



Anglican
Church of Noosa

2021
LENTEN
STUDIES

FAULTY PEOPLE

FAULTLESS SAVIOUR



Lent? What and Why

Lent is a season for spiritual renewal ... renewal that requires deep reflection, honesty and prayer, and a renewed understanding of the Scriptures.

Lent invites us to make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion and celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

The practice of a forty-day preparation period began in the Christian church during the third and fourth centuries.

The number forty carries Biblical significance based on the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness and Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness. The forty days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday and continue to Easter Day, not counting Sundays.

'Connect' Groups

At the Anglican Church of Noosa, the primary avenue for discipleship is in a Connect Group.

We strongly encourage everyone to be involved because these groups are specifically designed to help us grow as disciples.

The normal pattern for a Connect Group time is to have three sections: Connect, Word and Prayer, in any order.

We need time to relate to one another by connecting personally. Depending on the members, this can be done in a variety of ways.

As we get into the Word we examine the truth and relevance of God's Word in order to apply it to our lives. Scripture is explored and explained, and the goal is to minister to each other's lives through what is learned, not necessarily to finish all the material.

Prayer is a vital part of a Connect Group's time together. Leave plenty of time so your prayer is not rushed. This is not a 'closing prayer' but a time for everyone in the group to take specific requests to God, in a simply and conversational way. This is where the action is! The goal is to create a space where people can see God at work.

Thomas
Woman at the Well
The Apostle James
Mary Magdalene
Nicodemus
Mary mother of Jesus

Rev'd Simon Manchester
Rev'd Lynda Johnson
Rev'd John Dickson
Mrs Bec Choi
Rev'd Pete Stedman
Mrs Alison Whalley





Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 1

John 20:24-29

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. What causes you to doubt the truth of the Christian faith? What do you do when you have times of doubt?
2. What caused Thomas to move from doubt to trust?

Read John 20:24-29 (or on to 31)

3. Thomas put conditions on belief. But Simon reminded us that no one really lives like this. A huge amount of life is listening to reasonable evidence. Do you agree?
4. What was Jesus' response to Thomas' doubt? Why did Jesus bend to Thomas' request?¹
5. Why do so many people work so hard to discredit the eye-witness accounts of Jesus' ministry? ²

¹ Simon suggested it was so we might know that even the difficult-to-believe people were persuaded by Jesus face to face. Jesus convinced Thomas, and therefore, Simon suggested, we can be even more encouraged.

² We have reasonable evidence in the Scriptures of Jesus' life, teaching, death and resurrection. For 2,000 years, people who have not seen Jesus Christ, have trusted the word of those who have. Jesus proclaims a special blessing on those who have responded to the eyewitnesses.

6. What is the difference between proof and evidence? ³

Reflecting on what it means for us

7. Why did Simon suggest that doubt can be a help to us? Have you been through times of doubt only to end up stronger and clearer?
8. What is the difference between doubt and asking questions? What is the difference between doubt and unbelief? How did Simon describe doubt and who were his examples?
9. How did Simon describe faith? How will this understanding help you explain or defend why you believe?

Simon's conclusion: Jesus really is alive and well – we have reasonable and wonderful evidence to trust him, and when we do, we are able to say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God".

Share with the group (if you feel able), how this study has helped you.

³ Jesus is saying that seeing is NOT crucial to believing. Read John 20:30-31. There is sufficient in John's gospel alone to believe (trust) who Jesus is – Messiah and Son of God.



Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 2

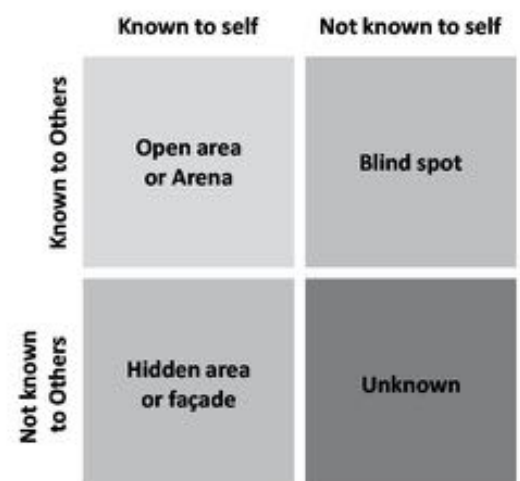
John 4:1-42

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. Lynda began by reflecting on grace we see in the life, death, resurrection and ascension: that we are not given what we deserve, but rather, receive what we decidedly do NOT deserve: forgiveness, mercy, a full and free relationship with God and the wonder of eternity with God as well! Reflect together on this and discuss what touches your heart about Easter.

