

LIFE IN THE SON

FROM THE UPPER ROOM
TO THE EMPTY TOMB

JOHN 13-21

KENMORE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
GROWTH GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Life in the Son: From the Upper Room to the Empty Tomb

Over the next few weeks we'll be exploring—life in the Son. John's gospel is a deep yet rich account of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In chapters 13-17, we discover Jesus' last words to his disciples from the upper room. Before his death, Jesus told his disciples what life will be like for them—as they live in the power of his Spirit. They will live radical, loving, world-confronting, God-honouring lives characterised by answered prayer and fruitful witness. It's the life that God offers us in Christ Jesus.

The Purpose

We love growth groups because we want to see people grow in Jesus. That's why we call our mid-week gatherings 'Growth Groups'—it's a way of reminding ourselves that we aim to grow in both maturity and number in Christ. While Bible study is the core of our Growth Group gatherings, we want to do more than just a Bible study. We want to care for each other, pray together, find ways to serve and encourage each other to share the truth about Jesus with our friends and family.

The Plan

This term we will be studying John 13-17 across seven weeks. As we study this part, it's important to keep the whole in mind. Below is a structure to John's gospel:

1:1-18	Introduction
1:19-10:42	Jesus in word and action
11:1-12:50	Transition
13:1-20:31	Jesus, his cross and exaltation
21:1-25	Conclusion

In our sermon series, we will cover all of chapters 13-21. But in our growth groups, we will cover chapters 13-17. The breakdown of these studies are below:

Study 1	John 20:24-31, 13:1-17	<i>Served by Jesus</i>
Study 2	John 13:18-14:14	<i>Trust in Jesus</i>
Study 3	John 14:15-31	<i>The Spirit of Truth</i>
Study 4	John 15:1-16:4	<i>Fruitful Witness</i>
Study 5	John 16:5-15	<i>The Spirit of Truth II</i>
Study 6	John 16:16-33	<i>Joy</i>
Study 7	John 17	<i>Jesus' Prayer</i>

The Prayer

As we read John's gospel, pray that God would convict us of the truth—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Pray that our faith in Him would be strengthened. Pray too, that we would be living life for Jesus in everything—obeying Him, loving each other, bearing fruit, witnessing to Jesus and waiting for Him to return.

More Prayers!

Throughout the term, we want you to make the most of praying in your group. Here are some prayers you could consider:

- **Each other:** Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving. Share any other concerns and also pray for:
- **Other Growth Groups:** Thank God for those who have committed to be a part of a Growth Group. Pray each of the groups would grow.
- **Friends and Family:** Ask for opportunities to speak with family members who need to respond to the truth about Jesus.
- **Church Family:** Have a look over a couple of pages in the church photo-directory, and pray for a few of the people you see there.
- **KPC Kids, Crèche & KPC Youth:** Give thanks for the children and youth in our church family. Pray for them, and for those who teach them on Sunday.

Study 1: Served by Jesus

John 20:24-31 & John 13:1-17

Bible Study

This is a time for introductions. We will begin by reminding ourselves why this Gospel was written, and then introduce ourselves to John chapters 13–17.

We'll start at the end of the Gospel, where John uses an incident involving Thomas to explain his purpose in writing. For those who have studied the first half of John's Gospel before, think of this as a brief revision.

Read John 20:24–31

1. What, in particular, does John want us to believe about Jesus, and to what end?
2. How does John use Thomas to demonstrate his purpose in writing this Gospel?

John shows how Thomas struggles with the truth—that Jesus is alive. It is as if we are meant to identify with Thomas and come to the same conclusion, but without needing to see for ourselves.

John writes his Gospel so that we might believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ), and that by believing we might have life in his name (John 20:31).

In the first 12 chapters, John shows people engaged in the same struggle Thomas had—the struggle to believe. Then, in chapters 13–17, Jesus' focus shifts from the crowds to his small band of disciples. John shows us how Jesus prepares them for life in the Son.

