

That **WE** may
believe

Living as disciples of JESUS



Bible Study Guide

THAT WE MAY BELIEVE

John 13-17: Living as disciples of Jesus

Thank you for picking up one of our study guides and engaging with our second series through the book of John. John's Gospel is a beautifully written book full of rich language and imagery, so we encourage you to read through it many times.

Part 1 '***That you may believe: Jesus in the Gospel of John***' ran throughout Term 3. We explored passages from the public life and ministry of Jesus (John 1-12); passages recorded and crafted by John so that we may believe. We focused on who Jesus is, what we are called to believe and how believing impacts our daily walk of faith. You can access these past messages and download the accompanying discussion guide through our website.

Part 2 '***That we may believe: Living as disciples of Jesus***' will run through the first part of Term 4 and 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 part 1. All set in the upper room the night of his arrest, these next chapters contain Jesus' final instructions to his disciples before the cross. There is much to embrace about how our common faith in Jesus shapes our identity, behaviour and community life together.

- #1 We are a community of servants
- #2 We are shaped by our future
- #3 We are empowered to live loved
- #4 We are appointed to bear fruit
- #5 We are distinct as disciples
- #6 We are His

Welcome to the first week in our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. Over the next six weeks we will work through Jesus' teaching to his disciples only hours before his arrest and crucifixion. These final pre-cross teachings reveal what Jesus wanted his disciples to really take hold of. These passage are therefore important for us, as those also seeking to live as disciples of Jesus.

Into the text

Read together this week's passage John 13:1-17.

Imagine you were there with the disciples – you have just seen Jesus raise a man from the dead and then being welcomed into Jerusalem by a joyous crowd. He is the most important and powerful person you have ever met.

- How would you have responded to Jesus wanting to wash your feet?
- What lasting impact do you think this memory would have on you after Jesus returned to heaven?

We are a community of servants

Philippians 2 reminds us of the truth that Jesus took on the "very nature of a servant". As those who follow Jesus' example we are called to become servants, not just to serve others occasionally. It is a subtle but important shift in thinking; serving is *something we do* whereas being a servant is *someone we are*.

- What is the difference between seeing serving as something we should do verses seeing servanthood as core to who we are?
- Do you see yourself as a servant? Do you see church as belonging to a community of servants being shaped by our common belief in Jesus?
- What would change if you made this shift?

The idea of embracing servanthood as who we are and how we behave is fairly counter-cultural. It can be much easier to allow the strong cultural currents of entitlement and self-interest to influence our thinking and behaviour.

- Where are the impulses of entitlement and self-interest present in your life?
- What have you found helpful in choosing Jesus' narratives for your life instead of the world's narratives in this area?

Jesus specifically made it clear that we would "be blessed" if we follow his example (v17).

- How do you understand what this "blessing" is? In what ways are we blessed through embracing servanthood?
- Where in your life have you experienced God's blessing come out of, or through your service?

At PBC we are a community who believe in Jesus and desire to orient our whole lives around this belief. As a community we are called to live out the vision Jesus has for us as his disciples.

If we were to truly embrace being a community of servants here in the life of PBC:

- What would that look like in practice?
- In what ways do you think we still need to grow in this as a community?
- How could this small group be a part of leading the way?

Each of us are surrounded by nearly unlimited opportunities to be servants and to bless others by serving them. Pause to consider who God might be calling you to serve this week.

- *How could you be a servant to someone close to you?*
- *How could you be a servant within the life of our church?*
- *How could you be a servant of a neighbour or work colleague or fellow student that you do not know so well?*

Break off into smaller groups to share your ideas and pray for one another.

Welcome to the second week in our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. As disciples of Jesus we believe in the hope of being with Jesus into eternity. This week we explore the ways our future hope can shape our lives now.

Into the text

Read together some of what Jesus has just said in John 13:21, 33, 36-38. Imagine being there in the upper room with the disciples, full of awe and expectation of who Jesus is and what that means for the world. Then you hear Jesus speak these words.

