

Our Saviour



‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’

A special 4 week Bible study based on our
Sunday messages in June 2023.

Big thanks to Peter Steicke for leading us in
these 4 weeks.

The Wonder of Following Jesus

Our Saviour Lutheran Church 4 week focus

Week 1 – Sunday 4th June – ‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’

(Groups will meet the following week)

1. Welcome

Welcome to ‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’. This special 4 week church focus is based on a book by Peter Steicke called ‘The Wonder’.

Life in Jesus is a wonder to be encountered, not a drudgery to be endured.

If your life in Jesus has stagnated, if discipleship is just another cliché that has lost any sense of awe, if you are struggling to lead others in a life of following Jesus, then get ready!

Over the next 4 weeks we are going on a journey where you will discover that following Jesus is a wonder to explore rather than just a set of practices to observe.

As you explore and share in your groups we also pray that you have lots of fun encouraging each other and getting to know each other better.

2. Opening Prayer

The group HOST might like to open with a short prayer thanking God for all those present and for your time together, inviting his Holy Spirit to be with you as you listen and share.

3. Checking In

Ensure everyone in your group knows each other. If not, briefly introduce yourselves.

4. Our Group Guidelines

These shared values will help your group to work well. Please read through together.

- As much as possible let's give priority to our group gatherings. Let your Host know if you are absent or late.
- We want our group to be a safe place where we can learn from one another's experiences and where our conversations remain confidential, respected and not shared outside the group.
- We will avoid boasting, gossip, put-downs, snap judgements, quick fixes and we will be good listeners, remembering that our gathering is about Jesus and what he is doing in our lives and the lives of those around us.
- We aim to look out for each other's interests, to encourage and build each other up.
- We will remember that we are all 'works in progress' and so will be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity and personal opinions.
- We look forward to getting to know each other and praying for each other regularly.
- Our group relies on shared ownership and we encourage members to help out in different ways.

5. Highs and Lows

Let's briefly check in with each other about our past week.

Share a HIGH from your day/week, it could be something you are grateful for.

And, share a LOW from your day/week, maybe something that didn't go well or that you regret.

6. Sunday's Message

If possible we encourage group members to participate in a worship service during the week and take in and reflect on the message.

You might like to attend worship and sit together as a group.

If people were not present, they can watch the message before the group gets together at home on our YouTube channel 'Our Saviour AP'.

OR at your group now you may like to watch Sunday's message together on your smart TV.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3welpCoXTlbtwvl-Gal6Yw>

7. Bible Reading - Luke 5:1-11

Slowly read the Bible passage out loud together.

Group members could alternate reading 2 or 3 verses each.

Afterwards allow a time of silence so each person can reflect and jot down their thoughts/impressions/reflections from the Bible reading.

Think about what word, phrase or verse was most important to you or stood out to you.

8. Discussion Questions

1. Take turns going around the group sharing the word, phrase or verse that impacted you from the Bible reading and share what struck you most.
2. It's not only fishermen that have unproductive seasons! Reflect and share on a time in your life or an area of your life currently where it feels as though you are working all night yet catching nothing. Please be as honest as you can with each other on this.
3. As you listen to each other, what emotions are coming up, what is being stirred up inside you?
4. Just prior to this, Jesus asked his disciples to put their nets down into the deep.
Have someone read the first section of chapter 7 (pp 72-72) in Peter's book 'The Wonder'. Discuss what it might mean for you to go "deeper into Jesus" and to let your nets down into him and his promises.
5. When some people think of "going deeper" they immediately presume it's about *doing* more, taking up new habits or new practises. As you reflect on

this passage in Luke 5, discuss the possibility that “going deeper” is actually more about trust and response rather than activity and effort.

6. In verse 11, it says they left everything and followed Jesus. Read the short section entitled ‘Follow’ in The Wonder (pp 61-62). Allow people some quiet time to reflect, then share what grabbed you the most from that, and why.
7. Finally, reflect again on the Bible passage, your readings, and the discussion. What one specific take home point will go with you as you leave?
8. What are the positive implications of all this for our Aberfoyle Park Christian community?

9. Homework for the Next Week

Watch the message from the coming Sunday.

10. Prayer

Please ensure you allow enough time for group prayer.

It’s a good idea if the leader starts and closes with a short prayer. If anyone else would like to add a short prayer in between they can as they feel led.

Some of your group members will be more comfortable than others with praying out loud and for each other. If you’re at ease, go for it and pray as you are led.

