

PART 1

You are having coffee with a friend and they initiate a conversation about faith and ask you what do you believe? How confident do you feel in answering that question?

You talk about what it means and looks like in your life to be a follower of Jesus, how a relationship with God makes a difference in your life, you talk about how God loves you and gives you peace and comfort. Your friend listens and then asks, 'But what do you believe about God and Jesus? I get peace, love and comfort from other people and places in my life, why do I need Jesus?'. What do you say next? How confident do you feel in that situation?

I think that if we are honest we don't have a lot of confidence in ourselves in this area. It's not that we don't believe but unless we are in the habit of sharing our faith regularly then we easily forget the foundations upon which our faith is built up. As time goes by we rightly focus on what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and how we love God and bring glory to him with our whole lives, but we don't often return to where it started. What do we believe?

So over the course of this term we will encourage one another as we build our knowledge of key Bible passages, and our confidence in knowing what the gospel is and how we can share it with others. We are hoping that by the end of the series we will have been encouraged both to grapple with the fundamentals of our faith and to remind ourselves of the great truths we have to share with the world around us.

Each week there is a key verse, these verses are great memory verses to try and recall so we can ground our faith in scripture. It might be a bit old fashioned these days but we would do well to try and commit these to memory.

Overleaf is an overview of what we will be looking at up until Advent.

OVERVIEW OF SERIES

Part 1: 7th September - 19th October

Part 2: 26th October - 23rd November

Sunday, Sept 7, 2025	The Way	John 14:6
Sunday, Sept 14, 2025	Designed for Success	Genesis 1:27
Sunday, Sept 21, 2025	The Meaning of Life	Ecclesiastes 3:11
Sunday, Sept 28, 2025	Broken & Restored	Romans 3:23-24
Sunday, Oct 5, 2025	God is Love	John 3:16
Sunday, Oct 12, 2025	Blessed to be a Blessing (Harvest)	2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Sunday, Oct 19, 2025	The Cross	1 Peter 2:24
Sunday, Oct 26, 2025	Fulness of Life	John 10:10
Sunday, Nov 2, 2025	Belonging & Purpose	1 Peter 2:9-10
Sunday, Nov 9, 2025	Identity	1 John 3:1
Sunday, Nov 16, 2025	The Hope of Heaven	Revelation 21:1-5
Sunday, Nov 23, 2025	Becoming a Christian	Romans 10:9

The Way

Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.' John 14:6

INTRODUCTION

We live in a culture that if people believe in God believe there are many ways to God or God is who you want God to be. We live in a culture which is suspicious of truth-claims, and hopes for eternal life, but with little certainty. Everything is tolerated except intolerance. At the same time, interest in 'spirituality' is growing, seen as a useful path to self-enlightenment, and adherents of other faiths are not just on the other side of the world; they are now our friends and workmates.

In this context, the words of Jesus, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no-one comes to the Father except through me' are shocking, embarrassing. How could he be so arrogant?

Yet when Jesus spoke these words, his intent was not to exclude, but to include - not to anger, but to comfort. Hours before his own death, Jesus is sitting at the Last Supper, reassuring his disciples who are fearful and grief-stricken at the news that he will be leaving them. He's speaking of eternal life in his Father's house, and he's reassuring his disciples that through him, they really will know that eternal life.

Jesus knows that his coming death is not to be an accident of history – it is a death full of meaning and purpose. Through his death on the cross, he will triumph over sin and death, and open the way of salvation that leads to the Father. Therefore, what he says to the disciples is good news – that despite the pain of separation, the agony of death, he really is the way, the truth, and the life.

As we grapple with these words of Jesus we have to consider who it is saying them and what we know about his character. Do we think he is an arrogant person? Do we think he wanted to intentionally mislead people? Do we think he is deluded? If we have said 'no' to those questions then we have to take seriously his claim.

Before we dive into to this week's topic, imagine the coffee shop scenario in the series introduction. How do you respond to your friend's question? Break into 2s or 3s and each have a go at articulating your response.

