

## What I love about Jesus: Bible Studies

"We need habitual reminders  
that the Christian life comes  
not by gritting our teeth,  
but by falling in love"  
– Richard Foster

- i) Note, some of these passages could be studied over more than one week. It is better to go slowly and study them properly than to rush to 'get it done' and miss the benefits of taking time to see what God is saying and putting it into practice.

### **Intro Study: You Won't Share What You Don't Love (John 15:1-17)**

**Read the Passage.** You may want to do this more than once or with different emotions (angry, sad, excited...) different emphases (fast, slow, long pauses...) different accents (Scottish, Welsh, German...) or different translations (NIV, NRSV, The Message, The Street bible...) each time. Though these may seem silly at first, breaking our of our normal way of reading a passage can give us fresh insights in unexpected ways.

General Questions (*these 5 questions can be asked of almost any bible passage and create a fruitful discussion. They may even form the entirety of a study, depending on the length of time available and the dynamics of the group. They are also a useful framework to remember for if you ever need to study the bible with an interested friend who is wanting to know more about Christianity – hence the repetition of the questions in each study (so that you might memorize the 5 questions for just that kind of occasion).*)

### **General Questions**

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### **Specific Questions**

1. FRUIT: Assuming that the primary meaning of 'fruit' in this passage is talking about their love for one another (compare John 13:34-35) not the adding of

numbers to their ranks, how might that change the 'goals' we aim for in our own life? In church? ... Share an experience of a person/church/organization that made you feel loved. Is there something of Jesus in what you experienced that we could learn from?

2. **ROOTS:** Remaining in Jesus is about developing habits of life, concrete actions that ground our knowledge, which allow us to live in step with the Spirit every day (see Matthew 7:24-27; James 2:14-17). What habits of life have you found helpful in developing or maintaining your Christian life? Are there any you used to do but have stopped doing? Are there any you feel God is convicting you about right now?
3. **REFLECT:** Take some time to be still. Picture an orchard with many barren trees, old and gnarled that have no fruit on. Then picture an open field with 4 or 5 trees in it; the grass is green and the trees are abundant with fruit. Which do you think God wants you to be? Your church to be? ... in the quietness of your own heart confess to God if you have been guilty of playing the 'numbers game' and trying to get people 'into church' instead of increasing the amount of love in your life, and desiring to increase the amount of love in theirs as your first priority.

*If appropriate you might want to share any further thoughts that came to mind whilst praying. Did God encourage/challenge you on anything that is helpful to share with the group?*

### **Part 1: I Love... The Stories Jesus Told**

#### **Study 1: The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23)**

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## Specific Questions

1. **UNDERSTAND:** the seed on the path is like not understanding the gospel of the Kingdom. What do you understand by the words 'gospel' and 'kingdom'? How might you explain why the Christian message is good news to someone else? Perhaps have a particular person in mind and think 'what part of the gospel would particularly sound like good news to them'? **PRACTICAL:** you could split into 2's or 3's and practice sharing the gospel with one another whilst the 'listeners' pretend to be atheists or proponents of other religions – what kinds of objections are raised and how do you try to answer them to communicate greater understanding?
2. **HABITS:** the seed on rocky ground is the gospel in theory that has not been put into practice in the obedience and habits of practical everyday life – obedience gives us roots. Based on what was just discussed what elements of the gospel of the Kingdom could you put into practice in your daily life? Did your explanation of the gospel focus on the good news of a transformed life or did you solely focus on grace? Why? When might it/when might it not be appropriate to share the challenge of the gospel as well as the grace?
3. **LIVING 'NOW':** the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth both make us live in the future to the detriment of today... 'such and such a worrying thing might happen sometime' which leads to unnecessary anxiety in the present; or 'once I buy x, y and z, then I'll be happy' leads to discontent with today. **PRACTICAL:** Make a list of all of your worries. Then ask the question 'what can I do to stop these things from happening and pursue the life God has for me instead?', 'what can I not control in these worries no matter what I do?'. Make a commitment to think about and prioritise the 'can do' items on your list. Pray for God to take the 'can't do' items and declare that you trust him and worship him whether or not they happen because you know that he will make a way for you to come out of the other side even when bad things happen.

## Study 2: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

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### Specific Questions

1. **SEEING TRUTH:** the Good Samaritan has compassion when he sees. What kinds of issues do you see around you today? As a society we are quite good at 'hiding' issues – the sick, dying, lonely, victims aren't lying around on the streets... where are they? How might we find them? What kinds of 'unseen issues' (e.g. anxiety) do people struggle with? List a few issues then discuss if there are elements of the gospel that address some of those needs.
2. **FACING FEAR:** The Pharisee and Teacher didn't cross the road. Were they afraid of being made 'unclean'? or were they afraid of being robbed? We don't know. All we know is that fear can be a factor in reaching out in compassion. What fears prevent you from reaching out? What other obstacles hold you back?
3. **BUILDING COMPASSION:** Take some time to be quiet and pray. Look at what you have written down/think on what you have talked about. Are there any issues you've 'seen' afresh tonight that God is moving your heart towards? Are there any 'barriers' (fear or otherwise) that God is calling you to deal with? Take time to share with one another what God has been saying and pray for each other about any issues that have been raised.
4. **DO SOMETHING:** Where could you start? If you don't feel any compassion that's okay; these things usually take time. Where could you start? Make sure you start small and manageable! A favourite quote about vision goes like this: 'most people I know have stumbled across vision by being faithful to what's in front of them'... I think the same could be said of compassion. What do you think?

