an end. Jesus is no longer teaching and healing in Galilee and Judea, he no longer appears to his disciples as he did before the resurrection. But the story of Jesus is not ended – before he ascended, he commissioned his disciples to proclaim him to the world.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

When Jesus rose from the dead, although his appearance had changed, one thing was still the same – he still bore the scars of his crucifixion. They were a sign that Jesus didn't somehow stop being human when he rose and ascended.

- Think of some of the experiences that Jesus had of temptation, of rejection, of abandonment. How does knowing that Jesus has experienced these things help you to pray?
- Jesus '*was tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.*' Why might Jesus' victory over temptation encourage us to come to him for help?

Read Hebrews 7:23-28

Admittedly Hebrews isn't the easiest book in the New Testament – largely because of its Jewish background, with all its references to priests and sacrifices.

- What do you think it means when it says that Jesus is '*able to save completely those who come to God through him?*'

The writer tells us that although Jesus' work of salvation is finished, he still lives to intercede for us. It is a reminder for us that though we are saved, we are still sinful. We still need help if we are to persevere; we need help to grow in grace.

- How might knowing that, no matter how many times we do fail, Jesus is interceding for us – that he is at work for us – help us to persevere as Christians?

Read Luke 24:36-53

- Before he ascended, Jesus left his disciples with a great mission. What did this mission involve (v47-48)?
- Why is the forgiveness of sins so important?
- Why did the disciples have to wait in Jerusalem? Why could they not be effective witnesses straight away?

We no longer have to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit – since Pentecost he is given to each person who repents and is forgiven. But the mission is still the same – we have been empowered to be witnesses.

WORK

Jesus sent his disciples 'to all nations', and still his people travel to different parts of the world to share the good news. If you know of anyone who is serving God overseas, tell the rest of the group about them so that you can all pray for them.

PRAY FOR THE NEW RECTOR

- In the next few weeks, the open day and interviews will take place please be praying for discernment for the panel.
- Pray for safety in travel for the candidates and for peace and confidence on the day of the interview.