- What would go through your mind? What would you be feeling?

Jesus recognised that his words had troubled their hearts. His response was to bring them comfort, confidence, peace and courage. Read together this week's passage: John 14:1-14.

- How has Jesus' teaching here been important to you personally?

We are shaped by our future

Knowing there is a good ending to something brings immediate comfort and relief. For instance – you can have your heart in your throat when hearing a story of a potentially dangerous situation a loved one faced, but when they are the ones telling it you have peace knowing it ended okay. Or, in the midst of a fight with a loved one you can still experience the security of knowing that the fight won't change your relationship as you will still love each other afterwards.

- Share your understanding of the 'good ending' in which believers can rest secure.

Jesus clearly envisaged that this assurance of a future with him would bring comfort and peace to his disciples as they processed the news of his imminent departure.

- What is it about our future with Jesus that can bring comfort and peace in our lives today, no matter what we are going through?
- Share a time when you experienced this same comfort and peace in the midst of a trouble, worry or hard time.

Our future with Jesus is more than a comforting thought. It is a powerfully certain future which has massive implications for how we live right now.

- How has knowing your future as a believer impacted and influenced your life to date? (*eg: your values, priorities, how you relate to others, decisions you make, or how you approach career and stewardship*)
- As you consider being further shaped by your future hope in Jesus, what do you sense God calling you to shift or change in your life?

Jesus made it very clear that he is the means by which this future is ours! He is the way, the truth and the life. Through his death and resurrection he accomplishes our redemption and restoration, thus securing our future.

- How can this shape the way we speak of Jesus with those yet to believe?

Our future reminds us even more of the greatness and power of Jesus! He is the one in control of human history, who prepares a place for us and who will be worshipped for all eternity. Read John 14:12-14.

- How does living in light of our future shape what we give our lives to?
- How does our future shape our faith and the things we pray for now?

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If we were to truly embrace being a community shaped by our future:

- What would that look like in practice in the daily life of PBC?
- How or in what ways can we still grow in this as a church community?
- How can this small group be a part of leading the way?

Welcome to week three of our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. One of the great truths of living as a disciple of Jesus is that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. Our relationship with God, our experience of his love, the power of his presence all help shape us in how we live as disciples.

Into the text

Read together this week's passage: John 14:15-27.

Imagine again being there in the upper room with the disciples, getting increasingly nervous as you realise that Jesus is speaking of leaving. Plus his expectation seems to be that you will carry on his message and mission.

- What would you be thinking and feeling?
- How would you receive the news that Jesus was going to send someone from God to be with you and help forever?

We are empowered to live loved

Jesus vision for his community of disciples was for them to be a people who loved him so completely that they would delight in keeping his commands and bringing him honour.

- Why do you think Jesus linked obeying his commands (doing what he said) with loving him?
- Present day Western Christianity has sometimes been accused of over emphasising right believing (orthodoxy) at the expense of right conduct (orthopraxy). To what degree has that been your experience?

Re-read this passage through the lens of relationship. Look for all the places Jesus describes relationship (him with us, us with him, him with the Father, the Father with us, the Holy Spirit to the Father and to us).

- What shifts when we embrace right living as an overflow of our relationship with Jesus (and not a set of rules we are supposed to obey)?
- Share an example of when your love for Jesus manifested in greater following of his commands, which then in turn further deepened your love for him.

Later (in John 16:7), Jesus said the Holy Spirit (the Advocate) will be such a powerful presence with his disciples that it is for their good that he is going away.

- How have you experienced the person, power and presence of the Holy Spirit with you?

We are radically loved by Jesus, and literally conduct our everyday lives with the presence of Jesus through the indwelling of his Spirit.

- In the midst of everyday life, how aware are you of how loved you are by Jesus?
- In the midst of everyday life, how aware are you of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit?
- If you were more aware of being empowered to live as a loved follower of Jesus, what might shift for you in the way you live each day?

