

That *you* may
believe

JESUS in the Gospel of John



Bible Study Guide

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- *John 20:31*

Welcome to the first week in our 'That You May Believe' series through the book of John. This series is all about Jesus and the impact that believing in him can have on our lives. The next ten weeks are a perfect opportunity to explore the person of Jesus, examine your beliefs about Jesus and to reflect on the way you desire those beliefs to influence the way you live and relate to Him.

Sharing Together

As we begin our series, reflect and then share:

- How do you hope the coming 10 weeks will impact your life and faith?

What we believe about Jesus has a profound effect on the way we relate to him, and even the way we live. It is good practice to examine what we believe and why we believe.

- Is there something or someone in particular that has significantly shaped what you believe about Jesus?

Into the text

John begins his account of Jesus' life very deliberately by paralleling the beginning of Genesis. It is a rich, theological start to his account. A start which highlights the need to have a big picture of Jesus from the outset.

Read together both Genesis 1:1-3, 26-27 and John 1:1-5.

- The other three Gospels begin with the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Why do you think John opens his account in this way?
- When you are thinking about Jesus, do you usually picture him in human form? Why is that?

Many people find it easy or more comfortable to reduce Jesus to a 'good moral teacher' or 'divinely empowered miracle-worker'. Even among Christian believers there can be a tendency to over-emphasise Jesus' humanity, or to reduce him solely to a forgiveness-bringing sacrifice.

- How would viewing and relating to Jesus in those ways be less demanding than viewing and relating to Jesus as he is presented in John's opening?
- Have you ever experienced your picture of Jesus getting a little diminished? What happens if/when this happens?

In these first few opening verses we read that the Word (Jesus, as v14-18 makes clear): a) existed before the creation of the world; b) was in communion with God; c) was God; and d) that through Him everything was created.

- How would you currently describe your level of awe for Jesus?
- Consider afresh this scandal: "*the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us*" (v14). What impact does this have on you and your life?

In v9-13 John lists recognising, receiving and believing as highly important responses to the person of Jesus.

- What exactly is it that we should be 'recognising' in Jesus? What does it mean to then 'receive' him?
- Why do you think people had a hard time recognising and receiving Jesus while he was on the earth? What about today?

John makes the point that these responses (recognising, receiving, believing) are the precursors for being given the right to become a child of God (v12-13).

- For you personally, how significant and identity-shaping is being given the right to become a child of God?
- If you *really* believed this, how would it impact your relationship with those who haven't yet recognised, received or believed in Jesus?

Believing is a verb

A key understanding for both John's Gospel and this study series is that John repeatedly uses the word "believe" throughout his book. Ninety-eight times the verb believe is used, and not

once is the noun form used. John deliberately emphasized the importance of *actively trusting* in Jesus.

To have a BIG picture of Jesus is to have a proper picture of Jesus. His divinity, his role in creation and his eternal nature are all essential to his being. When we deeply believe this it will shape not only our understanding of him but our relationship and experience of him in our lives.

- If you more fully believed that Jesus is who John presents him as,
 - How will you *follow* Jesus differently this week?
 - How would you *pray* differently this week?
 - How will you *relate* to him differently this week?

Welcome to the second week in our 'That You May Believe' series through the book of John. This series is all about Jesus, what we each believe about him and the impact that believing in him can have on our lives. This week we consider Jesus' invitation to "come and see" what believing in him is all about.

Sharing Together

Last week we looked at John's opening passage; a beautiful, theological and 'big picture' portrayal of Jesus.

- How did refocusing on this big picture of Jesus change something in the way you lived, prayed, shared faith or related to Jesus this past week?

This week John moves from his grand theological opener to recording the first believers' reactions to encountering Jesus. Before we read of their testimony, start by sharing:

- What did you see in Jesus that first caused you to believe and follow him? *(or what do you potentially see in Jesus that causes you to explore faith?)*
- As you started following, what did you experience in Jesus that caused you to continue believing and following?

Into the text

Read together 1:19-36.