2. How might the Johari window help us understand the account of Jesus and the woman at the well? And about Jesus and us?



The Johari Window Model

Read John 4:1-42

3. What were the (many) unusual aspects of Jesus meeting this woman?
4. How does Jesus know and then expose the woman's need for spiritual water? (John 2:24-25) Reflect together on Jesus' knowledge of us. (See Psalm 139:1-6.) What is the impact of this?

5. How are people around us today, filling their lives with the temporary and superficial, and avoiding what is of deep and eternal significance? How, and why, are we doing that?
6. “Jesus was trying to reach her deepest need”. What was that? And our deepest need? What do we know about our deepest need? ¹

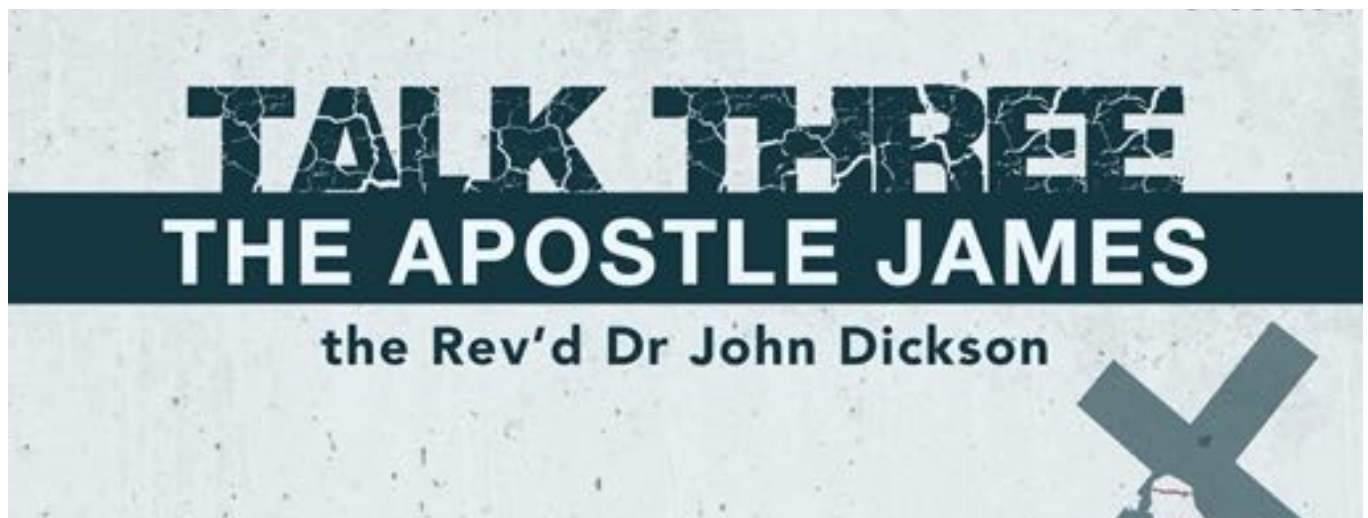
Reflecting on what it means for us

7. Recall the realisation of the woman (v.29) and then the Samaritans (v.42) about Jesus’ identity. How did *you* become clear about who Jesus is and what difference did that make to you?
8. When the woman finally realises who Jesus, she can’t keep it in but tells everyone! No one told her to do that. It was natural, it was real, it was enthusiastic. What holds us back from the type of excitement which can’t wait to tell others about who we have found in Jesus?
9. Lynda said that when we grasp the reality of Jesus, it necessarily involves a change of heart and cannot simply involve outward observance (John 4:23). Many church people seem to *only* emphasise outward observance. How can we see hearts penetrated and changed?

