CCH Small group questions

Autumn 2026

Eph 6:10-24

Read the passage

1. What pictures does Paul paint?
2. What commands does he give?
3. How much do you view the Christian life in this way?
4. (Maybe in pairs) Pick an item of the armour. Why do you think it's this specific item, rather than another. For example, why is truth the belt not the breastplate?
5. What does your answer to 4 suggest about what this looks like in practice? How then can you do that?
6. There is a strong encouragement to pray, especially for speaking to people about the gospel. What opportunities do you have to do this, and how can this group pray for you?

Eph 5:21:6-9

This passage can of course be looked at thinking about applying submission/love/obedience etc. But I imagine most groups would find this a bit tricky to do unless they are single gendered and all in the same relationship (e.g. Word Alive mums). If that is the case, then you could just read the passage and ask 1) what strikes you? 2) What questions do you have?3) What does this look like in practice?

For everyone else, I've provided more theological questions about Christ and the church, an apologetic question (given non-Christian friends might ask us), and then made space for applying slaves/masters into the workplace.

Read 5:21-33

1. In this passage, what are the parallels between 'husband and wife' and 'Christ and church'?
2. What could we say to a non-Christian who finds 5:22 offensive?
3. What can we pray for the marriages in our church?

Read 6:5-9

4. If for slaves and masters, we read workers and employees, what are the applications?

5. Does 6:8 mean we earn our salvation? If not, what do you think it means?
6. What can we pray for our work lives?

Eph 4:17-5:20

Read v17-24

1. What differences does Paul see between non-Christians and Christians?
2. How is our present state an encouragement to live well?

We're going to see lots of specific applications. Try to notice them as we read 4:25-5:20

3. What applications did we notice? Did they have anything in common?

In pairs, or even by yourself:

4. Which command struck you as something you need to work on? Why is that?
5. What can you do to put this into practice?

Go round and share prayer requests prompted by this passage (share as you feel comfortable)

Eph 4:1-16

Read v1-6

6. What do we already have?
7. How do the commands in v2 and 3 fit with what we already have?
8. In pairs, when might it be hard to obey these commands in church life? What would putting them into practice look like?

Read v7-13

9. What do we already have?
10. What is the aim of Jesus' gifts?
11. Does this sound 'academic' to you? Why/why not?

Read v12-16

12. What does a mature church look like?
13. In this group, how can we 'speak the truth in love' to one another?

Eph 3:1-21

Read v1-13

1. What does Paul tell us about himself? What strikes you?
2. He speaks of 'the mystery'. What was mysterious? What is now known?
3. In what ways do these verses elevate the church?
4. Thinking about application, what does v10 mean for this small group?

Read v14-21

5. Paul prays for power for the Ephesians to a) be Christians, and b) to know Jesus' love. In what ways is 'Jesus loves you' hard to grasp?
6. What difference do you think it would make to you if you knew even more that God loved you?
7. How can this whole passage shape our prayers for each other?

Eph 2:11-22

Read the passage

1. In verses 11-12, what is the 'before' for Gentiles and for Jews?
2. Does this mean that the Jews 'had Christ'?
3. Draw a diagram giving an overview of verses 13-18 - how does Jesus change the situation in v11-12?
4. What do all Christians have in v19-22?
5. Bringing the passage together, how might you tell the gospel differently to a Jewish background person than to a Gentile person?
6. How does this passage (esp v19-22) help us to do the good works God has planned for us ?

Eph 2:1-10

Read the passage

1. Having been so positive in the letter, why do you think Paul changes mood in verses 1-3?
2. What do these verses say about every *Christian*? Do you think this is fair?
3. God made us alive! In pairs - what reasons are given for why he did this?
4. What is the work of the Father in this passage? And of the Son?

5. How does this passage describe heaven/the life to come? What does that make you think about your future?
6. Read v8-10 again. How would you respond to the following?
    a. 'I don't believe the Bible - there's no such thing as a free lunch'
    b. 'God saves those who show their willingness to live for him'
    c. 'If we focus too much on grace, Christians will be lazy in their discipleship'

Eph 1:15-23

What things do you pray for other members of this small group?

Read the passage

1. Why and when is Paul praying?
2. What is Paul praying?
3. Why do you think he says 'that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened' rather than simply 'that you would see? How does this help us as we seek to know God better?
    a. [Bonus 'going deeper' q:] Still in verse 18, what is the 'inheritance' and who gets it? Is that the same or different to the inheritance in 1:14? What does this mean about how God views us?*
4. v19-23, in pairs: what things does Paul want us to know about God's power?
5. What do you think God is teaching you about himself? From the passage, think particularly about the hope to which he has called you, and his incomparable power.
6. How does this passage help us in praying for one another? Does this override our normal prayer requests? Why/why not?

*Leader note: the inheritances are different. 1:14 is talking about our inheritance, but 1:18 is talking about God's. The amazing thing is what God's inheritance *is*... and what that says about the church.

Eph 1:1-14

How would you answer someone who said, 'What's so good about being a Christian?'

Read the passage

1. What is the overall atmosphere of the passage? How does that help us read the details?

2. Verse 3 - what is God's and what is ours?
3. Verses 4 onwards show us the blessings we have received
    a. In pairs: in either v4-10 or 11-14, what blessings can you see?
    b. Together - where are all these blessings located?
4. What does this specific passage teach us about predestination?
    a. How does it teach us it is a blessing to know about?

Back in pairs, how might this passage shape your answer to 'what's so good about being a Christian?'

This passage shows us the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Why not spend some time praising God for what he has done for us?

Home Group programme (for reference)

SEPTEMBER		
Tues 1st	*Central Prayer Meeting*	*VR*
8,10	*Ephesians 1:1-14*	*Home-group study*
15,17	*Ephesians 1:15-23*	*Home-group study*
22,24	*Ephesians 2:1-10*	*Home-group study*
Tues 29th	*Central Prayer Meeting*	*VR*
OCTOBER		
6,8	*Ephesians 2:11-22*	*Home-group study*
13,15	*Ephesians 3*	*Home-group study*
20,22	*Ephesians 4:1-16*	*Home-group study*
27,29	*HALF TERM*	*No Groups*
NOVEMBER		
Tues 3rd	*Central Prayer Meeting*	*VR*
10,12	*Ephesians 4:17- 5:20 (sermon 1st Nov)*	*Home-group study*
17,19	*Ephesians 5:21-6:9 (sermon 8th Nov)*	*Home-group study*
24,26	*Ephesians 6:10-24 (sermon 22 Nov)*	*Home-group study*
DECEMBER		
Tues 1st	*Central Prayer meeting*	*VR*
8,10	*Christmas social*	*Home-groups*

Summer 2026

Daniel 8

This was due to be the last session of the Home Group term, and maybe penultimate one for any Word Alive groups that are going through Daniel.