John the Baptist remarks "I myself did not know him" twice before he baptised Jesus, yet with confident testimony now proclaims "I have seen and I testify".

- How do you think John the Baptist is able to have such ongoing conviction in who he understands Jesus to be?
- How would you currently describe your confidence levels in what you believe about Jesus? Is that higher or lower than normal for you?

What John the Baptist recognises in Jesus and then professes is profoundly significant: Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Biblical scholar M. C. Tenney notes that the title Lamb of God combines *'the concepts of innocence, voluntary sacrifice, substitutionary atonement, effective obedience, and redemptive power like that of the Passover lamb.'*

- What do you think is meant by each of those concepts? How do they apply to Jesus and his life?
- What is your heart response as you consider this part of who Jesus is and what he has done for you?

On the basis of John the Baptist's testimony, two of his disciples start following Jesus (read 1:37-41). Jesus' question to them seems simple enough on the surface, yet carries a deeper meaning for these potential disciples to consider.

- Stop for a few moments to each quietly consider:
If Jesus turned up in the midst of this small group, looked you in the eye and asked you "what do you want from me?" how would you answer him?
- If comfortable, share this answer with the group.

Jesus responds to them with an invitation. Philip extends the same invitation (come and see) to Nathanael, rather than enter into a debate with him (v43-46).

- Discuss the interplay between right understanding about Jesus and personal experience of Jesus.

Notice that Andrew and Philip believe so strongly in what they've found in Jesus, that they invite others to come experience the same. They simply declare their experience ("we have found") and then invite people to discover that for themselves in Jesus.

- If you had the same confident belief and experience of Jesus as Andrew and Philip, what might shift in the way you approach sharing faith?

Believing is a verb

If we truly believe that Jesus is a personal God who is best understood as we experience His Lordship, then we will constantly be responding to his invitation to come and see.

Think and read through the below things that can creep into our faith.

Intellectualise – the temptation to reduce *believing in* Jesus and our personal relationship with him to a set of *beliefs we hold about* Jesus

Depersonalise – the temptation to rely on the teaching and testimony of others to sustain our beliefs without our own first-hand experience

Non-contemporary – the temptation to sustain our faith by some of our past experiences of Jesus

It should be said that right doctrine, solid teaching, the testimony of other believers, and our past experiences of Jesus are all good things! Yet when we substitute them in the place of a vibrant, personal, current experience of Jesus in our lives we miss out on what “come and see” is all about.

- How have you experienced these things in your own relationship with Jesus?

In light of this week’s passage, reflection and discussion:

- How will you respond to Jesus’ invitation to “come and see” this week?

Welcome to week three of our 'That You May Believe' series through the book of John. This week we look at the first miracle Jesus performed, what John calls a 'sign'. John is deliberately drawing our attention to the significance of these things and calling us to examine what we believe about Jesus in light of them.

Sharing Together

We ended our time last week by considering how we would respond to Jesus' invitation to "come and see" in the days ahead.

- How did you take Jesus up on his invitation? How was your experience of Jesus in your life different this past week?

For many people, 'signs' or 'evidences' in their own life are an important precursor to, or confirmer of their faith.

- What have been some of the 'signs' you have experienced in your life that has pointed you to believing in Jesus' goodness and power?

Into the text

Jesus participated in the normal everyday lives of people, including social occasions of rejoicing. It is in this context, with compassionate care for the newlyweds, that Jesus performs his first 'sign'.

Read together John 2:1-11.

- Does it surprise you that Jesus' first miracle would be known only to a few in the middle of a wedding rather than in front of crowds, or in the temple? What does this reveal about Jesus?
- What happens in a person's relationship with Jesus if they live as if his only concern is the "religious" or "spiritual" parts of life?

Weddings at the time were a several day (up to a week!) celebration in a close knit community. To fail to provide adequately for the guests would bring social disgrace and would haunt this newly married couple all their lives. Although not what most would consider a

“spiritual” issue, Jesus demonstrates his care for this couple’s practical need as well as for their social standing.