READ

Read John 14:6, Acts 4:12 and 1 Timothy 2:3-5.

DISCUSS

- 1. The Bible makes it clear in these verses that Jesus is the only way to God. Be honest do you agree? How do you feel about that statement? Why is it so unpopular today?
- 2. Look at the context in which Jesus says our key verse: read John 14:1-14. Hear the reassurance in his voice (1-5). What difference does this make to the way you read verse 6?
- 3. Look at 1 Tim 2:3-6, along with the second part of John 14:6, how does this help us understand what it means that Jesus is the way? According to this (and other verses) without Jesus what is the alternative way?
- 4. Jesus claims that he has shown us the truth of the Father (verses 9, 11). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15, 19-20; 2:9). When our friends say that Jesus was just a great teacher, how can we respond? What is it that makes Jesus Christ unique? Think about his identity, his teaching, his character, his miracles, his work of salvation on the cross, and his resurrection.
- 5. Jesus offers his disciples, and all who follow him, eternal life (John 14:1-4; also John 3:16). What difference does this make to how we live our lives now?
- 6. The gospel is good news, yet so often we give the impression to others that it's bad news. Can you think of a way of conveying the content of John 14:6 in such a way that someone who's not yet a Christian hears it as good news?
- 7. How then do we respond to other religions? What do we say about those who've never heard about Jesus? We may not know how to answer these questions fully, but what we do know is that God's decisions will be seen to be just and righteous by everyone (Rev 15:1-4).

PRAY TOGETHER

 Spend some time giving God thanks for sending Jesus, making it possible for us to know him personally.

- Pray for God's help in communicating this message positively to our society and friends.
- Pray for those known to you who have not met Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life
- This week ,in our month of prayer, we are praying for our nation. Take some time to pray for our nation in whatever way you feel led to pray.

Designed for Success

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

INTRODUCTION

The question of where we come from is one that has intrigued and been discussed for centuries. Where we think we came from shapes what we think life is about. If we believe we came from nothing, apart from that being a bigger miracle to believe in than the virgin birth, it means that life is ultimately meaningless. If we believe we came from random forces moving around with no reason and life, therefore, is an accident then, again, life has no meaning or is just full of chaos. If though, we believe that we have been designed, planned and created (however that process was implemented) then what does that say about who we are and what life is about?

I suspect many people who do not know Jesus for themselves have an impression of the Christian faith that it is negative, that it always saying how terrible we are, and while there is an element of that we see that right at the beginning of it all, right at the very nature of who we are as people, is a belief that we are made in the image of God. If that is true, and God is who we say He is, then humanity is designed for success! Now we have to remember that this passage is before the fall in Genesis 3 which has had a major impact on that but, nevertheless, humanity's design is inspired by God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

What would you answer to the question of a non-believer, 'where do I come from?'

READ

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

DISCUSS

1. The whole of creation is formed as a response to the word of God, 'And God

- said'. Why does it matter to us as Christians that the world in which we live was created deliberately by God? Why does it matter that human beings specifically were created?
- 2. How do you understand being made in the image of God? How does this verse shape our understanding of human dignity and worth?
- 3. How does knowing you're made in God's image affect the way you see yourself? Are there areas of your life where it's hard to believe you reflect God's image? Why?
- 4. How might this truth challenge the way we view others—especially those who are different from us? What would change in our church and society if we truly lived out the belief that every person reflects God's image?
- 5. What does this verses reveal about God's attitude to us? How he might view humanity?
- 6. This week, how can you intentionally reflect God's image in your work, family, or community?
- 7. What's one habit or practice you could adopt to remind yourself daily of your identity in Christ?

- Read Psalm 8 out loud and praise God for all he has created.
- Pray for wisdom as we communicate what it means to be human beings, created for God's good purposes.
- Alpha begins next week (23rd) pray for those attending and those we plan to invite this week.
- This week in our month of prayer we have been praying for ourselves as we consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Take time to pray for one another that we would grow in the likeness of Christ, in Godliness, character....