7 Signs in John 1-12

John tells us that Jesus performed many miraculous signs – but that *these* have been recorded “that you may believe”. And as we look over John chapters 1-12 we discover that there are seven signs recorded, along with people's reactions to them.

Sign 1	John 2:1-11	turns water into wine.
Sign 2	John 4:46-54	heals the official's son
Sign 3	John 5:1-15	heals the invalid man
Sign 4	John 6:1-15	feeds over 5,000
Sign 5	John 6:16-21	walks on water
Sign 6	John 9:1-41	gives sight to a man born blind
Sign 7	John 11:1-44	raises Lazarus from death

Read John 13:1, 3, 11, 31

3. What does Jesus know?

Now jump ahead to chapter 17 and notice how Jesus prays.

Read John 17:13–19

4. What does this part of Jesus' prayer reveal about his plans and desires for his disciples?

With that perspective, come back to chapter 13.

Read John 13:1–17

5. Have another look at verse 1. Do you think John is referring primarily to Jesus' love shown in washing his disciples' feet, or his love shown in going to the cross for them?
6. And what about verse 7? What do you think Peter—perhaps with the benefit of hindsight—ought to make of this foot-washing experience?
7. In what way does Jesus say he is an example to his disciples (vv. 14–16)?

This foot-washing forms the backdrop for the next four chapters. It is not only an example of service, but also a visual parable of what Jesus will do for his disciples by sacrificially dying in their place—what he will do to make them clean.

Next week, we will begin to see how Jesus prepares his disciples—and us—to live for him: trusting, loving, serving, and witnessing.

Application

True life—life in Jesus' name—will be characterised by humility, love, and service. Look back over John 13:1–17 and reflect on Jesus' humility and love. Have you been served by Jesus? How does that shape your willingness to serve others?

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God for his love, as shown in John 13:1.
- Give thanks for forgiveness and cleansing through Jesus' death in our place.
- Ask God for humility and a heart ready to serve others.

Study 2: Trust in Jesus

John 13:18-14:14

Recap on last week

- Why does John write his Gospel?
- What can we learn from Jesus washing his disciples' feet?

The foot-washing experience would have been uncomfortable for the disciples—but that is only the beginning. Things quickly get worse. In the rest of chapter 13 and into chapter 14, we see the disciples becoming increasingly troubled as Jesus drops three bombshells.

Bible Study

Read John 13:18–30

1. How do the disciples react to the first bombshell—the news that one of them will betray Jesus?
2. When Judas leaves the room, which disciples know that it is he who will betray Jesus? How do they know?

The final four words of verse 30 do more than mark the time of day—this is a dark moment. But Jesus sees things differently.

Read John 13:31–38

3. The disciples are preoccupied with the fact that one of them will betray Jesus. Meanwhile, what are Jesus' concerns (vv.31–34)?

4. Jesus says a number of things, but Peter cannot see past the second bombshell. What is it that Peter latches onto (v. 36ff)?

The disciple Jesus loved

A number of times John refers to the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23, 19:26, 21:20). And in the end he says “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.” So in all probability John refers to himself as the disciple Jesus loved.

At first glance this way of speaking may seem snobbish or elitist. But perhaps we are supposed to read it differently. Perhaps John is instead acknowledging his indebtedness to Jesus. Perhaps he is expressing his wonder that Jesus would love him enough to give his life for him? He may simply be underlining that he now recognises Jesus' love for him.

5. What is the third bombshell Jesus drops (v. 38)?

Can you imagine the atmosphere in that room? Jesus has told all twelve disciples that one of them will betray him. Only Peter, John, and Judas know that it is Judas—the other nine are left guessing. And now Jesus has openly declared that Peter will disown him. But the most shocking news of all (judging by their reaction) is that Jesus is leaving. Yet, Jesus acknowledges the tension of the moment and offers words of comfort.