On reflection, having started writing questions for this passage, I don't think it suits our current small group practice. To be worth time in the session, it would require all attendees to have done some pre-reading of both the passage and historical background.

(If your group would like to do this, then I recommend this online commentary. Your group could read it, and then come ready to discuss three main questions: 1. What stood out for you in your reading? 2. What does this mean for us as we see empires rising and falling? 3. How can we be like Daniel, both mourning but also 'getting on with the king's business'?)

Otherwise, I suggest two different approaches:

a) Have a general look back on Daniel as a whole - what passage or verse has stuck with you, and why? What different has it made / could it make in your life?
b) Go round getting more detailed summer prayer requests and praying those things in

Have a blessed summer!

Daniel 7

Read v1-8

5. Imagine you just experienced this section of Daniel's vision as a dream. How would you feel when you woke up?

Read v15-28

6. What do these terrifying beasts represent?
7. How might this "heaven's eye view" of earthly kingdoms shape our expectations of how Christians will be treated in our day?

Read v9-14

8. Which aspects of the way God is revealed in this passage do you find encouraging / challenging?
9. How might this section of the vision (along with its interpretation in v18, 21-22, 26-27) be an encouragement to persecuted Christians? To us?

Read the following passages and discuss how they shed light on our understanding of Daniel 7:

- Matthew 24v29-31
- Acts 1v6-11
- Revelation 1v4-8

Spend some time praying for the persecuted church to find hope in these truths & that Jesus would return soon!

Communion (Passover)

[NOTE TO LEADERS - the sermon this week was focused on communion, in particular how we do baptism at CCH. But given the topical nature of the conversation, I thought it better to give some questions on another passage which informs communion]

Read Exodus 12:1-11

- What do we learn about the passover lamb?
- Can you think of ways these details point forward to Jesus as the Lamb of God?

Read Exodus 12:21-28

- What is the judgement? How does salvation come about?
- How does this point to Jesus?
- What does this passage tell us about faith - what saves the people?
- How can this passage encourage us in our appreciation of communion?
- [If doing this study before 27 June] Do you have any questions that you'd like covered in the podcast?

Matthew 3v1-17

[NOTE TO LEADERS - the sermon this week was focused on baptism, in particular how we do baptism at CCH. This is a topic that some people may have some strong views on and so you will need to gauge the appropriateness / helpfulness of discussing the topic in your group. The Home Group schedule should have you looking at a previous sermon from Daniel, but for the benefit of the other small groups, or home groups that aren't following the schedule, I've put in a few questions below to help you think about Jesus' baptism.]

Read v1-12

1. From these verses, what do we learn about:

    a. John the baptist himself?
    b. His ministry?
    c. How his ministry relates to the ministry of Jesus?
2. What's John's problem with the Pharisees and Sadducees?
3. In what way is the task of a 'normal Christian' like / unlike the task of John the Baptist?

Read v13-17

4. Why does John respond to Jesus the way he does in v14?
5. What reasons might Jesus have for being baptised by John? [In the sermon, I referred to Isaiah 53v5-6. It's also worth noting what Jesus says in verse 15 - 'righteousness' in Matthew is often synonymous with doing God's will]
6. Why do you think the events of v16-17 were so important for Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry? [It might be worth looking on to see what he immediately goes on to do in Matthew 4]

Application:

7. Why is it good news for us that Jesus underwent John's baptism?
8. How might you use this event in Jesus' life to help a non-christian friend understand more about why Jesus is so great?

Daniel 6

1. Preparing for the Storm We saw on Sunday that Daniel had three key traits: he was pure, public with his faith, and deeply prayerful. Read Daniel 6:1–10. Which of these stands out most to you, and how do you think a regular habit of prayer shapes the other areas of our lives?
2. Priorities in Prayer Daniel didn't start praying because of the crisis; he was already doing it. Read Daniel 6:10. Why do you think he kept praying even when it became deadly to do so? What does his response teach us about what prayer actually is?
3. Facing Modern "Lions" Read Daniel 6:4–13. Daniel faced intense pressure to compromise. What kind of pressures or "lions" do you face today at work, with family, or in culture when called to be faithful to God? How do we stay faithful without becoming combative?
4. Trusting a Sovereign King King Darius wanted to save Daniel but couldn't, but God did. Read Daniel 6:19–28. How does this chapter encourage you to trust God when circumstances look bleak?
5. The Greater Daniel On Sunday, we looked at how Daniel points us to Jesus (both were innocent, prayed, and were trapped in a sealed place of death before emerging alive). Read Daniel 6:22–23 alongside Luke 23:44–46 and 24:1–7. How is Jesus the greater and final Saviour?
6. Training for Trials Read Philippians 4:6–7 and Ephesians 6:18. We were challenged on Sunday to "train" for trials through daily prayer. What are

the biggest practical obstacles to prayer for you right now, and what is one small change you can make this week?

Optional Prayer Application: Thinking about the main theme of trusting the Sovereign King through prayer, where are you most tempted to rely on yourself rather than Christ this week? How can the group pray for you?

Daniel 5

Read v1-9

9. Draw a (basic!) comic book strip of this section. Share it with the person next to you
10. Why do you think the king is so very frightened?

Read 10-17

1. What reasons might Daniel have had for declining the king's gifts?
2. Why do you think Daniel still interprets the message for him?
3. What does this show us about how to relate to non-Christian authorities?

Read 18-31

1. What were the king's big mistakes? Why was this so serious?
2. Why do you think Daniel then accepts the gifts in v29?
3. How do Meme Tekel Parsin apply (or not apply) to Jesus?

Daniel 4

It's a long passage, so break people into smaller teams and allocate v1-18, 19-27, and 28-37. They should answer these three questions for their passage:

1. What's the plot of your section?
2. What might a new reader of Daniel find surprising the 1st time they read the section?

3. Pick one or two key verses in your section. Why do they stand out for you?

Then each team shares their findings with the rest of the group, before discussing:

1. How positively is Nebuchadnezzar portrayed?
2. What are the comparisons between Nebuchadnezzar and God?
3. Why do you think God reveals this in advance? Why do you think he uses a dream?
4. What difference does it make to believe that God has placed all world leaders in their positions?
5. In what ways does this passage point us to Jesus?