The Meaning of Life

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

INTRODUCTION

Now this might not be the most obvious verse to jump to when we are trying to understand our faith and thinking about how to share it with others. Ecclesiastes might be a book you aren't very familiar with too. It is a strange book; there is a basic theme of pessimism bordering on cynicism that runs through it, "everything is meaningless" (1:2) – whether it is work (1:3), creation (1:5-7), pleasure (2:1ff), even wisdom itself. Yet there is a **but** that runs through the book. **But** view these things with an idea that there is a God who is gracious and generous and things begin to fit in place. There is a God shaped hole in our lives, a longing for something more in all of us, that has been placed there by God. We all have it and try to fill it in different ways but this verse helps us make sense of that longing and how it is satisfied.

READ

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

DISCUSS

- 1. As you read the couplets in verse 1-8 do you see these as positive or negative reflections on life? Do they comfort or unsettle you?
- 2. v11 speaks of God having "set eternity in the human heart" Have you ever had a moment when you have had a profound sense of there being more to life than what you had? Maybe looking up at a night sky, sat in a lecture hall exploring a scientific theory, the birth of a child...? Did you have that sense because you already knew God or as a stepping stone to your relationship with God?
- 3. What does this verse tell us about why we often wrestle with questions of

- purpose, meaning, and what lies beyond this life? How does this idea shape your understanding of human nature and spiritual longing?
- 4. In what ways does this verse affirm that our desire for meaning is part of God's design?
- 5. Is there someone in your life who seems to be searching for meaning? How might you gently walk alongside them?
- 6. In what ways does Jesus answer the longing for eternity, beauty, and purpose? Had you noticed this longing before you became a Christian and attempt to satisfy it in other ways? How can we share this truth without sounding preachy or dismissive of someone's personal journey?
- 7. Reflect on your own "eternity moments" when you sensed God drawing you toward something deeper. How might those stories help others see Him?

- Pray for those we know who are searching for meaning and an opportunity for us to share where we believe that longing can be satisfied.
- This week in our month of prayer we are praying for Sale, spend some time praying for our local area in whatever way you feel led.

Broken & Restored

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24

INTRODUCTION

The gospel is offensive to people and these verses get right at the heart of why it is offensive. All humanity is in the same boat, all have sinned and all are saved through Jesus. Bishop Handley Moule, who was chaplain to Queen Victoria and then Edward VII, said of this verse, 'The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it; but so are you.'

The harlot, the liar and the murderer are also saved by Jesus just as you are. In the Roman's passage Paul is addressing the issue that in the new church made of Jews and gentiles the Jews had assumed superiority. At the foot of the cross is a level playing field, no one is worthy but all are made worthy. Over time, a myth has developed in the popular imagination that some sins are much worse than others. Time and time again, we hear people saying things like 'Well, I've not done anything really bad, I try to live a good life.' Paul reminds us that it is not about some doing better than others, and people trying their best to come up to some kind of standard. Instead it is about all of us failing to live up to the perfect glory of God – failing to live up to all that we were created for.

(When Paul writes of us falling short of the glory of God, he is probably referring to the image or glory of God in which all human beings were made, (Genesis 1:27) but which all fail to live up to. Each of us fails to exhibit the image of God – being like God, for which we were created.)

Can you think of a time you got something you didn't deserve - but were really grateful for?

READ

Read Romans 3:21-26

DISCUSS

- 1. How do you personally respond to the idea that "all have sinned"?
- 2. What is the end result of sin? (Romans 6:23) How much should/do death and judgement influence our evangelism?
- 3. Paul is saying something fairly radical about the righteousness of God. He is saying it is not earned by observance of the law, but given by God. How can we communicate the grace of God (v.24) to a society that prefers to believe that our worth and any future life beyond this one can be earned?
- 4. Why do you think people struggle to accept grace as a free gift? Is this something you have struggled with?
- 5. Paul is challenging the assumed superiority of the Jewish believers. How as Christians can we avoid appearing to have a 'holier than thou' attitude?
- 6. What is the end result of sin? (Romans 6:23) How much should/do death and judgement influence our evangelism?
- 7. If someone asked you, "Why do I need Jesus?" how could Romans 3:23–24 help you answer?