Lynda concluded: “How is your faulty life being met by the faultless Saviour? What is he revealing to you about yourself that brings change to your mind and heart and therefore your behaviour?” Reflect on this.

Share with the group (if you feel able), how this study – both talk and discussion - has helped you.

¹ Our deepest need – like that of the woman – is to know Jesus and have eternal life! Our deepest need has been met in Jesus!



Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 3

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. In your younger days, who did you look up to and want to be like?
2. Why did the reformer Martin Luther have some issues about the inclusion of the letter of James in the collection of New Testament documents? How did another famous reformer, John Calvin, resolve Luther's dilemma? ¹ Why is understanding that salvation is by grace and not by works, so crucial to our understanding of the Christian faith? What then is the place of good works in the Christian life?

Who is this James?

3. Why does John Dickson conclude that James, author of the Epistle in his name, was Jesus' brother?
4. See Mark 6:3. Yes, Jesus had brothers and sisters – who originally didn't believe in Jesus (John 7:5) and thought he was mad (Mark 3:21). How did they move from being sceptics to becoming leaders? (See Acts 1:14, 1 Cor 15:3-7). How crucial is Jesus' resurrection to *your* faith?

Read the following passages from James and compare with **Jesus'** own style.
(Don't dwell on these too long)

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. James 1:9-10 | f. Matthew 5:7 |
| b. James 1:27 | g. Mark 4:25 |
| c. James 2:13 | h. Matthew 7:16 |
| d. James 4:10 | i. Luke 18:14 |
| e. James 3:9-12 | |

¹ "It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves is never alone – it is always accompanied by works" John Calvin, 1509-1564

(You also may like to refer to Acts 12:17, 15:13 and 21:18 where James is a central leader in the early church and see how Paul confirms this in his letters in 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19 and Gal 2:9-12).

What does all this mean for us?

5. James had a prominence in the early church we rarely consider. (See Galatians 2:9 where he is listed first in a group of people Paul describes as pillars.) He is also mentioned in the works of the 1st century historian Josephus who reports James' martyrdom. James died because he trusted his brother Jesus.

How would you answer someone who challenged the historical reliability of Jesus' resurrection, with reference to the way James turned from sceptic, to believer, to leader, to martyr?

6. In James 1:1 – James describes himself as a servant of God and of his brother the Lord. In James 2:1-4, he describes his brother as the 'glorious Lord Jesus Christ'. James sees his brother as the Lord and therefore sees himself as his servant. What is the challenge for us who are often so casual about Jesus? How can we help one another grow in our reverence for Jesus as Lord, and in seeing ourselves as his servants?
7. In James 2:1-4, why is the treatment of those who appear well off, inappropriate among Christians? ²
8. What are the lessons for us (for you) in what John has presented about James?

Share with the group (if you feel able), how this study – both talk and discussion - has helped you.

² John Dickson said – because we are **all** tiny in comparison to Jesus, the glorious Lord of all eternity!



Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 4

John 20:1-18

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. What is your favourite genre of literature? Why so much fiction around Mary Madelene?
2. Are you willing to share with the group how your life has changed since following Jesus?

Read Luke 8:1-3

Mary's healing

When Mary meets Jesus, she is a broken person. She is enslaved by evil spirits and unable to save herself. Bec suggested that Mary's brokenness reminds us of our own brokenness and that of this world.

3. How has sin broken and impacted this world? How has sin impacted our relationship with God?
4. What did Jesus' healing ministry signify? ¹
5. Why is God willing to save us from our brokenness? How does the cross do that? ²

¹ Bec said that Jesus' healing ministry was a foretaste of that ultimate healing that Jesus offers to all mankind

² At the cross, Jesus took the full blow of our sin, so that there is no condemnation when we confess it all and repent

6. A friend who is aware of their failings, wants to come to Jesus. What do you assure them they will find when they come? ³

Mary's service

Luke 8:3 tells us that Mary was involved in bank-rolling Jesus' extensive ministry in Galilee, paying for food, accommodation and taxes. She is one of a number of unlikely people associated with Jesus such as tax-collectors, fisherman and all kinds of notorious sinners. And he welcomes their contribution.