- How does this fit with the perception of Jesus that many people who don’t yet know him have?
- What impact would believing that Jesus cares about all aspects of your life have on the way you relate to him every day?

Mary (after being gently reminded by Jesus of his greater purpose), demonstrates a confidence in what Jesus might do. With submission and faith, she leaves the issue in his hands and instructs others to obey him.

- What does Mary believe about Jesus that caused her to act in this way?
- What have been some of the highs and lows in your confidence of Jesus’ compassion and ability to care for you?

The miracle is impressive, a demonstration of supernatural power. It is akin to the power God demonstrated in creation; and becomes a sign that points to Jesus being the Creator God who could transform one thing into another thing.

- What is your understanding of how Jesus operates this power today?

There are many interpretations¹ of the symbolic significance of this miracle.

- Is there something in this miracle that speaks to you at a deeper level than the physical provision of wedding supplies?

It is hard to miss the *abundance* (in contemporary terms, this would have created somewhere between 600 to 900 bottles of wine!) and *quality* of the wine. Both the quality and quantity was probably much greater than required.

¹ Such as: the provision of wine as a symbol of the joy that Jesus brings believers; evidence the Kingdom of God was here; a foretaste of the messianic banquet; an old covenant to new covenant parallel; see the jars as individual believers in whom Jesus is making significant changes.

- In what ways has the presence of Jesus in your life brought you an abundance of life beyond what you thought you needed?

Believing is a verb

The Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The same compassionate, caring and powerful Jesus of this story is the same Jesus we follow and look to today.

- Finish the sentence: If I *really* believed that Jesus is powerful and cares about the everyday concerns of the people in my life I would _____
- Finish the sentence: If I *really* believed that Jesus is powerful and cares about the everyday concerns of my life I would _____

In the week coming, let's be people who actively trust in Jesus by bringing a specific need before Jesus in prayer. If comfortable, share what that need is with the group now and then spend time praying for those needs of each another.

Welcome to week four of our 'That You May Believe' series through the book of John. This week we look at an interaction Jesus has with a religious seeker that provides the context for John writing one of the most well-known verses in the Bible.

Sharing Together

Last week we ended by bringing a need to Jesus.

- Did anything shift in the circumstance, your experience or perspective of that need? *(If the need was for someone else, did you tell them that you took their need before Jesus? If so, how did they receive that?)*

"Jesus saves" has always been central to the Christian message. That through believing in Jesus believers enter the Kingdom of God, are born again and receive eternal life.

- Eternal life is a hard concept to get our heads around. What is your understanding of eternal life? Does the idea of eternal life have much impact on your day to day life?

Into the text

Read together John 3:1-15.

Whether it was crowds by day or a religious leader coming to him under the cover of night, Jesus made himself accessible to people. His clear mandate was to seek and save all who were lost, be they religious, irreligious or non-religious.

- Have you ever heard people say they are "too far" from God, or that "God wouldn't want anything to do with me"? What would you say to them?

In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus begins three sentences with 'very truly I tell you' to emphasise the importance and truth of what he is saying (v3, 5, & 11).

- In what ways do people try to see and enter the Kingdom of God apart from being born again?

Jesus used the imagery of being born of water and spirit to further explain what he meant by being born again. These speak of the need for spiritual cleansing and renewal (empowerment) from God's Spirit. See also 1 Corinthians 6:11.

- What is your understand of these two concepts? How are these tied to believing in Jesus?
- If comfortable, share your own personal experience of spiritual cleansing and spiritual renewal that has come by believing in Jesus.

Read together 3:13-18.

Believing in Jesus is presented as the key decider between whether a person is in or out of the Kingdom, stands uncondemned or condemned, receives eternal life or perishes. Here, perhaps more than ever, our understanding of what it means to 'believe in him' is vitally important.

- How would you explain what Jesus and John mean by 'believing in him'?
- How do you wrestle with the exclusivity of these claims? How do you feel about these when someone you love who never believed passes away?