- Spend some time in quiet confession before God, and then together read 1 John 1:8-9)
- Pray for those you know who do not seem to acknowledge any sense of need for relationship with God.
- Pray for wisdom, grace and humility in speaking about sin and judgement and the need for repentance in the context of the reconciling love of God in Jesus.
- In our final week in our month of prayer we are praying for our church, take time to pray together for our church.

God is Love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, philosophers and theologians have tried to describe what God is like, using abstract, theoretical words: God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient... But, as so often when we turn to the Bible, we find a much simpler, more direct answer: 'God is love' (1 John 4.8, 16). Even more important, God is like Jesus – 'anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father' said Jesus (John 14:9). That is why belief in the incarnation – God becoming a human being – is right at the heart of the Christian faith. And when we read John 3:16, we find the essence of the gospel conveyed in a single verse.

God is love and God shows us that love is active. It was love that compelled the Father to send the son, it was love that compelled the Son to say yes to coming to humanity, and this love was not just for the likeable, or a particular tribe or nation, but for the whole world.

This love evokes a response. God's offer of love is made freely to all. But it is a gift that must be accepted in order to be effective. His offer of eternal life is for all those who believe in Jesus – but if we reject God's love, we reject life itself. As John 3:17 makes clear, God's purpose is not condemnation, but salvation – it is we who condemn ourselves if we reject God's offer of life. As CS Lewis said, there are only two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done' and those to whom, in the end, God has to say, 'Thy will be done.'

What is the most memorable gift you received and what made it so special?

READ

Read John 3:14-21 for context.

DISCUSS

- 1. Why do you think love dominates music, films, literature, and so many other aspects of our lives? What does that longing for relationship say about human nature?
- 2. Read the following passages: John 3:16; Romans 5:5-8; 1 John 4:7-21; Ephesians 3:16-19; Romans 8:38-39. What do they tell us of the love of God?
- 3. 'Whoever does not believe stands condemned already.' What does it mean to stand condemned, or to perish (vv.16-18)? Many people struggle to see how a loving God could condemn those He loves. How do verses 16-21 help us understand the need for true love to be accompanied by justice?
- 4. Look again at Romans 5:5 and Ephesians 3:19. God's love is a love that can be known, that lives in us and fills our lives. It's not just an abstract theoretical force it's a living reality. Can you think of a time when you've particularly sensed the love of God in your life?
- 5. God's gift to us in this verse is twofold: 1. We get Jesus and 2. We get the offer of eternal life. I think in recent years the church has over emphasized the first at the cost of the second, possibly to counteract an overemphasis on eternal life over Jesus before that. As you think about sharing your faith with others, which of these do you feel more comfortable at presenting, a relationship with Jesus now or the eternal life? Why do you think that is? What is missing if we present one and not both gifts?
- 6. 1 John 4:11 is challenging to any follower of Jesus. Could someone observing our actions and interactions with others learn anything about the love God has shown to us?

- Spend some time thanking God for his overwhelming love for us
- Pray for someone you know who does not yet know the love of Christ for themselves.
- Pray for ourselves, that we might know the love of God more fully, and learn to love one another as God has loved us.

Blessed to be a Blessing

INTRODUCTION

This week we pause our sermon series as we mark and reflect on the theme of Harvest (although it isn't totally unrelated to our topic of knowing and telling the gospel).

God has generously given to us and, in 2 Corinthians 9:7, we are told he loves it when we give cheerfully. I think this is the only time in the New Testament where the phrase 'God loves...' is used. This is part of a bigger section on giving that started in chapter 8 and continues to the end of this chapter. Through it we can see some principles from the Old Testament tithing being adapted for the church. The main change here, and through the New Testament, is that there is not an obligation under the law to give but a higher challenge that the way we give to the kingdom and to those in need is a reflection of our heart, our love for others and our love for God. This was always how it was to be, God's people reflecting God's character and blessing others.

