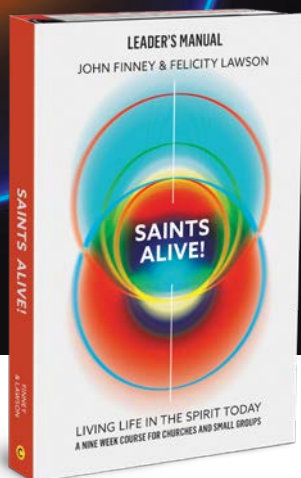
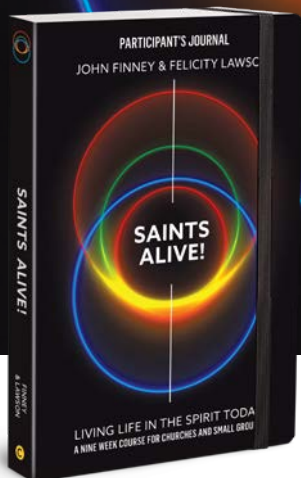


FREE SAMPLER

WITH SESSION 1 FROM THE LEADERS MANUAL AND PARTICIPANTS JOURNAL

LIVING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT TODAY
JOHN FINNEY & FELICITY LAWSON

**SAINTS
ALIVE!**



A NINE WEEK COURSE FOR CHURCHES AND SMALL GROUPS

LEADER'S MANUAL

JOHN FINNEY & FELICITY LAWSON



LIVING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT TODAY
A NINE-WEEK COURSE FOR CHURCHES AND SMALL GROUPS

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SECTION 1

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Aims of the Course

- It is a nurture course designed to equip churches to help people to come to faith and become active Christians within the church and the world.
- Saints Alive! helps people to explore what it means to live the Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- It offers participants an opportunity to respond to Christ and experience God's power at work in their own lives.

The Structure of the Course

The course consists of nine sessions. It is designed to be used in small groups, but it can be used within the context of one-to-one mentoring and self-learning. There is a **Leader's Manual** and each course member has a **Journal** which contains notes from each session, Chunk Reading, daily Bible readings and space for personal reflection. There is a **Video** to accompany the course.

A glance at the **contents** will show that:

- Session 1 looks at the being of God our Father and our need for a relationship with him.
- Sessions 2 and 3 look at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Sessions 4 and 5 look at the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Session 6 gives an opportunity for course members to respond to what they have learned and experienced of God so far.
- Sessions 7 to 9 look at the life of the Christian disciple and commitment to the local church.

The biblical basis for this Trinitarian approach is outlined in the Appendix. The ‘Hexagon of Faith’ and the teaching there have been widely used to illustrate the fullness of God’s action in the world and how it has been interpreted by different traditions in the church. You are free to borrow it and use it more widely!

Saints Alive! has three essential elements:

1. Teaching

There are teaching outlines and illustrations for each session. These are not meant to be exhaustive, and leaders should offer their own experience and adapt the notes to fit the different needs of each group.

There are references to places on the internet where some of the most common theological and practical questions are discussed.

The course does not pretend that it can convey the whole expanse of Christian teaching in nine weeks, but it provides basic teaching and an opportunity for ministry. It is designed to give those taking part a hunger to explore further into the immense riches of the faith.

2. Ministry

Ministry has been defined as ‘one Christian acting in love to another person’. Suggestions as to when it might be appropriate to invite participants to respond to God’s ministry to them are given throughout the course. There are also hints as to how this might be done, but a reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential. Opportunities for ministry should be taken whenever it seems right. Participants have the opportunity of a personal conversation (see ‘The Conversation’, page 77) and the invitation to receive ministry in Session 6 should *always* be made. The usual safeguarding principles regarding pastoral ministry should be strictly adhered to throughout.

3. Fellowship

When people who have been on a nurture course are asked, ‘What did you value most?’, they often answer, ‘Meeting people’. To be in a group where love is shown, confidentiality is kept and they experience the work of God together is a new adventure for most who are there. The chatter before and after sessions is almost as important a part of the course as the more structured times for

discussion. Space should be left for this informality, and this may be helped by refreshments.

This ‘friendship evangelism’ is a very important element as Christ is present in the middle of his followers as they enjoy each other’s company.

The Video

The Video contains a mixture of teaching material, testimonies and introductory material to be used at the discretion of the leaders. Timings given below are approximate.