Daniel 3

Read Daniel 3v1-15

1. How is this situation different from the situations Daniel and his friends faced in chapters 1 and 2? [might be helpful to c.f. Exodus 20v1-5]
2. What 'black and white' situations like this have you faced (or failing that, might someone hypothetically face) whether at work, in school, amongst family and friends, or in some other context?
3. In those situations, what were/might be the consequences of:
    a. Obeying God and remaining faithful?
    b. Disobeying God and compromising?

Read Daniel 3v16-18

4. What can we learn from the way these men respond?

Read Daniel 3v19-30

5. What are the consequences of their choice to obey God and disobey the king?
6. What do we learn from the manner in which God delivers his faithful servants?

PRAYER SUGGESTION - you may want to consider:

- Pray for anyone in the group (or wider church) you know is under pressure to conform
- Pray for our young people to stand firm in the face of pressure from an increasingly hostile world
- Pray for the persecuted church [resources can be found here]

NOTE FOR LEADERS: A question which lots of people asked after the sermon was 'where was Daniel while all this was going on?' It's a good Q! Daniel is conspicuous by his absence. A couple of points below may be helpful to consider in case this comes up:

I. We can't know for sure because the passage doesn't tell us
II. A possible answer is found by backing up to 2v48 and reading through to 3v1. Daniel was based in the royal court. The statue was set up in the province of Babylon, the location of S,M & A... It's entirely possible that Daniel just wasn't there... presumably someone had to stay behind and make sure the palace was ok?!
III. Daniel's faithfulness gets tested in a similar way in ch6 and proves faithful

Daniel 2

Read Daniel 2v1-15

1. If you found yourself in Daniel's position, how would you feel? What do you think you'd do?
2. What sorts of 'catastrophic circumstances' might we expect to face in our context? (N.B. this isn't persecution as a result of their faith!)

Read Daniel 2v16-24

3. What can we learn about responding to catastrophic circumstances from Daniel's response?
4. What can we learn about God from his response to Daniel?

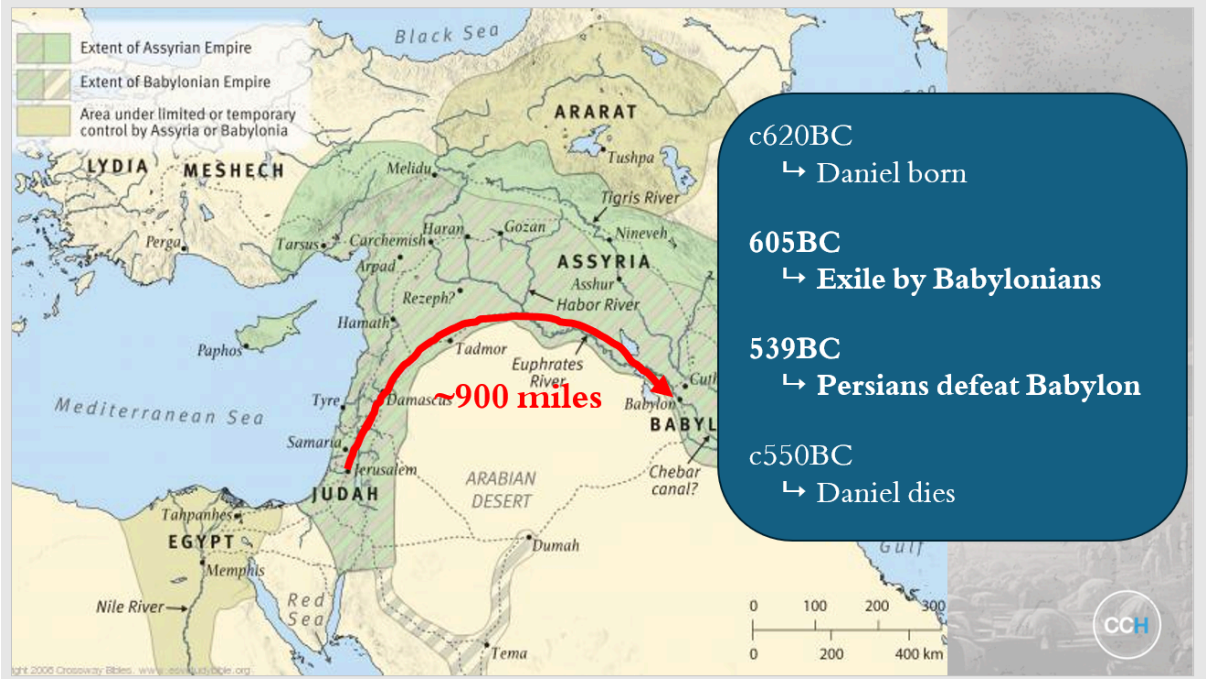
Read Daniel 2v25-49

5. How does this passage shape our understanding of (you may just want to pick a couple):
    a. God
    b. Governments
    c. History
    d. The church
    e. Our purpose in life

Prayer Time Suggestion: At the heart of this passage is the praise of God, the 'Revealer of Mysteries' (v20-23, 47). Spend some time praying prayers of praise to God, as well as calling upon him to have mercy on and deliver those in need.

Daniel 1

We're starting a new series in Daniel - here is a slide that will be used to show the basic geography and history:



Read Daniel 1

1. Daniel and his friends would have been about 15 years old. What do you think going into exile would have felt like?
2. How much do they go along with the Babylonian rule? How do they stand apart?
3. What wisdom can we learn from Daniel's actions in v8-13?
4. There is a conflict between different physical and spiritual kingdoms. Who is fighting? Who is winning? (this is not a simple answer!)
5. In some ways, our current situation is like Daniel's exile. Think of some challenges Christians have in this society (even better, why not share one you have?) Discuss what a 'Daniel 1' approach might look like in these situations. These would be great to pray about too!

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

We're thinking in this passage about Loving Church

Read 12-14

6. What is the picture here? Who has done what?
7. What does this tell us about diversity in the church?

Read 15-20

8. What doubts are being voiced here? What is the answer?
9. How do these verses give each Christian dignity?

Read 21-26

10. What wrong opinion do the eye and head have? What's the answer?
11. Looking at v 25, what is the opposite of church division?
12. How do v25-26 apply to our small group life?
13. Do you think we suffer together? Rejoice together? How can we do this well?
14. How might we show honour to one another?

