

JOHN 1-11

In Him was life, and that life was the light to all mankind

JOHN I: LIFE & MINISTRY (12 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION APPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

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THE SMALL PRINT

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®

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Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure
Spring 2019*

INTRODUCING JOHN'S GOSPEL

I really like Leon Morris's comparison about John's Gospel that it is a "pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim" (The Gospel according to John, Grand Rapids). Whilst being incredibly accessible John's gospel is also a rich treasure trove from which we will never tire. John says at the end of his gospel that he was written it so that we may believe in Jesus and have life in His name:

*³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written 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 20:30-31***

The gospel does not identify its author but refers regularly to the disciple who Jesus loved (13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 24 & 21:7). We know that John, the son of Zebedee was one of Jesus' inner circle among the disciples. The fact that he is not mentioned by name gives strong evidence that he was the author of this gospel. Historically of course the gospel has been attributed to John who was a key eye witness and certainly would have had the kind of perspective required to write in the way that he does!

The dating of John's gospel places it somewhere between 85-95AD (the traditional view) and sometime between 50 and 70AD (more modern view). John 5:2 says there *is* a pool near the Sheep Gate but given that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD this may give some weight towards an earlier date although as you would expect there are counter arguments on that as well. Chances are that John wrote the gospel from the major city of Ephesus (modern day Turkey) and he was writing to both Jews and Gentiles.

The central theme of John's gospel is of course Jesus Christ. Indeed the gospel begins by telling us that Jesus is *the Word* and *the Word* is God (1:1, 14). John records what he calls *signs* as well as a host of *witnesses* to help us to see that Jesus is the Promised Messiah. There is also a huge theme centred on the trinity. We see Jesus talking about He is working with the Father and the Spirit to reveal the Godhead to a needy world and bring Salvation. John's gospel is clear that Jesus' death and resurrection are the foundations of our salvation. Eternal life can be ours through believing in Jesus Christ and all that He has done on our behalf. John's gospel is also very mission-orientated as John calls us to continue the mission of Jesus through our everyday interactions with those around us.

I have divided my studies in John's gospel into two sections: John 1-11 and John 12-21. There is a verse in John 16:28 which sums up well these two sections of John:

*I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.' **John 16:28***

Firstly in John 1-11 we see Jesus described (and describing Himself) as the Christ. He is the Son of God sent by His Father to reveal Himself to us. Then in John 12-21 we see the emphasis on Jesus' return to His Father. In this first series we move from John 1 (describing the incarnation) into the essence of Jesus' ministry. We see key encounters with people like Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman and the blind man. This first volume also includes all seven *signs* (miracles). These are significant events which come with clear teaching points or meanings:

1. Changing water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11)
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-15)
4. Feeding the five thousand (John 6:5-14)
5. Jesus walking on water (John 6:16-24)
6. Healing the man blind from birth (John 9:1-7)
7. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

You will probably also be familiar with the so called *I Am* statements. Back in Exodus God met Moses through a burning bush. God told Moses that He was *I Am*. John makes use of this by illustrating His points by using the *I Am* statements of Jesus to show who Jesus was. John helps us see how Jesus was the embodiment of things such as Bread, Light, Gate, Good Shepherd, Resurrection & Life, Way, Truth & Life and Vine. Here are the seven *I Am* statements

1. I am the Bread of Life (John 6:35)
2. I am the Light of the World (John 8:12)
3. I am the Gate (John 10:9)
4. I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25-26)
6. I am the Way, the Truth and the life (John 14:6)
7. I am the Vine (John 15:5)

As well as the seven *signs*, five of these statements also come in this first section of John's gospel! This incredible gospel is loaded with inexhaustible depth. My prayer is that as you work through these studies you will begin to understand that Jesus really is the Messiah and that He really did come so all of us could have life to the full (John 10:10).

*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. **John 3:16***

Every blessing,

Steve McClure
Spring 2019

STUDY 1 – JOHN 1:1-18 – THE WORD BECAME FLESH

INTRODUCTION: This first section is really the prologue to John's Gospel and shows us that the Word (Jesus) is God. Though He created the universe, He took on human flesh and stepped into our world to make God knowable as we look at Him. He has come in grace to bring us into God's family.

SETTING THE SCENE: If you were writing an account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ where would you start? Contrast the beginning few verses of John's gospel with that of the other gospel accounts: what is similar and what is different?

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THE WORD (v1-5): Why do you think that John calls Jesus (see v14 & 17) *the Word (Logos)*? What does this description convey about Him? How can it be that the Word was both *with* God and *was* God? How do these verses point us back to God's creative work in Genesis 1:1-3?

