

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This brief discussion guide is to help facilitate groups that want to read the Lent devotional *The Glory of The Cross* and meet together to discuss and pray about what they've read.

You can run the discussion in a variety of ways.

1. You could run it as a conventional Bible study on the passage. There are questions below to help you do that.
2. You could run it as a testimony/sharing session. Simply invite group members to pick out their favourite phrase or verse from the Scripture reading, or a passage from the book, and say why they were helped by it. The session might end with open prayer, or by people reading some of the prayers in the book.
3. You could run it as a discussion group. Below are some general questions that you might use to stimulate this kind of meeting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What particularly struck you from the readings this week? What was new to you, or came across to you in a fresh way?
- How has reading this passage of John's Gospel in the light of the cross given you new insight into what it means? How has it given you new insight into what makes the events of Easter so glorious?
- If a child, or someone who is not a Christian, asked you to summarise what this passage is all about, and why it is important, how would you answer them?
- How have you been challenged to change your thinking or behaviour by this week's readings?

The beginning of Lent: John 3 v 1-21

Seeing the Kingdom of God

- Why does Nicodemus come to see Jesus in the darkness of night?
- What does Jesus want Nicodemus to understand?
- What is the point of the illustration about the snake on the pole (v 14-16)?
- How would Jesus' words in verses 17-21 have been both an invitation and a warning to Nicodemus, as he sat in the darkness listening to Jesus?
- If someone asked you, "What does it mean to be born again?" what would you say, from this passage?
- What was Jesus' relationship with religion? How is this both liberating for us, and a warning to us, in our religious lives today?
- "Will you, like Nicodemus, take a risk to honour Jesus today?" (p. 21). Have you had an opportunity to do that yet? In what area would you like to do something "risky"?

The first week of Lent: John 6 v 1-59

Seeing the Bread of Life

- What do people think they need in order to feel satisfied in life? How is that hunger and dissatisfaction shown in the lives of people you know? What about you?

- What does Jesus provide for the people; and how (v 1-15)?
- What is he showing about himself? Do the crowd realise (v 15)?
- What is Jesus' claim in verse 20? How does where he is standing add credibility to that claim?
- In what ways do we work for "food that spoils" (v 27)? What does it look like to feed on the bread of life instead?
- What will it mean in practice for you to feed on "the bread of life"? What will result from that?
- What truths could you use from this passage to encourage a Christian who is struggling with a lack of assurance?

The second week of Lent: John 10 v 1-18

Seeing the Good Shepherd

- Who is this teaching at the start of John 10 aimed at, and why (see 9 v 35-41)?
- What kinds of people enter sheepfolds, and how do the sheep respond differently to those people (v 1-5)? Who do you think each person represents?
- What does Jesus promise sheep who "enter through me" (v 7-10)?
- In what ways is Jesus a "good" shepherd (v 11-18)?

What characterises the shepherd's sheep?

- What is both humbling and wonderful about being a sheep of the good shepherd?
 - In what situations will this be particularly comforting?
 - Are there times when you struggle to believe that the shepherd is "good"? What truths in this passage help you?
- How are you enjoying life in all its fullness by following your shepherd's voice? Are there ways in which you are wandering and need to return?

The third week of Lent: John 11 v 1 – 12 v 8

Seeing the Resurrection and the Life

- What is strange about Jesus' response to hearing that his friend Lazarus is gravely ill (11 v 5-6)?
- How do verses 4 and 11-15 explain his delay? What are we being told about delayed answers to desperate prayers?
- What comfort is there for Christians in:
 - v 25-26?
 - v 33-35?
 - v 43-44?
- What do we learn from this passage about how we should respond to the reality of death or to grieving friends?
- What reactions to Jesus do we see encapsulated by the following people? What motivates each reaction?
 - Caiaphas (11 v 47-50)
 - Mary (12 v 1-3)
 - Judas (12 v 4-6)
- How do these examples challenge you personally?

The fourth week of Lent: John 12 v 20-50

Seeing the Glory of the Cross

- Read 7 v 30 and 8 v 20. What is hugely significant about 12 v 23? What does the arrival of Jesus' "hour" mean for him (v 24-33)?
- What is so unexpected about how Jesus is glorified? Have you ever struggled—or do you know people who struggle—to "get this"? How does this passage encourage you in that regard?
- What does Jesus say life will be like for his followers (v 25-26)? How does this reveal the inadequate nature of the "belief" we see in verses 42-43?
- In what particular ways is Jesus calling you to "die to self" in this season of your life? What words of Jesus in this passage help you to do that?
- What does Jesus remind the people about regarding the purpose of his coming (v 44-47)? But what warning does he also give (v 48)?
- How does this passage move you to worship Jesus more deeply?

The fifth week of Lent: John 19 v 1-37

Seeing the Crucified King

- What religious crime do the Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of committing (v 7)? What possibility about Jesus are they resolutely refusing to consider?
- Why is Pilate frightened and surprised by Jesus' silence? Who is really in control of this courtroom scene?
- What happens at the foot of the cross (v 23-24)? Why is this so significant?
- What is staggering about what Jesus does in verses 26-27?
- What is so wonderful about Jesus' last words (v 30)? What implications does it have for our lives as his followers today?
- "Jesus gets the worst to give us the very best. Sometimes we're tempted to feel short-changed by life. But when we look at the cross, we see it isn't so—Jesus died to quench our thirst with the very best" (p. 113). In what area of your life do you most need remember this?
- What motivations are there in this passage to share the message of the cross with others? What truths do we need to remember when our efforts are rebuffed?

Holy Week and Easter Sunday: John 20

The Triumph of the Cross

- What does Mary see (v 1-2)? What conclusion does she draw?
- What do the disciples do and see? What do they not grasp?
- Holding on to Jesus is a very natural thing for Mary to do—why does Jesus tell her not to?
- What new relationships does Jesus imply in verse 17? Why is this so exciting?
- How do the disciples feel before Jesus appear to them, and does that change (v 19-20)?
- What does Jesus give them and for what purpose (v 21-22)? In what ways do we need the Holy Spirit to equip us?
- Do you identify with Thomas' disbelief? Why/Why not?
- Who does Jesus say is blessed (v 29)? Why is this surprising—and encouraging?
- What part of the Easter story makes you most excited? What part will you now praise God for in particular?