Luke 9:10-26

We're thinking in this passage about Loving Harpenden

Read v10-17

15. What did Jesus ask of his disciples? What might he therefore be asking of us?
16. What kind of people/crowd might we find hard to welcome? How can this passage help us

Read v18-22

17. In pairs: how would you answer a complete newcomer asking, 'What is a Christian?'

Read v23-26

18. Paires: how would you summarise Jesus' teaching here?
19. Does this undo his welcome to the crowd? Why/why not?

Pulling it together

20. How much should we be concerned with newcomers to church being offended?
21. How can we be true to who Jesus is in both welcoming and truth-telling?
22. What would be good to pray in the light of this passage?

John 11:1-44

1. READ v1-16 - What surprising things does Jesus do/say in this section?
2. READ v17-27 - How does Jesus respond to Martha in her suffering?
3. READ v28-36 - How does Jesus respond to Mary in her suffering?
4. READ v37-44 - How does Jesus respond to the suffering of the crowd?
5. How might this passage inform the way we respond to
    a. Suffering in our own lives?
    b. Suffering in the lives of those around us?
6. How does this passage help us address the problem of suffering? [see the syllogism below in case it helps]

Premise 1: If God is all-powerful, he is able to eliminate all suffering.

Premise 2: If God is all-good, he will want to eliminate all suffering.

Premise 3: Suffering exists.

Conclusion: Therefore, an all-powerful, all-good God does not exist.

BONUS Q: What other barriers are there to faith for you / the people you know, beside the problem of suffering? [If you get any suggestions, I'd be really keen for you to feed them back to inform future teaching]

John 9

John 9:1-6

'Neither this man nor his parents sinned'

- What is your reaction to this teaching about suffering? Do you find it comforting, challenging, confusing, or something else? Why is that?

'So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.'

- What is the significance of this moment - for the man himself? For Jesus?
- For extra credit ;-) have a look at Isaiah 35:3-6 about what the Jewish believers were looking forward to...

John 9:13-25

'His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders'

- How much does fear impact your witness? Why is that? What could help us even when we're afraid?

'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'

- When is saying 'I don't know' a good thing? When is it not?
- How can this approach be useful in our own witness?

In pairs, sum up what you've seen in this passage. What's one thing you'll take from it?

John 8:31-59

[Before looking at the passage] How would you finish this sentence: "True disciples of Jesus…"

READ the passage

23. How might we finish the sentence in light of v31-32?
24. Where are Jesus' hearers placing their hope for freedom (v33, 39, 41)?
25. Are Christians 'slaves to sin' v34-36?
26. Split into 3 groups. Allocate each group a 'family': Abraham, God, the devil. What are the family traits of that family, according to Jesus?
27. If we saw people in the blunt spiritual categories that Jesus does (i.e. child of God or child of the devil) how would that impact:
    a. Our prayer lives?
    b. Our zeal for evangelism?
28. Who would you most like to see come into God's family? [pray for those people]

Psalm 72

When you look at the current state of the world, what worries or grieves you the most?

Read v1-7

29. What are the key themes of the psalmist's prayers for the king?
30. How might these themes inform our prayers for our world and its leaders?

Spend some time praying for world leaders in light of these verses.

Read v8-17

31. Which of these verses would you be comfortable praying for any current world leaders?
32. What three things are you most looking forward to when Jesus returns to reign?

Read v18-19

33. How do these verses relate to the rest of the psalm?
34. How does Jesus' reign give you hope in the face of current world events?

Spend some time praising God for king Jesus and praying for him to return and establish his reign. You may want to encourage people to pick up on the themes of the psalm as they do that.

Ephesians 6:10-20

How do you feel about fighting? What have you fought for recently?

Read the passage

1. Who/what are we fighting against?
2. How much do you view life in this sort of way? Why is that? What impact does it have to see the world like this?
3. Looking at v17, we see the weapon we are given. What is it, and how does that encourage us in our times together as a small group?
4. What links the Bible and prayer in verses 17 and 18?
5. How can we aim to 'pray in the Spirit'? What signs will there be that he is helping us?
6. What spiritual battle prayers can we pray for one another?

John 8:12-30

Read John 1:1-18 (the prologue)

7. In pairs, how many things can you spot about the light in this prologue?
8. Jot these things down

Read 8:12-20

9. What links can you spot to the prologue?

Read 8:21-30

10. What links can you spot to the prologue?
11. From these passages, what encourages you about Jesus as the light of the world?
12. What insight does this passage into why friends/neighbours etc. might *not* believe?
13. What can we do in the light of this passage to reach people? What should we pray?

John 7:14-52

1. In pairs, read through the passage (starting back at v12) making note of the different ideas people have about Jesus' identity. How would you describe popular opinion at this point in Jesus ministry?
2. What do Jesus words reveal about his identity in the following passages [perhaps allocate different passages to different pairs/smaller groups]:
    a. V16-18
    b. V21-24
    c. V28-29
    d. V33-34
    e. V37-38
3. What do you think the water imagery of v37-38 is meant to convey to us about having the Spirit?

[If you have time / inclination, you may want to look at some of the OT background to this. When Jesus says 'as scripture has said' in v38, he doesn't seem to have a particular passage in mind, so much as the general testimony of the OT about the coming 'age of the Spirit' however, the following might be particularly worth diving into]

    a. Ezekiel 47:1-12
    b. Psalm 1:1-3
4. In pairs, share how or where you would like to see more of the Spirit's power at work in your life? Pray for one another. [If people are stuck or would benefit from a bit more structure, you could point them to Galatians 5:22-23].

Galatians 4:4-7

Read the passage

5. What pictures does Paul use to paint the gospel story?
6. What does God do, and in what way(s)?
7. JI Packer wrote, "'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption." How much do you agree, and why?
8. Thinking about prayer - how much do you think of God as 'Abba' who has adopted you? What impact could this have on the way we pray?
9. What role do you think prayer currently plays in your small group? Are there any ways this passage could inspire development in that area?
10. What is one thing on your heart that you could ask the group to pray to Abba Father about?

John 7:1-13

Read the passage

11. What is good / bad about the advice Jesus' brothers give him? (v3-4)
12. Read 1v9-11. How do we see this played out in 7v1, 7v5, 7v7, 7v12? *[You could allocate different verses to different groups/pairs?]*
13. What *could* Jesus mean in v6 & v8 when he says his "time has not yet come"? What do you think he means?
14. Why is it good news for us that Jesus does all things according to his Father's will? *[Ian argued in the sermon that, by saying 'my time has not yet come', Jesus is acknowledging that he must do everything according to his Father's will: the Father controls Jesus' calendar]*
15. Can you think of a time (real or imagined) when trying to do all things according to God's will would result in:
    a. Pain
    b. Purpose
    c. Peace

John 6:25-71

Read the introduction (v25-29)

16. What is the big idea that Jesus wants to get across to the crowd in this encounter at the synagogue (c.f. v59)
17. How do your answers relate to Jesus' 'I AM' statement in v35?

