

25 Bible Studies in Simple English

These inductive bible studies were written for international students – many of them language school students. They are seeker friendly and fairly "stand alone", and should be useful for bible studies publicized at International Cafes, where there is an unpredictable mix of Christians and non-Christians, newcomers and regulars.

Some of the studies are quite long & you might want to focus on sections of the study.

No.	Passage	Notes	Page
1	Matthew 1:18-25	The birth of Jesus	2
2	Matthew 6:5-15	Prayer	3
3	Matthew 9:9-13	The calling of Matthew	5
4	Matthew 14:22-32	Jesus walks on the water	7
5	Matthew 16:13-26	Peter's confession of Christ	9
6	Matthew 26:17-30	The Lord's Supper	12
7	Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75	Peter's Denial of Jesus	14
8	Matthew 28:1-20	Jesus' resurrection	16
9	Luke 9:18-27 & 14:25-33	The identity & call of Jesus	18
10	Luke 12:4-34	"Who or what do you trust?"	21
11	Luke 13:1-20	"Enter the Kingdom of God – quickly"	23
12	Luke 15:1-24	"Returning to the Father"	26
13	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus	28
14	Luke 23:32-49	"The Death of the King"	29
15	John 9:13-41	"Jesus wants to make blind people see"	31
16	John 12:12-26	Jesus enters Jerusalem	33
17	John 13:1-17	"Jesus came to serve"	34
18	John 15:1-16:4	"Jesus wants us to remain in him"	36
19	John 20:1-18	"Jesus is alive!"	39
20	Acts 1 & 2	"The First Christians"	41
21	Acts 17:16-34	"The Nature of God"	44
22	Ephesians 1:1-14		47
23	Ephesians 1:15-2:10		49
24	Ephesians 2:11-3:13		53
25	Ephesians 3:14-21		56

Matthew 1:18-25

1) Introduce yourself: your name and what it means!

Today we're going to learn about how Jesus was born, and about what his name means.

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

2a) What was the relationship between Mary and Joseph at the start of this story?

b) How do you think Joseph felt when he heard that Mary was pregnant? Was it his child? What did he think had happened?

c) What did he plan to do? Why did he decide to break the engagement privately? What might happen to Mary if he broke the engagement publicly?

3a) But what had really happened? Who was the father of Mary's baby?

b) What else do we know about this baby? What else did the angel say about the baby?

c) Why did Joseph need to call the baby 'Jesus'?

d) What other name would the baby have? What does that mean?

4a) 'God is with us' and 'he will save his people from their sins' – what does this tell us about this baby? (who he is and why he was born)

b) How do you feel about the idea of God being with us? How would you feel if you met God? Why do you think God decided to come to earth as a baby?

c) What is sin? Why do people need to be saved from their sins? How would this baby save people from their sins? How do you feel about the idea of Jesus saving you from sin?

5a) V22, why did all this happen? This prophet had spoken about this baby about 700 years earlier. For 700 years the Jewish people had been waiting for this baby! How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they heard the baby was going to come to them?

b) God had promised the people this baby would be born, but they had to wait 700 years for the baby to come. What does this teach us about God and his promises? (He keeps them, but maybe we have to wait!)

6a) How long do babies stay as babies? What happens to them after that? That's what happened to Jesus too! At Christmas many people get excited about the baby Jesus being born, but they don't think about Jesus growing up and becoming a man – why do you think this is?

b) But even before Jesus was born, the angel talked about what he would do when he became an adult. Why do you think this is?

c) Will you celebrate Christmas this year? Why? Will you celebrate just the birth of a baby? Or will you celebrate the reason why the baby was born? Will you celebrate because in Jesus God is with us? Will you celebrate because Jesus has saved you from your sins?

Matthew 6:5-15

- 1a) Do you pray?
- b) What do you pray for?
- c) Who do you pray to?

Jesus is talking to a crowd of people. Jesus wants to teach them how to pray. First he gives them two examples of the wrong way to pray.

READ MATTHEW 6:5-15

- 2a) What is wrong about the way hypocrites pray? Why do the hypocrites pray?
 - b) Where should we pray? Why?
 - c) What does this teach us about the purpose of prayer?
 - d) Does this mean we can never pray with other people? When we do pray with other people, what should be our reason for praying?
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- 3a) What is wrong with the way pagans pray?
 - b) Why do they use lots of meaningless words?
 - c) Why must Christians pray in a different way?

V8 - God always hears us and already knows what we need - we don't use prayer to try to control God and make Him do what we want instead of what He wants.

- d) If God already knows what we need, why do we need to pray?

Being a Christian means having a relationship with God. Prayer is an important part of that relationship, it's the way we communicate with God. If we pray and ask God for the things we need it reminds us to be thankful for them when He gives them to us.

- 4a) What sort of things should we pray about? What do the first three things mean?

1. Honour God: That we want people to know how wonderful God is and to praise him.
2. God's kingdom come: That we want people to obey God as their king
3. God's will be done: That we want everything to happen as God wants it to happen.

- b) Which of these things do you think is the most important? Which do you think Jesus thought was the most important? (Of course they're all important!) Why do you think he said start by praying about God's honour and God's will?
- c) Jesus said pray for the food you need. What other things do we need? Do you think we can pray about those things too? Why do you think Jesus said pray for what you need, not for what you want?!!
- d) Why do you think Jesus said we can pray for forgiveness for the things we do wrong, as we forgive others. Why will God only forgive us if we forgive others?

Before God forgives us we have to repent of our sins, including our anger at others. If we understand how much Jesus has forgiven us we will be willing to forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35)

e) Do we have to use exactly these words? (We already said the words you use are not important, it's what's in your heart that matters.)

f) Does it matter what language we use for praying? (We're reading this in English, it was originally written in Greek, but Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic!)

- Don't pray to impress other people – pray to God
- The words you use for praying don't matter – what is in your heart is what matters.
- We shouldn't use prayer to try to control God, prayer is an expression of our relationship with God
- Good things to pray about:
 - For God to be honoured/glorified
 - For God's will to be done
 - For the things we need
 - For forgiveness (and help in forgiving others)
 - Protection from evil/hard testing

Matthew 9:9-13

- 1a) What kind of people do you want to be your friends?
- b) What kind of people do you think Jesus was friends with?
- c) Do you think Jesus would want to be your friend?

Jesus has just been teaching and healing many people.

READ MATTHEW 9:9-13

- 2a) What do we know about Matthew?
- b) What kind of people were tax collectors? Why?

Jesus was a Jew (a Jewish person). At that time the Jewish people lived in their own country, but their country was controlled by the Romans. They were not free people. The Romans made them pay high taxes. Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Romans. They collected money from the Jews to give to the Romans. But they usually collected more money from the Jews than was necessary, and then kept some for themselves. So the Jews hated the tax collectors, firstly because they worked for the enemy and secondly because they were dishonest.

- c) Jesus was a Jew, so how would you expect him to relate to Matthew? What would you expect Jesus to say to Matthew?
- d) But what did Jesus say to Matthew? What was Jesus asking Matthew to do? What would Matthew need to do if he wanted to follow Jesus? How would Matthew's life change if he followed Jesus?

Following someone means becoming like them, living the way they live, obeying their teaching. For Matthew this would mean some big changes in his life!

- e) How do you think Matthew felt when Jesus said "Follow me"?
- f) What did Matthew decide to do? Why?
- g) Jesus says "Follow me" to everyone. If you decided to follow Jesus, how would your life change?

3a) Matthew introduced Jesus to his friends. What kind of people were Matthew's friends?

b) What did the Pharisees (the religious leaders) think about Jesus' new friends? Why were they surprised/critical?

c) Why did Jesus want to be friends with Matthew and other outcasts? What do we learn about Jesus from this? What kind of people did Jesus want to be friends with?

d) What did Jesus mean when he said "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick."? In what way were Matthew and his friends sick? In what way were the Pharisees well?

e) For the Jewish people, offering animal sacrifices to God was an important part of their religion, it was something the Pharisees were very good at. In fact the Pharisees were considered very good and respectable people. So what did Jesus mean when he said "It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices?" Were the Pharisees as good as they thought they were? How have they shown their unkindness in this story?

f) Why do you think Jesus came to call outcasts and not respectable people?

4a) What does this mean for us? Some people are more like the tax collectors and other outcasts – they know they do wrong things and disobey God. What does this story teach these kind of people?

b) Other people are more like the Pharisees – they think they are good people and that God is pleased with them. What does this story teach them?

c) Are you more like the tax collectors or more like the Pharisees? If you think you're more like the tax collectors, how do you feel about the idea that Jesus wants to be your friend? How will you respond when Jesus says “follow me”? What will need to change about your life?

d) Or are you more like the Pharisees? But are you really as good as you think you are? What do you need to do before Jesus can be your friend?