### Study 3: The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

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### **Specific Questions**

1. **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE A PARTY:** Growing up in church I always imagined that heaven was a place where you could barely see anything because everything was white and there was 'dry ice' type of smoke everywhere! But one of Jesus' most common metaphors for heaven is of a huge party. How does that make you feel? If that's true, what might that mean for our task of bringing 'heaven to earth' as we pray (and then obey) 'your kingdom come... on earth as it is in heaven'? What would a modern day 'Kingdom of Heaven Party' look like in your context?
2. **OLDER BROTHER TENDENCIES:** This parable is partly about the prodigal son and the loving father, but the major audience was the Pharisees (as represented in the parable by the character of the older brother). The challenge of this parable was whether the Pharisees would join heaven in rejoicing that people who had done bad things could turn back to God and join in the heavenly celebration or whether they would stand in judgment over such people. Choosing not to forgive. If we're honest we all have older brother tendencies. Like one of my lecturers used to say 'there's a little Pharisee inside of all of us just waiting to get out!' The best way to overcome our 'looking down on others' side is to admit that its there. Share a story or experience (even something small and amusing) about when you made a judgment and then realized what you were doing (or perhaps that you were guilty of doing the same thing soon after. I can remember many time, especially early on in my marriage where I would ask Christina to do/not do something, and then finding myself breaking my own rule soon after! We found that you're honest about the 'little Pharisee' within and say sorry for being judgmental, you can laugh about it, forgive and gradually grow in grace. It's when you feel like you have to pretend you're perfect and never judge anyone that you actually make the 'little Pharisee' grow.
3. **LOVE/BE LOVED LIKE THE FATHER LOVES THE SON:** How many different things does the Father do to love the Son? Think for two minutes, share with the person next to you for two minutes, then share with the whole group. How does this translate to how Father God loves you? Perhaps you could take 5-10 minutes to write prayers of thanksgiving, listing the different ways that God loves you? Who in your life is Jesus calling you to love? Having received the Fathers love, in what ways might you pass that love on to someone God is calling you to serve, encourage or bless in some other way?

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## **Part 2: I Love... The Things Jesus Did**

### **Study 4: Mary & Martha (Luke 10:38-42)**

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#### **Specific Questions**

1. BUSYNESS & DISTRACTION:
2. SITTING AT THE FEET?:
3. HOLY/KAİROS MOMENTS AND EVERYDAY LIFE:

### **Study 5: Healing of the Leper (Mark 1:40-45)**

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## Specific Questions

1. WHAT WOULD YOU ASK JESUS?:
2. ON THE OFFENSE OR THE DEFENSE?:
3. LIVING HOLY PROACTIVE... IN HOPE:

## Study 6: Healing of the Withered Hand (Mark 3:1-6)

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## Specific Questions

1. SABBATH GOODNESS:
2. FACING THE PHARISEES FEARLESSLY:
3. WHO ARE YOU DOING GOOD TO?:

## Study 7: Welcoming Zaccheus (Luke 19: 1-10)

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### **Specific Questions**

1. THE AFFIRMATION OF CHRIST & WELCOMING HIM IN:
2. WHAT IS JESUS SAYING TO YOU RIGHT NOW?
3. THE PRAYER GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS IN 5 SECONDS...

## **Part 3: I Love... The Questions Jesus Asked**

### **Study 8: Why do you call me good? (Luke 18:18-30)**

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### **Specific Questions**

1. WHO'S THE ONLY PERFECT ONE OF THEM ALL?
2. LIVING FOR ONE THING OR MANY?
3. GOOD ON THIS EARTH...LIKE WHAT?

### **Study 9: John's baptism, was it from heaven or from men? (Luke 20:1-8)**

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### Specific Questions

1. WHY DO YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS?
2. THE AUTHORITY OF HEAVEN, ONCE CONCEDED, GIVES JESUS CARTE BLANCHE
3. THE PRECURSORS TO BELIEF IN CHRIST

### Study 10: What do you want me to do for you? (Mark 10:46-52)

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### Specific Questions

1. MEDITATION: WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?
2. PERSEVERANCE...PUSHING PAST WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK.

3. REFLECTION 'THE JESUS PRAYER': 'Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner. Take some time to pray this prayer either in silence or with gentle music playing. You may want to take some time to re-read the passage, change position or move to a different location.

### **Study 11: Who's portrait and inscription are on it? (Luke 20:20-26)**

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#### **Specific Questions**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Part 4: I love... The Way Jesus Died**

### **Study 12: Son, here is your mother (John 19:26-27)**

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### **Study 13: A ransom for many (Mark 10:45 & Isaiah 53:4-5)**

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### **Study 14: Today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:26-43)**

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## **Part 5: I love... The Way Jesus Rose Again**

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### **Study 16: Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-31)**

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### **Study 17: Reinstatement of Peter (John 21:15-25)**

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## Specific Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Senior Minister: Scott Williamson  
Assistant Minister: Daniel Hatfield  
Student Minister: Jonathan Blake

Elder: Les Maybury  
Church Secretary: Linda Harrison