Read John 14:1–3

6. What should the disciples do instead of worrying (v. 1)?

7. What is good about Jesus leaving (vv. 2–3)?

There is much to look forward to, but confusion still hangs in the air. Peter is in no frame of mind to challenge Jesus again, so this time it is Thomas.

Read John 14:4–6

8. Jesus says his disciples know the way to the place where he is going (v. 4). At first glance, it sounds like Thomas proves Jesus wrong (v. 5). But how is Jesus' statement actually correct (v. 6)?

The confusion continues—now it is Philip's turn.

Read John 14:7–10

9. Why can't Jesus "show" the Father in the same way we might introduce one person to another?

Jesus began by telling his disciples to believe—to trust (14:1). Now he returns to that call, with an added twist.

Read John 14:11–14

10. Who will continue the work Jesus has been doing (v. 12a)?

11. What will Jesus do to make their works greater (v. 12b)?

12. Why will Jesus respond to our prayers (v. 13)?

The disciples need not be troubled by Jesus leaving. He is leaving to prepare a place for them (v. 2ff). But that is not all. Everyone who believes in Jesus will continue what he began—proclaiming the kingdom of God. They will do even greater things because Jesus will open the way to God the Father. And Jesus will not leave his people on their own; he will continue to respond to their prayers.

Put all of this together, and there is nothing to be troubled about—if we trust Jesus.

Application

Last week we saw that truly living means a life of humility, love, and service. This week we can add *trust in Jesus*. Is your life characterised by trust in him? In what areas do you find that hardest?

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God that Jesus has made forgiveness possible.
- Thank God that he hears our prayers.
- Ask God to help you continue what Jesus began—proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Study 3: The Spirit of Truth

John 14:15-31

Recap of the last two weeks

In John 13–17 we discover what it means to truly live, as Jesus prepares his disciples for life after he goes. We have seen that this life is characterised by:

_____, _____, and _____ (*two weeks ago—Q8*)

_____, _____ (*last week – Q13*)

Last week, we saw the disciples struggling to come to terms with Jesus leaving. Jesus told them that his return to the Father would enable those who believe in him to continue what he has been doing—and even to do greater things. Today, we begin to hear what Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit.

What sorts of things do you hear people say about the Holy Spirit? Alternatively, what questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?

Bible Study

Read John 14:15–21

1. What will we do if we love Jesus (vv. 15, 21)?
2. And what will Jesus do (v. 16)?
3. Who is responsible for sending the Holy Spirit (v. 16; cf. v. 21)?
4. What will he—the Holy Spirit—do (v. 16b, 17b)?

5. There is another puzzle to consider. Does verse 18 refer to Jesus coming to his disciples at his resurrection, coming in the person of the Spirit, or coming at his second coming?

It most likely refers to Jesus coming at his resurrection, for these reasons. First, verse 19 suggests that when Jesus rises, he does not appear to everyone, but only to his disciples. Also, the disciples will live because Jesus lives (v. 19). Second, it is the risen Jesus who asks God the Father to send the Spirit. In other words, the coming of the Spirit is dependent on Jesus' death and resurrection.

So how should we understand verse 18? Jesus is comforting his disciples by assuring them that his death will not be the end. He will rise again, and he will ask the Father to send the Spirit. If the disciples love Jesus, they will obey him, and the Holy Spirit will dwell in them.

We also learn something important about the Holy Spirit. He is spoken of as a "person" (v. 17)—a person of the Trinity. And just as Jesus submits to the Father, the Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son (v. 16).

The 'Counsellor'

(John 14:16)

The Greek word translated 'counsellor' in the NIV could be translated 'helper', 'advocate' (as in a legal advocate), 'representative' or 'comforter' (as in giving strength). The word means something like: 'to draw alongside', 'encourage', 'exhort'. This is not all soft and fuzzy, it has a hard-edge – like you see in 16:7 ff.

Here in chapter 14 the Counsellor is identified as 'the Spirit of truth'. This is the third person of the Trinity – and his identity is tied to truth. He is no softy! And He will give strength to do 'greater things' (c.f. 14:12-13).