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John describes the Word (Jesus) as *the light* and *the life* (v4-5): what is he seeking to convey about what He came to do? What is the significance of light and darkness in the Bible? How does that help us to understand why John describes Jesus as the *light of all mankind* (v4)?

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WITNESS TO THE LIGHT (v6-8): John refers to another John (the Baptist) in this passage: how and what does John the Baptist testify about Jesus (see also v19-34)?

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RECEIVING CHRIST (v9-13): What does it mean to recognise (v10) and receive (v11) the Lord Jesus? Why do you think that the majority rejected Jesus? What truths about Jesus should have led that majority to *receive Him*? What does John mean by those who have *received Jesus* and *believed in His name* (v12)? What are the results of *receiving* Jesus (v13)?

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GLORY, GRACE AND TRUTH (v14-17): What is so astounding that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us (v14)? How do we see Grace and Truth in the life and ministry of Jesus (v14, 17)? Specifically how have we received (and do we receive) *grace in place of grace* (v16)? What would you say is the relationship between glory, grace and truth?

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THE FATHER & THE SON (v18): This is an astonishing statement about the relationship between the Father and the Son: how does this emphasise the purpose John has in writing his gospel? What difference should the revelation of the truth of *who Jesus really is* make to our daily lives?

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DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS: How do the different descriptions used for Jesus help us to understand who He is: i.e. the Word (v1-3), the light of all mankind (v4), the true Light (v9) and the one and only Son (v14, 18)? What is your experience of Jesus as these things?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What is different in our lives because we have received the light and life of Jesus? How could we experience more of the light and life of Jesus in our lives every day?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: The only logical and right response to a passage like this is to worship God: we have seen something of just how much Jesus is worthy of our worship! Spend some time praising God and asking Him to help you understand more about who Jesus is.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 1:14

STUDY 2 – JOHN 1:19-51 – TESTIFYING TO THE WORD

INTRODUCTION: This passage is all about testimony about Jesus and includes a whole bunch of titles ascribed to Him. It is also about following Jesus as He begins to call the disciples to follow Him. We are left with a challenge: will we also respond like the disciples and follow Jesus.

SETTING THE SCENE: What kind of people do those in our spheres of influence want to follow and why? Who are the people that you find yourself following and why? What do you think it was that made Jesus such a compelling person to follow?

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JOHN'S TESTIMONY (v19-34): John begins the narrative of his gospel with the testimony of John the Baptist: how does he describe himself in these verses (see also v6-8)? In contrast how does he describe Jesus? What is the significance of John's declaration that Jesus is the *Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world* (v29) and *God's chosen One* (v34)?

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JOHN'S PURPOSE: What do you think makes John so certain about his own purpose and ministry? In what ways are our message and ministry similar to and different from the ministry of John the Baptist?

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BAPTISM AND BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT (26-34): John was baptising the Jews and preaching a message about repentance and cleansing. There was an expectation that the Messiah would come to baptise (v25, Ezekiel 36:250-27 & Zech13:1). What baptism and what is its significance? Why was this so important in bringing God's people back to God? What role does baptism play today?

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In contrast what does it mean to be *baptised with the Holy Spirit* (v33) and how is it different to water baptism? How should we understand the usage of this phrase in a passage like this (there are 7 direct NT references in Matt 3:11-12, Mark 1:4-8, Luke 3:15-18, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 11:15-18 and 1 Cor 12:13)?

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COME AND SEE (v35-39): Why do you think that Jesus' invitation to 'come and see' (v39) was so enticing to these disciples of John the Baptist? What is the background to the title John gives Jesus of the 'lamb of God' (v36)? How crazy was it to drop everything and go spend the day with Jesus?

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ANDREWS TESTIMONY (v40-42): Why do you think that Andrew was so eager to go and tell his brother, Peter? What does his description of Jesus as the Messiah tell us about what he now believes about Jesus? What is the big deal with the change of name to Cephas (meaning *Rock*)?

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COME AND FOLLOW (v43-51): The call to Philip is to *follow Jesus* (v43) and he in turn invites Nathanael to *come and see* (v46). What do you think Jesus deals with Nathanael quite differently to the others? What does Jesus mean when he tells Nathanael that he will see *greater things* (v50) which He then goes on to spell out in v51?

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DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER: What does it mean for you to follow Jesus today, and what might it mean for you in the future? What are the biggest challenges for you to follow Jesus right now?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the encouragement of this passage to follow Jesus who is the *Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*. Pray that we too would have the motivation of Andrew or Peter to share Jesus with our friends.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 1:29

STUDY 3 – JOHN 2 – WATER INTO WINE

INTRODUCTION: In this study we see Jesus first sign (turning water to wine) and then hear how He will be the new temple. Both point to a new era in God's plans of abundant life and encountering God in Jesus himself.