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If we were to be a community deeply shaped by Jesus' love and the Holy Spirit:

- How would that overflow into the life of our church?
- How or in what ways could we still grow in this as a community?
- How can this small group be a part of leading the church deeper in this?

Welcome to week four of our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. This week we look at a well-known passage and image; the vine and branches. As disciples of Jesus we are chosen and appointed to bear fruit that will last.

Into the text

Read together this week's passage: John 15:1-17.

Jesus borrows from nature and agriculture to explain a core teaching that his disciples will need to take hold of, especially once he is gone. To understand it properly, we need to understand what he meant by two key phrases:

- What do you understand Jesus meant by "remain in me"? How does someone actively remain in Jesus?
- How would you explain what this "fruit" is that we are appointed to bear in our lives?
- How is the "fruit" that grows from our connection to Jesus different from other "fruit" that our lives might produce?

We are appointed to bear fruit

Have you ever been chosen for something? Maybe you were chosen for a particular job or role (in a workplace, sports team, creative project) that carried expectations of what you would accomplish.

- Share what it felt like to be chosen for that. How did you feel about the task you then had the responsibility to perform?

Consider for a moment the wonderful truth that (v16) Jesus **chose you**, you are already "clean" (v3), and you are already included in the vine (v5). You are IN CHRIST and it is God's will that through you, eternally significant fruit will grow!

- When you reflect on those truths, what impact does it have on you?
- What would shift for you if you lived from a place of affirmation (you are chosen by God) and anticipation (God's will is to bear fruit through you)?

It is amazing that God would delight to bear eternal fruit through our lives. Unlike a list of targets or responsibilities set for us by a boss (where the focus is to strive to complete them), here fruit is the natural by-product of being connected into the vine. So we are to pursue connection above fruit.

- How has your connection to Jesus grown eternal fruit in and through your life so far? Give some examples.

It is the full expectation of Jesus that, as his disciple, you “*will bear much fruit*” (v5). If you were to examine your life right now:

- How satisfied are you about the current level of Kingdom fruit you are seeing?
- Is God speaking to you about anything that needs to change? If so (and if comfortable), share with the group what that is.

According to Jesus, one of the key ways we bear ‘fruit’ that lasts is our love for each other (v12-17).

- Why do you think Jesus specifically mentioned love here? (*why not great missionary work, or church movements, or societal change?*)

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If we were be a community deeply shaped by our connection to Jesus and the desire to see eternal Kingdom fruit flow from that, then:

- How would that be shown in the life of our church?
- What are some of the ways we could grow in our connection to Jesus and our focus on “fruit” over other goals?
- How can we in this small group help each other to be affirmed and equipped in bearing fruit as we remain in Christ together?

Welcome to the second last week of our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. This week we look at where Jesus prepared his disciples for the inevitable fall out of being different in this world and then explore what it means to be distinctive as disciples of Jesus today.

Into the text

Read together this week's passage: John 15:18-27.

This teaching is an important preparation for the reality of being different in a world which does not recognise the Lordship of Jesus. It is an uncomfortable passage to read, and does not usually feature in our favourite verses or on the Bible verse mugs we can buy in Koorong!

- What is it about this passage that makes us uncomfortable?
- How strongly do you feel the desire to fit in and to be liked in this life?

We are distinct as disciples

Believing in Jesus and having a relationship with him transforms our lives. We are so thoroughly shaped by our relationship with him that we become completely different to the surrounding culture. God is holy, and his ways are not the ways of the world.

The Bible uses lots of images to capture our distinctiveness as disciples: we are in but not of the world, we are aliens and strangers here, salt and light, a kingdom of priests, Christ's ambassadors and more.

- How have you experienced being (or becoming) different from your non-Christian friends, family, work colleagues, and broader culture?
- Have you ever been tempted to "tone down" your differentness in order to fit in or to not cause a scene?

