

Session 1 - Rising from the Dead John 20:

1. How much of the Easter story do your friends think is true? None of it, only in a spiritual/metaphorical sense, historically accurate for the time (except the resurrection)...
2. How would you explain to them that belief in the resurrection is essential to the Christian faith?

Read John 20

3. What are some clues that the disciples discover in the tomb that tell them that Jesus' body was likely not stolen?
4. At what point did Mary recognize the risen Jesus? What can put us in a position to hear Him call our name? (John 10.3)
5. What emotions was Mary feeling before she saw Jesus? How did those change after she saw Jesus?
6. What emotions were the disciples feeling before they saw Jesus? How did those change after they saw Jesus?
7. Describe your reaction when you realized that Jesus rose from the dead.
8. To help the disciples move from fear to courage, what did Jesus say and do (John 20:19-22)? What call to action did Jesus give them in John 20:21? How does this call to action apply to us today?
9. Before Thomas called Jesus his Lord and his God, what happened (John 20:26-29)? Do you call Jesus your Lord and your God? What happened before you could say that?
10. Is doubt necessarily a bad thing for believers to experience? Explain your answer.
11. Three times Jesus says to the disciples "Peace be with you" – What is the significance of this greeting?
12. Every sermon in Acts speaks of Jesus' resurrection, but not every sermon in Acts talks about Jesus sacrifice on the cross. Does the modern church focus too much on the cross and not enough on the resurrection? Explain your answer.
13. In what way should the reality of Jesus' resurrection shape your life?

Session 2 - On the Road to Emmaus

1. Read Luke 24:13-49
2. Imagine if you were one of these disciples walking home. What thoughts and questions might be going through your head after the events of the preceding weekend?
3. '....but we had hoped' v21 How do you deal with great disappointment? Could you share some experiences of times when you have felt hugely let down & deflated?
4. Why did they not realise that Jesus had predicted these events? Why did Jesus have to repeat it all? v25-27. Can you think of times when you, too, have needed to have truths retold?
5. What are the implications of Jesus having to open the eyes (v31) and minds (v45) of His own disciples to recognize Him and understand the true meaning of the Scriptures? How does this practically impact how we approach the Scriptures?
6. How are the disciples who walked with Jesus impacted and changed by their interaction with Jesus and the way He opens the Scriptures for them?
7. Where have you seen the Scriptures burn in your heart (v32) in such a way that what you love, your desires and hopes and dreams have been transformed by the truth of who God is and who you are?
8. What do you understand about Jesus disappearing and turning up in Jerusalem? How do you interpret Jesus travelling through space?
9. You might like to compare this passage the other resurrection appearances in the gospels: Mark 16:14-20 & John 20:24-21:25. What else do you learn about Jesus and his relationship with his followers?

Session 3 – Mark 16

Read Mark 16 on the Resurrection

1. What stands out for you in Mark's account of the Resurrection?
2. Put yourself in the place of the women in Mark's account (vv 1-8). What emotions do you think they would they have experienced?
3. Why was it necessary for the stone to have been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb? And who was responsible?
4. Who was this young man dressed in white? (v 5)
5. Why does the young man say to the women, '...go, tell his disciples *and Peter*...'?
6. The young man continues, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' When did Jesus tell them this and what was the context?
7. Our Bible tells us that serious doubt exists as to whether verses 9-20 belong to the Gospel of Mark:
 - Why might this be?
 - Would you find v 8 a satisfactory ending to the Gospel?
 - Despite the reservations regarding these verses, are they a helpful summary of what we know from the other Gospels? Is there anything new in them?
 - What do we make of the *signs* which it is said will accompany those who believe (vv 17-18)?
 - Do the doubts surrounding these verses undermine your confidence in Mark's Gospel (or even the Gospels in general)? Explain....
8. Read Romans 1: 1-4. Discuss these verses and give thanks to God for Jesus Christ our Lord!

Session 4 – John 21

1. Do you have a 'comfortable place', somewhere you go to when life is rough? It could be a physical place (a walk in the park), or an activity you do (knitting), a memory....? Why is that place significant to you?