Or for those who are not as comfortable praying out loud, you might like to use the following as a guide.

- Silently, look through these sentences below. Think of your endings, and then after a minute or so, pray out loud as many as you feel led.
You can begin “Dear Jesus ...” or “Father God ...” or “Holy Spirit ...” and then add your sentence/s.
- Thank you for ...
- Please be with ... in/with ... (name the situation or need)
- Guide us in/as ...
- You can all bless the person on your left by simply praying: Please bless ... (name them) with ... (name something, or add a fruit of the Spirit like: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. Or a quality like: insight, wisdom, understanding ...)

Another idea is to ask each group member before you pray “how can we pray for you this week?”

You might like to refer to a high or low shared earlier on.

There may be something that came up in your group’s discussion that you would like prayer for.

11. Next Week

Next Sunday 11th June, Peter shares on the topic 'Following in Community'.

Before you finish up today plan the next time your group gets together.

Where and what time? Who will lead?

What food will you have and who will bring what?

The Wonder of Following Jesus

Our Saviour Lutheran Church 4 week focus

Week 2 – Sunday 11th June – ‘Following in Community’

(Groups will meet the following week)

1. Welcome

Welcome back to week 2 of ‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’. This week we look at following Jesus in community.

We follow Jesus as individuals, but we’re not meant to do life alone.

Today we’ll delve deeper into the wonder of following Jesus with others.

2. Opening Prayer

The group HOST might like to open with a short prayer thanking God for all those present and for your time together, inviting his Holy Spirit to be with you as you listen and share.

3. Checking In

If there is anyone new who has joined you this week?

Ensure everyone in your group knows each other. If not, briefly introduce yourselves.

4. Our Group Guidelines

If you have someone new to the group this week, remind each other of your Group Guidelines that you shared last week.

5. Highs and Lows

Let’s check in with each other about our past week.

Share a HIGH from your day/week, it could be something you are grateful for.

And, share a LOW from your day/week, maybe something that didn’t go so well or that you regret.

6. Sunday’s Message

If possible we encourage group members to participate in a worship service during the week and take in and reflect on the message.

You might like to attend worship and sit together as a group.

If people were not present, they can watch the message before the group gets together at home on our YouTube channel ‘Our Saviour AP’.

OR at your group now you may like to watch Sunday’s message together on your smart TV.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3welpCoXTlbtwvl-Gal6Yw>

7. Bible Reading - Mark 3:7-19, 31-35

Slowly read the Bible passages out loud together.

Group members could alternate reading 2 or 3 verses each.

Afterwards allow a time of silence so each person can reflect and jot down their thoughts/impressions/reflections from the Bible readings.

Think about what word, phrase or verse was most important to you or stood out to you.

8. Discussion Questions

1. Take turns going around the group sharing the word, phrase or verse that impacted you from the Bible reading and share what struck you most.
2. As you listened to the message from last Sunday, what stood out to you personally? What inspired you and what challenged you?
3. The phrase “with him” is shorthand for discipleship. The disciples learned and grew by being with Jesus.
See if you can recall some of those who have been “with” you in your life as a follower of Jesus. For me, apart from my parents, one of the first was a leader at a youth camp.
Then, consider those whom you’ve been privileged to be “with.”
4. There’s a saying, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your family.” How does this relate to Christian community and following Jesus?
Read Mark 3:31-34.

Read this excerpt from Pastor Peter below.

(Peter writes more about ‘one-anothers’ on pg 145 of his book ‘Suddenly’, and ‘twos and threes’ on pg 199 of ‘Suddenly’).

5. What do you **resonate** with most in this? (What spoke to you the most, or what did you like the most?)

Jesus has a daily relationship of intimacy with his Father. And he has the twelve disciples who spend so much time with each other.

Yet, in the midst of this, Jesus knows the need for a sustaining connection with a smaller number of people. He chooses Peter, James, and John.

They see him at his best. When he is transfigured on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-8).

They see Jesus at his worst in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was anguished and needed their presence (Mark 14:32-42).

Thirdly, they experience Jesus needing their support when surrounded by the grief of Jairus’ family upon their daughter’s death (Mark 5:35-43).

If it is enough for Jesus—God in human flesh—to need the company of a few significant others to focus and support him in his life mission, then surely it is no different for us.

All the one-another statements take on hyper-status when applied, not just in a group of say, twelve, but in a group of two or three. There you get to be with, confess, confide, encourage, receive from, bless, listen to, learn from, eat with, forgive, admonish, send ... one another. Practically, it's easy to arrange a group of two or three. The constraints of finding a time or place diminish the smaller you go.