7. Another friend has somehow gained the impression that they are too bad to come to Jesus. What did Bec suggest was Jesus' selection criteria for people to join his team?
8. How does Jesus take and use us broken people in this broken world, to make a difference? What does he look for from us, as we come into relationship with him and seek to serve him?

Mary's devotion to Jesus

There at the cross in Matt 27:55-56 is Mary Magdalene; also at his burial (Matt 27:61); and in John 20, she is there at the empty tomb, distressed, as the stone has been rolled away and there is no body. We see her total devotion and desire to be close to Jesus, even if it means following him to his burial!

9. Bec asked us to consider whether our lives are driven by religion and obligation, or by a desire to be close to Jesus? How do you think we can figure that out? How do you tell the difference?
10. Like Mary, we all have a unique story about our relationship with Jesus and the difference meeting him has made. How can we gain confidence in telling *our* story?
11. What are the lessons for us (for you) in what Bec has presented about Mary Magdalene?

Share with the group (if you feel able), how this study – both talk and discussion - has helped you.

³ God will meet us with love and compassion, healing and salvation.



Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 5

John 3:1-15

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. Have you felt let down by those who have not lived up to your expectations? Any examples?
2. And yet – Pete said, “we *too* are fractured, fallen, faulty”. Do you agree?

Our God in heaven is perfect, holy, faultless! For those who know they are faulty; there is great hope!

Read John 3:1-15

1st meeting of Nicodemus

Nicodemus lives like the way to get to God is through morality, religiosity and law-keeping.

3. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus under the cover of darkness?
4. What is the problem of religion that we see in Nicodemus? ¹
5. What is missing in a world of academia that seeks all the answers to life with no reference to God? ²

¹ He has no peace or rest. He is groping about in the dark and has ongoing dissatisfaction.

² Intellectualism cannot answer the questions of WHY we live, suffer and die.

6. What is Jesus offering in place of religion and intellectualism? (v3)
7. v.4 – what has Nicodemus missed in Jesus’ answer, as he comes back with this question?
8. vv.14-15 – what is the clue Jesus gives to Nicodemus about how a “new birth” is possible?³

2nd meeting

Read John 7:37-52 – the Jewish leaders at the Feast of Tabernacles want Jesus killed for his outrageous teaching such as ‘your religion has not satisfied, but I will’! Nicodemus speaks up for Jesus! He is changing!

9. Pete said, “When faulty people begin to meet the faultless Saviour, they are slowly, surely, inevitably, transformed.” We begin to see that here. Would you consider sharing with the group part of your story – of how meeting Jesus began to slowly, surely yet inevitably change you?