Read John 21

2. Peter went back to the Sea of Galilee to fish. Describe a time when life seemed crazy and you wanted to surround yourself with the familiar and go back to your comfort place.
3. In v.7, John (the disciple whom Jesus loved), suddenly recognised Jesus – Why?
4. What strikes you about Peter's reaction to Jesus' presence?
5. What do you think is the significance of Jesus sharing a meal with the disciples in vv.12-14?
6. Why does Jesus ask Peter the same question 3 times? (read John 18.15-18 & John 18.25-27)
7. What encouragement can we take for our own lives from the way Jesus 'reinstates' Peter in John 21?
8. When Peter responds each time saying he loves Jesus, Jesus then asks Peter to express the love he has for him by action? Why do you think he does this? Are the answers you gave relevant for us today or specific for Peter's situation?
9. What do vv.18-23 have to say about what it means to follow (be a disciple of) Jesus?
10. Just after Jesus reinstates Peter and recommissions him Peter asks questions about Jesus' plan for other disciples (v20-22) Do you sometimes get preoccupied with what the Lord is doing in someone else's life instead of focusing on how he is at work in your own life?
11. What are some ways we can help each other to listen to what Jesus is and wants to work through our own lives?

Session 5 – Saul’s Conversion

1. Who is the most outspoken critic of Christianity that you know? What would it take for you to believe that they might believe the gospel?

Read Acts 9.1-19

2. Christianity at this time was known as “the way.” What do you think is the origin of this name?
3. Why do you think Saul hated Christianity so much? (Read Acts 7:54-60.) Why is he heading to Damascus?
4. What is the first question Jesus asks Saul? Why did He phrase His question this way?
5. In verse 10, the focus shifts to Ananias. What does God want him to do? How does he feel about this?
6. How would you feel if God wanted you to meet with someone known for killing Christians? Would you do it?
7. In verse 15, God says that Saul is to be His chosen instrument for taking the gospel to the Gentiles. What would have made Saul a good candidate for this task?
8. How does Ananias address Saul? What does this indicate about the way Ananias’ attitude towards Saul has changed? What changed it? How easy would you find it to make that step?
9. What can we learn about ourselves and our response to God from the way Jesus interacts and works in Saul? What can we learn about ourselves and God from the way God interacts and works in Ananias?
10. Much of the ‘raw ingredients’ of Saul were already there for his ministry as Paul. All that was missing, although extremely crucial, was a relationship with Jesus and power of the Holy Spirit? (Firstly do you agree with that statement?!) What does this tell us about the way God has made us and what he calls us to?

Session 7 – Prayer

If you are keeping up with the Sunday sermon series this will be the week after the Be Our Guest service. However most groups are one or two weeks behind due to public holidays and other factors. This week therefore is a chance for you to catch up. However we would like to encourage all small groups to consider having an evening of prayer.

Some suggestions to get going. Feel free to add to this list or adapt for your group. Start by asking one another what you areas you would like the rest of your group to pray about.

For one another - Take time to catch up properly, spiritually check in with each other and pray into what is shared.

For friends and family – Those for whom life (or aspects of life) are a struggle or a stretch at the moment. Amongst this please be intentional about praying for specific people to hear and know Jesus.

For church life – Prayer for areas of church life you are involved with or have a passion for.

Also for

- the mission of the church, for Fun Tots, Messy Church & Be Our Guest services where we are meeting people who do not yet know Jesus.
- Our gathered worship and what we do as church together
- Our scattered worship (day to day living in the places God has called us)
- Those in our church who are moving on
- Transition period when Simon moves on to when a new Chaplain is appointed
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For the world – For organisations we support and pray for through MIG. For events/elections around the world. A useful guide to how to pray for world affairs, justice, climate <https://www.24-7prayer.com/prayfortheworld>

Praise and thanks - take time to give thanks for who God is.

Scripture - You might like to use some Psalms or other scripture throughout the prayer time.

Psalms 3, Psalm 5, Psalm 9, Psalm 66, Psalm 95, Psalm 100, Matthew 11:28–29, Hebrews 4:14–16,

Session 8 – Spiritual Gifts

1. When have you felt that you were part of a team, division, unit... where all the parts worked together for a common goal? Describe.