Read John 14:22–24

6. Judas appears to be questioning Jesus' apparent favouritism. How does Jesus respond?

As we continue reading, we are reminded that this conversation began back in 14:1, where Jesus comforts his disciples as they worry about what will happen when he leaves.

Read John 14:25–31

7. What will the Spirit do? How does this fit with his title, "the Spirit of truth," back in verse 17?

8. Why should the disciples be glad to see Jesus go (v. 28ff)?

9. What does the world need to learn about Jesus (v. 31)?

Application

What does this passage teach us about the nature of the Trinity? How do the Father, Son, and Spirit relate to and work with one another?

What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit and his role in the life of a Christian? How does this compare with the things you shared in Question 1?

Two weeks ago, we saw that truly living means a life of humility, love, and service. Last week, we added that truly living is characterised by trust in Jesus. This week, we can add another mark of true life: a life guided by the Spirit and shaped by obedience to God's word.

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God that he has not left us alone.
- Ask God to work in you by his Spirit—to remind you of Jesus' words and help you to obey them.

Study 4: Fruitful Witness

John 15:1-16:4

Recap

As we work through John's Gospel, chapters 13ff, we see Jesus preparing his disciples for life after he has gone.

- From what we have seen so far, what will this life be like?

This week we see Jesus preparing his disciples for *fruitful obedience*—lives marked by love and witness, even in the face of opposition from the world. He does this using a metaphor: the image of a vine and its branches. We will look at the metaphor (vv. 1–8), its explanation (vv. 9–17), and then some implications (v. 18ff).

Bible Study

Read John 15:1–8

Jesus tells the story of a vine.

1. What part do these characters play in the metaphor?
 - Jesus
 - God the Father
 - The disciples
 - Others
2. How is the vine pruned (v. 3)?
3. Why is it important to remain in the vine (vv. 4ff)?
4. How is God the Father glorified (v. 8)?

Application

As we consider Jesus' metaphor, one which is often used to speak about our union/ingrafting into Christ, where do you think we fit into Jesus' vine imagery? What does this tell you about your relationship with God in Christ?

Read John 15:9–17

Jesus goes on to explain the metaphor.

5. How do we remain in the vine (vv. 9–11; cf. vv. 4ff)?

6. What is Jesus' command (vv. 12–13)?

7. How are Jesus' friends different from servants (vv. 14–16)?

8. Why did Jesus choose the disciples (v. 16)?

Application

Jesus has used the vine metaphor (vv. 1–8) and then explained and applied it (vv. 9–17). What sort of fruit should Jesus' friends bear? Obedience? Love for one another? Witness to Jesus? All of the above—or something else?

Read John 15:18–25

In the next verses, we discover that living like this will both attract opposition and bring judgment. Some implications!

9. Why does the world hate Jesus' friends (vv. 18–21)?

10. Speaking the truth about God does not always lead to a positive response. What does Jesus say will happen to some people in verses 22–25?

Read John 15:26–16:4

11. What should the disciples do when the Holy Spirit comes?

12. Why has Jesus told his disciples these things?

Application

Jesus was preparing his disciples for the time immediately following his death and resurrection. So where do you think we fit into all of this?

Over the last few weeks, we have seen that truly living means a life of humility, love, service, and trust in Jesus. This week we can add obedience and fruitfulness. We can also expect opposition from the world. Where does your life bear fruitful witness to Jesus? Where would you like it to? How could you start today? Are you facing opposition from the world? What's that look like for you at the moment? How does this passage speak into that moment?

Some things to pray about...

- Ask God to help you bear faithful witness to Jesus, even in the face of opposition.
- Pray that your life would be characterised by obedience to God and love for others.

Study 5: Spirit of Truth II

John 16:4-15

Recap

Look back over Study 3 (Spirit of Truth). List the things we discovered about the Holy Spirit in John 14.

Last week we heard that the world opposes both Jesus and his friends. While Jesus is physically with his disciples, he can protect them—and he does (cf. 17:12). But he is about to leave. Let's read what happens next.