The real difference is a difference in belonging (v19). We belong to Jesus. We no longer belong to the world. This is what is at the heart of our distinctiveness as disciples of Jesus.

- How does knowing you belong to Jesus bring comfort and encouragement as you live for him, even when it is out of sync with the culture around you?

- How can that idea (belonging to Jesus, not belonging to the world) help navigate the many choices you'll be faced with in your life?

Our distinctiveness as disciples of Jesus can at times lead to people responding negatively to us (v20-21). At other times though, our distinctiveness can be a powerful witness to the goodness of God that presents a beautiful alternative to the ways of the world.

- Share a time when something different about you opened a spiritual conversation that otherwise might not have been had?
- What are some distinctly Christian ways of being in this world that you see as particularly powerful witnesses?

Pause to reflect on your current distinctiveness as a disciple of Jesus. Reflect on the following list. Ask God in which area is he calling you to further embrace a Jesus-shaped distinctiveness.

- *Values and ethics*
- *Worldview and engagement with social issues*
- *Attitudes and behaviours towards possessions and finances*
- *Relationships and the way they're conducted*
- *Habits and practices*
- *Morality and behaviour*
- *Life purpose and priorities*

(If comfortable share with the group and receive prayer at the end).

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If we were to be a community that embraced our distinctiveness of being followers of Jesus:

- How would that be shown in the life of our church?
- What might we need to let go of in order to grow in this area as a church?
- What do you think the role of this small group is in encouraging and holding one another accountable to this way of living?

Welcome to the last week of our 'That We May Believe: Living as disciples of Jesus' series. We finish with Jesus' prayer over his disciples and over us. This is a beautiful, heart-felt prayer that reveals his deep affection for those who are his.

Into the text

Read together this week's passage: John 17:6-26

- Is there anything in what Jesus prayed that particularly moves you? If so, what part and why?

Imagine what it would be like to have Jesus physically present with you, praying out loud to the Father for you. Wow!

- What must have that been like? What impact would that have on you?
- We read elsewhere in the New Testament that Jesus continues to intercede for us in heaven (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1).
How does that make you feel?

We are His

It is not a nice feeling to be unsure about where you stand with someone. To watch what you say and do around them, looking for clues as to how they feel about you is stressful. To be constantly trying to win their approval or affection is exhausting. Thankfully, the believer in Jesus has no such uncertainty.

- How have you learned to embrace the truth that you are eternally saved, loved and accepted by God because of Jesus? Has that been an easy or hard journey for you?
- Are there still times when you need to preach the Gospel to yourself?

It is incredibly moving to hear Jesus' affection for us coming through so strongly in this prayer. He conveys such a strong desire for us to be where he is, seeing him as he truly is (v24).

- How has this shifted the way you think about spending time with Jesus in prayer, worship, the Word?

As those who are his, Jesus prays for us – giving thanks to the Father for us and then praying for our protection.

- Why would Jesus pray for his disciples' protection?
- What do we learn about how to see the world and how we should pray from Jesus here?
- What is the confidence you draw from belonging to Jesus, and coming under his authority and power? Does this confidence have any practical outworking in your life?

One of Jesus' desires that comes through strongly in this prayer is for our unity as believers. That we would be one (v11, 21-24).

- How can you encourage and keep Christian unity as a key priority in your life?

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If we were to be a community that celebrated, proclaimed and lived in light of being His:

- How would that flavour the life of our church?
- How could we ensure that we don't grow stale or complacent in delighting in this truth as a church?
- In our small group how can we keep each other delighting in this truth?

Thank you for engaging with our series 'That We May Believe'.

We trust you have felt encouraged, challenged and inspired afresh in what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus. At PBC we are a community who desire to orient our whole lives around Jesus and our faith in him. Continue to join us in this, as we seek to do so with the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Parramatta
baptist church