This passage has often been used in an evangelistic context. Yet it also speaks truth over the believer; truth we often need to hold on to and be reminded of.

- Do you ever have doubts about where you stand with God? Or do you still feel the need to earn what Jesus says is already yours?

Believing is a verb

Believing in Jesus also means accepting, receiving and living in light of all he has done for and in us. It is to live saved! To walk with the certainty and surety of being part of God's Kingdom, free from condemnation with eternity as our certain hope. To use a well-known phrase: it changes everything!

Consider the following truths for every person who believes in Jesus.

TRUTH: *I have seen and entered the Kingdom of God*

TRUTH: *I stand free from any condemnation*

TRUTH: *I have received eternal life*

TRUTH: *I have been spiritually cleansed and spiritually renewed; I am not the same, I am born again!*

- Which of those do you need to hear most today and why?
- If able, share a time when one of those truths suddenly “hit home” to you and share the impact of deeply receiving that truth.
- What would it mean for you to more fully “live saved” this week coming?

Welcome to week five of our 'That You May Believe' series through the book of John. This week we read of two healings (or signs) that again point us to believing in Jesus more deeply.

Sharing Together

Last week we looked at the famous John chapter 3, filled with rich theological truths for both the seeker and the believer.

- How did you go 'living saved' last week? Was there any noticeable difference to your thought life, prayer life or behaviour as a result?

For many the topic of physical healing is a very personal one. Sickness by its nature is deeply personal, as is the desire and prayer for healing.

- Share an experience from your own life of receiving healing, or the testimony of someone close to you who received healing.

Into the text

The occasion for Jesus' first sign was a mother's concern for a young couple, and here the second sign comes in response to a father's concern for his son.

Read together John 4:46-54.

Consider the desperation of the father who would leave his dying son to make the 21km journey from Capernaum to Cana in the hope that Jesus could bring healing to his boy.

- Have you seen desperation or crisis cause others to reach out for God's help who normally would not?
- Has crisis, difficulty or desperation in your life caused you to reach out to Jesus in a deeper way? Share why that was, and the effect of doing so.

The man had rightly believed that Jesus could heal but wrongly assumed two things; that Jesus had to physically go to Capernaum to do so and that if Jesus didn't get there before his son died it would be too late.

- In what ways have you believed in Jesus and his ability in the past, but only to a partial degree of who Jesus really is and what he is able to do?
- What was the cause for the gap do you think?

Jesus is presented here as the great healer. Despite the considerable distance, having never met the boy or having his condition explained in detail, Jesus declares healing and its effect was immediate and miraculous.

- Put yourself in the place of the desperate father. How would you have felt and responded upon realising that Jesus brought healing to your son?
- How do you reconcile a belief in Jesus as the Great Healer with the testimony of many who don't receive healing today?

In the father we see a growing and deepening belief. From crisis belief (v47) to confident belief (v50), to confirmed belief (v53) to contagious belief (v53).

- How might the Father's journey towards believing shape your approach to sharing faith?

Jesus as healer is confirmed in the following event John records. There can be no mistaking Jesus' power and ability to miraculously heal when the person receiving the healing had his condition for 38 years! Read John 5:1-15.

- Why do you think Jesus would choose to heal this man?

Consider the contrast between the father and the invalid. The invalid seemed to have no belief in Jesus before or after the healing, beyond the recognition (and excuse to the Pharisees for carrying his mat on the Sabbath) that it was Jesus who did this.

- How can someone be miraculously healed, recognise that Jesus had performed the healing and yet seemingly still not believe in him?
- What do you make of Jesus' later instruction to the man in v14?
- As you consider the two men and the two healings, does anything speak into something going on in your life or belief in Jesus at the moment?

Believing is a verb

This study is not to suggest that everyone who approaches Jesus for healing today gets healed – there may be examples right now in this group that speaks to the reality of that. There is a mystery in those unanswered prayers that we trust to God, believing that full healing is coming for every believer, be that in eternity or before.