SETTING THE SCENE: What is a *sign* and what is its purpose? John is writing in this first part of His Gospel to show that Jesus is the Christ: what convinced you about the identity of Jesus (think about truths, signs or experiences)?

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WATER INTO WINE (v1-12): This is the first of the seven 'signs' recorded by John from the many miracles Jesus performed: what can we infer from the fact that this miracle was the first of Jesus' *signs*? What exactly does this miracle point to?

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NO MORE WINE (v1-3): Why was running out of wine a problem (v3) and what do you think Mary (Jesus' mother) expects Jesus to do (see v11)? What is suggested about the relationship between Jesus and Mary by this incident?

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MY HOUR HAS NOT YET COME (v4-5): On several occasions Jesus refers to *His hour* or *His time* (see John 2:4, 7:8 & 17:1): why do you think Jesus says this here and how does He later develop this theme? Why does this not deter Mary from ordering the servants to do whatever he tells them?

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REVEALING HIS GLORY (v7-10): What amazes you about the miracle that Jesus performed here (note the jars and the effort required to fill them)? What do you imagine the servants made of this seemingly crazy instruction? Why was it such a big deal that the best wine had come out last?

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REVEALING HIS GLORY (v11-12): John says the purpose of this miracle was not to save face but to reveal Jesus' glory: in what ways do we see that to be true in these verses for the different people in the story? How have you experienced the revelation of Jesus' glory?

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CLEARING THE TEMPLE COURTS (v13-25): This second incident appears to be in sharp contrast with the first miracle: why might John have recorded the two things, one after the other (NB: the synoptic gospels place this event towards the end of Jesus' ministry)?

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MY FATHER'S HOUSE (v13-17): What motivates Jesus to take this strong (and uncharacteristic) response to what was happening in the temple? What do his actions and His claim this was His Father house tell us about Jesus' identity?

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DESTROY THIS TEMPLE (v18-25): How did the Jews respond to Jesus' somewhat cryptic words about destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days? Why did it take the disciples so long to understand what Jesus was really saying here? To what extent do *signs* produce faith?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: We've seen Jesus' first miracle and the first prophecy about his own death: as you consider these events what is your conviction about the power of Jesus?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God together that the one who can turn water into wine is also the one who died and rose again three days later so that we could know and be made right with His Father. Pray for those around you, that they would also come to be convinced about who Jesus is.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 2:11

STUDY 4 – JOHN 3 – NICODEMUS AND NEW BIRTH

INTRODUCTION: This study focus' on Jesus' night time encounter with Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. John's main point here is about the role of the Spirit in giving us new birth so that we might accept Jesus' offer of eternal life for all who believe in Him.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why is the good news about Jesus so counter-cultural? What makes it so hard for us to trust in what Jesus has done for us rather than what we are able to do ourselves?

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WHO IS NICODEMUS (v1-2): What do we learn here about Nicodemus? What is surprising about Nicodemus' visit to Jesus? What do you think was his purpose in coming to Jesus (think back to 2:13-25)? Who do you think Nicodemus thought Jesus was at this point?

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WHAT THE SPIRIT DOES (v3-10): How do you respond to Jesus' image of being *born again* (literally born from above) which He uses to describe how a person may see the kingdom of God (v3)? Why is *new birth* so essential for us to enter God's Kingdom? Why it so hard for us to accept that we cannot achieve this ourselves?

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What does Jesus mean when He says we need to be *born of water and the Spirit* (v5)? Why is Nicodemus so astonished by Jesus' likening the Spirit to the wind which blows wherever it pleases (v6-9)? Why in turn is Jesus so astonished by his lack of understanding (v10)?

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WHAT THE SON SAYS (v11-15, NUMBERS 21:4-9): What is Jesus claiming about Himself in these verses? When he speaks of 'we' and 'our' in v11 to whom is He referring? How does Jesus use the story of Moses lifting up the snake in the desert to illustrate the true nature of saving faith (v14-15)?

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WHAT THE FATHER OFFERS (v16-21): These well-known verses summarise God's plan of salvation: what is the basis on which mankind is condemned? How does Jesus describe God's amazing offer to a fallen mankind? With such a great offer open to us why do so many hate the light (v19-21)? What might it mean for us to step in to the light (see also John 1:6-9)?

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WHAT JOHN TESTIFIES (v22-38): What does John the Baptist believe about His own ministry and that of Jesus (v22-30)? What might he mean by the phrase *He must become greater; I must become less* (v30)? In v31-36 who is talking? Is it still John the Baptist or could this be John commenting on Jesus' words to Nicodemus? What do these words say about who Jesus is?

