

INTRODUCTION

“Haven’t you read the sightings?” That’s the question Jesus effectively asked two men on the road to Emmaus. Jesus explained to them how the Old Testament (Hebrew) Scriptures pointed to Him. We read, “Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.” (Luke 24).

Our new series looks at some of the feasts and festivals in ancient Israel that give us a greater ‘taste’ of Jesus. A series like this is particularly appropriate at this time of the year in preparation to Easter as we remember the extreme act that Jesus went through in order for us to feast in relationship with God.

USING THE DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Some Christians prepare for Easter with a season called Lent. Effectively, it’s a time of increased spiritual reflection and preparation. With that in mind, the daily questions and reflections are designed to help you re-appreciate God’s involvement in your life and the radical call from Jesus to live as his followers.
2. In addition to these questions, you might want to take a page of the church directory to pray through each day. Over the course of this series, you would have prayed for everybody in our church community.

USING LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

Spiritual Growth best happens in community. If you’re not already in a LifeGroup, contact the office to find out more. You can also go to our website and find a group at <http://www.mabc.org.nz/content/life-groups>. How about making a commitment to check it out for the duration of this 5 week series?

Monday: Shelter

1. Read Leviticus 23:33-44 this provides the background of the feast of Tabernacles
2. Background: This week long feast was the most popular of all feasts for Jewish people. During this week, the people made and lived in temporary booths in order to reenact and remember Israel’s earlier experience of dwelling in the wilderness on their journey to the Promised Land. On the final day of the great feast, they left these shelters and returned to their comfortable homes in fresh appreciation that God had brought them into the Promised Land in fulfillment of his promise.
3. Reflect on the following verse: *“The LORD your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give you when he made a vow to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. ¹¹ The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, ¹² be careful not to forget the LORD, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt – Deut 6:10-12.* How easy is it to forget God’s goodness when we are happy with our lot?
4. Write down some of the material things that God has given you. Thank him for these. They are His gift to you.
5. What can you do in this season towards Easter to take time for additional spiritual preparation?
6. Turn to the first page of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven’t met them before.

Tuesday: Water

1. Read John 7:37-39, which takes place in the context of the feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7:2).

2. Background: One of the activities during the Feast of Tabernacles was the water rite, where a golden jug was filled with water from the pool of Siloam and carried in a procession led by the High Priest back to the temple where it was offered to God at the time of the morning sacrifice. It was a tangible reminder that God provided water for the people in the wilderness and provided rain for their crops in the past year.
3. Reflect on the following verse: *“Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink— even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk— it’s all free! - Is 55:1 (NLT).*
4. Jesus invites you to feast and be satisfied in him? How are you responding to his invitation?
5. Take time to thank God for his provision towards you.
6. Turn to the second page of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven’t met them before.

Wednesday: Light

1. Read John 8:12, a claim Jesus makes in the context of the feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7:2).
2. Background: Special things were set up during the feast of tabernacles to display light including four huge lamps in the part of the temple known as the ‘court of the woman’ and ‘the Treasury.’ These were lit during this feast, casting a glow all around the temple. Under them, people danced through the night, holding burning torches in their hands and singing worship songs. The light reminded the people that God had guided His people through the wilderness with a cloud by day and fire by night. It was a reminder that he continues to guide and protect.
3. It’s in this place (cf. John 8:20) and context (cf. John 7:2) that Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” Interestingly, twice in John 7, Jesus is accused of leading the people astray. In reality, he is the One who guides and leads the people to the ultimate Promised Land. Jesus is inviting you to follow his guidance and leadership. What will you do with the invitation?
4. Read the miracle in John 9 where Jesus shows that he is able to bring light to help people see. How has he opened your eyes?
5. Reflect: *“The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. – Isaiah 58:11 (NLT).* Thank God for his guidance and protection.
6. Turn to the third page of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven’t met them before.

Thursday: Celebration and Vow

1. Read Nehemiah 8.
2. Background: The Israelites had forgotten about this feast but rediscovered its importance with joy and took the opportunity to recommit themselves to God. This was a major celebration.
3. God invites you to celebrate and rejoice in his abundant goodness in the past (Exodus journey) and present (providing material, physical and spiritual nourishment). Share a story with another today about his goodness to you.
4. Reflect: Where would you be if God hadn’t rescued you from sins slavery and brought you on this journey towards the ultimate Promised Land?
5. Take time to recommit yourself to God, as the people in Nehemiah did.
6. Turn to the fourth page of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven’t met them before.

Friday: Future

1. Read Psalm 118, a Psalm that was regularly sung during the Feast of Tabernacles.
2. Background: The feast was the last harvest of the calendar year and marked the beginning of a new year. God had been good the previous year and it helped the people look ahead to a new year with confidence. Whether you're happy with your lot or tense about tomorrow, God invites you to lean into him with confidence for his protection and nourishment for the future.
3. The feast of Tabernacles also looked ahead to the great ingathering of the people that would be a time of great rejoicing because the LORD would fulfill all his promises. It's referred to in Zechariah 14:16 (which was a text read by later Jews at the feast of Tabernacles) where people will one day gather from all nations bringing the fulfillment of hope to the people of God and judgment to the rest of the world.
4. Spend time praying for a friend who does not yet know Jesus. Or, (if you don't yet have such a friend) ask God to help you step into the lives of others. Pray that they can one day join you to celebrate the goodness of God.
5. Turn to the fifth page of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

LIFE GROUPS

Tabernacles



OVERVIEW

This past Sunday, we looked at the Feast of Tabernacles. This week long feast was the most popular of all feasts for Jewish people. During this week, the people made and lived in temporary booths in order to reenact and remember Israel's earlier experience of dwelling in the wilderness on their journey to the Promised Land. It included a water rite and light festival to help people remember the way God guided, protected and provided all they needed. But, it's not just history. This is written to encourage us, as God's people today.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Describe the best party you have ever attended?
2. Looking back at this week's teaching, what particular point, statement or scripture caught your attention, challenged or confused you the most?



DIGGING DEEPER

The Feast of Tabernacles called the people to look **back** to their journey through the wilderness and of God's provision of crops for the previous year. It had them look **at their present situation** and re-appreciate the home and comforts they had (particularly as they returned from living in a booth for the week!). It also helped them look **forward** to the uncertainties of the future and the time when God would ultimately fulfill his promises.

1. Which time element (past, present, or future) of God's involvement in your life would it most benefit you to focus on at this time? Share with the group the reason for your choice?

2. Tabernacles is a feast of appreciation and thankfulness for all God has done and will do. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. How are you currently reflecting a life of joy, prayer and thankfulness?



TAKING IT HOME

1. Looking back at this weeks teaching, what is the one take-away for you?
2. As we begin a new year in LifeGroup, what do you hope to get out of this year?



GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS

Break into groups of 2-3 to pray for each other. Spend no more than 1 minute talking before you begin praying.