The 'believing is a verb' end to the study today has to be:

- Is there any issue in your life that God is placing on your heart to believe for and pray healing over?
- What about for issues others in your life are facing?
Consider asking them this week if you can pray to Jesus for healing and then pray for them then and there. Alternatively, pray for healing and then let them know you have been praying healing for them.

Close in praying to Jesus for healing over those people and requests.

We are over halfway through our 'That You May Believe' series through the Gospel of John, and our heart is that you would already have experienced being drawn into deeper belief in Jesus. May that be true this week too, as we consider two of the most stunning 'signs' that Jesus performed during his public ministry.

Sharing Together

Last week we discussed the powerful healing signs Jesus performed, and left being encouraged to do something with our belief that Jesus is healer.

- How did you go putting belief into action this past week?

Those who have grown up in church have repeatedly heard the most amazing stories of Jesus. There is danger though, that over-familiarity can lessen the impact those stories would otherwise have on them.

- How have you been able to remain awe-struck at the person and power of Jesus year after year of following him?

Into the text

Read together John 6:1-21.

Once again in John we read of signs that point us towards believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus does here what God alone could do: exercise sovereign power over creation to multiply matter and control the forces of nature.

- How would you make a case for the legitimacy of these miracles and explain their implication to a modern-day sceptic?
- How do you understand the ways that Jesus exercises this power and authority today?

These miracles are feats that almost defy imagination: multiplying matter, walking on water, and being able to instantly take charge of and change the weather.

- How would you have reacted if you had been there with the disciples?

In both events the disciples lack the resources or ability to overcome the circumstances in their own strength. In a stunning contrast, Jesus seemingly without any strain or effort miraculously provides and then divinely protects.

- For many, our default is to rely on our own resources and abilities, even after believing in Jesus. How has this been a part of your journey?

John records many details, such as: the number of barley loaves and “small fish” (v9), the size of the crowd (v10), that each person took “as much as they wanted” (v11) and the amount of collected leftover food. Again there is a contrast, this time between the meagreness of the available supplies with the lavishness of Jesus’ supply.

- What do you think John is calling us to believe here?

Having had their fill and being impressed by the miracle, the crowd see in Jesus a potential figurehead to bring their political and social aspirations to fruition. The disciples on the water however see something so beyond the realm of human experience that it evoked genuine fear and awe.

- There will always be a temptation to manipulate Jesus to fit our own agenda and ideas of who he should be. How can we always be on guard against trying to limit, box in, or water down who we believe Jesus to be?

The disciples being caught in the storm has become a fitting symbol for trials of faith. This has been reflected in many devotionals, sermons or songs that use imagery of storms, walking on water and Jesus calming raging seas.

- What is it about this event that deeply resonates with so many?
- How has your belief in Jesus been a powerful constant in the ups and downs of your life?

Believing is a verb

These two signs of Jesus call us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the one who has sovereign power and authority over creation itself. The effortless authority and power Jesus displays here is simply stunning. By implication there is nothing you will face in life that doesn’t come under the authority of Jesus. To believe this is to also embrace the truth that Jesus has authority over you and your life.

- If you more fully believed and were more conscious of the authority Jesus has throughout each day, what would the impact be on:
 - The way you respond to things that come against you in life?
 - The strongholds you sense in the lives of others?
 - Your thought-life?
 - Your prayer life?

- How can you more fully submit to the authority of Jesus in your life this coming week?
(be specific about what God lays on your heart about this)

All the way back in week One we said that this series is all about Jesus and the impact that believing in him can have on our lives. This week we discuss some of the claims of Jesus, claims which have the potential to have a much needed impact on our lives and the lives of many in our world today.

Sharing Together

Last week we ended by considering Jesus' authority over each of our lives and the things within our lives.

- Did being more conscious of Jesus' authority over your life bring any change to your thought-life, prayer-life or a specific behaviour?

Much has been written about an epidemic of dissatisfaction that seems to plague so many in our society today.

- How have you experienced feelings of dissatisfaction with your life or life circumstances?