2. **Read 1 Corinthians 12.1-11**

3. What is or has been your attitude toward spiritual gifts? a.) For pastors only. b.) For all believers. c.) For mature believers. d.) Those were for Bible times. e.) I've never really had a clear understanding of spiritual gifts.

4. What is the purpose of having spiritual gifts?

5. Do you know what your spiritual gift(s)?

Take time to look at these passages for some of the different spiritual gifts that the Bible lists. (You might want to discuss what you think some of them are): 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 12:28; Romans 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:9-10; Exodus 31:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Ps. 150:3-5.

6. If members are unsure what their gifts are you might like to go around the group and encourage one another by say what you see in each other that might be a gift.

7. What does it mean to use your gifts for the common good? (v7)

8. What do verses 4-5,11 tell us about a 'hierarchy' of gifts and our own 'success' in having them?

9. Do you see the connection between how God has gifted you and how you can impact the world around you? In what ways are you using your gifts to influence the world around you? If not what is hindering you/holding you back? (we will focus on our use of them in the church next week)

10. What is your next step in either to try and identify or have confidence in the gifts God has given you OR/AND to use them more?

Session 9 – One Body, Many Parts

Last week we focused on what our spiritual gifts are and how we use them in the world. This week we will focus on using them in the church.

1. **Read 1 Corinthians 12.12.31a**
2. Look at verses 12-14 What are the implications that, as Christians, we are a vital part of a living organism?
3. The word “one” is mentioned 6 times in these three verses, so one obvious theme is unity. From this passage, what do you think the Holy Spirit’s role is in fostering Christian unity?
4. Looking at verses 15-26, what problems in the Corinthian church can you discern? Why would these issues be so divisive?
5. How do you think these issues apply most to our church setting?
6. How do these verses balance unity and diversity? In your experience of church here and in other places, does the church value unity or diversity more? Why? Do you think this could be better balanced? How?
7. How are you using your spiritual gifts at St Paul’s? If not what is hindering you/holding you back?
8. How do you feel knowing that you are a vital part of church life? (v27) Have you ever thought of your connection to church life in this way?
9. What is the impact on the church and our communities if we are encouraged and step forward to use our gifts verses if we hold on to them and do not use them?
10. What opportunities are there for you to use your gifts that you are yet to do so? Does that thought leave you feeling guilty/exhausted that there is more to do or excited that God chooses you and has equipped you to be part of his plan to change the world? Pray into your groups honest responses.

Session 10 – Love

1. Can you share a story where you shared real kindness with someone or someone showed kindness to you in a meaningful way?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 12.31b-13.13**
3. How familiar are you with this passage? Where have you heard it read most?
4. We have been looking at spiritual gifts, how does this passage show us that those gifts can be useless?
5. Why do you think that God defined love here? (if it adds to the discussion the Greek use of love here is agape)
6. Although this passage is often used as a soft and gentle love poem at weddings the church in Corinth would have received this as a strongly worded telling off. Therefore what do you think is going on behind the scenes in the Corinthian church?
7. This passage also falls within a section on the letter looking at orderly worship when the church gathered. Does that change the way we see this chapter? Does it change our view on worshipping together?
8. Reread verses 4-7, which of these aspects of love do you find most challenging, specifically when you are thinking in the context of loving your brothers and sisters in Christ, week to week?
9. God is love. In what ways has/does Jesus demonstrate these aspects of love?
10. What steps do I need to take to show and live out this type of love in our church?

Session 11 – Armour of God

1. Share about a time in your life where you felt that there were things working against you? Did you at the time/Do you now see these things as spiritual?
2. **Read Ephesians 6.10-20**
3. What does Paul want us to understand about the battle we face as Christians?
4. Throughout the letter, Paul has stressed that we must rely on God's strength in and through us (See 3:14-19). What's the difference between using our own strength and being strong in God's might? (v10)
5. What reasons in v11-12 does Paul give for the command "Put on the full armour of God"?
6. Go through each piece of the armour, why do you think Paul linked each individual attribute/character to that piece of equipment? How do the metaphors help us? (i.e. in what ways is faith a shield?)
7. How should the reality of spiritual battle affect the way a Christian prays? (18-20)
8. What does it mean to rely on Christ's strength and not our own?
9. All of us have a few chinks in our armour. What's an area you would like to grow in? Where do you most need God's power in your life?