MATTHEW 14:22-32

Just before this story Jesus was teaching the people. There were more than 5000 people and they listened to Jesus for a long time, until it was late. Afterwards they were very hungry and there were no shops nearby. Then Jesus did a miracle – he used five loaves of bread and two fish to feed everyone!

READ MATTHEW 14:22-32

1a) What did Jesus make the disciples do? Why did he want them to get into the boat? Where did he want them to go?

b) Why didn't he get in the boat with them?

c) What did he do when all the people had left?

d) How long did he spend on his own? (v23, 25)

e) Normally people are asleep at 3 in the morning. Jesus had had a long and busy day he must have been very tired, why did he pray instead of going to sleep?

f) Why did Jesus need time to pray?

g) What can we learn from this? If Jesus needed time to pray at the end of a busy day, what should we do when our lives are busy?

h) Are you willing to spend time praying even if it means less time sleeping?

2a) What was the weather like for the disciples in the boat?

In the Bible a storm is often a symbol of the problems and difficulties we experience in life.

b) What did Jesus do when he saw the disciples had a problem? How did he go to them? What do you think Jesus wants to do when we have problems in our lives?

c) How did the disciples react when they saw him coming? How did they feel? What did they think?

d) How would you feel if you saw Jesus walking on the water? What would you think?

e) Do you know anyone who can walk on water like that? How was Jesus able to walk on the water?

f) How did Jesus respond when the disciples screamed? What do we learn about Jesus from this?

3a) Try and imagine how Peter felt as he put his leg over the side of the boat and onto the water? What would happen if Jesus couldn't help him walk on the water? So it was a huge risk! He was trusting Jesus with his life.

b) Are you willing to trust Jesus with your life?

c) What happened when Peter started walking on the water? That's amazing! How was Peter able to walk on the water?

d) What do we learn from this story? What sort of things can we do if we trust in Jesus?

4a) What happened later? (v30) Why?(v31)

b) What can we learn from this? What will happen if we decide to trust Jesus and then start to doubt?

c) What did Peter do when he started sinking? Why? How did Jesus respond?

d) So, if we decide to trust in Jesus, but then we start to doubt and it all goes wrong, what can we do? What will Jesus do?

e) When Peter asked Jesus to call him to walk on the water, why do you think Jesus did what Peter asked?

5a) How did the other disciples respond to what they had seen? Why did they worship Jesus?

b) How will you respond to Jesus?

Do you know who Jesus is? Jesus lived 2000 years ago. Maybe you think, 'So why should I care about a man who lived 2000 years ago?' How can Jesus be important in my life when he lived such a long time ago?' Today in the Bible study we're going to look at who Jesus is, why he was born and what it means for us today!

MATTHEW 16:13-26

Who do you think Jesus is?

READ MATTHEW 16:13-19

1a) Who is Jesus talking to?

b) He asks them a question about the Son of Man. What does he mean by 'the Son of Man? Who is he talking about?

c) He asks them who people say the Son of Man is. What ideas do different people have?

d) What does this teach us about how people are thinking about Jesus at this time? What kind of a person do they think he is?

2a) The 12 disciples have been with Jesus more than his other followers. Jesus has explained his teaching more clearly to them. Peter was one of these people. What kind of a person does Peter think Jesus is?

b) What does this mean?

c) How does Jesus react when Peter says this? How does Jesus feel? Was Peter right?

d) How did Peter know this? Where did he get this truth from?

e) Why do you think God had to give this truth to Peter directly?

f) So how can we know the truth about Jesus?

3a) Now that Peter understands this truth about Jesus, how will Jesus use Peter?

b) Why will Jesus build his church on Peter? What have we just learnt about Peter?

c) How strong will the church be? How long will it last for?

So the church will last even beyond death – not only forever in this world, but beyond death, into the next world too.

READ MATTHEW 16:20-26

4a) Why do you think Jesus ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah? What kind of Messiah were they expecting? What would happen if everyone heard that Jesus was the Messiah?

b) They were expecting the Messiah to be a political leader. What kind of a person was Jesus? Why had he come? What was going to happen to him?

c) Jesus says these things MUST happen to him – why MUST they happen?

d) What would happen after Jesus was put to death? Is this normal? Why would it happen to Jesus?

5a) How does Peter react when Jesus talks about these things?

b) Why does he react like this? What things does Peter think must never happen to Jesus? Why does he think this?

c) How does Jesus react when Peter says this? Why? Where did Peter get this idea from?

d) What do we learn from this about Peter? A few minutes earlier Jesus said that he would build his church on Peter, so Peter was obviously accepted by God – did this mean he was perfect?

6a) Now we know what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah and we know that he MUST suffer. What about if we want to follow Jesus – what MUST we do?

b) What does it mean to forget self?

c) At this time the cross was a symbol of death - someone who was carrying a cross was about to die. What does it mean to carry your cross?

d) What does it mean to follow Jesus?

e) What would it mean for you to forget yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus?

f) Is it easy to do these things? Why/why not?

7a) Why do you think Jesus says we MUST do these things if we want to follow him?

Jesus is being honest – if we want to follow him it will not be easy. If we do these things it's like we lose our life.

b) Why does Jesus want us to lose our life like this?

c) Let's think, if we ignore Jesus and try to save our life – what will happen? What does this mean?

d) In verse 25 Jesus is talking about two kinds of life – what are they?

e) In verse 26 Jesus talks about winning the whole world – what does this mean? What is the whole world?

f) Do these things really satisfy people?

g) And the only way to win these things is to lose our spiritual life. If we do this, what can we do to regain it?

h) But, if we listen to Jesus and do what he says, we will lose our physical life, but what do we gain instead?

So, Jesus is giving people a choice between following him or doing what they want to do.

8a) Have you decided what you want to do? If not, what do you need to know before you will make that decision?

b) Think through the story. Where are you at the moment?

- Are you like the people who think Jesus is someone special, maybe a prophet?
- Are you like the disciples who know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God?
- Do you understand what kind of a Messiah Jesus is and that he had to suffer and die?
- Are you willing to forget your self, carry your cross and follow Jesus? Or do you want to keep control of your life now?

MATTHEW 26:17-30

- 1a) What special meal were the disciples preparing for?
- b) What did Jesus tell them to say to the man in the city?
- c) What did Jesus mean when he said "My hour has come"? What was going to happen to him?
- 2a) What did Jesus say during the meal?
- b) How did the disciples feel about this?
- c) Why do you think they were upset?
- 3a) What did Jesus say about who would betray him?
- b) What did Jesus say would be the result of him being betrayed? (v24)
- c) How did Jesus know he would die?
- d) The scriptures were written by God. They explain God's plans and his purpose. So if the scriptures say that Jesus must die, what is God's attitude to Jesus' death? Why was Jesus going to die? Who was responsible for his death?
- e) What would happen to the one who betrayed him?
- 4a) Who is the traitor?
- b) How did Jesus respond when Judas said "Surely Teacher, you don't mean me?"?
- c) What did he mean when he said this?
- d) How did Jesus know it was Judas who would betray him?
- e) If Jesus knew he was going to be betrayed, why didn't he run away?
- Just now we said that it was God's plan for Jesus to die. Now we're going to think about why this was God's plan.
- 5a) When Jesus gave the disciples bread, how did he describe the bread? What did it symbolise?
- b) The cup contained wine. How did Jesus describe the wine? What did it symbolise?
- c) Why was it necessary for Jesus to pour out his blood? What did his blood achieve?
- d) So why did Jesus need to die? Why was it God's plan for Jesus to die?
- 6a) Are you sinful? Do you sin? Do you feel guilty about your sin?
- b) Would you like to be forgiven?

c) What does this passage teach us about how we can be forgiven for our sin?

d) How do you feel about the idea that Jesus suffered and died for you?

e) How will you respond to Jesus?

7a) What will happen after Jesus dies? (v29)

b) What does this mean?

MATTHEW 26:31-35, 69-75

Last week we read about a special meal that Jesus ate with his disciples. Jesus knew that he was about to die and this was the last meal he ate with his disciples before his death. After the meal Jesus and his disciples went outside and Jesus talked with them.

READ MATTHEW 26:31-35

- 1a) What did Jesus say the disciples would do that night?
- b) Why do you think they were going to leave Jesus?
- c) Why do you think Jesus told them this?
- d) Try and imagine what this was like for Jesus. He knew that he was about to die, and he knew that when he was arrested all his friends would leave him. If you were in his situation how would you feel? What would you think about your friends?
- e) Now imagine how the disciples would feel after they had left Jesus?
- f) What did Jesus say would happen after he died? (v32)
- g) Why do you think he told them this?
- h) What does this teach us about Jesus?
- i) Can you think of any ways you have run away from Jesus, any ways you have rejected Jesus or disobeyed Jesus or ignored Jesus or hurt Jesus? From this passage what do you think is his attitude towards you?
- j) How will you respond to this love?