Bible Study

Read John 16:4–11

1. Why are the disciples filled with grief (vv. 4b–6)?
2. Why shouldn't they grieve (v. 7)?
3. What will the Spirit do (v. 8)?

It will be painful for the disciples to see Jesus go—but it is for the best. If Jesus dies, rises, and ascends to be with God the Father, then his work will be complete. And Jesus will not leave his disciples alone; he will send the Spirit. We have heard similar things already, but here Jesus adds more detail.

The Spirit reveals the world's guilt:

- in regard to **sin**,
- in regard to **false righteousness**, and
- in regard to **false judgment**.

The Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, because the world has rejected Jesus. The Spirit convicts in regard to false righteousness, because the Spirit will continue Jesus' work after he returns to the Father. And the Spirit convicts in regard to false judgment, because the ruler of this world now stands condemned—Jesus has defeated him through his death and resurrection.

Application

How do you think the Spirit convicts the world of guilt? Where have you see this happen? Discuss.

Read John 16:12–15

The Spirit's role in convicting the world may sound quite negative. But Jesus also speaks about the Spirit's positive and ongoing work in the lives of his disciples.

4. Why doesn't Jesus tell the disciples more at this point (v. 12)?
5. How will the Spirit complete what Jesus has left unsaid (v. 13)?
6. How will the Spirit bring glory to Jesus (vv. 14–15)?

But they DID ask you!!!

In John 16:5-6 Jesus says...
"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'where are you going?' Because I said these things you are filled with grief."

But back in 13:36 Peter asked...

"Lord, where are you going?"

Yes, there appears to be a contradiction here. Unless Jesus understood that Peter's question was driven not so much by wanting to know where Jesus was going, as by angst that he is going at all. Peter was really asking a different question... "why are you going?" or "why do you have to leave?"... if you understand what I mean. This seems to be what Jesus implies when he says...
"Because I said these things you are filled with grief."

Application

Should this passage lead us to expect the Holy Spirit to speak anything new or novel?

These verses refer especially to the work of the Spirit in the lives of the original disciples—those who were with Jesus and heard him speak (cf. 14:26; 15:27; 16:12). The Spirit guides them into a full understanding of the truth already revealed in Jesus (cf. John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life”).

The Holy Spirit does not reveal a new message. Even the phrase “he will tell you what is yet to come” (16:13) can be understood as explaining and applying the significance of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.

Application

How do we benefit today from the work of the Spirit in the lives of the original disciples?

Look back over this study—and the recap from Study 3. Discuss anything you have found interesting, surprising, or unexpected about what John teaches us regarding the Holy Spirit.

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God for continuing to convict us of guilt through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Thank God that the Spirit enabled the disciples to understand the truth about Jesus and to testify to him—despite persecution and even death.

Study 6: Joy

John 16:16-33

Recap

As we work through John's Gospel, chapters 13ff, we see Jesus preparing his disciples for life after he has gone.

- From what we have seen so far, what will this life be like?
- What role will the Holy Spirit play in the lives of the disciples after Jesus goes to be with God the Father?

Today's passage shifts from teaching about the Holy Spirit to Jesus' final words to his disciples before his departure. That departure is near—it will happen "in a little while."

Bible Study

Read John 16:16–24

1. What can't the disciples understand (vv. 16–18)?
2. How does Jesus say their experience will be like that of a mother giving birth (vv. 19–22)?
3. How will things be better once their grief turns to joy (vv. 22–24)?
4. Will they ever lose their joy (v. 22)?

When Jesus says, "In a little while you will not see me, and then you will see me," it makes most sense to understand him as referring to his death, followed by his resurrection. The disciples' joy therefore begins at Jesus' resurrection. Life in Jesus' name—true life—is characterised by joy.

"The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." John 20:20b (NIV)

Application

Should we expect to experience the same joy as the disciples? In what ways? What does this actually look like? Is it an involuntary feeling or something else?