It is quite common for John to circle back round and cover ideas he's already introduced, but to add more information or a different angle. Read each of the following sections in turn and then give people time in pairs/threes to discuss the question:

18. "How does John expand our understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the 'Bread of Life' in this section?"
    a. v36-40
    b. v41-51
    c. v52-59

*[Depending on your group, and how many people have heard the sermon, you may just want to jump to application Qs 6&7 at this point.]

Read the ending (v60-71)

19. Combined with the introduction, how would you describe the tone of this passage? (What emoji would you use to represent how Jesus seems to be

feeling about the situation - perhaps share on the group whatsapp if you have one?!)

APPLICATION:

20. How should this passage shape the way we respond when we encounter hard heartedness towards the gospel?
21. What things might people in the world (and in the church!) be tempted to seek satisfaction in, rather than seeking satisfaction in Christ?
22. (In pairs) Share an area where you're tempted to seek satisfaction in the things of this world. Pray for one another to know God's help in finding satisfaction in Jesus.

OPTIONAL DEEP DIVES:

There are several issues or questions this passage throws up that we didn't have time to cover in the sermon, but that you may find it helpful/interesting to consider in your groups.

Divine Sovereignty v Human Responsibility

Divide into two groups / pairs and allocate the following questions to different groups:

- What do v37-39, 44-45, 63-65 tell us about God's part in saving the lost?
- What do v27-29, 35-37, 40, 47, 50-51, 53-57, 70-71 tell us about the individual's responsibility to respond to the gospel?

Take feedback from each group and discuss the following questions:

- Why is it important to hold the tension between divine sovereignty in calling people and human responsibility to respond?
- How might this tension encourage us in the areas of:
    - evangelism
    - assurance of our own salvation
    - dependance upon God

The Lord's Supper in John 6?

Some believe that Jesus is referring to the Lord's Supper in v52-58.

- Are you convinced? Why / why not?
- What are the dangers of interpreting these verses hyper-literally?
- What are the dangers of dismissing them as 'purely figurative'?

Bible study tip

Gareth writes: I came across a brief article on leading Bible studies, and one tip stood out for me. “Instead of discussing your prepared list of questions immediately after reading, give members a few minutes to review the text… most people need a few moments to gather their thoughts after reading, which is why the first discussion question is often met with the most silence.” Why not try it the next time you lead a study and see how it goes? Ask the group for their opinion too.

Luke 10:25-37

Read v25-28

23. Do you think the expert’s question is a good one? Why / why not?
24. How would you describe the relationship between the two commandments? Is one more important than the other? Could they sometimes be in conflict?

Read v29-37

25. [In pairs] If this parable was being made into a film, and you were directing it, how would you shoot it? What time of day? What would you zoom in on? What moments would you slow the story down, or have particular music playing?
26. What surprises are in the story? What lessons did this teach the expert in the law?
27. Does this story tell us about the second commandment, or both? What does it mean for our relationship with God?
28. [In pairs] Name a literal neighbour, and share one thing you could do to love them in the next week or so. Why not ask your pair-person to remind you next week?

CCH prayer requests (this is a new idea to prompt prayers in Small Groups, as well as helping connection to CCH as a whole - feel free to share these with the group if you’d like)

- For our love of Harpenden, that we would be good neighbours to our town
- For us to take opportunities that God brings our way to show his kindness to others
- For our relationships with people on Vaughan Road, as well around the Public Halls and with Roundwood Park School

Matthew 24:36-25:46 - Will Jesus Return in 2026?

As I mentioned in the sermon, this one passage could easily be divided up into four separate passages, each worthy of deeper consideration.

- Matthew 24:36-51
- Matthew 25:1-13
- Matthew 25:14-30
- Matthew 25:31-46

You may want to focus in on one of them and ask the following questions:

1. What does this passage have in common with the others?
2. What unique contribution does this passage make to our understanding of Jesus' return?
3. What does this mean for us in 2026?

Alternatively, you may want to focus more on application of the sermon, in which case the following questions might be helpful:

1. What should we make of predictions that Jesus will return on a specific date? (see 24v36)
2. Who should / shouldn't be worried about Jesus' return?
3. How can we prepare for Jesus' return? What will he expect of us on that day?
4. What do you notice about the types of service Jesus mentions in 25v35-36?
5. As you look back over 2025, are there ways in which this small group has served Jesus by loving you this past year? [perhaps best done by giving people a moment to think and then offering the opportunity to share if they'd like to]
6. How might you, as a small group, commit to serving Jesus by loving one another in 2026?

Autumn 2025

Gareth writes: I came across a brief article on leading Bible studies, and one tip stood out for me. "Instead of discussing your prepared list of questions immediately after reading, give members a few minutes to review the text… most people need a few moments to gather their thoughts after reading, which is why the first discussion question is often met with the most silence." Why not try it the next time you lead a study and see how it goes? Ask the group for their opinion too.

AI: How do we flourish

This week's sermon was applicatory, so probably doesn't need much discussion in the groups (unless your group is very keen about the topic and had all heard the sermon! FYI the report I will mention is here in case any in your group would like to check it out: https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/ai-christian-benchmark/)

Here are two of the principles I will cover in the sermon, and you could choose either one (I doubt anyone will have time for both!) to look at together. The questions are intended to open up conversation about the small group itself.

Discipleship and difficulty

Read Matthew 28:18-20

- How is making disciples more than 'teaching them everything I have commanded'?
- What does that mean for how we disciple each other? What should the focus be?
- What is tempting about focussing our ministries on 'information' only?
- How does this particular small group help one another to be changing? What have you found useful? What have you not?

Being close

Read the following passages to answer the question, 'What does this passage say about being close?':

1. Matthew 17:5-7
2. John 20:26-27
3. Acts 2:46
4. 1 Thessalonians 2:17

- Feedback all together - what struck you?
- What are the benefits of being physically close to each other?
- What do you personally find to be the cost of this sort of closeness?
- What helps you in this small group to be physically present with others, whether in the main sessions or at other times?
- Are there any things we could do to encourage this closeness over the next year?

AI: Will we be replaced?