2a) What did Peter think when Jesus said they would all leave him?

b) What did Jesus think about Peter's confidence?

c) What exactly did Jesus say Peter would do? When would Peter say that he didn't know Jesus? How many times would he say this?

d) Did Peter believe what Jesus said? Why not? What does this show us about Peter (and about his attitude to himself and to Jesus)? Why was he so confident that he would never leave Jesus? Why did he think he was different to the other disciples?

e) Are there any ways that you are like Peter? Are you ever confident that you can do good things for God? Do you ever think you know better than Jesus? What about if we know Jesus commands us to do something but we don't want to do it?

After this Jesus was arrested and as he had said, all the disciples ran away and left him. But Peter didn't run away completely, we waited outside the place where Jesus was being questioned so that he could see what happened to Jesus.

READ MATTHEW 26:69-75

3a) How did Peter respond when he was asked if he knew Jesus?

b) How many times did he deny Jesus?

c) When he was talking to Jesus in the first passage he said very strongly that he would never leave Jesus, he would even die with Jesus. So why did he deny Jesus so strongly?

4a) So Jesus was right when he said that Peter would deny him 3 times. How did he know this?

b) How do you feel about the idea that Jesus knows the bad things you will do even before you do them?

5a) How did Peter feel when he heard the cock crowing?

b) Why did he feel so upset?

6a) Can you think of any ways you have denied Jesus? Any ways you have disobeyed him or ignored him or been ashamed of him? How does this make you feel?

b) Remember what we learnt earlier, that even though Jesus knew the disciples were going to leave him and deny him he still said he would meet them after he was raised to life. He loved them even though they were not faithful to him. How will you respond to his love?

Matthew 28:1-20

Jesus died on a Friday and was buried in a tomb. The next day was a Saturday, and for Jewish people Saturday is a special day. They call it the Sabbath and it's when they rest and don't do any work. It's a day for celebrating God's love for them. This meant that Jesus' friends couldn't go to his tomb to mourn on the Saturday. So they went very early on the Sunday instead.

READ MATTHEW 28:1-20

- 1a) How do you think Mary and Mary felt when they were going to the tomb?
- b) What did they expect to find?
- c) What happened when they got to the tomb?

- 2a) Who else was there when they arrived?
- b) Why do you think there were guards at the tomb?
- c) How did the guards feel when they saw the earthquake and the angel? Why?

- 3a) The angel said that Jesus was not there. Why was Jesus not there?
- b) Did the women know that he was not there? Why did they go to the tomb?
- c) Should they have known that Jesus was not there? Why? Why didn't they believe what Jesus had told them?
- d) Are we sometimes like them? Do we find it hard to believe what Jesus tells us? How can this story help us?

- 4a) How did the women feel when they heard that Jesus was alive? Why?
- b) What did they do? Why?
- c) What happened when they were going to tell the disciples?
- d) How did they respond to Jesus? Why?

- 5a) What did the guards do? Why did they do this? Did they believe that Jesus was alive?
It's interesting that even the guards were convinced that Jesus was alive. It must be true!
- b) What did the chief priests do when they heard that Jesus was alive?
- c) Why do you think they did this? Why did they need to make the guards lie?
- d) Why didn't they want to believe in Jesus? Why didn't they want other people to believe?

6) How do you respond to Jesus? Do you believe he's alive? Are you afraid like the guards? Do you refuse to believe like the chief priests? Or are you full of joy like the women? Do you worship him? Do you tell other people?

7a) What did the 11 disciples do when they saw Jesus? Why?

b) What did Jesus tell them to do?

c) Who did Jesus tell them to tell? Why?

d) What did they have to do when people became disciples of Jesus?

e) How do you think the disciples felt when they heard Jesus say this?

f) v18, Why should they do what Jesus tells them to do?

g) What did he promise them to encourage them?

h) What does this mean for us today?

LUKE

Luke 9:18-27 & 14:25-33

'Luke' was written by a man called Luke. Luke was a doctor (Col 4:14). He probably wrote this book about 30 years after Jesus died. It is a book about Jesus - what he did, what he said and what happened to him.

The part we're going to read today happened when people had been observing Jesus for some time. They had seen him healing people. They had heard his teaching. Jesus now questions who people think he is.

READ LUKE 9:18-20

2a) What was Jesus doing at the start of this story? (v18)

b) Why does he stop praying? (v18)

c) What do you think he had been praying about?

d) What question does he ask the disciples?

e) What do different people think? (v19)

3a) What did Peter think?

b) What does this mean?

c) Why is Peter's answer different to other people?

d) What about you? You have read about some of the things Jesus said & did, who do you think Jesus is?

READ LUKE 9:21-27

4a) When Peter said that Jesus is the Messiah, how did Jesus respond? (v21)

b) Did Jesus tell Peter he was wrong? What does this tell us about Jesus?

c) Why did Jesus tell them not to tell anyone? Why didn't Jesus congratulate them for getting the right answer? Why didn't he want people to know that he's the Messiah? What would happen if everyone knew he was the Messiah? What sort of Messiah were the people expecting?

5a) But what sort of Messiah is Jesus? What was his purpose? Why did he come to earth? What will happen to him? (v22)

b) Jesus said that he MUST suffer and die. Why MUST this happen?

c) What will happen after he dies?

So now the disciples know who Jesus is and why he has come. They know that he will suffer greatly. Jesus now talks about what life is like for people who follow him.

6a) What must we do if we want to follow Jesus? (v23)

- b) What is 'self'? (v23)
- c) What does it mean to 'forget self'? (v23)
- d) At this time the cross was a symbol of death - someone who was carrying a cross was about to die. What does it mean for us to 'take up our cross'? (v23)
- e) What does it mean to follow Jesus? (v23) How does what Jesus says in v23 connect with what he said in v22?
- f) What would it mean for you to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus?
- g) Do you think it's easy or difficult to do these things? Why/why not?

7a) Why do you think Jesus says we MUST do these things if we want to follow him?

b) What do we receive if we do these things?

Jesus is giving people a choice between following him or doing what they want to do. He asks them some questions to help them understand this choice.

- c) What does Jesus mean by the 'whole world'? (v25)
- d) Do these things really satisfy people?
- e) What do we lose if we concentrate on getting these things?
- f) What did Jesus mean when he said v24? What kind of life is he talking about?

8a) In what ways might people be ashamed of Jesus and his teaching? (v26)

b) What will happen to people who are ashamed of Jesus? (v26)

READ LUKE 14:25-33

- 9a) What must people do if they want to follow Jesus? (v26-27, 33)
- b) What does it mean to love Jesus more than we love our families and ourselves?
- c) Is it easy to do this? Why/why not? Can you do it?
- 10a) Jesus tells a story about a man who was planning to build a tower but didn't have enough money to finish. And another story about a king who decides if he is strong enough to fight another king before the fight begins. Why does Jesus tell these stories? What is he trying to teach us?
- b) Do you understand how much it will cost to follow Jesus? What did Jesus say in v33?
- c) What does it mean to give up everything to follow Jesus? Does it mean I have nothing?
- d) Have you considered if you are able give up everything to follow Jesus?

e) There are many people who have given up everything to follow Jesus. Think back to what we read in Chapter 9. Why are so many people willing to give up everything to follow Jesus?

f) What about you?

Luke 12:4-34

Who or what do you trust?

1) What things are you afraid of?

READ LUKE 12:4-12

2a) Who should we be afraid of?

b) Who should we not be afraid of?

c) Why should we be afraid of God? Why should we not be afraid of people?

d) Can you think of any examples of situations where we might be afraid of people? What example did Jesus give? (v8)

3a) If we are Christians, in what ways might we need to defend ourselves today?

b) How can God help us at those times?

READ LUKE 12:13-21

4a) What did the man want Jesus to do?

b) Why did Jesus refuse to do this?

5a) In the parable, what was the rich man's problem?

b) How did he feel about this problem? Why?

c) Who or what did the man trust?

d) But what happened?

e) So, what does this story teach us?

6) When the people heard this story and understood that Jesus was telling them to not be greedy, how do you think they felt?

READ LUKE 12:22-31

7a) What things did these people worry about?

b) Do you worry about these things? What do you worry about?

c) What was Jesus trying to teach the people here?

d) Why should we trust God? What examples did Jesus give to show that we can trust God?

e) Why do we worry about things?

f) What should we do when we start worrying about things?

8a) Jesus was saying that we mustn't be concerned about physical things. What should we be concerned about?

b) What does it mean to be concerned about God's kingdom?

