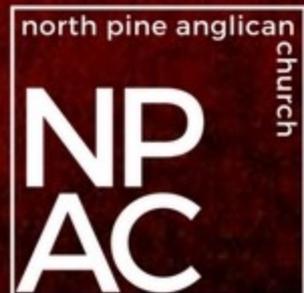


LENT
2018

Name

TRUTH REVEALED

JOHN
1-5



NPAC is a Church of people who
Love Jesus • **Grow** Disciples • **Serve** and **Change** the World

Lent? What and Why

Lent is a season for spiritual renewal ... renewal that requires deep reflection, honesty and prayer, and a renewed understanding of the Scriptures.

Lent invites us to make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion and celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

The practice of a forty-day preparation period began in the Christian church during the third and fourth centuries.

The number forty carries Biblical significance based on the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness and Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness. The forty days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday and continue to Easter Day, not counting Sundays (which are always reserved for celebratory worship!)

The Gospel of John

From the beginning to the end, the Gospel of John shows that Jesus is God in flesh. It shows his authority and his right to call people to the truth, which is Himself.

There is no doubt that this Gospel is more complex than Matthew, Mark and Luke. It presents the story of Jesus through theological themes rather than an historical timeframe. It has been said, however, that this Gospel is —

*'like a pool that's safe for a child to paddle in
but deep enough for an elephant to swim in.'*

The author identifies himself as an eye-witness [John 19:35], and as the beloved Disciple [John 21:24].

Origen [Church father AD185-254] described the Gospels as the first-fruits of all Scripture and the Gospel of John as the first-fruits of the Gospels.

Clement of Alexandria [Greek theologian, missionary & apologist AD150-215] described the Gospel of John as 'the spiritual Gospel'.

Chapters 1-5 present to us very clear evidence that this JESUS is indeed —

TRUTH REVEALED.

How to Use this Study

At NPAC, the primary avenue for discipleship is in a Growth Group.

We strongly encourage everyone to be involved since these groups are specifically designed to help us grow as disciples.

The normal pattern for a Growth Group is to have three sections: Connect, Word and Prayer.

CONNECT

Growth Groups have a time to relate to one another by connecting personally. Depending on the members, this can be done in a variety of ways.

Fun - like an icebreaker activity

Answered Prayers - sharing of testimonies and updates

Questions - such as those provided in the material, learning each other's personal stories, and sharing feedback from the weekly sermon.

Questions during the 'Connect' time:

- ▶ are deliberately friendly to first-timers
- ▶ ask for opinion or experiences
- ▶ require no Bible knowledge
- ▶ have no right or wrong answer
- ▶ are not controversial
- ▶ are preferably connected to the day's topic

WORD

This section examines the truth and relevance of God's Word in order to apply it to our lives. Scripture is explored and explained, and the goal is to minister to each other's lives through what is learned, not necessarily to finish all the material.

What does the Bible say?

Biblical truth needs to be communicated clearly so that it can be understood and sink into our hearts.

2 Tim 3:16,17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

What is the relevance of the Word to my life?

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will".

How do I apply the Word to my life?

James 1:22 "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

PRAYER

Prayer is a vital part of a Growth Group get together.

Make sure you have plenty of time so your prayer time is not rushed. This is not a 'closing prayer' but a time for everyone in the group to take specific requests to God. This is where the action is.

The goal is to create a space where people can see God at work.

- ▶ Listen to the Holy Spirit during the whole discussion time
- ▶ Spend the time praying, not sharing and discussing prayer points
- ▶ Keep your prayers simple, sincere and short
- ▶ Pray, don't preach
- ▶ Use conversational, not complicated prayer
- ▶ Expect God to answer your prayers

TRUTH REVEALED

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TRUTH ENTERED

John 1:1-34

INTRO

This first section introduces the big themes of this Gospel.

As you continue to read over the coming weeks, try and keep these big ideas in mind—it will certainly help you to connect the dots as we go.

The 'Prologue' to John's Gospel [1:1-18] bears many parallels to Genesis 1. The significance of this can't be missed.