Into the text

John records Jesus making some significant claims about himself that are then immediately challenged by some of those hearing them.

Read John 6:29-42; 7:37-44; and 8:12-13.

- What is your reaction when you read of these beautiful claims being immediately challenged and Jesus being openly criticised?
- What resistance do you recognise in yourself or in others when it comes to genuinely believing and living in light of the claims of Jesus?

Jesus' claim to be the Bread of Life in chapter 6 is the first of seven "*I am the*" claims that John recorded Jesus making.

[Those I am statements are: The Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Gate; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth and the Life; and the True Vine]

- Do any of these have particular significance for you? If so, share why and how that has been significant for you.
- Why do you think Jesus used imagery to describe himself to us?

The Jews asked Jesus to give a sign to back up his claim and to then be given this bread from heaven that gives life. In response Jesus didn't say he *had* the bread of life, he said he *was* the bread of life.

- Discuss the differences between looking to Jesus for what he can give us and believing Jesus is the gift?
- The Jews asked for a sign before being willing to believe (even after all they had seen!). What sort of signs or proofs or circumstances do people say they are looking for in order to believe today?

In using bread to describe himself, Jesus self-identifies as the satisfier and sustainer of life. He is the only one who can truly satisfy our fundamental need.

- In what ways has believing in and receiving Jesus impacted your experience of having joy, purpose and satisfaction in life?
- What does it mean to believe this in a world full of consumerism, comparison and the yearning for more and better?
- If we really believed this (that Jesus is able to truly satisfy), how might that impact the way you viewed and shared faith with those who are yet to believe?

Consider the permanence of the impact Jesus has on those who believe: they will *never* be hungry or thirsty (6:35) and will *never* walk in darkness (8:12).

- How do you understand what Jesus is promising here?
- What do you do as a believer when you encounter times in your life where that doesn't feel like your experience?

Believing is a verb

In the midst of all those who challenged and opposed Jesus and his claims, John records that there were also those who responded by believing. For them, the claims of Jesus became something that was then experienced and confirmed as true when they received him into their lives.

- What challenges or potentially to undermines your enjoyment of being satisfied in Jesus?

Finish the sentence: If I genuinely believe Jesus is the One who truly satisfies, then something that needs to shift in my life right now is _____

Morning & Night Prayer challenge:

This week, every morning and evening pray the below prayer (or something like it). Take note of how God answers that prayer, and what impact praying it has on you as you go about your daily life.

“Thank you Jesus for being the one who truly satisfies. I look to you today as the source, the sustainer and the satisfier of my life.”

This week we continue our 'That You May Believe' series with a detailed account of Jesus healing a man born blind, an account which builds on the theme of Jesus as the Light of the World (8:12).

Sharing Together

Last week's discussion finished with a challenge to pray a simple prayer each day in the week ahead.

- How did you go with challenge? What changes did you observe in response to praying that prayer?

Into the text

Read John 9:1-12.

The disciples viewed the man born blind as a subject for a theological conversation, seeing his condition as an indication of divine displeasure. Jesus on the other hand viewed the man as someone to be merciful to, seeing his condition as an opportunity for divine grace.

- What does this reveal about the person and work of Jesus?
- How can our perspectives of people and circumstances sometimes be out of alignment with Jesus' perspective?
- What might this reveal about how Jesus feels towards you and all that comes against you?

We have read of Jesus healing with a word before, yet here a combination of spit, mud and washing are used to complete the healing Jesus brings. Consider that the man was born blind – he could hear Jesus spit, feel the application of the mud, and physically experience washing all as part of his healing.

- Why do you think Jesus appealed to his senses? Was it a simple kindness, to help build his belief, to involve him in his healing or something else?
- Discuss the interplay between obedience and faith when it comes to believing in Jesus (*the man obeyed Jesus' instruction indicating a level of belief*).

The change brought by Jesus in a person's life can be so great that others find it difficult to believe it is the same person.