9) Can you trust God in this way?

READ LUKE 12:32-34

10a) Thinking about the rich man in the parable again, what should he have done when he had such good crops?

b) Looking back to v15, if our true life is not made up of the things we own, what is it made up of? [v32-33 – why can we safely sell our possessions?]

c) So what should be our attitude to money and possessions?

d) v34 - Where is your heart?

Key points

- We should not be afraid of other people – we should trust God.
- We should not be greedy for material things – we should trust God.
- We should not worry about material things – we should be concerned about God's Kingdom.
- God can provide everything that we need.

Luke 13:1-20

Enter the Kingdom of God – quickly!

Jesus had been travelling, healing people and teaching about the Kingdom of God. Lots of people went to him because they wanted to be healed or they were interested in his teaching, but only a few of these people were really serious about wanting to follow him.

READ LUKE 13:22-30

- 1a) What question was Jesus asked?
- b) Why do you think the man asked this question?
- c) Is it a question you worry about?

- 2a) How did Jesus reply?
- b) Jesus talked about a door – where would they get to if they went through the door? (v28)
- c) Who/what is the door?
- d) So how can we go through the door?
- e) Why is this door narrow?
- f) Why must we do our best to get in? (v24) What will happen if we don't go through the door now?
- g) How can we do our best to get in? What do we need to do?

- 3a) Who was the master of the house?
- b) Why did the master of the house refuse to let people in?
- c) In what way didn't he know them?
- d) What will happen to those people?
- e) How do you think those people will feel?

- 4) What was Jesus trying to teach the man here?

- 5) Do you think you have gone through the narrow door yet?

We're going to think a bit more about how to enter the kingdom of God – though the connection will not be immediately obvious!

READ JOHN 13:1-17

- 1a) When did this event happen?

- b) How did Jesus know that the hour had come for him to leave this world?
- c) Who are the 'those' in v1?

In Israel the ground is very dusty and at this time people wore open sandals – so their feet got very dirty. When they arrived in a house, a slave would wash their feet. Only the lowest and least important slaves had to do this job.

2a) Why did the disciples still have dirty, unwashed feet during the meal?

b) What do you think about the fact that Jesus washed their feet?

c) Why did Jesus wash their feet (v1 and v4 and v12-17)?

3a) If you were one of the disciples, how would you feel if Jesus tried to wash your feet?

b) Why did Peter refuse to let Jesus wash his feet?

c) Why did Jesus insist that he must wash Peter's feet?

d) Why was it impossible for Peter to be a disciple unless Jesus washed his feet? What was Jesus trying to teach Peter? Think about how else Jesus will serve them in the next few days.

e) So if we want to be disciples of Jesus, what must we do? What does this teach us about how we can go through the narrow door into the kingdom of God?

f) How do you feel about the idea of allowing Jesus to love you and serve you? How do you feel about the idea that Jesus died for you?

4a) Why did Jesus refuse to wash Peter's head and hands?

b) In what way was Peter clean already?

c) So if he was clean already, why did he need his feet washed?

5a) What did Jesus want the disciples to do?

b) What does that mean?

c) Why should the disciples do it?

d) What do you think about this idea of serving other people?
Here's an example of someone who didn't go through the narrow door.

READ JOHN 13:18-30

6a) v18-19, what is Jesus talking about?

b) How did Jesus know that Judas would betray him?

Judas was one of Jesus' closest followers and everyone else thought he was a genuine believer, but inside he didn't really believe in Jesus. He hadn't been through the narrow door. It is possible for us to look like we are following Jesus, but later we can betray him – a bit like the people who tried to go through the narrow door after it had been locked.

c) Look inside your own heart – are you really following Jesus, or are you just pretending? Will you continue following him in the future or will you betray him if it makes your life too difficult?

d) How can we make sure this doesn't happen?

7a) Jesus said that Judas must betray him (v18). Why?

b) Why did Jesus tell the disciples about this?

c) The 12 disciples had been Jesus' closest friends for 3 years. How do you think Jesus felt about the idea of one of his closest friends betraying him?

d) So why did Jesus encourage Judas to betray him?

e) Why did Jesus wash Judas' feet when he knew Judas would betray him?

Luke 15:1-24

Returning to the Father

READ LUKE 15:1-3

Jesus is talking to a group of people. Some of the people are Pharisees and teachers of the Law.

- 1a) *What sort of people were the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law?*
- b) *Why were the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law grumbling?*
- c) *Why were they upset about this?*

Jesus told three stories to explain to the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law why he spends time with sinful people.

READ LUKE 15:11-24

- 2a) *Who is the father?*
- b) *Who is the older son?*
- c) *Who is the younger son?*

3a) How do you think the father felt when the younger son asked for his share of the property? (v12). How would you feel?

When the younger son asked for this he was saying to his father 'I wish you were dead so I can have your money now'. He wanted the good things his father could give him, he did not want a relationship with his father.

- b) What good things does God give us?
- c) In what ways do we accept the good things God gives us but then say to God 'I wish you were dead'? Do we want a relationship with God?

This is what sin is: when we turn away from God and disobey him or ignore him.

d) How do you think God feels about this?

4a) Why did the son decide to return home? (v16-17)

b) Do you feel far from God? Do you feel spiritually hungry? Do you feel lonely?

5a) What did the Son need to do before he could meet his father?

b) Have you realised that you've sinned? Are you ready to repent and return to God?

c) *What did the Son decide he would do when he got home? (v19)*

d) In what ways do people try to 'work' to make God accept them?

e) Does God accept us when we do these things?

6a) What did the father do when he saw his son coming? Why? (v20, 22-23)

b) If we repent of our sin and ask God to forgive us, how will he respond?

c) How does God feel when sinful people return to him and ask for forgiveness?

d) When we sin, what do you think God wants us to do?

e) Why?

7a) V24 – how did the father think of his son while his son was away? How did the father think of his son when his son returned?

b) In what way are we dead and lost if we have sinned and haven't asked God for forgiveness?

c) In what way are we alive and found if we ask God to forgive us and receive his forgiveness?

8) Remember, at the beginning the Pharisees asked Jesus why he spent time with sinful people. What does this story teach us? Why does Jesus want to spend time with sinful people?

LUKE 19:1-10

1. What type of person was Zacchaeus? What do we know about him?
2. Why did Zacchaeus climb a tree?
3. Why do you think he wanted to see Jesus?
4. What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus?
5. How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus said this? How would you feel if you were Zacchaeus?
6. What did the people think when Jesus said he wanted to eat with Zacchaeus? Why?
7. Jesus had shown Zacchaeus that he accepted him. How did Zacchaeus respond?
8. Why did Zacchaeus do this?
9. What does this story tell us about the type of people Jesus wants to be friends with?
10. Why does he want to be friends with these people? (v10)
11. What does this mean?

When Zacchaeus was accepted by Jesus he changed the way he lived. He stopped doing wrong things and started doing good things.

12. If God accepts you how do you think your life will need to change? What things will you need to stop doing? What new things will you need to do?

Zacchaeus had a choice to make: his money or to be a friend of Jesus. He chose to be a friend of Jesus.

13. Which is more important to you at the moment: having lots of money or being a friend of Jesus?
14. Before Zacchaeus met Jesus do you think he wanted to give away his money?
15. Why did he suddenly change so much?
16. Would you like your heart to change so that you want to do good things?
17. If we want our hearts to change, what must happen first?
18. How do you feel about the idea that God doesn't accept us because we're good, rather that God accepts us first and then we become good?

Luke 23:32-49

The Death of the King

Jesus has been arrested and questioned. The authorities have decided to kill him.

READ LUKE 23:32-49

1) What method did they use to kill Jesus?

Crucifixion was the most painful way the Romans had for killing people. It was only used for slaves and really bad criminals. The person being crucified was stripped naked. Nails were put through their arms to attach them to a piece of wood. This piece of wood was then put on a wooden pole. Their feet were nailed to the wooden pole. Underneath their feet was a small piece of wood to support their body. This was arranged so that their legs were painfully twisted up underneath their body. To breathe they needed to push their body up using their legs. Eventually they got too tired to do this and then they died because they could not breathe. They usually took several hours or even days to die.

2a) What was the first thing Jesus said when he was on the cross?

b) Why does he want God to forgive them?

c) If you were being killed like Jesus would you be able to forgive the people who were killing you?

d) What does this teach us about Jesus?

3a) How did the Jewish leaders feel about Jesus' death?

b) What did they say to Jesus?

c) Did they really believe Jesus was the Messiah?

4a) What did the soldiers say to him?

b) Did they really believe he was the King of the Jews?

5a) Could he have saved himself?

b) If he had saved himself do you think people would have believed that he is the Son of God?

c) Why didn't he save himself as the Jewish leaders and soldiers suggested?