Why do we get together in twos or threes? Most of us don't need another Bible study. We do so to remind us of how exceptionally and incredibly loved we are. To learn of God's ways, so we can walk in his truth. To maintain an undivided heart, so we will revere his name.

6. What **challenged** you most as you read this? It could be something that challenged you personally, from your history or perception of things.
7. What can you put into practice due to what you've just read?
8. How can this impact our lives, local communities, and faith communities?
9. In the New Testament, the wonder of following Jesus in community is expressed through one-another statements.
These 'one-another' exhortations only really make sense in the context of shared life together. They may remain merely an ideal in a large, attendance-based organisation, but come alive in the context of relational groupings where we exist for others and receive blessings in family. Which of these 'one another' statements speak the most to you (that is, what would you like to receive most)? And which one can you best bring to others?
 - Romans 12:10 Be devoted to *one another*. Honour *one another*
 - Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with *one another*
 - Romans 15:7 Accept *one another*
 - Galatians 5:13 Serve *one another*
 - Galatians 6:2 Carry *each other's* burdens
 - Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to *one another*
 - Ephesians 5:21 Submit to *one another*
 - Colossians 3:13 Bear with *each other*
 - Hebrews 10:24 Spur *one another* on
 - 1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to *one another*
 - James 5:16 Confess to *each other* and pray for *each other*
 - Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage *one another*
 - Thessalonians 5:13 Live in peace with *each other*
10. Consider this: *The smaller the grouping you are involved in, the more pronounced is the effect of the 'one-anothers'.*
11. What possibilities are there for our Aberfoyle Park church family as a result of this topic?

9. Homework for the Next Week

If possible read chapter 6 of The Wonder, titled 'To Follow in Wonder'.
Watch the message from the coming Sunday.

10. Prayer

Please ensure you allow enough time for group prayer.

It's a good idea if the leader starts and closes with a short prayer. If anyone else would like to add a short prayer in between they can as they feel led.

Some of your group members will be more comfortable than others with praying out loud and for each other. If you're at ease, go for it and pray as you are led.

Or for those who are not as comfortable praying out loud, you might like to use the following as a guide.

- Silently, look through these sentences below. Think of your endings, and then after a minute or so, pray out loud as many as you feel led.
You can begin "Dear Jesus ..." or "Father God ..." or "Holy Spirit ..." and then add your sentence/s.
- Thank you for ...
- Please be with ... in/with ... (name the situation or need)
- Guide us in/as ...
- You can all bless the person on your left by simply praying: Please bless ... (name them) with ... (name something, or add a fruit of the Spirit like: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. Or a quality like: insight, wisdom, understanding ...)

Another idea is to ask each group member before you pray "how can we pray for you this week?"

You might like to refer to a high or low shared earlier on.

There may be something that came up in your group's discussion that you would like prayer for.

11. Next Week

Next Sunday 18th June, Peter shares on 'When Following Doesn't Make Sense'.

Before you finish up today plan the next time your group gets together.

Where and what time? Who will lead?

What food will you have and who will bring what?

The Wonder of Following Jesus

Our Saviour Lutheran Church 4 week focus

Week 3 – Sunday 18th June – ‘When Following Doesn’t Make Sense’

(Groups will meet the following week)

1. Welcome

Here we are already in week 3 of ‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’!

This week we acknowledge that following Jesus is sometimes difficult and doesn’t always make sense!

Jesus himself was misunderstood, rejected, deserted by friends as well as the crowd, and experienced suffering. It was the same for his followers. Even after the resurrection, the disciple Peter wanted to go back to fishing!

To be sure, there are aspects of following Jesus that sometimes seem illogical or impractical. Let’s dig into this with the heart of the Father who loves us.

2. Opening Prayer

As you open in prayer today, consider using these words from Psalm 71. You can sit back and rest while one person reads it slowly, or read a line or verse each in turn. When reading Scripture such as the Psalms, you are indeed praying.

In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame!

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.

Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb.

My praise is continually of you.

I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.

But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.

My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens.

You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.

You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.

I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.

My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.

3. Highs and Lows

Let's briefly check in with each other about our past week.

Share a HIGH from your day/week, it could be something you are grateful for.

And, share a LOW from your day/week, maybe something that didn't go so well or that you regret.

4. Sunday's Message

If possible we encourage group members to participate in a worship service during the week and take in and reflect on the message.