Introduction

A. Introducing the Course (10 minutes)

Church and course leaders and members share their experience of Saints Alive! This can be used to introduce the course to decision makers within the local church.

B. Leading the Course (10 minutes)

Four people with extensive experience in using Saints Alive! share insights which will help those preparing to lead the course. This material can be found on the website together with other material useful for course leaders (<https://saintsalivecourse.com>).

C. The Introductory Meeting (2 minutes)

Three short clips suitable for showing at the Introductory Meeting.

Session 1—Relationships Matter!

A. The Two Sons (4 minutes)

A retelling of the parable from Luke 15:11-32.

B. The Cottage (2 ½ minutes)

A short reflection on Christ's redemptive work in the lives of individuals designed to encourage course members.

Session 2—Who Is Jesus?

A. Who Is Jesus? (1 minute)

Two short reflections to encourage discussion.

B. The Message of the Cross (18 ½ minutes)

An illustrated retelling of the Passion.

Session 3—The Resurrection

A. Mary in the Garden (3 ½ minutes)

Easter morning—Mary's story from John 20:1-18.

B. The Resurrection Today (3 ½ minutes)

Personal reflections on the Resurrection.

Session 4—Who Is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit Today (5 ½ minutes)

Personal experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Session 5—Harvest Time: Fruits and Gifts

A. The Gifts of the Spirit (10 minutes)

Teaching on the gifts of the Spirit from 1 Corinthians 12.

B. Experiencing the Gifts (3 ½ minutes)

Personal experiences of using the gifts.

Session 7—Growing Up (5 minutes)

Living as a Christian beyond Saints Alive!

Session 8—Being Church (1 minute)

The impact of a loving church on one individual.

More extensive information on how to run the Saints Alive! Course is available at www.saintsalivecourse.com

Session 1

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER!

Aims:

- To meet each other.
- To put everyone at ease.
- To think about relationships—with each other and with God.

LEADING THE SESSION

In this session, establishing healthy dynamics within the group is really important from the outset. A light but firm touch is required from the leaders.

If there are a lot of people from the fringes or from right outside the church, they may need to be reassured that they are not the only ones who:

- Are feeling nervous and worried that they will be put into toe-curlingly embarrassing situations.
- Are not sure what they think about God or church or the Bible.

The content is intended to be straightforward enough to enable non-Christians to have as much to offer as those who have been Christians for years. Everyone can speak about their experience of life and relationships. At the same time, no one should be put in the position where they are forced to speak. Fear of making a fool of oneself may be very near the surface.

In this session, although we retell the story of the two sons, it is best not to ask group members to open their Bibles until the very end when talking about the Journal. Remember that some of them may be very unfamiliar with handling any book, let alone one as big and complicated as the Bible.

An introductory ice-breaker may be used but is not essential.

Decide before the session whether you are going to use ‘The Two Sons’ and/or ‘The Cottage’ from the **Video**.

Refreshments

People relax if their hands are occupied. Tea or coffee and a biscuit will always help. (See Section 2 on the pros and cons of more elaborate food.) Much depends on the social norms of the people in the group—elaborate meals may make some feel awkward while others may come straight from work and need something more substantial.

Leaders should be introducing people to each other rather than working in the kitchen!

PRESENTATION

In this manual, teaching material is in 'normal' print and notes for your guidance are in *italics*.

Prayer

A brief prayer may set the tone for the course, but often the introductions flow naturally from the refreshments and it is best to allow that to happen.

Introductions

The relationships between members of the group are very important. Even more important is the way in which the leaders are regarded—as a schoolteacher? ... friend? ... senior? ... expert? ... companion on the Way? Leaders should not give the impression that they know the answer to everything. Avoid going round the group asking each person to say something about themselves—it can be terrifying for some people.

It may be helpful to use some sort of ice-breaker, but it should not take too long. If the group mixes well, it may be unnecessary, though a good ice-breaker enables even groups who know one another to discover new things. If leaders expect group members to be open with them, then

they themselves should be vulnerable. One simple ice-breaker is to ask people to tell the group, or in a pair, how they got their name. Our names are about our identity. It is also helpful to group leaders to get people's name clearly in their minds from the outset.