One of the criminals insulted Jesus in a similar way to the Jewish leaders and the soldiers.

6a) Why did the other criminal rebuke the first criminal?

b) What did Jesus say would happen to the second criminal?

c) This man was a criminal; he knew he deserved to be punished, so how could Jesus tell him he would go to heaven?

d) Why didn't Jesus say the same thing to the first criminal?

e) What must we do if we want to go to heaven?

f) What do you think about the idea that we can go to heaven just because we trust Jesus? Do you like the idea that even criminals can go to heaven?

7a) What two things happened before Jesus died?

b) Does it normally go dark at 12 noon?

c) In the Bible darkness shows that God is angry about something. Why do you think it went dark when Jesus died?

The Temple was the Jewish religious building. Inside the Temple was a small room called 'the Holy of holies'. This was a symbol of God's presence - God wanted to have a relationship with the people. But the people were sinful and their sin separated them from God. They could not have a relationship with God so they were not allowed to go inside the Holy of holies. The curtain in the Temple separated the Holy of holies from the rest of the Temple. It was a symbol of the separation between people and God created by people's sin.

d) Why was the curtain torn in two when Jesus died?

8a) When the Army officer saw what happened to Jesus, what did he think? Why?

b) How did the people feel when they saw Jesus died? Why?

When different people saw Jesus die, they reacted in different ways:

- Some people were sad about Jesus' death because they loved him.
- Some people were glad about Jesus' death because they hated him.
- Jesus accepted his death because he knew it was what God wanted. He knew it was the only way people could be forgiven for their sins.

9a) What do you think about Jesus' death?

b) How do you feel about the idea that Jesus died to make it possible for God to forgive your sins?

John 9:13-41

Jesus wants to make blind people see

Last week we saw that the Pharisees did not believe Jesus' teaching – they could not 'see' who Jesus really is. Today we will read about a miracle that Jesus performed to show how people can 'see' clearly who he is.

It was a Sabbath. The Sabbath was the Jewish religious day (like the Christians' Sunday) and on the Sabbath Jewish people were not allowed to do any work. This included not healing someone. But Jesus met a man who had been blind all his life, and Jesus healed him, so he could see.

READ JOHN 9:13-17

- 1a) How did Jesus heal the man?
- b) What did the Pharisees think when they heard the story?
- c) Why was healing on the Sabbath a problem?

2a) What did the man think about Jesus?

b) Why?

The Pharisees are not convinced so they ask the man lots more questions.

READ JOHN 9:24

- 3a) What did the Pharisees ask the man to tell them?
- b) The man had already told them that he thought Jesus was a prophet, did they think he was telling them the truth then?
- c) What did they think the truth was?
- d) Why didn't they believe that Jesus healed the man with God's power?

And the man answers...

READ JOHN 9: 31-34

- 4a) We've seen lots of different reactions to Jesus – some believed he was God, others believed he was a sinner – what do you think?
- 5a) Did the man agree with the Pharisees that Jesus was a sinner?
- b) Why not?

READ JOHN 9:35-41

- 6a) Why do you think Jesus went to find the man?

b) How did the man respond when he met Jesus the second time?

c) Why?

d) If we believe in Jesus, how should we respond?

7a) When Jesus said “I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind”, what did he mean?

b) How is it possible for ‘blind’ people to ‘see’?

c) How did the Pharisees feel about what Jesus said?

d) Why?

e) In what way were the Pharisees blind?

f) What did Jesus mean when he said “If you were blind, then you would not be guilty, but since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty.”?

g) Can you see Jesus clearly, or do you need him to heal your blindness?

John 12:12-26

Today we're going to read what happened when Jesus went to Jerusalem for a religious festival and see how different people reacted to him. At that time there were many Jewish people in Jerusalem because it was a special Jewish festival.

READ JOHN 12:12-19

- 1a) What did the crowd do when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem? (v13) Why did they do this? (v17-18) What do you think they were hoping to see?
 - b) What did they call Jesus? (v13) Why do you think they called him the King of Israel?
 - c) What transport did Jesus use to go into the city? (v14)
 - d) Do you think he looked like a king? What did kings travel on in those days? So why did he ride on a young donkey? (v15-16)
 - e) What does this teach us about the kind of king Jesus is?
- 2) How did the Pharisees feel about what the crowds did? (v19) Why were they upset? Why didn't they want the people to follow Jesus?

READ JOHN 12:20-26

- 3a) Philip and Andrew told Jesus some Greeks wanted to see him. How did Jesus respond?
- b) Who was Jesus talking about when he said 'the Son of Man'?
- c) In what way was Jesus going to receive great glory?
- d) He uses the example of a grain of wheat. What does he say must happen to the grain of wheat? So what is going to happen to him?
- e) What do you think the 'many grains' represent? What will come from Jesus' death?

So Jesus is not the kind of king who rides on a great horse, he is the kind of king who will die, and then be followed by many people.

- 4a) We saw earlier that when Jesus did miracles people reacted in different ways. Some people worshipped him as their king because they were impressed by the miracles. Other people hated him because many people were following him. But from v26, how does Jesus want us to respond to him?
- b) What will it mean for us if we follow Jesus? What has Jesus just said will happen to him? What does it mean for us to die?
- c) What do you think about this? Is it easy to follow Jesus?
- d) What does Jesus say will happen if we love our own life? (v25) What does this mean?
- e) What will we receive if we follow Jesus and serve him? (v25, 26)
- f) So what about you? How will you respond to Jesus? Worship him only if he does amazing miracles in your life? Hate him? Or let your selfish part die so you can follow him and serve him?

John 13:1-17

Jesus came to serve

Last week we read about Jesus travelling to Jerusalem. The story we will read today happened a few days later while he was in Jerusalem. It is nearly the end of Jesus' life and he will soon be killed.

READ JOHN 13:1-17

1a) When did this event happen?

b) What did Jesus know was about to happen?

So he knew he would not be on earth for much longer. He knew he had only a short time to teach his disciples. And we will see in this story there were two important things he wanted to teach.

In Israel the ground is very dusty and at this time people wore open sandals – so their feet got very dirty. When they arrived in a house, a slave would wash their feet. Only the lowest and least important slaves had to do this job.

2a) Why do you think the disciples still had dirty, unwashed feet during the meal?

b) What do you think about the fact that Jesus washed their feet?

c) There are three reasons why Jesus did this. What are they? Why did Jesus wash their feet? (v1 and v3-4 and v12-17)?

3a) If you were one of the disciples, how would you feel if Jesus tried to wash your feet?

b) Why did Peter refuse to let Jesus wash his feet?

c) Why did Jesus insist that he must wash Peter's feet?

d) v8 - Why is it impossible for Peter to be a disciple unless Jesus washes his feet? What is Jesus trying to teach Peter? Think about how else Jesus will serve them in the next few days.

If Peter didn't let Jesus wash his feet then he wouldn't let Jesus die for him either. And then he couldn't be a disciple of Jesus.

e) So if we want to be disciples of Jesus, what must we do?

It's impossible for us to be followers of Jesus unless we let him die for us.

f) It's not in this passage, but does any one know why we can't be a follower of Jesus unless we let him die for us?

g) How do you feel about the idea of allowing Jesus to love you and serve you? How do you feel about the idea that Jesus died for you?

4a) Why did Jesus refuse to wash Peter's head and hands?(v10)

b) In what way was Peter clean already?

c) So if he was clean already, why did he need his feet washed?

5a) v12-17, What did Jesus want the disciples to do?

b) What does that mean?

c) Why should the disciples do it? (v14)

d) What do you think about this idea of serving other people?

6) So, will you let Jesus love and serve you? Will you accept that he died for you? Will you follow him and love and serve others?

John 15:1-16:4

Jesus wants us to remain in him

READ JOHN 15:1-17

- 1a) Why does Jesus describe himself as the vine?
- b) Who are the branches?
- c) What are the two different types of branches? (v5-6)

- 2a) What does it mean to remain in Jesus? (v9)
- b) How much does Jesus love us? (v9)
- c) How do you feel about the idea that Jesus loves us that much?
- d) What does Jesus do if we remain united to him? (v4) What does that mean? How do you feel about it?

- 3a) What is the fruit that we produce if we remain in Jesus?

READ GALATIANS 5:22-23

- b) Would you like to produce that fruit?
- c) Why can't we produce fruit by ourselves?
- d) Can we do anything without Jesus? (v5)
- e) Why not?

- 4a) What does Jesus do if we produce fruit? (v2)
- b) What does it mean to be pruned? How do you feel about this?
- c) What is the result of pruning?