- Have you ever seen such a dramatic change in someone after Jesus intervened in their life?
- What are some of the more dramatic changes within you since believing in Jesus? How have they been observable and possibly even confusing for those around you?

Following the healing there is quite the commotion, with an investigation and attempt to discredit Jesus. No one seemed to want to recall that when the Messiah appeared He would open the eyes of the blind (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7).

Read the remainder of the chapter, 9:13-41.

- How do you respond when someone pre-judges what they think about Jesus (like the Pharisees do in v24) without genuinely engaging with your testimony of what Jesus has done in your life?
- How do you understand Jesus' statement in v39 being fulfilled in this chapter and in our world today?

Once again we read of a person's belief growing incrementally. From calling Jesus "the man called Jesus" (v11), then "a prophet" (v17), then a prophet "from God" (v33) and finally "Lord" who he then worshipped (v38).

- What steps are you helping someone in your life take along this journey towards belief?
- Do you feel there are next steps for you to take in your journey of believing in Jesus? If so, what are they?

Believing is a verb

John 9 is a beautiful picture of Jesus' intervention in the life of the man born blind. An intervention that brings healing, restoration and in a very real way brings him new life.

- Is there an area in your life at the moment where you believe Jesus longs to intervene, but you are holding him back?

Jesus describes the blind man's condition as something in which the works of God can be displayed. Finish by celebrating together:

- What works of God do you recognise that have already been displayed in you?

Welcome to our second last week in our 'That You May Believe' series through the Gospel of John. This week we discuss the final sign John records from Jesus' public ministry, the implication of which provides profound comfort and excitement for hundreds of millions of believers worldwide.

Sharing Together

The nature of life and life after death are big philosophical questions. They are questions that sometimes people deliberately try and avoid as much as possible.

- For something so important, why do you think that is?
- In your own experience, have there been times which required you to confront the reality of death and what is beyond? How did what you believed about Jesus at the time bring clarity, comfort or confusion to those questions?

Into the text

Jesus had presented himself as the Bread of Life and the bringer of the Light of Life. Now he reveals himself as the Resurrection and the Life. This is the seventh sign John records; a powerful revelation pointing to Jesus' true identity.

Read John 11:1-45

- If you had been one of the witnesses to this event, what would you have felt, thought and done in response?

Before going to Bethany Jesus states that Lazarus' death will result in God's glory and in God's Son being glorified (v4). He also anticipated that the impact for his disciples would be that they 'may believe' (v15).

Compare this with Jesus' comment to Martha just before calling Lazarus forth in verse 40.

- Do you think people are more likely to see something of God's glory and then believe, or believe and then see God's glory?

- As you have continued believing in Jesus, how have you seen and understood more of God's glory?

John 11:35 is the shortest yet one of the most heart-felt verses in Scripture: *Jesus wept*. This is unlikely to be grief over Lazarus (who he was about to raise) or solidarity with his grieving friends (their grief was about to turn to joy).

It seems that Jesus, broken by the devastating effects of sin in the world, outwardly expressed his deep empathy and sorrow over us.

- In what ways do you perceive how destructive sin has been in our world? In our society? In people's lives? In your own life?
- It is humbling to think on how fully and fiercely Jesus loves and empathises with us, longing to reverse the effects of sin and bring restoration and life. What does it mean for you when you reflect on that?

Read v25-26 again. This is a central belief for the Christian.

- What impact should believing this have on a person's life and relationship with God?
- How have you seen this belief influence the way someone faced their coming death? Or the way in which a life was celebrated in a funeral service?

Jesus' prayer in verses 41-43 is said aloud for the benefit for those there. There is nothing secretive or hidden in this sign. Jesus' prayer and actions are public, audible, observable and powerful.

- It could be argued that Jesus' power and authority is still plain to see, for those who wish to see it. Discuss.
- If performing this sign publicly meant putting himself in serious danger (see v54, and 12:10), why do you think Jesus performed it in this way?