John is connecting this great event of Jesus' entry into history with God's big story.

Of course, living on this side of the Cross we know that the coming of Jesus is God's grand plan providing the ultimate answer to the problems of the world. Jesus is part of God's new creation, and paves the way for the 'new heaven and earth' described in Revelation.

CONNECT

If there are new members in your group, spend some time getting to know one another—talk about family / work / Christian journey so far / what God is doing in lives right now.

If your group members know one another already, share what has been the highest high and lowest low of this past week/s?

WORD

Read John 1:1-18

- Make a note here of the words or big ideas which impacted you most ...

This section of John is known as the Prologue, and rather than introducing Jesus with historical or human detail, John gives us a theological framework from the outset, showing that Jesus is 'logos' - WORD.

- Read **Genesis 1:1-5** — note the similarities you see with the Prologue and note which words are common. What does this tell you about Jesus, and what impact does that have on you?

In John 1:6-9 the two themes of 'light' and 'witness/testimony' are introduced. Keep these two themes in mind and recognise when they appear again in this gospel.

- What was the role and aim of John the Baptist?
- How is “receiving” Him [Jesus] defined in v.12?
- How could you use vv. 12 & 13 to explain to a friend what Christian belief is, and what happens when someone receives Jesus?
- In what ways do vv.16-17 suggest the blessings of Jesus are better than the blessings of the Old Covenant?
- Who did John deny being? vv.20,21.
Check out Malachi 4:5-6 and Deuteronomy 18:15-18.
- Read Isaiah 40:1-5 and reflect on John’s humility alongside his great claim to be a herald. How can we live both humbly, but also with confidence in our calling?

PRAYER

Try and turn each truth learned in vv.1-5 into praise.

Pray to the Father that as you read John's Gospel, you will see and know the Father intimately through Jesus, His Son and Word.

NOTES

'Grace' and 'truth' are two central features of God's character used throughout the Old Testament — using words like 'steadfast love' and 'faithfulness'.

Jesus lives out the ultimate expression of God's unmerited favour and His faithfulness toward a world that has rejected Him.

The word 'life' is a key word for John — used 36 times in the Gospel.

The 'World' — Greek word 'kosmos' — occurs 78 times in John's Gospel.

2

TRUTH FOLLOWED

John 1:35-51

INTRO

We're now introduced to other people who meet and interact with Jesus.

It's a wonderful encounter of the very first disciples with the Chosen One as testified to by John the Baptist in v.34.

Every detail is important and can teach us so much.

CONNECT

Share about an occasion when you met somebody for the first time who already knew quite a bit about you!

Read John 1:35-42

- This is the second time John the Baptist has used the phrase 'Lamb of God'. What does this say about who Jesus is?
- vv.38-39 Jesus' question 'What are you looking for?' Is one we all need to answer. It shows the seriousness of our seeking. What would your answer be to Jesus?
- v.39 Jesus invited them to 'Come, and you will see'. The verse immediately tells us their response - 'they came and saw'; but they also 'remained' for the rest of the day. [cf John 15:4-9]. How do you seek to 'come, see, and remain'?
- The result of their visit with Jesus was to immediately find others. How could you do this better with the temperament God has given you?
- When Simon came to Jesus, Jesus not only saw him as he was, but also saw who he would become. You might not have received a new name, but how is Jesus changing you?

Read John 1:43-51

The group of disciples is slowly growing. First Andrew and [likely] John, then Peter, now Philip and Nathaniel.

Jesus goes north to Galilee and finds Philip, who is from the same village as Andrew and Simon.

- What does it say to you that it was Jesus who sought out Philip? [cf. Andrew and the other disciple seeking out Jesus].

- Reflect on how Philip describes Jesus when he finds Nathaniel. v.45
What might have been positive for Nathaniel in this description, but what does he make comment on?

- Two times John tells us that Jesus 'saw' Nathaniel and made comment on him. [vv.47 & 48
What does this teach us about Jesus and how he deals with his followers - then and now?