- 5a) Why does Jesus want us to bear fruit (v8)?
- b) Why is Jesus telling them all these things about remaining in him? (v11)
- c) What does it mean to have complete joy?
- d) Do you have this kind of joy? Would you like to have this kind of joy?
- e) What do we need to do if we want to have it?

- 6) Jesus said we can ask for anything we wish and we shall have it. Is this really true? What did he mean?

7a) How can we remain in Jesus' love? (v10)

b) Is there anything else we need to do if we want to remain in Jesus' love? Why not?

c) What is Jesus' command?

d) Who do we need to love?

e) How much do we need to love each other?

f) What is the greatest way to show love?

g) Would you like other people to love you that much?

h) Would you like to love other people that much?

i) Can we love others that much?

9a) What kind of relationship do we have with Jesus?

b) How do you feel about that?

10a) What does it mean for Jesus to choose us? (v16) Why doesn't he choose everyone?

b) Jesus has chosen us to bear fruit, does this mean that we just wait for the fruit to appear? What do we need to do?

11a) What happens to people who don't remain in Jesus?

b) How do you feel about that?

12a) So, how can we bear good fruit?

b) And how can we remain in Jesus?

READ JOHN 15:18-16:4a

13a) What does Jesus mean by the world?

b) Why does the world hate Christians?

c) How do you feel about the idea of being hated by the world?

d) Have you ever experienced this kind of hatred?

e) What should we do if we find that the world hates us?

14a) Why did Jesus tell the disciples that they would suffer in this way? (16:1, 4)

b) What can we learn from this?

15a) What does God think about people who hate Christians in this way? (v22)

b) Why are they guilty of sin?

16a) Jesus tells his disciples that they must speak about him. What must they speak about?

b) Why must they speak about him?

c) What can we learn from this?

d) Who else will speak about Jesus?

e) How can this encourage us?

John 20:1-18

Jesus is Alive!

1) Can you think of a time when someone you loved died? How did you feel?

Last time we learnt that Jesus was killed on a cross. This happened on a Friday. After he died his disciples buried his body in a tomb. The Saturday was a special day of rest for the Jews so no one went to the tomb on the Saturday. Today we are going to read what happened on the Sunday.

READ JOHN 20:1-10

2a) Why did Mary go to the tomb on the Sunday morning?

b) How do you think she felt before she got to the tomb?

c) What do you think she expected to find when she got to the tomb?

d) But what did she find? What was not there?

e) What did she think had happened? Who did she think had taken the body? Imagine you were Mary – how would you feel? How do you think she felt?

3a) Who else went to the tomb? Who was the other disciple? (So John is writing about things that he actually saw himself!)

b) What did they see when they got to the tomb? (2 things)

c) What did John think when he saw the linen wrappings? What did he believe? (JOHN 20:31) How did seeing the linen wrappings help him to believe? What did he not understand?

d) What do you think had happened? Are you like Mary (who thought the reason they couldn't see the body of Jesus was because the Jews had taken it)? Are you like Peter (who saw that Jesus was alive, but didn't understand why)? Or are you like John (who believed that Jesus was alive and understood why but didn't understand how that related to the Old Testament)? Or something else?

(OT scripture: Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 (especially 10-11), Psalm 16:9-11)

READ JOHN 20:11-18

4a) What did Mary see when she looked inside the tomb?

b) What question did they ask her? Who else asked her the same question?

c) Think about what Mary said when she answered these questions. Why did she want to find Jesus' body?

d) Why did she not recognise Jesus when she saw him?

e) The angels and Jesus must have known that she was looking for the body of Jesus, and that she was sad because it was missing. So why did they ask her why she was crying?

Mary was very sad because Jesus was dead. The one thing she wanted was to get the body back. That was the best thing she could hope for. But Jesus and the angels wanted her to see that God had something even better to give her.

5) Think about your life – what do you hope for? What's the best thing you're hoping for now? What do you think about the idea that God may have something even better planned for you?!! How could the fact that Jesus is alive be better than the things you are hoping for?

6a) When did Mary understand that she was talking to Jesus? Why did Jesus say her name like that?

b) How do you think she felt then? What did she do? (Why did Jesus tell her not to hold onto him?)

c) Why do you think Mary wanted to hold onto Jesus?

d) Why didn't he want her to hold onto him?

e) What did Jesus tell her to do? Why did Jesus give her this message? What did it mean for the disciples? What was their relationship with God now?

At first Mary could not believe that Jesus was alive. She was certain he had died. She knew that dead people stay dead. So she never even thought that he might be alive again! But Jesus spoke to her to help her believe.

7) How can this help us if we find it hard to believe that Jesus died and then came to life again?

8) If we do believe that Jesus came to life again, what should we do next? Why? How?

Acts 1 & 2

The First Christians

'Acts' is a book that tells us what happened after Jesus returned to heaven. It is the story of the first Christians. It was written by Luke. It was written to the same person to whom Luke wrote his gospel – Theophilus.

READ ACTS 1:1-5

- 1a) What happened after Jesus' death?
- b) Why did Jesus appear to them so many times?
- c) Why was it important that the disciples were convinced that Jesus really had risen from death? (v2 – what does Apostle mean? Also, see LUKE 24:45-49).
- d) What did Jesus promise they would receive?

READ ACTS 2:1-17

- 2a) Where were the believers on the day of Pentecost (v1)?
- b) What happened?
- c) How do you think the believers felt when this happened? Were they expecting it?
- 3a) How many different languages did the believers speak?
- b) What were they speaking about (v11)?

The people listening were all Jewish people (some by birth and others because they had converted) but they were from many different countries so they spoke many different languages.

- 4a) *How did these Jewish people feel when they heard the believers speaking in other languages (v6, 7, 8, 12)?*
- b) *Why were they so surprised? (v7)*
- c) Some of the Jews thought the believers were drunk. What do you think? Were they drunk?
- d) Why is it unlikely they were drunk (v 15)?
- e) So why are they speaking in languages they have never learned (v16-17, v4)?
- f) Why did the Holy Spirit want them to talk in different languages?

So, God's message is not just for people from Israel. It's for people from all countries.

- 5a) Who is it that explains to the Jews why they are speaking in strange languages?
- b) When Jesus was arrested, Peter denied that he knew him three times because he was scared of being arrested too. Why is he now so bold and brave?

c) How can we speak boldly and bravely about Jesus?

READ ACTS 2:22-24, 32-33, 36

6a) *What do we learn about Jesus?*

b) Why did Peter think they should believe that Jesus had divine authority (v22)?

c) You've read about the miracles and wonders Jesus did. Do you think Jesus had divine authority?

d) Why was Jesus killed (v23, 36)? Why did God decide to let the people kill Jesus?

e) How did Peter try to convince them that God really did raise Jesus from death (v 32)?

f) What is your feeling as you read what Peter said?

g) Why was Peter so convinced? Why was he so desperate for them to believe?

READ ACTS 2:36-42

6a) How did the people feel when they heard what Peter said (v37)?

b) Why do you think they felt like this?

c) Had they killed Jesus? (v36)

d) Who else was responsible for Jesus' death?

e) How do you feel about this?

7a) What did the people do (v37)?

b) What did Peter tell them to do (v38)?

c) If we feel deeply troubled because our sin caused Jesus to die, what should we do?

8a) What did Peter promise them if they did turn away from their sins and get baptised (v38)?

b) Who is this promise for (v39)?

9a) Why did Peter want them to turn away from their sins and get baptised (v40)?

b) What will happen to us if we don't turn away from our sins and get baptised?

c) What would Peter say to us?

10a) How did the people respond to what Peter said (v41)?

b) What about us? How will we respond to this message?

11a) What did they do after they believed (v42)?

b) How can we learn from the apostles?

c) How much time do you spend reading the Bible? Meeting with Christians? Praying with Christians?

Acts 17:16-34

The nature of God

READ ACTS 17:16-21

- 1a) How did Paul feel when he saw that there were many idols in Athens?
- b) Why do you think he was upset?
- c) What did he do when he was upset?
- d) Why do you think he did this?

2a) Who did he have discussions with?

Epicurean: They believed that happiness is the greatest good. Sensual pleasure was very important

Stoic: They believed people should live in harmony with nature, be independent and ignore/control their desires (they lived very simple lives)

- b) What did he discuss with them? (v18)
- c) What did they think about what he said?
- d) Why did some of them want to take him to the city council?
- e) Why did they want to understand him?
- f) Why do you want to study the Bible?

READ ACTS 17:22-34

- 3a) What was the first thing Paul said to them? (v22)
 - b) Why did he start by saying this?
 - c) If we want to tell people about Jesus, where should we start?
 - d) Why do you think the Athenians had an altar for an unknown God?
 - e) Are you worried that you might offend God unintentionally?
- 4a) What did Paul teach them about God?
- b) How is God (as Paul describes him here) different from the other gods the Athenians worshipped?
 - c) Why did Paul say that God doesn't live in temples made by human hands?
- 5a) What sort of things would the Athenians think this unknown God might need from them? (v25)
- b) Do you think there is anything God needs us to do for him?