Believing is a verb

The question Jesus asks Martha in v26 is one he still asks today: *"do you believe this? That I am the resurrection and the life; the one able to bring you life to the full now and into eternity."*

- What did you do this past week that demonstrated your belief in this?
- If you were to believe this more fully and more deeply:
 - What would shift in the way you view and approach your career?
 - What life priorities might need to be realigned with this belief?
 - How might this impact your current experience of joy in life?
 - What would change in your attitude towards things you currently worry about?

Welcome to the final week of our series 'That You May Believe'. The series has taken us through much of the life of Jesus and his public ministry as recorded by John. This week we look at the last chapter of Jesus' public ministry before he retreats to be with his disciples ahead of his arrest and crucifixion. It is a chapter filled with a wide range of responses to Jesus.

Sharing Together

This week we consider a beautiful individual act of worship, made even more so when compared to the convenient worship and later fickleness of a crowd.

- People will do many things in response to their love for Jesus. What is one act of worship someone you know has done that particularly moved you?
- How would you define what worship is? What about the purpose of worship?

Into the text

Read John 12:1-11.

Mary anointed Jesus with a lavish amount of high quality perfume, far more than needed and very expensive. She also humbled herself in anointing Jesus' feet and unbinding her hair to wipe away the excess. Normally a Jewish woman never unbound her hair in public.

- How does what we believe about Jesus impact the way we treat him?
- Discuss the roles of humility and generosity in expressing gratitude to someone. How do those apply to worshipping Jesus?

This is clearly an act of worship born out of relationship, personal experience of Jesus and deep gratitude for all he has done (especially coming out of John 11).

- What has been one of the more humbling, vulnerable and costly acts of worship you have given Jesus? Share how you felt as you did that, and what was behind that expression of worship.

This intimate and beautiful act of worship is interrupted by Judas' remark.

There will always be those who don't understand lavish acts of worship, who may even criticize the one worshipping that way. Maybe they feel confronted or confused by such acts as they don't understand Jesus in the same way.

- How is witnessing genuine worship confronting? What does it confront?
- What do you do when your desire to worship seems to exceed the desire to worship of those around you?

Read John 12:12-19.

The crowd welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, at least how they perceived the Messiah. They did not understand the true nature of His messiahship, nor the necessity of his death or the kind of Kingdom Jesus was establishing. We read that many were there just to catch a glimpse of Lazarus (v9, 17-18).

- What is John calling us to believe about Jesus in this passage?
- How can we make sure our worship remains a pure response to who Jesus truly is, not a form of worship twisted by what we want him to be for us?

Believing is a verb

To believe in Jesus is to believe that he is supremely worthy of our worship. Mary expressed this belief in one momentary act of worship, no doubt only one of many moments and acts of worship she would express to Jesus over her life.

- What would people close to you point to in your life as evidence that you believe Jesus is worthy of worship?
- In light of this week's passage and discussion, in what ways are you feeling called to worship Jesus more fully this week? Is there a particular act of worship that you feel God prompting you to do?

Thanks for being part of this series over the past ten weeks. Back in the first week we asked if there was any hopes you had for the impact this series would have on your personal faith and life. Looking back:

- Has anything changed in what you believe about Jesus? Have you noticed any change in the way you believe what you believe about Jesus?

- What has been the impact on your experience of life and relationship with Jesus? In what ways are you more fully living in light of what you believe?

John has repeatedly used the verb form of believe throughout his Gospel. Believing in Jesus cannot be reduced to a past decision. It is an ongoing, active, vital trust in Jesus that shapes all of life.

Close out your time and this series together by praying for one another's ongoing faith in and relationship with Jesus.

Thank you for being a part of our series 'That You May Believe'.

Join us for our next series 'That We May Believe' where we explore what it means to live as a community of believers in Jesus, as Jesus intended. We will pick up where we left off in John's Gospel in Pt. 1. All set in the upper room the night of Jesus' arrest, these next chapters contain Jesus' final instructions to his disciples ahead of his crucifixion. There is much for us to learn about our identity and what will shape our community life together.

Begins Oct 21.

Parramatta
baptist church

