



Evangelistically Active Week Four

Welcome to the fourth week of our bible reading notes looking at 'Evangelistically Active', which is our topic for the next five weeks in our morning service, leading up to Easter Day.

Our aim with these notes is to encourage one another to read God's word, so you may want commit with a friend to do these bible readings and to pray each day – and then ask each other how you've got on during the week.

This week we're continuing in John's gospel, and keeping with our theme of 'seeing Jesus' we're looking at what Jesus says about himself, and what difference that makes.

These notes should hopefully be useful for individuals and for families with and without children. Each day, there is a bible passage to read – **read that first**, and **pray** - ask God to help you understand it. (If it is your habit to spend some time with the passage and make your own notes, then do that now.)

Once you've read the passage and thought about it – have a look at the accompanying notes. The notes cover some of the context of the passage, an explanation and an application. There are also some accompanying questions or suggestions for action. As God speaks to you through His word, you may wish to write down what He is calling you to do (and share it with someone!) However, don't worry if sometimes you don't receive an obvious answer to prayer or clear instruction – just keep faithfully reading God's word, and He will use it in your life, as the Holy Spirit works in you.

After you've looked at the bible passage is a good time to pray – pray for strength to do what you need to do – thank God for what you have learned about Him – and bring your requests before Him.

Then, you'll see that there is an activity for families with children; the target age range of these activities is 4-11ish, so you may need to modify them. This activity draws on one or two of the verses you've been reading, and give you some suggestions for sharing them with the family – over the breakfast or tea table perhaps. There's a starter activity to get people thinking, then reading the passage, some questions to answer, and then something to read – and a prayer so you don't forget to pray (just a starting point – do pray for longer if you can). Should take about five minutes – but can easily expand if you want it to.

Don't worry about communicating everything – particularly if you've got small children – communicating something of the good news of Jesus Christ every day is a great place to begin.

Enjoy – and let me know how you get on

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.



Monday

John 8:12-14 The Light of the World

Read John 8:12-14

Our first passage this week occurs when Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the feast of booths. At the feast, there is controversy over Jesus' identity, and that is the context for what we read in John 8:12-14.

Jesus declares that He is the light of the world – bringing light into the darkness (v12). Of course He does this through His teaching and works, but supremely through dying on the cross and bringing us into the light, by defeating the darkness of sin, dying in our place.

Immediately the Pharisees question this claim—how can Jesus bear witness about Himself? (v13). Jesus can bear witness about Himself because of who He is, - He knows about what came before and what comes after, because He is God's son (v14).

The reaction of the Pharisees indicates the truth of what Jesus says in verse 12. He has come as a light in the darkness—the darkness which does not wish to know Him. We have already seen this in John 1:9-11—Jesus is not always received as He should be, the one who brings Light.

So as we start this week we remember two things. First, who Jesus is: the one who came into the darkness and died for us – to free us from the darkness of sin and death – to give us life.

Second, we recognise different reactions to Jesus. We have seen this before. Not everybody takes the challenge here, to follow Jesus, to listen to Him and to follow Him. But it

is the response that we need to make, and the response we need to encourage others to make.

So today:

Give thanks that Jesus is the Light of the World, who has dealt with the darkness of sin and death.

Pray for opportunities to share this good news with others

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: talk about the difference between light and darkness. When the light goes on—what happens to the darkness?

Read John 8:12

Who is Jesus?

What do we need to do?

Read: Jesus is the light of the world, who promises life to all who follow Him. He calls us to follow Him.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you that you are the Light of the World. Help us to follow you. Amen.



Saturday

John 18:33-36 The King

Read John 18:33-36

For our final reading this week, we are moving into Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. Here, we're in the middle of Jesus' trial before Pilate. And this is all about who really has authority.

Pilate heads back into the palace (v33) and for the next few verses it is just Pilate and Jesus in conversation—the one who looks to have authority, and the one who really does. Pilate begins with a question – and it's all about authority – are you the King of the Jews?

Look at Jesus response in verse 34. Jesus is the one who is on trial – but Jesus is the one who takes the initiative here – what kind of question is Pilate asking? Pilate's answer comes in verse 35: am I a Jew? What do these things matter to me?

Pilate's question is not His own – and yet Jesus graciously reveals something of His authority – of what His kingdom is like in verse 36. Jesus is a King. But His kingdom is not of this world. And the proof? Jesus' followers do not behave as the followers of an earthly kingdom.