PRAYER

As you pray today, think about your areas of weakness, and how Jesus sees them. Write a prayer asking that Jesus will change you in that area.

Pray lovingly as a group for growth and change for each other.

NOTES

v.35 It is likely that the other disciple with Andrew was John.

v.28 Bethany 'on the other side of the Jordan' is a different village to the Bethany where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived, which is only two miles from Jerusalem.

3

TRUTH HEARD John 2:1-24

INTRO

Jesus arrived in Cana, Nathaniel's home town, which is just a few miles north of Nazareth, where Jesus himself grew up.

John records the first of Jesus' 'signs' - a word John used for 'miracles'.

Jesus then goes to Capernaum [probably his home base] for a few days. Before returning south to Jerusalem for the Passover.

CONNECT

Share a time in your life when God's presence or action helped you or showed you something new.

Read John 2:13-25

This is the first of three Passovers in Jesus' three years of ministry. John draws strong attention to this.

At the time of Passover, the crowds would have been bigger than normal. Jews bought their sacrifices from traders in the Outer Court.

- Why is Jesus so angry?
- v.18 Why do you think the Jews demanded a sign?
- What did Jesus mean by his cryptic answer?
- The Temple was the place on earth where men and women met with God. What does it mean for Jesus to be that place today?
- Look back at 1:7 & 12 - what pattern do we see emerging as we conclude this chapter?

PRAYER

Thank God through your prayer time that following Jesus is better than following religion.

Pray through the wedding story, taking seriously Mary's word - 'Do whatever he tells you'.

NOTES

A 'sign' is a wonderful action of Jesus that points to a deep truth about Him.

The theme of Jesus' 'hour' returns many times throughout the Gospel of John. The great highlight is the Passion. [7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1]

Herod started rebuilding the Temple in about 19BC. The project wasn't completed until AD63 [82 years]. The Roman General, Titus, then destroyed it completely in AD70.



TRUTH EXPLAINED

John 3:1-36

INTRO

God loves to take people and change them!

How wonderful that God was patient with Nicodemus and invested time in Him.

CONNECT

Share about a time you really wanted to know about something but hid your questions from others.

Read John 3:1-21

- Why would it have been odd for a Pharisee to come to Jesus?
- How does Nicodemus react to what Jesus is saying? vv.3-4; v.9
- Read Numbers 21:4-9. How does this help you understand and interpret Jesus' reply?
- Read John 7:50-52 and 19:39-40. How did this first encounter with Jesus impact Nicodemus?
- Are there people you disregard, thinking they would never respond to Jesus?
- God wants us to change and grow over time. Where have you seen growth over time in your own life?

Read John 3:22-35

John the Baptist was the last prophet in the style of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus brings in a new age which requires new allegiances.

- Jesus spends time with his disciples and it is clear that people come to him for baptism. John the Baptist is in the same area, baptising as well. What irony do you see in John the Baptist's disciples' questions/complaint?
- Everyone must do their ministry according to God's call and their gifts.
How does John the Baptist remind his disciples of this?
- How do vv.31-36 remind us that Jesus is the truth revealed?

PRAYER

Spend time praying for those you know who have knowledge, but not salvation.

Pray that you will be a witness and example to those you come into contact with.

Pray about the areas in your life where you must decrease, and Jesus must increase.

NOTES

Understanding the relationship between sin and death [Genesis 2:16,17; Number 21:5,6] helps us to know the significance of Jesus' death reversing the consequences of sin - John 3:14. When the Israelites were in the wilderness - looking at the bronze snake reminded them of the truth.

John 3:16 - this verse can be summed up as the Gospel in a nutshell.

As the Prologue tells us, Jesus' home was in heaven, so he has the authority to speak of heavenly things.

5

TRUTH BELIEVED John 4:1-54

INTRO

Opposition against Jesus was increasing, so he returns north. The normal route a Jew would have taken would avoid Samaria by travelling on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Jesus' choice is deliberate and controversial [to say the least].

