

April 2025 – A journey through a special week

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

As we journey through April, we begin and end the month looking at John's record of Jesus teaching his disciples in the days before his death: Jesus' instructions to 'remain in me' and to 'love one another'. We explore God's **faithfulness** to us and how we can stay close to God. And we see how the love of God, **his kindness**, transforms us and how we, in turn, impact the world. We will celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter and we will see the excitement of the people at Jesus' arrival; they trusted his reign would bring **goodness** to them. And we will witness Mary's **joy** of knowing that Jesus is alive.

Session 1

April 5/6

Session Aim: To explore how and why we stay close to God
Bible Ref: John 15:1-11

Today's fruit

God is **faithful** to his promises. The Spirit helps us to be **faithful**, including being **faithful** (and staying close) to God.

The vine and the branches

In chapters 13 to 17 of John, Jesus is with the disciples and is comforting them, giving them advice for a time when he won't physically be with them any more.

In John 15 he uses the metaphor of a vine and a gardener to teach the disciples that they need to stay close to him, to 'remain' in him and his love.

Jesus talks about the disciples as branches on the vine, saying that when the branch is attached, it will grow fruit, whereas the unattached branches will wither and be thrown away.

He tells them that God is the gardener and that the branches growing fruit will be kept and looked after, whereas the branches without fruit will be cut off. He says that the branches can't grow fruit on their own – they can only grow fruit when they're attached to the vine.

Jesus is the vine. He's the one we need to stay with. He tells the disciples that the way to 'remain' in him is to stay in his love and keep his commands.

Think about

Jesus used the image of a vine and a gardener because the disciples would have understood that really well. Do you understand what Jesus means?

Have you ever looked after a plant? What did you have to do? In what ways is God like a gardener?

I wonder what it means for us to produce fruit. Why does Jesus say, 'You cannot produce fruit alone'? (v4 ICB)

Some words are repeated a lot in the passage – how many times does it say: remain, love or fruit? What do you think are the most important words in the passage and why?

Do you know anyone who seems to be close to God? What is it about them that shows you they are close to God?

What can we do to stay close to God? Are there practices or habits that can help us?

Have you ever felt like God was really close to you? How did that feel? Would you like to tell us about it?

Session 2

April 12/13

Session Aim: To respond to the events of Palm Sunday

Bible Ref: Mark 11:1-11

Today's fruit

The people welcomed Jesus because they believed he would be a good king – fair, strong, and bring **goodness** to his people. God is good all the time.

Palm Sunday

Jesus was approaching Jerusalem with his followers. He sent two of them with instructions to find a colt, telling them exactly where they would find the donkey and what they should say to anyone who questioned them.

In a miraculous way, the colt was just where Jesus had told them, and when Jesus' followers answered the people in the way Jesus said, the people let them take the donkey.

Jesus' followers put their coats on the donkey's back and he rode it into Jerusalem. People in the crowd spread their coats on the road and others put down palm branches for the donkey to ride on.

Everyone was shouting words of praise and welcome and they believed that Jesus was the king who had been promised and would save them.

Think about

Which parts of this passage interest you? Why?

Do you have questions about what happened?

Did you notice how the two people Jesus sent to get the donkey obeyed him even though they weren't sure if the donkey would be there, or if the people would let them take it? Let's talk about how they trusted Jesus.

The people had been waiting for a long time for a new king to come – a king who would save them and rule with goodness. How do you think they felt when Jesus arrived?

The crowd were shouting praise to God. Have you ever been in a large crowd? What was it like? Would you have liked to be in this crowd, as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem?

Do you think there was anything surprising about how Jesus came into Jerusalem?

Why did people put their coats and palm leaves on the ground? What might we do today to show respect and recognition if Jesus came into our town? What would you say (or shout) to Jesus when he arrived?

17/18 April: Maundy Thursday and Good Friday

The coming days will see significant Easter events. How does the Easter story show God's goodness to us?

Session 3

April 19/20

Session Aim: To consider Jesus' resurrection and the difference it makes to us
Bible Ref: Matthew 28:1-10

Today's fruit

One of the experiences of Mary Magdalen and the other Mary was **joy** when they saw Jesus alive. This is for all people who know that Jesus is alive.

Easter Sunday

The two Marys went to the tomb where Jesus' body was. There was an earthquake, and an angel came and moved the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb.

The soldiers guarding the tomb collapsed and the angel spoke to the two Marys, telling them not to be afraid because Jesus had risen from the dead.

The angel invited the two Marys to look in the tomb, and then told them to go and spread the word to the disciples, telling them to meet Jesus at Galilee.

The women left quickly, afraid but happy, and went to tell the disciples what had happened. On the way, they saw Jesus and they stopped and worshipped him, before carrying on to the disciples.

Think about

What do you think when you hear about Jesus' resurrection? Is there anything you want to say, or do you have any questions?

Talk through the story again and identify how the people may have felt at each part of the story. What a lot of emotions!

The angel said, 'He has risen from death as he said he would' (v6). Do you think anyone had expected Jesus to rise from the dead? Why or why not?

What Easter traditions do you know about, or do you carry out? For example, Easter eggs, hot cross buns, sunrise service ... Can we find out what they mean or why we do them?

Why is it so important that Jesus rose from the dead? What does it mean for us, or what difference does it make to us?

Jesus rising from the dead shows us that God has power over all things – even death. Nothing is stronger or better than God. How does that make you feel?

Jesus told the two Marys not to be afraid. It says 'Do not be afraid' a lot in the Bible! Why might people be afraid when they encounter God (or specifically in this story)? And why do we not need to be afraid?

Session 4

April 26/27

Session Aim: To explore Jesus' command to love each other
Bible Ref: John 15:12-17

Today's fruit

Kindness is about caring for others and being generous to them. The way God loves is **kind**, and with the Spirit's help we can grow in **kindness** to others.

Love God, love others

Today's passage follows on from Jesus teaching the disciples about the vine and the branches, which we looked at before Easter.

After telling the disciples why they should stay close to him, Jesus tells them that they need to love each other as well. In fact, he says that they need to love each other the same way he has loved them.

He says that the greatest love someone can show is to die for their friends. (That is what Jesus knows he will do for his friends, the disciples, which we just celebrated at Easter.)

Jesus also tells the disciples that they are no longer 'servants' but 'friends' of his, and that he has chosen them to produce fruit. He then says again that they should love each other.

Think about

In The Salvation Army we use the phrase 'Love God, love others'. Have you heard this before? What do you think it means? Which part of this is Jesus talking about in today's passage?

Jesus said, 'Love each other as I have loved you' (v12). In what ways has Jesus loved us? Can we love others in the same way?

Jesus died for his friends – for all of us (v13). What does this verse mean for us? Rather than actually dying for our friends, what could it be about?

When you think about the way God loves you, and the idea that Jesus died for you, how does that make you feel? What do you want to say to God?

Do you know any stories where someone has shown great love for another person? (Have examples ready to share.)

What is the kindest or most loving thing someone has done for you? How did that make you feel?

How would this group / our church / our community / our world be different if we loved each other as God loves us?

Is there someone you know who needs to experience God's love? Is there anything you can do to show them God's love? Let's pray for these people now.