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IMPACT OF ENCOUNTERING JESUS (JOHN 7:50 & 19:39): What would you say was the impact of this encounter with Jesus? What can we imply from the two later passages in John in this respect?

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DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER: In what ways does this chapter help you to see your own need for God to act through His Spirit in order for you to believe? How might you respond in worship?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Take time to worship and to thank God for the love He has demonstrated to you through the Lord Jesus Christ. Take time to pray for those you know who are still in the darkness and need to come to the Light. Pray that God would continue to transform your lives.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 3:16

STUDY 5 – JOHN 4 – THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND LIVING WATER

INTRODUCTION: In contrast to Nicodemus (who Jesus told needed to be born again in John 3) the woman Jesus meets at the well is the last person we might expect to have a relationship with Jesus. We see how a woman who had always sought satisfaction through ‘men’ now found it in Jesus.

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you define *prejudice* and why is it so hard to move past it? What would be good examples of modern day prejudices between individuals and/or people groups?

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SAMARIA AND SAMARITANS (v4-5): The direct route to Galilee from Judea was north through Samaria; often strict Jews would go the long way round (crossing the Jordan) to avoid defilement. What do we know about the history of Samaria and the reasons for such prejudice?

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A SURPRISING ENCOUNTER (v6-9): What is surprising about the encounter that Jesus has with the woman at the well in the heat of the day? What present day situations would arouse the same racial, religious and sexual prejudices? (NB: the average 35 year old today has had 17 sexual partners)

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The Samaritan woman appears shocked and confused by Jesus’ request for a drink (v7); what do you think would have been going through her mind at this point? What does this tell us about Jesus?

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AN OFFER OF LIVING WATER (v10-15): What do you think Jesus means by *living water*? Where and how can we get this living water (see also John 7:37-39)? What can we learn here about how to move from an everyday conversation to spiritual matters? What kinds of things are your friends craving?

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THE HEART OF THE MATTER (v16-18): Why do you think that Jesus brings up the woman's long list of past marriages and her present adulterous relationship? To what extent might it be appropriate for us to confront the sin we see in the lives of the people we are living and working with?

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TRUE WORSHIPPERS (v19-26): How does Jesus respond when the woman suddenly changes the topic of conversation and starts talking about places of worship? What do you think it means to worship in 'spirit and in truth'? What kind of worshipper are you and why? What do we learn about who Jesus really is from this encounter with the woman (see also v10, 12, 14, 16-18-19, 29-30, 41-42)?

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IMPACTING OTHERS (v27-42): What impact did Jesus' revelation of truth about His identity have on the woman and her friends? What principles can we draw from this passage and apply to evangelism in our context? How does or doesn't a passage like this motivate / encourage you to reach out to your friends? In your experience do you see that the harvest-fields are ripe for harvest (v37)?

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THE SECOND SIGN (v54-54): What impresses you about the faith of the Royal Official? What is wrong with the kind of faith based on signs and wonders (v48)? How did this second sign point to God, reveal more about Jesus and demand a response?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What stands out to you from this story either regarding Jesus: who He is and why he came or regarding the people He encountered and how they were drawn to Jesus?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray for one another as you tell your story of what God is doing in your life. Pray specifically for two or three friends who you want to see transformed by the gospel.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 4:10

STUDY 6 – JOHN 5 – FACING OPPOSITION

INTRODUCTION: In chapter 5 Jesus performs His third sign as He heals an invalid who was lying near to the Pool of Bethesda hoping to get healed. Because the miracle happens on the Sabbath (and was prohibited under Jewish law) a long and detailed debate begins between Jesus and the Jews.

SETTING THE SCENE: To what extent do you think that signs (miracles) would convince your friends to believe in Jesus? Why might a deep commitment to our own rules and/or ways of doing things prevent us seeing good when it clashes with those rules and/or ways of doing things?

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THE THIRD SIGN (v1-15): It seems that this invalid believed that the first person into the pool after the waters had been stirred would be miraculously healed (v3 & 7): what do you think it would have been like to wait in hope for a miracle? Would you say the man appears more hopeful or hopeless?

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ON THE SABBATH: What do you think Jesus hopes to achieve by asking the man if he wants to get well? Is the answer a given? Why was it such a big deal that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath (v10 and Exodus 20:8-11)? How do you respond to the way Jesus heals him and then his subsequent warning to *stop sinning or something worse may happen* to him?