Some groups found the study last week didn't work for them, so here are two separate options. The first is a general study on 1 Cor 15, which we will look at towards the end of the sermon. The second is some questions on the Genesis passages I will use to think about what it means to be human, is more linked to AI, and is meant to encourage more open-ended conversation.

1 Cor 15

Opening question

- How much do you think about Jesus' resurrection? Your own?
- Why is that? What impact do you think that has on your life & faith?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

- How does Paul speak of the importance of the resurrection?
- How do v3-8 help someone who is thinking about the truth of the Bible?

Read 1 Cor 15:12-19

- If Jesus actually hadn't risen, what would it mean for Christianity?
- Jesus died for our sins on the cross. Why then do you think we would 'still be in our sins' if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead?

Read 1 Cor 15:20-24

- In what ways is our resurrection connected to Jesus' resurrection?
- What different things do we learn about Jesus here?
- What from these passages has struck you?

Genesis

Read Genesis 1:26-28

- What does this passage tell us about what it means to be human?
- How is that different from a secular view of humanity?
- What is the relationship between what we are and what we do? Would you say one is more important than the other? Why/why not?

Read Genesis 2:7

- Is a human natural or supernatural? Or both?
- Can we create new life ourselves? Is making AI different from having children? How?

Bringing these things together

- How would you explain to a 3 year old child what a human is?

- How would you explain to a 10 year old child what a human is?
- Biblically-speaking, are the main differences between artificial intelligence and real intelligence?

AI: Should we be afraid?

It is likely different groups will have very different appetites/interest/questions for AI as a series, so here are some options which you could include. Do feel free to choose whatever makes most sense to your group. I will refer again to John 6:16-21 walking on the water, questions on that are below from a few weeks ago.

Exploring the topic

- In pairs, what do you know about AI? What questions do you have?
- Capture the questions and comments, both for your group and for the preacher!

Technology and humanity

- Read Genesis 11:1-9
- What does this tell us about technology?
- About humanity?
- Do you think their goal was achievable? Why or why not?
- What do you think about God's response? Is there anything that you don't understand?
- How might these things apply to AI and modern tech in general?

Our hearts

- Read Mark 7:21-22
- What does this tell us about humanity?
- What are its implications for tech and AI?
- How do you see this being played out in the world?

Connecting with our neighbours and friends

- How might you respond to someone who says 'AI is going to end the world?'
- How might you respond to someone who says 'AI is going to save the world?'

Psalm 105

- In pairs, how many of the 10 plagues of Egypt can you name?
- Read verses 1-9, looking out for a) what are the people to be thinking, and b) what are they to be feeling?
- We remember (v5) and God remembers (v8). How is our 'remembering' the same as God's, and how is it different?
- Read the longest section v26-38. In pairs, see how you did in naming the plagues.
- Why is this passage so detailed in recounting the story? Do you think it important for us to remember the details?
- Read v42-45. What is the purpose of our salvation?
- In this Psalm, what part does 'remembering' play in a Christian's life?
- From this, how can we encourage each other?

John 6:16-21

- Read the passage
- Give out paper & pens, and ask people to draw a comic-strip/story board of the passage (if they would rather not draw, they can bullet point list the main moments of the story
- Why were the disciples afraid? Were they right to be afraid? Why/why not?
- What did this incident teach them about Jesus?
- In the Greek that John wrote in, Jesus literally says 'I am, do not fear'. Compare this to God speaking to Moses in Exodus 3:13-14. What do you notice?
- Why then do the disciples not need to fear?
- How does this passage shape our view of Jesus? What strikes you personally?

John 6:1-15

- RECAP: What did Jesus say about who he is in John 5?
    - 'Jesus is the Son of God, sent from the Father to give life, to judge and to receive honour'
- READ: John 6:1-9
    - How is Jesus testing his disciples here?
    - How do Philip and Andrew underestimate Jesus?

- READ: John 6:10-13
    - What does this passage show us about Jesus?
- DIGGING DEEPER: the main OT allusion in this passage is to Numbers 11. You may want to spend some time in that passage and consider the following questions:
    - READ Num. 11:4-6. What is the context to this passage?
    - READ Num. 11:10-15, 18-23. Who are the disciples most like in this passage? Who is Jesus most like?
    - READ Num. 11:31-33. How is this the same / different to what Jesus does in John 6?
    - How does this allusion point to the fact that Jesus is both the one who gives life and the one who will judge?
- READ: John 6:14-15
    - How do the crowd underestimate Jesus in these verses?
- APPLICATION:
    - How do you find yourself tempted to underestimate Jesus?
    - What are the dangers of ONLY going to Jesus when you feel 'out of your depth'?
    - Are you facing any challenges at the moment where you'd love to see Jesus' power at work, either to change the situation or to sustain you in it? (it would be good to allow people time to share 1:1 or in the group and then to pray).

John 5:16-47

- RECAP: What did Jesus do in the build up to this passage?
- READ: John 5:16-20
    - What do these verses tell us about how Jesus sees his identity?
- READ: John 5:21-30
    - What 3 things does Jesus say he has been sent by the Father to do?
    - Which verse from this section most powerfully spells out how we should respond to Jesus?
    - DIGGING DEEPER: In verse v29, Jesus seems to state that we will be judged according to what we have done in this life. How do we square that with salvation by grace alone, though faith alone, in Christ alone? [Depending on the maturity of your group, you may want to skip this! Throughout scripture, the final judgement is always conducted on the basis of our works. This may feel unsettling, but really serves to emphasise the truth of what James says in James 2:14-26. Genuine saving faith always expresses itself in good works. BUT, we must remember that good works are the *fruit* of salvation, not the *root* of salvation.]
- READ: John 5:31-47
    - What three sources of testimony confirm the truth of Jesus' claims about himself? (see esp. v33-34, 36, 39)

    - What parts of the Old Testament can you think of that point forward to Jesus? What do they tell us about him?
- In which areas of your life do you find it hardest to honour Jesus?
- What helps / hinders you from seeking Jesus in all of the Scriptures? [After feeding back on these last two questions, it would be good to pray for one another as a group or in pairs]

John 5:1-18

- READ John 5:1-18
- What is the man's hope for healing, v7?
- How do Jesus' actions challenge that hope?
- Which do you find more shocking, the response of the Jewish leaders or the response of the healed man? Why?
- What is Jesus claiming in his response to the leaders in v17?
- Where should we expect to see the power of God at work in our day and how do we legitimately 'access' that power?
- How do other Christian traditions sometimes separate the power of God from the personal work of God? [It might be worth discussing the veneration of icons in Orthodoxy, the adoration/use of relics / 'lucky objects' like st Christophers in Catholicism, or 'manifesting' in some more new age syncretic churches]
- How does this passage challenge that sort of syncretism?
- How might you use this passage to respond to another Christian who claims that God always wants to heal his people and that any failure to be healed is a result of weak faith?