Back in John 16:12, Jesus said that he had more to tell his disciples—more than they could bear at the time. But things will change when the Spirit comes, and they will understand. It seems that Jesus has the arrival of the Spirit in mind as he continues.

Read John 16:25–33

5. What does Jesus say will happen in the future (vv. 25–27)?

6. The disciples recognise that Jesus comes from God, but do they really understand what he is talking about? What suggests they do—or do not (vv. 29–31)?

7. What needs to happen first before the time when Jesus says he will speak plainly (vv. 32–33)?

After Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Spirit, the disciples will fully grasp all that Jesus has been saying in chapters 13–17. They will also be able to come to God directly, without the need for intermediaries or priests (v. 24).

Although the disciples think they understand (v. 29), they do not—not yet. There is still deep grief ahead. So the farewell discourse closes on a note similar to chapter 13: Judas' betrayal is looming, the disciples are confused, and yet Jesus remains confident about the future.

Application

We live in a new era—the time after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, and after the giving of the Spirit. What implications should that have for the way we read the Bible and the way we pray?

Is your life characterised by love for Jesus and trust in him? Do you know the joy of forgiveness, and are you bearing fruitful witness? Are you humble, loving, and obedient? Are you really living?

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God for the remarkable privileges that are ours: the joy of forgiveness, understanding God’s plans and purposes, and being able to know God and approach him in prayer.

Study 7: Jesus' Prayer

John 17

Recap

This is our final week in John's Gospel. Take a moment to flick back over the last six studies and share things you have learned, been reminded of, or found particularly interesting.

Today we will spend some time reflecting on the prayer Jesus prayed just before his arrest. This prayer follows the farewell discourse and is closely connected to it. You will notice many of the same themes running through Jesus' prayer—and once again, we see the depth of his love for his disciples (cf. 13:1).

Bible Study

Read John 17:1–5

1. What does Jesus ask for himself (vv. 1, 5)?
 2. What work did God the Father give Jesus to do (v. 2)?
 3. How does Jesus define eternal life (v. 3)?
 4. How does Jesus glorify God the Father (v. 4)?
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Application

Would you have expected eternal life to be described in the way Jesus describes it here? Discuss.

Next, Jesus turns to pray specifically for his disciples, and we hear many of the same concerns that have shaped the previous chapters.

Read John 17:6–19

5. What has Jesus done for those the Father has given him (v. 6ff)? How has he done this (v. 8)?

6. How has glory come to Jesus (v. 10)?

7. What danger does Jesus pray against (vv. 11–12)?

8. What else does Jesus pray for his followers (vv. 13–19)?

Application

How does Jesus “sanctify” his followers? What does this look like? What might this mean for you and your life?

In the final section of his prayer, Jesus turns to pray for those who are not yet his “friends.”

Read John 17:20–25

9. How does Jesus pray for those who are not yet believers (v. 20ff)?

10. Why does Jesus want his followers to be united (v. 23)?

11. What motivates Jesus in this prayer (v. 24ff)?

Application

On what basis is our unity as Christians founded? How does this shape our view of other believers and our relationship with them? What might it look like to express this unity more?

Drawing it all together

We have covered a lot over the past six weeks. We have seen Jesus serve his disciples by washing their feet—a visual picture of the cleansing from sin that will be made possible through the cross. We have heard Jesus prepare his disciples for his departure, and we have listened in on his prayer.

In his final hours with them, Jesus describes what life will be like after his death—lives lived in the power of the Spirit. It will be an era in which his followers live radical, loving, world-confronting, God-honouring lives, marked by answered prayer and fruit that bears witness to him. This is the life given to those who truly love Jesus.

Go back and read John 13:1. How have we seen Jesus' love for his disciples throughout chapters 13–17, and especially in his prayer? How does this love shape and motivate your own prayers?

Some things to pray about...

- Thank God for his love, shown so clearly through Jesus.
- Pray that we would live lives that bring glory to God, as we live life in Jesus' name.