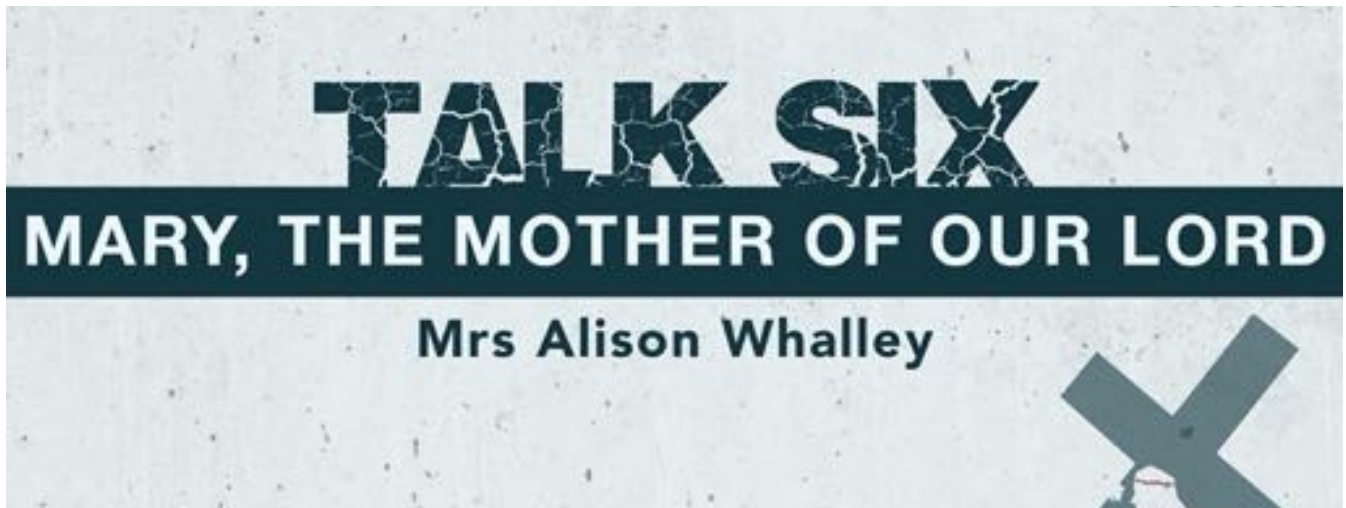
3rd meeting

10. This third time we meet Nicodemus is after the crucifixion when Jesus’ body taken down from the cross. See John 19:39ff. He is cleaning a corpse and preparing a body for burial! What was Nicodemus’ motivation?

It seems like he has come to recognise both his faulty ways AND the faultless Saviour who has been ‘lifted up’ just as he said he would. It seems that he has found salvation! Initial intrigue and a willingness to listen (John 3); resulted in caring less what others think and defending Jesus (John 7); and then, he grew in a desire to bring all he had to Jesus because he loved him so much. You know how desperate you were before you met Jesus and the load of faultiness you felt (maybe still feel!). And when you see the faultless Saviour and trust in who he is and what he’s done; you find your way home to our heavenly Father; forgiven, free and faultless!

11. Pete closed: “The faultless Saviour, forgives, restores, revives. This Easter, may you know the hope and the freedom, and the grace of sins forgiven, and of life restored.” How might this Easter be different for you?

³ Believe in Jesus, lifted up on the cross, to deal with our sin.



Faulty people: Faultless Saviour: Study 6

John 2:1-11

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. What do you consider to be the most important traits to have, to be useful to the Lord?
2. We are often introduced as “so and so’s husband” or “so and so’s mum” or “so and so’s neighbour”. What is your **primary** identity?

The stories – *choose the ones you want to consider. You might not have time for them all!*

3. **The call:** Luke 1:26-38: What do you find most remarkable about the angel’s call on Mary’s life? And most remarkable about her response?
4. Looking back, what have been the circumstances when you have struggled to say, “I am the Lord’s servant”?
What helped you through these times?
1. **Called ‘blessed’** – by Elizabeth and ‘all generations’. What are the hallmarks of a “blessed” life?¹
2. **The birth** - Luke 2:1-14 - What were the challenges, the surprises and the joys of this time for Mary?

¹ The great confidence that the Lord is totally in control. Being able to hold on to him and say no matter the circumstances, ‘I am the Lord’s servant’.


3. **The presentation** - Luke 2:28ff - Simeon's response to seeing the baby Jesus: What strikes you about his statement as he held this baby. How might Mary have responded?
4. **At the temple** - Luke 2:41ff - Mary and Joseph lose the Messiah! What do you think it means that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart?"
5. **The wedding in Cana** - John 2:1-11- John calls the miracles of Jesus "signs" meaning they point forward to something else. To what did Jesus changing water to wine, point?
6. **The family challenge** – Mark 3:31-35 – who are those who are Jesus' family? (Does that include you?)
7. **Jesus' death** – Jesus used some of his last breaths to address Mary who was there when he had taken his first! Jesus makes provision for what remained of Mary's earthly life, but also in his very death, was making provision for her _____ ?

Reflection

Alison said, "At the foot of the cross, we are all equal. We are all faulty. Doesn't matter who we are or what we've done."

8. As we head into Easter: who do we see hanging on the cross? Why is this important?
9. Lent is traditionally a time to "give up" something. What did Jesus give up (see Philippians 2:5-11) for us? What does the Bible teach that we gain from what Jesus gave up?
10. What have you learned about God by reflecting on Mary's life?

What will you take from our Lenten studies into your celebration of Easter and beyond? If you feel able to, share with the group what you've learned and what changes there may have been in your life from what you've learned.



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