1 Samuel 31

- Recap - what battle was about to happen? Who would be in it (and who wouldn't?)
- Read chapter 31
- What positives are there in the passage? What negatives?
- Share these verses for pairs (if not enough pairs, prioritise non-italic ones)
    - What significance does these verses give to the events of ch 31?
    - *1 Sam 2:6-7*
    - *1 Sam 9:1-2*
    - 1 Sam 15:22-23
    - 1 Sam 20:14-16
    - 1 Sam 28:18-19
- Where does the story of 1 Samuel leave the story of Israel's kingdom?
- How is Jonathan a model for us to follow?
- What does friendship with Jesus look like? How can we grow it?

1 Samuel 30

- Read ch 30
- If you were making a film of this story, what are the main scenes? What are the dramatic moments?
- In what way is God working in the background?
- David finds strength in the Lord his God. How do you think he did that?
- What do you make of David's decision to share the plunder?
- How does this passage point us forward to Jesus?
- What here can give us strength in God?

1 Samuel 27

[For the sake of time and covering the right amount of text, this study doesn't include Saul's visit to the medium. If people in your group wish to discuss it, then do feel free to ask them what they make of it. I've put notes from my sermon below for reference]

- Before the reading, some Important geographical/tribal knowledge - v10 people mentioned are Israelites; v8 tribes there are not God's people
- Read 1 Sam 27
- What is David's: a) problem, b) solution, c) outcome?
- How effective is what he does?
- What do we see about David's moral compass here? How does he compare badly even to Saul (28:6)?
- What is the purpose of showing David in a bad light?
- Read Matthew 26:47-56
- What is Jesus': a) problem, b) solution, c) outcome?
- What is his moral compass here? How is he so much greater than David?
- What might these passages teach us about our problems and possible solutions?
- How can we give thanks to Jesus from these verses?

Notes on 1 Sam 28

- *I think this is indeed Samuel's spirit, as the narrator tells us as much several times*
- *Whether we would think of this as a 'ghost', the Bible clearly paints a supernatural realm as well as a natural one. Christians do need to be afraid to believe that such things happen*
- *However, Christians do need to stay away from such things. Leviticus 19:31 says, "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God." Such a command is in any way changed by this passage, or by the coming of Jesus.*

- *Note it is not 'stay away because they don't work', but 'stay away because they will change you for the worse'*

Summer 2025

John 4:31-42

- Read v31-33.
    - What are the disciples focused on and why?
    - How are they similar to the Samaritan woman?
- Read v34-38
    - What is Jesus' food?
    - What is the harvest that Jesus speaks of?
    - What might be the difference between sowing and reaping when it comes to the harvest?
- Readv39-42
    - What does this section tell us about the work of reaping?
- What things in this life do you hunger for that can take your attention away from the harvest?
- What opportunities do you see to reap a harvest in Harpenden?

1 John 4:7-12

- What are the different definitions of love in this short passage?
- What do they have in common?
- From these verses, do you think it is possible to explain God's love without talking about the cross, or about sin? Why / why not?
- How much do you believe, deep down, that God loves you?
- Why do you think that is?
- How can this passage help us when we don't sense God's love or care?
- What can we share with our non-Christian friends from this passage?

John 4:1-30

- [LEADERS' NOTE - Lot's in this passage so you may want to pick and choose from the below to fit your group]
- Read John 4:1-15.
    - Is there anything that encourages or surprises you about this interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman?
    - How do the following passages shape our understanding of the 'living water' that Jesus is offering to this woman? [Might be worth

splitting into smaller groups with each one looking at a passage and then feeding back]
        - Jeremiah 2:10-13
        - Ezekiel 47:1-12
    - How should this imagery shape the way we think about our relationship with God?
- Read John 4:16-18
    - What is Jesus aiming to do in this interaction?
    - How is Jesus' intimate knowledge of our circumstances both an encouragement and a challenge?
- Read John 4:19-26
    - What makes someone a 'true worshiper'.
    - How do these passages we've already seen in John inform our understanding of what it means to worship in Spirit and in truth? [again, maybe in small groups]
        - John 1:14
        - John 1:32-34
        - John 3:5-8
        - John 3:31-34
- Read John 4:27-30
    - What can we learn from the example of the Samaritan Woman in these verses?
- What are the implications of this passage for our own witness, both as individuals and corporately as a church?

John 3:22-36

- Read John 3:22-26.
    - What Are John's disciples concerned about and why?
- Read John 3:27-30.
    - What have John's disciples missed that he wants them to see?
    - How does John's wedding illustration work and how does it map onto the church today?
- Read v31-36.
    - What is John the Gospel writer trying to convey to us about who Jesus is?
    - How does this shape the way that John the Baptist thinks about his life and ministry?
    - How should this shape the way you think about your life and ministry?
- How might John's 'mantras' from v27 & 30 help you to grow in contentment and joy, regardless of the situation?
- How might you know the difference between a situation where you need to grow in contentment and a situation where you should actively seek to bring about change? [LEADERS' NOTE: this could be a pastorally sensitive

one. In scripture, many people experience a great deal of suffering and injustice and are still able to rejoice in the midst of it. In particular, we shouldn't run away from our responsibilities because things get tough or sin as means of extracting ourselves form an unpleasant situation. On the other hand, suffering needlessly isn't a virtue and if we have the means of legitimately changing our situation, particularly if we're being sinned against, it might be right to pursue that. Always good to discuss with a pastor / trusted Christian friend before jumping to action.]

- In pairs, share some of the blessings that you've received that you struggle to be content with. Pray for one another to grow in contentment and joy.