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JESUS' AUTHORITY (v16-30): What was it that made the Jews even more eager to kill Jesus (v18-18)? What do verses 19-23 have to say about the interaction between the Father (especially His love for the Son) and the Son (especially His dependence on the Father)?

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JESUS' EQUALITY: In what ways does Jesus imply *equality* with the Father (see v17, 19, 20, 21, 22-23, 24 & 26)? Why is our response to Jesus so significant (v24-30)?

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TESTIMONY (v31-47): Jesus says in v31 that if His testimony is the only evidence of His connection to the Father then it is untrue: to what other witnesses does Jesus appeal (see v33-35, 36, 37, 39, 46 and 15:26-27)? What impact do such testimonies have on our thinking about Jesus?

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THE PHARISEES: These verses also contain a critique of the Pharisees: what charges does Jesus direct at them and which of them can you most (or could you at some stage) identify with? Why do you think it was so difficult for the Pharisees to accept Jesus for who He is even in the light of the miracle Jesus performed? What about us: when do we also find it hard to believe?

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DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER: How do we nurture a faith that is not just a good show on the outside (adhering to a list of do's and don'ts) but an expression of a sincere heart? What are some of the ways in which legalism has prevented you from getting on board with what God has been doing?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that today is always a good time to do good! Pray for one another that you would see beyond your own rules/scruples to the big picture of what God is doing in our midst. Pray for our friends that they would be willing to weigh the evidence about Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 5:19b

INTRODUCTION: Here we see the first of Jesus' so called "I am statements. The action begins with two astonishing signs (#4 & #5) as Jesus feeds 5000 men (plus women & children) with next to nothing before walking on water. Later Jesus points them not to physical but to spiritual nourishment.

SETTING THE SCENE: How do you tend to respond to seemingly impossible situations? Do you think that miracles are possible? Why or why not?

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JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND (v1-15): What motivated the crowds to follow Jesus up on to the mountainside? How would you describe Philip and Andrew reactions to the need to feed such a huge crowd (v5-9)? What do you think would have been their response to the leftovers (v12-13)?

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Why do we find it so difficult to believe that Jesus can do the impossible? Are there times in your own life when you have been amazed by how God has smashed your earthly expectations? Why do you think that at this point Jesus withdraws to a mountainside to pray (v15)?

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JESUS WALKS ON WATER (v16-21): In light of the conditions (v17-18), what do you imagine that it would have been like to be out on the lake that night? To what extent can you identify with the terror felt by the disciples when they saw Jesus coming towards them (v19)?

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The words *It is I* can be translated literally as *I am*: why do you think Jesus uses this phrase? How do you think their perception of Jesus might have changed through this incident?

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JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE (v22-50): What is wrong with the crowd's motivation to seek Jesus (v22-27) and how does He help them to think differently? How do you distinguish in your own life between 'food that spoils' and 'food that endures to eternal life' (v27)?

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(A) BELIEVE (v28-34): How do you understand Jesus' statement that the work of God is to believe in Him? What does this believing in Jesus involve?

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(B) COME (v35-47): How do you think that Jesus' claim here to be the 'bread of life' (v35) would have been understood by the people in the crowd? What can we conclude from the reactions of some of the Jews recorded here (v41-47)? What does coming to Jesus involved (v44)?

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(C) EAT (v48-59): How does the food analogy help us to understand our need for spiritual food? Jesus' words here about eating cause a sharp argument amongst the Jews; what do you think it means to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood (v53-59)?

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(D) FOLLOW (v60-71): To what extent can you sympathise with the disciples' reaction to this hard teaching (v60) and the fact that many turned back (v66)? How do you react to Jesus' subsequent response in v61-65? What should be our motivation to keep on following Him (v67-69)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What is your experience of these two contrasting appetites for physical and spiritual food? Have you found Jesus to be true to His claim? Why or why not?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray for one another that you would find lasting satisfaction in the Bread of life who gives us cause to never hunger or thirst if we believe in Him. Pray that this would be something that each of you experience over the coming week.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 6:35

STUDY 8 – JOHN 7:1-52 – COME TO ME AND DRINK

INTRODUCTION: Having spent some time in Galilee, Jesus' time was most definitely *coming*, but had *not yet come* (v6). Jesus has not been in Judea since the events of chapter 5 which led to the Jewish leaders wanting to kill Him. Chapter 7 is based around the festival of Tabernacles. It was a feast to celebrate harvest and remember God's care for His people when they literally lived for a week in tents.

SETTING THE SCENE: Can you think of people who have a divisive or polarising effect on others (e.g. politicians, entertainers or sports stars)? What is it that gives them such an appeal to some while at the same time being a turn-off to others? Why do you think Jesus was so divisive?