How are you with exchanging gifts when there is a clear difference between the value of the gifts you have got for each other? Is it different depending on if you have given the more expensive or cheaper gift?

READ

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

DISCUSS

- 1. What do these verse reveal to us about God's character?
- 2. What does Paul mean by "sowing sparingly" and "sowing generously"? where does the provision of the seed we are to sow come from? Is this how you view your money, possessions, time, talents or whatever it is we are using to sow?
- 3. Why do you think God cares about the attitude of the giver? What does "cheerful" giving reveal about our hearts? Is cheerfulness an expression you would use to describe your own attitude to giving? Why do you think that is how you feel about it?
- 4. In verse 8, Paul says God is able to bless us "abundantly." What kind of

- abundance is he talking about? Is it always material? What other kinds of harvest might we experience?
- 5. How does our generosity point others toward God?
- 6. What are you sowing in your life right now, intentionally or unintentionally? Are there areas where you want to sow more generously?

- Thank God for the generosity he has shown us
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would increase the joy we have in blessing others
- Pray for us as the church that we would sow the seed of the gospel generously
- For provision of finances to so this

The Cross

He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 2:24

INTRODUCTION

This is a massive subject and a challenging one to look at in one session. The cross of Jesus has so many different facets to it, and so many different outworkings, that even if we were to dedicate a lot more time to it there will still be some things that are out of grasp to fully understand exactly what Jesus' death on the cross achieved. Whilst it is absolutely central to our faith, who Jesus is and why he came is nevertheless a 'mystery'.

We could look at so many different passages it is the moment in human history that everything changed, everything hinges on. It is through the cross we are made right with God, where we receive forgiveness and reconciliation, freedom from sin and condemnation. It is a demonstration of God's love for us, through it we receive new life and find encouragement in our own suffering but there is still more that the cross achieves.

"The cross is the place of exchange. It is where Jesus descended to the depths so that we might ascend to the heights. It is where Jesus, out of love, became everything that we human beings are – guilty, weak, separated from God and subject to death – in order that we may, if we choose, share in his innocence, his power, his fellowship with God, his life." - J. John, The Life

The imagery of Jesus' death on the cross is one that has been reflected many time in other stories. What examples can you think of from books and films where someone has stepped in to take the blame or punishment for someone else?

READ

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

DISCUSS

- 1. If someone asked, "Why did Jesus have to die?" how would you explain it?
- 2. What does it mean that Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the cross"? How does this deepen your understanding of the cross?
- 3. What does Peter say is the purpose of Jesus bearing our sins? How do "dying to sin" and "living for righteousness" show up in daily life?
- 4. "By his wounds you have been healed"- what kind of healing is Peter referring to? Is it physical, spiritual, emotional...? Can you describe what that looks like in your own life?
- 5. Here are a handful of other verses that talk about the cross, what do they add to your understanding of what happened when Jesus died on the cross? Hebrews 10:10-12, Hebrews 12:2, Romans 3:21-25, Romans 6:6, Colossians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 4:10.
- 6. Look at 1 Corinthians 15, particularly verses 12-19. What is the significance of the resurrection in relationship to the cross? What is the meaning of the cross without the resurrection?
- 7. Why is it important that Jesus' story doesn't end on the cross, that he rose again? Again, skimming through 1 Corinthians 15, particularly verses 55-57, will help, along with looking at Philippians 3:10, Romans 4:25, and 2 Corinthians 4:14.

PRAY TOGETHER

• You might like to spend sometime giving thanks to Jesus for the cross, perhaps use 'You Chose the Cross' By Martin Layzell:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=vzMubghVEM0&list=RDvzMubghVEM0&start_radio=1

 Pray for those you long to see come to the cross of Christ and accept him as Lord and Saviour. Pray that God would reveal the depth of his love to them through the cross.