You might like to attend worship and sit together as a group.

If people were not present, they can watch the message before the group gets together at home on our YouTube channel 'Our Saviour AP'.

OR at your group now you may like to watch Sunday's message together on your smart TV.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3welpCoXTlbtwvl-Gal6Yw>

5. Bible Reading - John 21:1-23

Slowly read the Bible passage out loud together.

Group members could alternate reading 2 or 3 verses each.

Afterwards allow a time of silence so each person can reflect and jot down their thoughts/impressions/reflections from the Bible reading.

Think about what word, phrase or verse was most important to you or stood out to you.

6. Discussion Questions

1. Take turns going around the group sharing the word, phrase or verse that impacted you from the Bible reading and share what struck you most.
2. As you listened to the message from Sunday, what stood out to you personally? What inspired you and what challenged you?
3. Following Jesus isn't a recipe for a trouble-free life. Jesus himself suffered. The early Christian followers of the Way grew exponentially through suffering and hardship. Discuss this from your experience.

Read and reflect on Mother Theresa's poem below.

4. What do you resonate with here?
How does it fit in with following Jesus when life doesn't always make sense?

'Anyway' - a poem by Mother Teresa

(It is reported this was inscribed on the wall of her children's home in Calcutta.)

*People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centred;
 Forgive them anyway.
 If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
 Be kind anyway.
 If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;
 Succeed anyway.
 If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
 Be honest and frank anyway.
 What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;
 Build anyway.
 If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;
 Be happy anyway.
 The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;
 Do good anyway.
 Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
 Give the world the best you've got anyway.
 You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;
 It was never between you and them anyway.*

Peter was sharing about Father God's promises with a person one day. Here's how a little of it transpired. (You can read the full account in chapter 8, 'Living in the Promise' of his book 'Spirited').

5. What resonates with you about this and following Jesus when times are hard?

One facet I love of life in the Kingdom of God," I unfolded, "is the number of promises there are for us. God apportions thousands of them. For sure, some are duplicated, but you could easily go a couple of years writing down a new promise of God each day and not repeat the same verse.

She looked astounded, even hopeful.

Here's the thing, I continued, and wrote the word *provision* between the other two, so that the scrap piece of paper looked like this:

Promises → Provision → Problems

In God's promises are provision for the problems. Holy Spirit, as the Promise, releases promises from the Father's heart.

6. What possibilities are there for our Aberfoyle Park church family as a result of this topic?

7. Homework for the Next Week

If you can, read Chapter 16 'Wondrous Forgiveness' in The Wonder.

Listen to or watch Sunday's message as we prepare to meet together.

8. Prayer

Please ensure you allow enough time to finish up with group prayer.
Refer to the previous week for ideas.

9. Next Week

Next Sunday 25th June, the 4th and final week, Peter shares on 'Wondrous Forgiveness'.
Before you finish up today plan the next time your group gets together.
Where and what time? Who will lead?
What food will you have and who will bring what?

The Wonder of Following Jesus

Our Saviour Lutheran Church 4 week focus

Week 4 – Sunday 25th June – ‘Wondrous Forgiveness’

(Groups will meet the following week)

1. Welcome

Welcome everyone to the final week of our 4 week study - ‘The Wonder of Following Jesus’. This week we look at an aspect of following Jesus that is central to everything: forgiveness. The wonder is that as we celebrate our forgiveness by Jesus and grow in forgiving others—even when it’s difficult and seemingly unfair—we eventually grow into a freedom we perhaps never even thought possible!

2. Opening Prayer

As you open in prayer today, perhaps consider going around your group using the Lord’s Prayer as a guide.

The Host can read out one line of the Lord’s Prayer at a time leaving a pause after for people to respond, either out loud or silently.

“Our Father in heaven ...”

Consider calling him by an endearment you’ve never used before: My Father, Heavenly Father, Father God, my beloved Father, Abba Father, Papa, or Papa God, or ...

“Hallowed be your name ...”

Acknowledge to God how you feel about him. You can use his attributes (his power, that he’s unchanging, his presence, insight, etc) or his character (love, joy, faithfulness, peace, goodness, generosity, graciousness) or his names as a basis. Or just tell him that you love him.

“Your Kingdom come ...”

We need his kingly rule and reign in our lives and our world, so ask for his Kingship in your life. For example: Jesus, you are a King and I now acknowledge you as my King.

“Your will be done, on earth as in heaven ...”