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CONFUSED & DISBELIEVING (v1-13): What do you think motivated Jesus' brothers to encourage him to go back to Judea (v3-4)? What do their words tell about how they perceived Jesus (v5)? Why do you think Jesus waits until after they have gone before He too goes up to the festival (v10)? Why does Jesus go in secret rather than publically (v11)? Who did the crowds think Jesus was (v12-13)?

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JESUS' TIME OR HOUR: Jesus speaks at other times about His *time* or *hour* (See John 2:4 & 17:1): what does Jesus mean here that His time is *not yet here* (v6) and *not yet full come* (v8)? What most impresses you about Jesus' clarity of mission and sense of God's timing?

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JESUS THE TEACHER (v14-25): The response of the Jews to Jesus' teaching is one of amazement and it provoked questions about where His learning had come from (v15): how do you respond to Jesus' answer (v16-19) and why does it provoke such a harsh response from the Jews (v20)?

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How does Jesus show them the hypocrisy regarding how they viewed the Sabbath (v21-23)? In what ways were they judging by mere appearances (v24)? How might we do likewise today?

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FURTHER OPPOSITION (v26-32): In what ways do the discussion about who Jesus is (v26-27) and His declaration about His authority (v28-29) lead to more threats to His life (v30, 32)? How do you respond to John’s comment that no-one laid a hand on Him because *His hour had not yet come* (v30)?

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LIVING WATER (v33-44): Jesus confuses them again with His talk about going to His Father where they could not come: how do you respond to Jesus’ invitation to anyone who is thirsty to come and drink living water (v38)? What do you understand as the connection between *living water* and the *Holy Spirit* (v39)? What might it mean for you to come to Jesus and drink?

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DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER (v40-52): To what extent does it surprise you that the crowds were so divided about Him (v40-44)? The chapter ends with a variety of responses: what causes such diverging responses from the temple guards (v45-46), the Pharisees (v45, 47-48) & Nicodemus (v50-51)? Which of these responses do you most observe in your experience today?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that Jesus’ life and teaching is astonishing. Ask God to help you, and your friends, to respond to Jesus appropriately. Ask God to quench your thirst and give each of you this *living water* that Jesus speaks about here.

MEMORY VERSES: JOHN 7:37b-38

INTRODUCTION: The section begins with a woman brought to Jesus having been caught in the act of Adultery. Jesus sidesteps the Pharisees trap and responds with much grace. Then we find Jesus making claims about Himself, interspersed with challenges from the Religious authorities.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why is it so hard to forgive others (or even ourselves) when we fail? What response does our society have for failure? How is this in contrast to Jesus' response to failure?

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WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY (7:53-8:11): What is surprising about the scene that develops in the temple courts? E.g. where is the guilty man? Where is the woman's husband? How exactly was the woman caught (the standard of evidence required was two witnesses to have seen the act)? What would it have been like for the woman to stand before the group (v3-4)?

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What was the trap (v6) that the Pharisees were trying to spring on Jesus? What might they have been hoping He would say? Why did His response to them have such a positive effect on the situation? How would this encounter with Jesus (esp. His words in v11) have impacted this woman's life?

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (8:12-20): What would you see as the distinction between *walking in darkness* and having the *light of life* (v12)? How shocking is it for Jesus to claim that He is the light of the world (consider both then and now)? What is Jesus' answer to the Pharisees challenges (v13) about the validity of his claim and testimony (v14-18)?

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FROM ANOTHER WORLD (8:21-30): Jesus also claims that God is His Father (v19) and that He is not from this world (v23): what do you understand Jesus to mean by these statements and how do

they go down with the Pharisees? Why is our belief Jesus is so fundamental to whether or not we *die in our sins* (v24)? How does Jesus show us what it looks like to please the Father (v29-30)?

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THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE (8:31-47): How do you understand the tension between Jesus definition of freedom (v31-32, 34-38) and that of the Pharisees (v33, 39a, 41b)? To what extent do you regard yourself as a slave of sin (v34)? In light of this, how would you define true freedom?

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What does it mean to be a true descendent of Abraham (v37-41)? What is your response to Jesus claim that their father is the devil: the father of lies (v44)? What do our actions say about our beliefs?