- c) Why did Paul say that God doesn't need anything from us?
- d) What does God want us to do for him?
- e) But how are we able to do that?
- f) What does Paul mean by 'he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else'?
- g) If God gives us everything we have, including life, what should be our attitude to him?
- h) How do you feel about the idea that everything good we do doesn't really come from us, it comes from God who made us?
- 6a) Who is in control of when and where each race on earth lives? (v26) Who decided when and where you would live? Who decided you would come to [the UK]?
- b) Why did God decide to put particular nations in particular places at particular times? (v27) Why did God send you to [the UK]?
- c) What do you think about the fact that God wants us to seek him?
- d) Why does he want us to look for him? Why does he want us to find him?
- e) Is God difficult to find? Why/ why not?
- f) In what way is God not far from us? (v28)
- g) Does God feel close to you? How can you be close to God?
- 7a) What did Paul mean when he said we are God's offspring?
- b) Why does the fact that we are God's children mean we should not think he's an image made from gold or silver or stone?
- c) If we are not to think about God as an image, how should we think about him?
- 8a) How did God respond when people did not know him in the past?
- b) How does he respond when they do not know him now?
- c) What does it mean to repent?
- d) We've just learnt that God is not far from us, so why do we need to repent before we can know God?
- e) Why is it important for us that we repent? What will happen to us if we don't? (v31)
- f) How will God judge the world? What does this mean for us if we don't repent?
- g) Who will judge the world? Why is it important that the judge is a man?
- h) How has God proved that this man will judge the world?

i) When will God judge the world?

9a) How did the people respond to Paul's teaching?

b) How would you respond if you were there? How will you respond now?

c) Why did some of the people make fun of Paul?

d) What do you think about the idea of someone rising from death?

Ephesians 1:1-14

Ephesians is a letter written by Paul to the Christians who lived in Ephesus. At this time Ephesus was a very important city in what we now call Turkey. In fact the letter was probably intended to be read by the Ephesians and then passed on to other Christians in other places around Ephesus.

READ EPHESIANS 1:1-2

- 1a) How does Paul describe himself?
- b) What does 'apostle' mean?
- c) Why is he an apostle?
- d) If he's an apostle by God's will, how should the Christians in Ephesus respond to his teaching? How should they see it? What about us?

God's plan and purpose is something Paul talks about in this letter a lot. Here Paul says it was God's plan for him to be an apostle.

- e) Do you know what God's plan for you is?
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- 2a) How does Paul describe the people in Ephesus?
 - b) Who do they belong to?
 - c) What is their relationship with Jesus? What does it mean to be in union with Jesus?
 - d) What does it mean to be faithful in your life in union with Christ Jesus?
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- 3) What does Paul pray for the Ephesians? What is grace? What is peace?

READ EPHESIANS 1:3-14

This is the introduction to the letter. Most of the ideas here will be talked about in more detail later in the letter.

- 4a) Paul tells us to give thanks to God. Why? What should we give thanks for?
 - b) When did God choose us? (v4)
 - c) Why do you think Paul tells the Ephesians that God has chosen them? How would it encourage them? Does it encourage you?
 - d) What has God chosen us for? (v4) Did God choose us because we are holy?
 - e) Imagine yourself standing before God. Do you feel holy and without fault?
 - f) How can we belong to God and be holy and without fault? (v4)
-
- 5a) Paul says that God has made us his sons and daughters. Why did God decide to do this? (v4b, 5)

b) How do you feel about the idea that God loves you? Do you feel that God loves you? What can we do when we don't feel that God loves us?

c) How does God feel when we are his sons and daughters? (v5)

d) What did Jesus have to do before we could become God's children? Why did he do this? (v6-7)

e) Paul says by the blood of Jesus we are set free. What are we set free from? (v7)

f) How should we respond to what Jesus has done for us? (v6)

So Jesus' death was so that God would be praised!

6a) What is God's plan for creation (v10)

b) What does this mean?

So God's plan is for everything in creation to obey Christ as King.

c) How can we be part of that plan?

d) When did God decide his plan?

e) When will God complete his plan? (v10)

From the beginning to the end of time it is God's plan for everything to obey Christ as King.

f) Will God achieve his plan? How can we know this?

g) How do you feel about the idea that all things are done according to God's plan?

7a) When did the Ephesians become God's people? What did they have to do before they could be God's people? (v13)

b) Have you heard this Good News message? Have you believed in Jesus?

c) When we are God's people how does he show us we belong to him? (v13)

d) What is the Holy Spirit a guarantee of? (v14)

e) What has God promised us?

f) What sort of freedom will God give us?

Ephesians 1:15-2:10

Ephesians is a letter written by Paul to the Christians who lived in Ephesus. At this time Ephesus was a very important city in what we now call Turkey. In fact the letter was probably intended to be read by the Ephesians and then passed on to other Christians in other places around Ephesus.

READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23

- 1a) Why did Paul give thanks to God?
 - b) Why did Paul thank God for these things? Where did their faith and love come from?
 - c) If Paul was writing to you would he thank God for your faith and love?
 - d) If we want to have more faith or more love what should we do?
-
- 2a) How much did Paul give thanks for their faith and love?
 - b) What sort of things do you thank God for?
 - c) How much do you thank God?
-
- 3a) What does Paul pray for them?
 - b) Why does Paul want them to have the Spirit?
 - c) What does Paul mean when he prays for them to be wise? What does he want them to be wise about?
 - d) Paul has just said that he thanks God for their faith. So why did Paul pray for them to know God?
 - e) Would you like to know God?
 - f) How can we know God?
-
- 4a) Why does Paul want God to open their minds? (3 things) (v18-19)
 - b) What is the hope to which we've been called?
 - c) How will seeing God's light help us to know that hope?
 - d) Why do you think Paul wants us to know that hope?
 - e) Do you know anything of that hope? How can you know more?
-
- 5a) What are the wonderful blessings God promises his people?
 - b) How will knowing God's light help us to know how rich those blessings are?
 - c) Why do you think Paul wants us to know how wonderful those blessings are?
 - d) Do you know anything of how wonderful those blessings are? How can you know more?

- 6a) How does God's power work in us if we believe?
- b) How great is that power? How has God shown us how great his power is?
- c) Why do you think Paul wants us to know how great that power is?
- d) Do you see God's power working in you?

- 7a) What do we learn about Jesus in v21?
- b) So what should be our attitude to Jesus?
- c) Do we see Jesus having authority and power over this world? Now?
- d) So when will it happen?
- e) Which part of the world do we see Jesus having authority over?
- f) What does it mean for Jesus to have authority over the church?
- g) Paul says Jesus completes all things everywhere. What does this mean?
- h) So what are our lives like if they don't include Jesus? What are they like if they do include Jesus?

READ EPHESIANS 2:1-3

- 8a) What were the Ephesians like in the past? (v1)
 - b) Why were they spiritually dead?
 - c) What does Paul mean by spiritually dead?
 - d) When someone is dead, is there anything they can do to make themselves alive again? Is there anything their friends can do? What about when we're spiritually dead, is there anything we can do to make ourselves spiritually alive? Anything our friends can do to help us?
-
- 3a) Who did the Ephesians follow in the past? (v2)
 - b) What is the world's evil way?
 - c) Who did they obey? (v2)
 - d) Who is the ruler of the spiritual powers in space?
-
- 4a) How did the Ephesians decide what to do? (v3)
 - b) What are our natural desires?

5a) So Paul describes the Ephesians as having been spiritually dead, disobedient, sinful, followers of the world's evil way, obeying Satan, controlled by their natural desires. Who else does he describe like this? (v2b, 3)

b) What do you think? Is everyone like this? Are you like this? Were you like this before you became a Christian?

6a) How does God feel when we live according to our natural desires? (v3)

b) Why is he angry? Why is it a problem if we live according to our natural desires? What's wrong with our natural desires?

(SEE MARK 7:20-23)

c) Is there anything we can do to change our natural desires?

So in our natural state we have a problem – we're spiritually dead and we can't make ourselves alive; we're controlled by our natural desires and we can't change them.

READ EPHESIANS 2:4-10

7a) In verse 3 God was described as angry. What else do we learn about him in verse 4?

b) What did God's mercy and love cause him to do for us?

So we are unable to make ourselves spiritually alive, but God is able.

c) What does this teach us about God?

d) How did God bring us to life with Christ? What did Christ do?

e) If you know that God has given you spiritual life, how do you feel about it? How do you respond to his love?