Pilate needs to know this. Jesus is not a political threat, not in the way the Jewish leaders have been making out. Pilate enforces his will through threats and coercion and the power of the sword. His is the military representative of roman power, temporarily in Jerusalem with his troops to make sure there is no trouble during the Passover feast. Jesus' kingdom doesn't work like that, and Pilate needs to know this.

But it is not just Pilate who needs to know this. We too need to remember that Jesus is King but that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world. However, it has a profound effect on this world as Jesus draws people to Himself. As we serve and follow Jesus, our weapons are not coercion and oppression, but preaching the good news of the kingdom of Jesus., trusting in our King for the outcomes, because He has the authority.

So today

Give thanks that Jesus is the King

Pray that we would share the good news of the king and His Kingdom.

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: when you read stories about kings and queens—what kind of things do kings do? (fight, order people around etc.)

Read John 18:36

What does Jesus tell us about His Kingdom?

What is different about Jesus' Kingdom?

Read: Jesus is the King, but the Kingdom of God is not like ordinary kingdoms. Jesus' Kingdom comes as people come to know Him as Lord and saviour.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, help us to know You as our King. Amen.



Friday John 15:1-5 The True Vine

Read John 15:1-5

Today we're looking at another passage from Jesus' teaching in the upper room. The time is drawing near for His death, and Jesus is teaching and comforting His disciples. He tells them who He is (v1) - the true vine. The background to this statement is found in the Old Testament, in passages like Isaiah 5:1-2, where Israel is pictured as a vineyard, often fruitless. Jesus is the true vineyard, the true Israel.

Where Israel failed in her mission to the nations, to the Gentiles, Jesus will succeed, He will be a light of the world. Jesus is the true vine. He is the only way to God, the way the truth, the life and so on.

And so it is natural, as Jesus is the only way, that we should need to remain in Jesus. Any unfruitful branches will be cut off (v2). Fruitful branches will be pruned – as a vine is pruned to encourage greater fruitfulness next year.

Jesus reminds the disciples in verse 3 that they are clean, they are in Him. In verse 4 and 5 Jesus puts it another way – they are to remain in Him. It's obvious when you think about it. No vine branch can bear fruit if it's not connected to the trunk of the vine – it might look pretty for a while, but it will wither and die. It is not possible to be fruitful unless we remain in Jesus. But if we remain in Jesus, we can expect to be fruitful.

And so we remind ourselves again of the need to remain in Jesus, that there is no other way to know God. And we rejoice that Jesus' promises to bring fruit to those who

remain in Him. And we give thanks that He completed His mission, to bring the Gentiles to know God through the cross.

So today

Give thanks that Jesus is the true vine

Pray that He would draw us to Himself so that we remain in Him.

Pray that we would seek to remain in Him

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: talk about what happens when you cut off branches or leaves or flowers from tree and plants.

Read John 15:5

Who is the vine?

And who are the branches?

Read: Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. He calls us to remain in Him, and He will give us life and make us fruitful

Prayer: Dear God thank You that You are the vine. Help me to remain in You. Amen.



Tuesday John 10:11-16 The Good Shepherd

Read John 10:11-16

Again we meet Jesus teaching at a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. Again, He teaches us something about who He is, the Good Shepherd (v11). The good shepherd cares for his sheep unlike the hired hands, verses 12 to 13, who are good in the good times, but go when trouble comes. The good shepherd lays down his life for sheep. The sheep are in a deadly predicament – facing God's wrath - and this can only be dealt with by the Good Shepherd.

We need to recognize our need for the Good Shepherd to lay down His life for us. And we need to see how others need this too.

Then we move to see in verse 14 the mutual knowledge of shepherd and sheep. This is very encouraging because Jesus knows His people individually, like a good shepherd knows his flock. This close relationship is based on the mutual knowledge of God the Father, and God the Son (v15). Again we are reminded in verse 15 of the foundation of relationship: Jesus dying for His sheep and bringing them to know God.

But who are the sheep? Verse 16 tells us. The people of Israel are the sheep pen. The other sheep are the Gentiles, everybody else—and that includes us. Jesus calls people from all nations to follow Him and to be His sheep – and He knows them all.

Jesus calls – and we listen and respond – we recognize who He is. And we encourage others to do the same

Application – rejoice in God's plan, rejoice to be known by God.