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BEFORE ABRAHAM I AM (8:48-59): What is it that makes the Jews think that Jesus is a *Samaritan* (v48) and *demon-possessed* (v48 & v52)? Why does Jesus claim to know of Abraham's gladness and his statement *Before Abraham was born, I am* (v58) cause the Jews to try and stone Jesus?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What picture do you build up about Jesus, who He was and how He dealt people from these verses? What steps can you take to respond to Jesus and make Him known?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Praise God together for the truth claims we see from this passage. Ask God to help you live in a way that demonstrates that you are a follower of Jesus and encourages others to do likewise. Ask God to help you respond to sin and failure with deep compassion and grace.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 8:12

INTRODUCTION: In this chapter Jesus encounters a blind man whom He heals on the Sabbath (Sign #6). In the previous chapters there has been quite a bit of conflict with the Pharisees and this chapter is no different. Jesus deals here with two kinds of blindness; physical and spiritual.

SETTING THE SCENE (v1): Looking back to chapter 8 what is the background in which Jesus meets the blind man here in 9:1? After such fiery encounters in chapter 8 what impresses you about Jesus' willingness to give time to this man? What do you think it would be like to be blind from birth?

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BLINDNESS & SIN (v2-5): What do the disciples believe is the connection (if any) between suffering and sin? What do you think? How do you understand Jesus' quite different understanding of this issue? How might the work of God be displayed in our lives through suffering?

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (v5, 8:12): What do you think Jesus means when He calls Himself the 'Light of the World'? In what ways does the healing of the blind man confirm Jesus' claim? What impact does (or might) Jesus being the light of the world have on your life?

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PHYSICAL HEALING (v6-13): Why does Jesus make the blind man go through such a strange process in order to be healed (compare to Mark 10:46-52 or Luke 7:1-10)? To what extent can you identify with the various responses of his neighbours?

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SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS (v13-34): What does the Pharisees reaction to the man's new found sight reveal about what was in their hearts? What things might we learn from the way that the blind man (v17, 24-25, 27 & 31-33) and his parents (v21-23) respond to the Pharisees?

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On what grounds do they object to the miracle (v16, 22 & 24)? What do you make of their response when the reality of the miracle becomes undeniable (v28-34)? Can you think of times when you have hardened your own heart rather than believe what God has done?

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SPIRITUAL HEALING (v35-41): Jesus seeks the man out a second time (v35); what do we learn here about where the man's heart is at? What does Jesus reveal here about His identity?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What is your response to Jesus? Do you sway towards wonder & worship like the blind man or hard-heartedness like the Pharisees? How might we help one another to recognise our own blindness in order to see Jesus more clearly?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for revealing Himself through His Son. Pray that He would help you overcome your unbelief and trust Him in the day to day challenges that life brings. Pray that He would reveal Himself more to you this week as the 'Light of the World'?

MEMORY VERSES: JOHN 9:2-3

INTRODUCTION: During the Hanukkah festival the priests examined their commitment to serve, using Ezekiel 34:1-31. Jesus picks up on this shepherd theme in order to distinguish between Himself as the good shepherd (John 10:11) and Israel's current religious leaders as bad shepherds (10:10, 12-13).

SETTING THE SCENE: What light does Ezekiel 34:1-31 shed on the state of Israel's shepherds? How does this passage point forward to how God was going to step in and shepherd them? How does this knowledge help us to understand where Jesus was coming from with His teaching in John 10?

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WISDOM FROM THE SHEEP-PEN (v1-21): How do you understand this analogy? Who do you think are the thieves, the robbers and the wolf? What does Jesus mean when He said He *lays down his life for the sheep*? Does it comfort you or scare you to think that Jesus knows you (v14)?

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I AM THE GATE (v7 & 9) & THE GOOD SHEPHERD (v11 & 14): How is Jesus like both a *gate* and a *Good shepherd*? In what ways is a shepherd different to the hired hand? What are a shepherd's feelings for their sheep (e.g. love/hate, care/ambivalence, helpful/hurtful)? What are you most anxious about? How could the *Good Shepherd* help you with that?

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RECOGNISING HIS VOICE (v4-5, 14-16 & 27): How can we learn to recognise the Shepherd's voice: i.e. what would it sound like and how can we distinguish it from all the other 'voices' that we are continually bombarded with? What is your experience of hearing Jesus' voice?

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LIFE TO THE FULL (v10): What would your friends describe as *life to the full* and how does that contrast with Jesus' definition? In what sense do we have *life to the full* (v10)?

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WEIGHING JESUS' CLAIMS (v22-42): If Jesus is the Messiah, why doesn't He just say so (v24-25)? And why didn't they believe that he was the Messiah? If you were there, do you think you would have believed that he was the Messiah?

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RESPONSES TO JESUS (v6, 20-21, 31-33, 39-42): What do we learn from all of this about who people thought Jesus is and who he really is? Why did some of the people think that Jesus was crazy for saying this (v20-21)? What do you think?