Remember Paul is writing to Christians.

9) Why does God rescue people from spiritual death? Is it so they can have a comfortable life? Is it so they can boast about how good they are?

10a) So God is able to make us spiritually alive, because Jesus died for us. But what do we need to have before we can receive this spiritual life?(v8) How are we saved?

b) What does it mean to have faith?

c) Have you put your trust in God?

11a) So does God save us and make us spiritually alive because of what we do?

b) Why does God make us spiritually alive as a gift?

- c) If spiritual life is nothing to do with what we do, can we feel proud about it?
- d) How do you feel about the idea that we can't make ourselves spiritually alive, but God offers us spiritual life as a gift?
- e) What do you learn from verses 8-9 that will affect the way you live this week?
- 12a) v 10, so if we are saved only because of God's grace and not because of anything we do, does this mean we can do whatever we like and it doesn't matter?
- b) How are we able to do these good deeds that God has prepared for us? What needs to happen first? What does our relationship with Jesus need to be?
- c) How should a Christian life be different to a non-Christian life?
- d) Why is it different? What should motivate a Christian to do good deeds?
- e) If you are a Christian what do you learn from verse 10? How will it affect the way you live this week?

Ephesians 2:11-3:13

Circumcision is something that Jewish people do. It shows that they are Jewish. God told them to do it to show that they are different to other nations, to show that they belong to God. It is a physical operation for baby boys (when they are 8 days old) where a small piece of skin is removed from the end of their penis.

Gentiles are people who are not Jewish. They are called 'uncircumcised' by the Jews. Jews look down on Gentiles because they are not Jewish and therefore not circumcised. Because they are not circumcised they do not belong to God.

READ EPHESIANS 2:11-22

1a) What was life like for the Gentiles before Jesus came? (v12)

b) How does it feel to be a foreigner?

c) What does it feel like to be without hope?

d) This is a description of anyone who does not belong to God. It sounds very depressing. Do you feel like this? Have you ever felt like this?

2a) How is life different for Gentiles now? (v13)

b) Why is it different now? (v13)

c) How do you think these people felt when they realised they could belong to God through Jesus, without needing to be circumcised?

d) How do you feel about belonging to God? Do you understand what a privilege it is?

3a) Before Jesus came Jews and Gentiles were enemies (v14). What is their relationship now?

b) How did Jesus do this? (v15,16)

The Jewish law is the instructions God gave Moses about circumcision, food and drink, holy days and seasons and many other things. Jewish people had to obey these laws to please God. If they didn't obey them they couldn't continue to be God's people.

c) If Jesus abolished the Jewish law, what does that mean for Jewish people? Do they still need to be circumcised? How do you think the Jewish people felt about being free from the Jewish law?

d) Paul says that Jesus has made one new people out of the two races. Today there are many races in the world. What does it mean for us to be one new people in union with Jesus?

e) So how should we relate to Christians from other countries?

f) What other groups of people who would normally be enemies (or at least competing against each other) can be brought together through Jesus?

g) So if we are Christians, what should be our attitude to our own country or 'group'? Is it more or less important than our Christian family?

- 4a) Paul uses the example of a building to help us understand what our lives are like. Who built the foundation of the building? (v20)
- b) So, what is the foundation of the building?
- c) What does this mean for us? What should our faith be based on? What should our lives be built on?
- d) What else do people try to build their lives on?
- e) What is the cornerstone (the most important stone in the building – without it the building would collapse) of the building? (v20)
- f) What does this mean for us? What will happen to our lives if we turn away from Jesus or ignore him?
- g) Jesus is the one who holds the building together and makes it grow. What does this mean?
- h) Paul says Jesus makes us grow into a sacred temple. What does that mean? (v22)
- i) If we are being built together into a place where God loves through his spirit, how should we relate to each other? What would you say to someone who says she doesn't need to go to church, so can be a Christian by herself at home alone with God?

READ EPHESIANS 3:1-13

- 5a) v1, 13, what do we learn about Paul's situation when he wrote this letter?
- b) Why was he suffering? Why was he in prison? (v13)
- c) Why was Paul, a Jew, willing to suffer for the Gentiles? (v2)
- d) What is the secret plan that God revealed to Paul? (v6). So why was Paul willing to suffer for the Gentiles?
- e) Paul suffered greatly because of his faith in Jesus. Many other Christians have suffered in a similar way, and many still suffer today. Would you be willing to suffer for Jesus if that's what God wanted you to do?
- 6a) Now that Paul understands this secret, what does God want him to be? (v7)
- b) How is he able to be a servant of the gospel? Where does his power come from? What is this power? (v7)
- c) What does God want him to do? (v8)
- d) If we understand that the good news about Jesus is for everyone, what should we do?
- 7a) Why did God choose Paul? Was it because he was a great man? (v8)
- b) If God chose Paul even though he was the least of all God's people, who else could he choose? Could he choose you?
- c) If God chooses you for a special task, how will he help you to do it?

d) Paul suffered greatly because he took the gospel to the Gentiles, but he describes it as a privilege (v8). If you were suffering like Paul would you consider it a privilege? Why do you think he considered it a privilege?

8a) What was the message that Paul took to the Gentiles? (v8)

b) What are the infinite riches of Christ?

c) v12, what does this mean for us now? How are we able to go into God's presence?

d) How do you feel about this idea of going boldly and confidently into God's presence? Do you do it?

e) Paul is in prison at the moment so he can't visit people and tell them this good news about Jesus. So what did he do instead? (v1, and how did the Ephesians get this letter?)

f) What should we do as well as telling people about Jesus?

9a) Why did God keep this message secret in the past? (v9-10)

b) How do angels learn of God's wisdom?

Ephesians 3:14-21

Paul starts chapter 3 by saying 'For this reason... pray to God'. He then gets a bit distracted by another thought. But in verse 14 he returns to the idea of verse 1 'For this reason... I pray'. So to understand why he is praying in verse 14, we need to understand why he is praying in verse 1. The reason is found in chapter 2 verses 11 to 22. There Paul explained that through Jesus' death all people can be forgiven for their sin and become God's children. It doesn't matter what our nationality is, Jesus' death was for all of us. And so we are all one in Jesus, whatever our nationality. And it is for this reason that Paul prays to God. Today we're going to look at what he prays.

READ EPHESIANS 3:14-21

- 1a) What does Paul do with his body while he prays? (v14)
- b) In those days people usually stood to pray. Why did Paul kneel? What attitude does kneeling express?
- c) When you pray to God, do you think about his greatness and your smallness/unworthiness? Do you have this kind of respect and awe?
- 2a) What word does Paul use to describe God? What name does he give to God? (v14)
- b) What does this word tell us about God? What do you expect a good human father to do/be for his children? Why does Paul call God the Father? What does it show us about Paul's attitude to God? [In those days fathers were respected and obeyed.]
- c) Do you think about God as your Father in this way?
- 3a) v16, what does Paul pray for?
- b) Why does Paul want them to have power? What does he want them to have power for? (v16)
- c) Where does this power come from? How do they receive it into their inner beings?
- d) What does it mean by 'in your inner selves'? What is our inner self?
- e) How can the Holy Spirit help us to be strong in our inner selves?
- 4a) v17, what else does Paul pray for?
- b) What does it mean for Jesus to make his home in our hearts?
- c) How does Jesus get into our hearts? What do we need to have? (v17)
- d) Does Jesus live in your heart in this way?
- 5a) What else does Paul pray for in v17?
- b) Paul is using the picture of a tree that needs strong roots that go deep into the ground to stop it falling over, and the picture of a building that needs a strong foundation in the ground to stop it falling down. As

Christians we also need strong roots or a strong foundation. What do our roots and foundation need to go into?

c) What is this love? Who does it come from?

d) What does it mean for us to have our roots and foundation in Christ's love?

e) What is Christ's love like? In what way is it broad (wide)? In what way is it long? In what way is it high? In what way is it deep? Who is this love for? (v18)

f) How can we understand this love? (v18) Why do we need God's power to understand it?

Before Paul prayed for them to understand this love, he prayed that Christ would make his home in their hearts. It is when we have Christ in our heart that we can know Christ's love in our heart.

g) Do you know this kind of love in your heart?

h) Can we ever fully know this love?

i) So why does Paul pray that they will come to know it? What is he really praying for them?

j) Paul says that if we come to know this love we will be filled with the very nature of God. Is it possible for all of God to be inside us? So what does Paul mean?

6a) Paul has been asking for some big things: things we cannot do by ourselves, things only God can do. Why does he ask God for such difficult things? (v20)

b) How do you feel about the idea that God can do more than we could ask or even think of?

c) What does this make you think about God? What does it teach us about God? How does Paul react to this idea in verse 21?