So today:

Give thanks to God that Jesus is our Good Shepherd who cares for us.

Give thanks that Jesus has a flock from all over the world.

Pray that others would come to know Jesus as their Good Shepherd

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: talk about different jobs with animals—farmer, vet etc. And then get to shepherds, and what shepherds do.

Read John 10:11

Who is the Good Shepherd?

How does Jesus show that He is the Good Shepherd?

Read: Jesus is our Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for us. He dies for our sake, so that we might know and be known by God.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you that you are our Good Shepherd. Amen.



Wednesday

John 11:17-27 The Resurrection and the Life

Read: John 11:17-27

In John 11 we read about Jesus' visit to Bethany, on His way to Jerusalem for the final time. His time is drawing near; Thomas' comment in 11:16 about the plan to go to Jerusalem captures the concerns of the disciples about what is about to happen.

But Jesus comes to Bethany, and Lazarus is already dead (v17). Jesus has deliberately delayed His journey, to demonstrate His glory (v4-6). The mourners are all present (v18-19), and Martha comes out to meet Jesus (v20). Notice her confidence in Jesus' healing abilities (v21), and in what Jesus can do (v22). But when Jesus talks about Lazarus rising again, (v23) her response contains some doubt—does Jesus mean rising again on the last day, verse 24.

Jesus answers by revealing something about Himself—He is the resurrection and the life, who provides life after death (v25) - and gives life that continues after death (v26). Does Martha believe? She believes that Jesus is the Christ, verse 27.

John 11 continues with Jesus' compassion and mercy to Mary (v28-37), and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (v38-44), thus demonstrating the truth of His assertion in v25-6. But we focus on the fact that Jesus is the one who gives life after death, and we rejoice in His promises to us.

So today:

Give thanks to Jesus for dying and rising for us.

Pray that we would have confidence in the everlasting life we have in Jesus.

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: talk about events you are looking forward to, like birthdays, or Easter. Why do you look forward to things?

Read John 11:25-6

Who does Jesus say He is?

What does He call us to do?

Read: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He promised that if we trust and follow him, we will receive eternal life.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus we thank You for dying and rising for us, and giving us eternal life. Amen.



Thursday

John 14:1-6 The Way, the Truth and the Life

Read John 14:1-6

As we come to John 14, we move into the upper room with Jesus. Jesus is with His disciples, just hours before He is arrested and tried, and condemned to death. He has been telling His disciples about what is going to happen to Him.

Jesus is going away to another place, where He will prepare a place for them (v1-3). He tells them they know the way to where He is going (v4) but Thomas questions this, probably on behalf of all the disciples (v5).

And Jesus responds by telling them something about Himself. He tells them that He is the way, and the truth and the life (v6).

Jesus is the *way*. The fact that Jesus is the way means that there is a way. There is hope. Death is not the end.—there is a way to the father in heaven. There is a way to heaven – and that way is Jesus. Jesus offers His disciples a way – and that way is to follow Jesus. In Jesus we can have hope for the future. And of course as the rest of this verse makes clear, Jesus is the *only way*.

Then Jesus tells His disciples that He is the *truth*. What Jesus says is true. Jesus is trustworthy. Jesus promises His disciples that He has made a place for them in His Father's house. This is no idle boast or false comfort. When Jesus makes a promise, He keeps it.

Jesus showed throughout His ministry on earth that He was trustworthy. What He said, He did. What He said would happen, did happen. Even His own death happened as He predicted, and He rose again from the

dead as He promised that He would. We can rely on Jesus. We can take Him at his word, we can trust Him, put our faith in Him.

And Jesus is the *life*. Eternal life is about the future: it is about a future spent with Jesus, a future secure in Jesus because of what He has done for us on the cross, saving His people from their sins by dying in their place.

Eternal life is also about what we do now, in the present: we are called to follow Jesus, and to enjoy being in fellowship as His followers, trusting in Him, being confident in what He has done for us.

So today:

Give thanks that Jesus is the way, the truth and the Life.

Pray that we might be encouraged and reassured by who Jesus is.

Activity for Families with Children

Starter: talk about how we know how to get somewhere. We might need a map that we can rely on, and signs along the way which tell us the right direction to go.

Read John 14:6

How do we come to God the Father?

How do we know the way to God the Father?

Read: Jesus is the One who shows us the true way to the Father and gives us Life.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You that because of You we can come to know God our Father. Amen.