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ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED (v28-29)? How do you understand these verses in light of the reality that some Christians backslide and/or seem to give up on their faith? What do you think Jesus means when he says *I and the Father are one* (v30) and why does it generate such a strong reaction?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What have you learned today about the nature of the Good Shepherd and what it takes to be a good sheep/follower? What steps can we take to begin to greater understand and experience this life to the full that Jesus spoke about here?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray for one another that you would know Jesus' voice and know Him as your Good Shepherd. Thank God for the gift of 'life to the full' and the gift of Jesus who laid down His life for His sheep; thank God that no-one can snatch you out of His hand.

MEMORY VERSES: JOHN 10:14-15

STUDY 12 – JOHN 11 – I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

INTRODUCTION: Lazarus (brother of Mary & Martha) was dearly loved by Jesus. In this chapter Jesus demonstrates how He is ‘the resurrection and the life’ (Sign #7). He works through the sadness of the situation to bring glory to Himself and give them an opportunity to believe.

SETTING THE SCENE: Everyone in this story had a limit to what they believed Jesus could do: what kind of limits do we intentionally (or indeed unintentionally) tend to attribute to God? To what extent do you think you have limits about what you think He can do?

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OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE GOD’S GLORY (v1-8): What do we know about the different people Jesus meets here, Mary, Martha and Lazarus (v1-2)? Despite Jesus’ love for Lazarus (v3), why doesn’t He go immediately in response to news of his sickness? Why were the disciples so surprised that He wanted to go at all (v7-8)? What additional light does Jesus shed in v14-15, v25-26 & v41-42?

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GOD’S PURPOSES (v9-16): What do we learn here about God’s purposes (bear in mind v4)? How do you feel about the way that Jesus seems to use difficult circumstances to work out those purposes? When in your own life have difficulties been opportunities for your to trust and grow in faith?

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RESPONDING TO MARY & MARTHA (v17-37): To what extent do you think Mary & Martha expected Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead? Why does Jesus deal with Mary & Martha so differently in response to the same statement, “if you had been here he would not have died” (v21 & v32)?

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THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE: What does Jesus mean when He claims to be the “Resurrection and the Life” (v25)? Jesus makes this statement, and then goes about proving it by raising Lazarus. Do you think you would have believed what Jesus said before and/or after this miracle?

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LEARNING FROM THE MASTER: What do we learn here about Jesus and his character? How is he and isn't he like us? In particular what do you make of phrases such as Jesus was "deeply moved in Spirit and troubled" (v33), "Jesus wept" (v35) and the Jews comment "See how He loved Him" (v36)?

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RAISED FROM THE DEAD (v38-44): What do you imagine would have been the reaction from the crowds watching as Jesus asked for the stone to be taken away and prayed aloud to His Father? How can we respond to this quite familiar miracle with both our heads and our hearts?

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RESPONDING TO JESUS (v45-57): How do you explain the wildly contrasting responses to Jesus here (v45-48)? How do you understand Caiaphas the High Priests statement (v49-52)? Why does this lead them to plot fervently to kill Jesus (v53-57)?

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DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER: In what way is this amazing miracle a 'sign' and to what does it point? What would be some practical applications in terms of our convictions or beliefs, our faith or trust in God and our subsequent actions or behaviour?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Chat together about what you have learned about Jesus and His power over life and death. Thank Jesus for His victory over sin and death and that one day we will all be raised when Jesus comes back.

MEMORY VERSES: JOHN 11:25-26

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 1: JOHN 1:1-18 – THE WORD BECAME FLESH

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. **John 1:14**

STUDY 2: JOHN 1:19-51 – TESTIFYING TO THE WORD

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **John 1:29**

STUDY 3: JOHN 2 – WATER INTO WINE

¹¹ 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. **John 2:11**

STUDY 4: JOHN 3 – NICODEMUS AND NEW BIRTH

¹⁶ 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. **John 3:16**

STUDY 5: JOHN 4 – THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND LIVING WATER

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' **John 4:10**

STUDY 6: JOHN 5 – FACING OPPOSITION

¹⁹ ...'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. **John 5:19B**

STUDY 7: JOHN 6 – I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

⁵ Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. **John 6:35**

STUDY 8: JOHN 7:1-52 – COME TO ME AND DRINK

³⁷ ...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' **John 7:37b-38**

STUDY 9: JOHN 7:53-8:69 – THE LIGHT OF LIFE

¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' **John 8:12**

STUDY 10: JOHN 9 – I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

² His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

³ 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. **John 9:2-3**

STUDY 11: JOHN 10 – I AM THE GATE AND I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. **John 10:14-15**

STUDY 12: JOHN 11 – I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

²⁵ "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" **John 11:25-26**