This is where we surrender our agendas for God’s. A great way of expressing this is simply the way Jesus taught us: Father, I exchange my will for yours. Or: Jesus, let us carry out your kingdom ways instead of just wanting our own personal ways.

“Give us this day our daily bread ...”

We have so much, and it all comes from Father God. Spend some time thanking him for all the things you can think of.

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ..."

Ahh, the topic of this study! One of the biggest temptations is to remain in bitterness and blame. One of the biggest evils is when the devil tries to keep us in unforgiveness.

Thank Jesus for obtaining your forgiveness, and ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you all as you unpack this topic today.

Then pray this ending out loud together:

"For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen."

3. Highs and Lows

Let's briefly check in with each other about our past week.

Share a HIGH from your day/week, it could be something you are grateful for.

And, share a LOW from your day/week, maybe something that didn't go so well or that you regret.

4. Sunday's Message

If possible we encourage group members to participate in a worship service during the week and take in and reflect on the message.

You might like to attend worship and sit together as a group.

If people were not present, they can watch the message before the group gets together at home on our YouTube channel 'Our Saviour AP'.

OR at your group now you may like to watch Sunday's message together on your smart TV.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3welpCoXTlbtwvl-Gal6Yw>

5. Bible Reading - Luke 7:36-50; Luke 23:32-34; Acts 7:54-60

Slowly read the Bible passages out loud together.

Group members could alternate reading 2 or 3 verses each.

After each reading allow a time of silence so each person can reflect and jot down their thoughts/impressions/reflections from the Bible reading.

Think about what word, phrase or verse was most important to you or stood out to you.

6. Discussion Questions

1. Take turns going around the group sharing the Bible word, phrase or verse that impacted you and share what struck you most about it.
2. As you listened to the message from last Sunday, or read the chapter 'Wondrous Forgiveness', what stood out to you personally? What challenged you most as you read this? It could be something that challenged you personally, from your history or a perception of things.

3. Both the chapter and Sunday's message spoke of the unfairness of forgiveness, as well as the cost of forgiveness.
Discuss how it is possible to walk alongside others through this forgiveness journey that seems so unfair and has a personal cost to it.
4. It's possible that forgiveness is one of the most missional activities we'll be engaged in. Read this comment from Pastor Peter below and discuss:

When the church has practised unilateral forgiveness, she has been unstoppable. "The gates of hell" Jesus says, "will not be able to stand against her". Forgiveness, as lived out by Jesus and his followers, is one area where Christians get to shine. However, for many reasons, we don't.

In Philippians 2:14-15, St Paul says: "Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which you shine like stars in the world."

I ask myself, where do I shine like a star in the world? Where am I different from my neighbours? Where do I stand out more from them? I probably drink more than them, and I'm sure I grumble as much as them. So how am I different?

In a society fixated on paybacks, getting even, and reprisals, we get to shine through unilateral forgiveness. It is so counter-cultural. It is so much of the new person we are in Christ.

Our fleshly nature can't produce this kind of forgiveness. Only the Holy Spirit can affect this work of blessing in and through us. It's just possible that forgiveness is the richest and most transformative missional endeavour you will engage in.

5. How does the possibility of forgiveness as a missional undertaking strike you?
As you reflect, think of the Christian couple whose four children were killed by an out of control motorist and then started the i4give foundation - <https://www.i4give.com/>.
(You can also see this ABC article <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-31/parents-launch-i4give-day-anniversary-oatlands-crash/13106662>.)
6. What possibilities are there for our Aberfoyle Park church family as a result of this topic?
7. As you finish up this 4 week course, what has stood out for you?
What do you feel Jesus is prompting you in as you follow him?
What do you still want to learn about?
8. What do you want to do as a group?
Do you want to meet again to continue any discussions/ study/ prayer?
Maybe you would like to have a meal together or do something fun together to celebrate your journey?

7. Prayer

Please ensure you allow enough time to finish up with group prayer, praying for whatever has come up for each person today.

Thank God for your time together over these 4 weeks, and pray his blessing on each of your group members and our church family in our journeys of following Jesus.

8. What Next?

If you want to meet again, before you finish up today plan the next time your group gets together.

THANK YOU for being willing to set aside this time and for getting together in a group to share in the life and learning of these past 4 weeks.

We pray that you have been blessed in many ways, beyond anticipation!

We look forward to hearing your feedback and stories from this 4 week church focus. But most of all we are excited about our shared journeys in 'The Wonder of Following Jesus'.

ENJOY!