John 3:1-21

- Read John 3:16, then in pairs, try to put it into your own words.
    - What other ways does God demonstrate his love?
    - How do they compare with this?
    - *[Leaders' note: it might be worth pausing at this point and a few people praying prayers of thanks and praise to God for his sacrificial love]*
- Read John 3:1-10.
    - How does Ezekiel 36:24–28 inform our understanding of the New Birth Jesus is talking about?
    - Same question, but Ezekiel 37:1-14 *[Leaders' note: it is common (necessary?!) for OT prophecies to have at least two levels of fulfillment: an immediate one in the life of God's Old Covenant people; AND a greater fulfillment in the New Covenant that the OC fulfilment was a shadow of]*
- Read John 3:11-18
    - Can anyone be saved without believing in Jesus? *[Leaders' note - there's an important pastoral balance to strike here. We mustn't limit the regenerating work of God's Spirit, otherwise infants and those who are intellectually incapable of believing couldn't be saved. BUT, we also need to recognise the clarity with which the gospel is saying that those who have not believed are condemned and that ordinary means by which God saves people is through the gospel]*
- Read John 3:19-21
    - Humanly speaking, why is it so hard for people to come to Jesus and believe in him?
- According to this passage, what must we do to be saved?
- If you were talking to a non-Christian friend, would you talk about the need to be 'born again'? Why/why not?

John 2:12-25

- Read v12-17: What is important to Jesus, according to these verses?
    - When might we legitimately be 'consumed by zeal' for the Lord?
    - What might a legitimate outlet for that zeal be? [Leaders' note: a really excellent and very 'safe' example of this might be to consider the example of the imprecatory psalms (e.g. Psalm 109). The key thing to note is that rather than doing these things himself, David pours his heart out to God and leave it with him to do whatever he sees fit.]
- Read v18-20: How would you feel if you were one of Jesus's disciples on this occasion?
- Read Psalm 69:6-12: What do these verses add to our understanding of the events that take place in the Temple?
    - How might these verses encourage us when we are 'shamed' by others for following Jesus?
- Read v21-22: How is Jesus vindicated by these verses?
- [perhaps in pairs] Are there any passages you've read recently where you've found that Jesus / God wasn't what you've expected / wanted him to be? Pray for the Spirit's help to grow to love him for these things.

Psalm 100

- Opening q: how would you describe what 'joy' is?
- What is the structure of the Psalm? And what is the feel of it?
- What reasons does the Psalm give for us to be joyful?
- Do these reasons help you at the moment? Why/why not?
- For someone finding joy elusive, what encouragement can we give?
- What does this Psalm suggest for our times of worship together? How can we use it to prepare ourselves when we come to church?

John 2:1-11

[LEADERS' NOTE - the nature of the sermon has made this a more challenging set of Qs to prepare. There's probably far more below than you can use in one session but I've worked on the assumption that too much is better than not enough, so as always, feel free to cut whatever won't work for your group!]

1. This passage follows a fairly classic 'story arc' of introduction / problem / resolution / conclusion. Which verses would you put under each heading?
2. In v4, Jesus seems to distance himself from the problem because 'the hour' has not come. What do the following verses tell us about 'the hour'

[LEADERS' NOTE - annoyingly, sometimes the NIV translates 'hour' as 'time']
    a. 4v21, 23
    b. 5v25, 28
    c. 7v30 & 8v20
    d. 12v23, 27
    e. 13v1
    f. 16v2, 4, 21
    g. 16v25,
    h. 16v32,
    i. 17v1
3. What do the following tell us about Jesus and what 'his hour' will achieve:
    a. The type of jars used to hold the water?
    b. The sheer volume and quality of the wine produced?
4. How does this passage point us forward to Revelation 19v6-9?
5. v11 tells us that this 'sign' reveals Jesus' glory to us. How does Jesus seem more glorious to you in light of this sign?
6. With Jesus, the best is saved to the last (v10). How might that fact:
    a. Encourage struggling Christians?
    b. Challenge those of us tempted to 'live our best lives now'?
7. Pray for those Seniors who attended the guest service to receive the invitation to 'the wedding supper of the Lamb'.

John 1:35-51

8. Who 'comes & sees' Jesus in this passage?
9. For each person, what's their response when they do see Jesus?
10. [Read Genesis 28:10-17 & Daniel 7:13-17.] What light do these passages shed on what Jesus says in v51?
11. What encouragement is there in v50-51 for:
    a. Those looking into Christianity?
    b. Those already following Jesus?
    c. Christians who are in a tough season?
12. Is anyone willing to share with the group about how they first 'came and saw' Jesus?
13. Is there anyone you'd love to 'come & see' Jesus? [spend time praying for those people].

John 1:19-34

TEXT WORK:

14. Read Isaiah 40 (or at least v1-11). How does the context to John 1:23 tell us about John and his ministry?
15. What other evidence of John's greatness is there in this passage?

16. How does our understanding of John's greatness inform our understanding of Jesus' greatness in v26-27? [you may want to refer to the graphs in the slide deck to support this]
17. According to John, who is Jesus and what has he come to do?
18. How is Jesus' baptism the same / different to John's?

APPLICATION:

19. What aspects of greatness in the world's eyes are you most tempted to pursue?
20. Which of the challenges at the end of the sermon do you most need to hear and why?
    a. Come to Jesus for forgiveness / the power to fight sin
    b. Use your 'greatness' to point to Jesus
    c. Recognise that Jesus says you're great, even if you don't feel it (cf Luke 7v28)

John 1:1-18

[Leaders' Note: There's a LOT in this passage and there are a few different things it might be fruitful to do with it. Below, I've put some fairly straight questions tied to the sermon that you might want to use, but I've also included a starter activity, which may work well for your group. Above all, do pray at some point for the points I suggested in the sermon (below)!]

STARTER [could be done as a whole group for whole text, or you could break into smaller groups to look at v1-8, 9-14, 15-18 and then come together to share. It might be worth recording these on a large sheet of paper in order to refer back to]

- Go through the text and jot down any repeated words
- Go through again and add any others that seem particularly important
- Next to each word, note an antonym (e.g. life / death. Some like light / darkness may already be present and just need combining)
- If you know John's Gospel well, are there other themes you expect to see developing that we haven't noted yet? (e.g. S/spirit, the hour, work, food, love...)

21. Why do you think John begins his gospel in the way he does? [you could discuss both the function of the prologue generally, as well as the first 3 words.]
22. What does John say about Jesus in these verses that gives you a bigger and more glorious view of him?
23. What is so shocking about the unbelief of v9-11?
24. What are the benefits of belief? [It might be worth taking some time to drill down into the privileges of being a child of God]

25. How does the backdrop of Exodus 33v18-23 enrich our understanding of John 1v14-18?
26. What are you most looking forward to / hoping to get out of this series in John?

PRAY [please do make time as a group to pray over the 3 requests I made at the end of the sermon (copied below)]
Please pray for...
1) a bigger view of Jesus
2) an increase of faith
3) deeper relationship with the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit

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For older SG questions, you can find them here:

CCH Small group qs May 2024 to Apr 2025