

Explore... Welcome to Explore...

Explore... is a chance to think together about some of the big questions of life - questions of life, meaning, spirituality, satisfaction and death. We know that everyone has different opinions on these topics - we hope that you will feel comfortable to share yours. We also know that we all often have more questions than answers when it comes to the big issues, and we want Explore... to give time and space for those questions to be asked - even if nobody has the exact answer!

Each week at Explore... will involve reading and discussing a small part of the Bible. We are focusing on one part - the gospel of John. This book is designed to introduce people to the character of Jesus, and claims to be an eyewitness account of his life, teaching and work. Millions of people throughout history and across the world have found that the answers to the really big questions are all tied up in the identity of this person Jesus. As Christians, the people running Explore... are convinced that there are answers to be found here. Let us know what you think.

Each week we will also have a time where you set the agenda and can ask whatever questions or raise whatever topics for discussion that you like. The people leading the group will try to answer from a Christian perspective, but we hope that we can also have general discussion. The rules for this section are that no question is too stupid, too hard or too vague to be asked - anything goes. It might be worth writing some questions down, especially if there are some you can't answer immediately, so that you can come back to them later.

We hope that Explore... will be useful to you - we hope it might also be fun! You will probably get the most out of it if you can come every week, but feel free to drop in whenever you can.

Explore... Life after death

What do you think happens after you die?

Read John chapter 20 verses 1 to 9

Do you think Jesus' followers are expecting an empty tomb? Why?

What might be the significance of the stone rolled away, and the linen left behind?

Read John chapter 20 verses 10 to 31

John records 3 appearances of Jesus in chapter 20:

to Mary (look at verses 10 to 18)
to the disciples (look at verses 19 to 23)
to Thomas (look at verses 24 to 29).

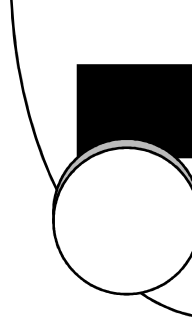
How did an encounter with the risen Jesus transform each of them?

Look at verses 29 to 31...

What basis do we have for believing in Jesus?

Do you find that convincing? Why/why not?

What reasons do you have for not responding to Jesus? What would be the next step for you to address them?



explore... sacrifice & salvation

Read *Isaiah chapter 52 verse 13 to chapter 53 verse 12...*

Look particularly at verses 4 to 6...
What is happening to this servant? Why?

Read *John chapter 19 verses 1 to 16...*

What is the narrator trying to tell us in the recorded words of Pilate?

Read *John chapter 19 verses 17 to 37...*

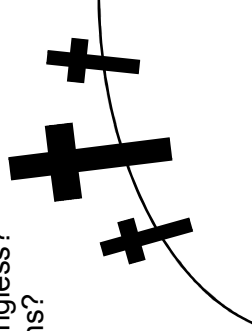
Look for repeated phrases and themes... What do they tell us?

What is Jesus claiming to be "finished"?

Does Jesus' death make sense to you?

Would you describe it as meaningless?
If not, what do you think it means?

How does the description of Jesus' death make you feel?



explore... the God who is there

Where do you look for answers to the big questions in life?

Read *John chapter 1, verses 1 to 18*

Look at the first five verses...

What is John telling us about God in these paragraphs?

How might "the Word" be relevant to us today?

The character "John" in this chapter is not the John who wrote the book, but another John. He has gone down in history as "John the Baptist". His job was to prepare people for the coming of someone else. You can see examples of what he said and did in chapter 1 verses 19 to 36 and chapter 3 verses 25 to 36.

Look at verses 6 to 13...

What would you expect to happen when the "true light" comes into the world?

What actual responses were there?

Look at verses 14 to 18...

How does John say we can see and know God?

What is God like according to John?

How do you respond to the idea that Jesus is God?



explore...

new life, fresh start

What do the words 'fresh start' mean to you?

Read John chapter 3, verses 1 to 21

Jesus uses three images in this conversation...

Rebirth - look at verses 3 to 7...

What does the image make you think of?

Why do you think Jesus uses this image with Nicodemus? Does it seem appropriate to you?

Nicodemus was a **Pharisee** - a member of one of the most strictly religious sects in Jewish society at the time. He was also probably a noted theologian: "Israel's teacher" may well be his title. So he was most probably a strictly moral man, and a person well educated in all things philosophical, theological and ethical.

From the book of Numbers, chapter 21...
"[The Israelites] travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses... Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said 'we sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses 'Make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived."

Light and darkness - look at verses 16 to 21...

What is Jesus saying about human beings? How does the metaphor make you feel?

What is Jesus offering throughout this conversation? Does the offer appeal to you? What aspects in particular?

explore...

the satisfied life

What do you most enjoy about being a student? Where do you or your friends find most satisfaction?

Read John chapter 4 verses 1 to 30

What is surprising about the way Jesus talks to the woman?

What does Jesus offer her?

Why does the woman have problems understanding what Jesus is offering?

How does Jesus' request in verse 16 highlight her search for satisfaction?

Messiah means anointed one. In ancient Israel, kings and priests were appointed by anointing with oil (see Leviticus chapter 8 verse 12 and 1 Samuel chapter 16 verses 1 to 13). The Messiah was the promised King who would lead the people back to God. **Christ** is the Greek version of Messiah.

Why does the woman bring up worship in a discussion about satisfaction?

In what ways does Jesus' teaching on authentic worship make sense? And how is it challenging?

How do you feel about Jesus saying that only he can offer true satisfaction?

Samaritans were a mixture, both ethnically and religiously, of Jews and surrounding peoples settled by the Assyrians around 700 BC. The relationship between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' time was one of bitter hostility fuelled by generations of conflict.