But it brought interesting results!

CONNECT

Share a time when you've crossed a visible or invisible barrier and felt uncomfortable.

WORD

Read John 4:1-42

Nicodemus was privileged and messed up. The Samaritan woman was unprivileged and messed up! Everyone needs Jesus!

- How does John show us that Jesus is human?
- What surprises the woman and why?
- vv.13-14 What are the positive and negative parts of Jesus' promise? What is Jesus really speaking about?
- How did Jesus put his finger on this woman's real issues?
- vv.27-38 Compare the disciples lack of understanding about food, with the woman's lack of understanding about water.
- How can we share our experience of Jesus with others, as this woman did?

Read John 4:43-54

Jesus is welcomed back into Galilee only because the locals witnessed all He did in Jerusalem.

- This second sign [v.54] that Jesus did was again in Cana. What unusual things do you notice about this story?
- What are the indicators of faith that we see in this official?
- From the official's request, through to him getting home again, what progression do you see in his faith?
- How do you see faith growing in your own life:?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for who He is, and for what only He can give.

Praise Jesus that He knows you so deeply, with all your faults and sin, and yet loved you enough to go to the cross.

NOTES

When the northern Kingdom of Israel was taken over by Assyria in 792BC, most Jews were deported.

Assyrians were brought in to keep peace and maintain the land.

They intermarried with the few Jews who were allowed to remain.

This mixed race was called the Samaritans, and was considered impure by the Jews of the southern Kingdom of Judah. Jews and Samaritans didn't mix, or venture near each other.

Added to this fact, Jewish men were not to associate with women on their own. A Samaritan woman? Well, that was a double no-no!



TRUTH TESTIFIED

John 5:1-47

INTRO

Here we see an amazing miracle, made possible only by the spoken word of Jesus — the living Word.

This is Jesus' first year of ministry and already the persecution has begun, because it is perceived that a law had been broken.

CONNECT

Share a time in your life where you waited a very long time to see something happen.

Read John 5:1-18

This feast is unnamed, but Jesus is back in Jerusalem to attend.

The intricate description indicates that John is an eye witness, and archaeology affirms that there was such a place, with a spring feeding the pool.

- What impact do you think 38 years of being in this place and predicament would have had on the man?
- Jesus' question to the man may be quite pointed. Perhaps after 38 years this lifestyle had become his 'comfortable normal'. Jesus doesn't judge his situation however — he just heals him! After 38 years of nothing, what do you believe would have been the impact of this 'at once' nature of this healing?
- Note the response of the Jews - first blaming the man [v.10] then blaming Jesus [vv.16-18]. What change did this bring to Jesus and his public interaction?
- It's easy to get caught up in man-made rules around God's law which can then preclude the care of individuals.
Where do you see this playing out in society?
Where do you see this playing out in your own life?

Read John 5:19-47

Rather than the testimony of John the Baptist or others, Jesus now seizes the opportunity to make some things clear.

The truth is now well and truly being revealed!

- What are the implications of Jesus revealing that he is equal with God?
- vv.19-29 Find the verses where Jesus makes the unbelievable claims that He is indeed divine.
- v.40 doesn't mince words. These people deliberately rejected Jesus, the source of life. Despite the devotion of the Jews to study Scripture they didn't believe what it said. How can we not fall into the same trap?

PRAYER

We can never fully comprehend the unity of the Trinity.

Spend some time in prayer simply in awe of who Jesus really is, and that He is TRUTH REVEALED.

Focus this prayer on the events we remember this week

- Jesus' entry into Jerusalem
- last supper
- betrayal
- prayer in Gethsemane
- arrest
- Peter's denial
- arrest and trial
- crucifixion
- resurrection

NOTES

There is textual variation for v.4. Some later manuscripts add v.4, however the NIV omits it.

It was likely that the 'stirring' of the water was a spring which would occasionally well up.

According to the Mishnah, the only way to legally carry a mat on the Sabbath was with someone lying on it. Simply carrying your mat was seen as 'work'.



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