Leaders should introduce themselves by giving a few facts about themselves, but it is not a time for a C.V. or a testimony. Avoid facts which some group members cannot relate to (e.g. a degree when some of the group have left school as soon as they could).

Expectations

Has anyone any expectations or feelings as the course begins? [*No one is obliged to speak.*]

This can set some boundaries—e.g., this is not a complete course on Christian theology or ethics—nor does it tussle with current political or international issues. It is a basics course to help us to explore the Christian faith, either for the first time or as a refresher. It may be important to remind folk what was said at the Introductory Meeting—e.g., no question is too basic or silly. The group will be discussing the Christian faith in a setting which is comfortable and confidential.

Human Relationships

We all have something in common which can bring the most joy or sometimes the most misery into our lives. What is it? *Answer: relationships.*

We all have a network of relationships, some with people we are close to and others with those we don't know so well. What relationships can you suggest?

Draw a sample relationship map on a big piece of paper (wallpaper is good). Put an imaginary person at the centre and draw all the relationships they might have. This is best done by one of the leaders kneeling on the floor and writing the answers that group members give.

Note that the quality of relationships may vary—not least within families. Some sisters and brothers do not get on! Work relationships may be supportive or destructive. Some relationships will be deeper or more superficial than others.

Time also matters. Lovers do not always love forever.

On another piece of paper put the personal effects of relationships.

When relationships are positive, how does it make us feel? *Take suggestions from the group but be ready to start the ball rolling.*

Members may suggest:

feeling good about ourselves
valued/supported
able to grow
more ready to launch out

When relationships are poor we may feel: *Again take suggestions from the group.*

without worth/unloved
angry

anxious/bitter
 unable to reach our full potential

Relationships can end when:

there is an almighty quarrel with anger and slammed doors
 people drift apart without realising it
 other relationships take priority
 people develop different interests
 people have different aims and priorities
 people get bored with each other

Relationship with God

The Bible and Christian experience down the centuries tell us that, amazing as it may seem, God wants a relationship with us. God created us and loves us. Totally, unconditionally. Loving relationships are at the very heart of God, whom Christians know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *(Don't get mired in a discussion about the nature of the Trinity at this point!)*

Jesus prayed to God as Father. Not everyone has a good relationship with their parents, but we all know what is involved in good parenting. What does an ideal parent give? *Suggestions from group:*

appropriate care as we grow up
 stability
 food and warmth

love/acceptance
 freedom to be ourselves

The other side to this is what we think an ideal child should give to their parents: *Again suggestions from group:*

love
 helpfulness
 trust

If children are unsure of the love of a parent, they may try to ‘buy’ their love by such things as:

slaving round the house
 over-working at school/striving to achieve
 being strangely well-behaved

or they may:

rebel against their parents
 have temper tantrums
 go their own way
 be disobedient

Neither is good. The first leads to a worried, over-conscientious person and the second to an adult who finds it difficult to trust others or make deep relationships.

Often a poor relationship with our parents—or indeed anyone who is in authority—can be one of the factors which influences the way we see God.

What Do People Think of God?

*Not necessarily how **we** think about God, which may be too personal at this point, but how do people in general think about God? Do not assume that your concept of God is the same as group members'. **Don't be critical of views expressed at this stage.***

Some people may see 'God' as:

- identified with nature
- a benevolent old-man-in-the-sky
- an autocrat who makes demands—a policeman or head teacher who keeps accounts of wrongs
- one among many—as in some polytheistic religions
- a generalised force for good
- an impersonal spirit—as in much New Age thinking
- something out there which has influence over my life—through the stars, crystals, extra-terrestrials, hexing, etc.
- non-existent
- a figment of people's imagination—for those who need a prop in life

The Bible speaks of God as a person who wants a relationship with human beings and is continually reaching out to them in love. Christians believe that Jesus shows us what God is like, but we shall be thinking a bit more about that next week.

God the Father has all that we look for in an ideal parent and much, much more.

But we can behave like children trying to earn their parents' favour by giving presents to our heavenly Father: *A sheet of paper should be*

pre-prepared with the outline of various 'presents' sketched in: write suggestions inside the outlines. There may be suggestions like, being good ... going to church ... obeying 'rules'.

Our capacity to want to do our own thing means our relationship with God can break down in very similar ways to human relationships breaking down.

Although we are talking about 'sin' it may not be helpful to use that word at this point unless all the group already have some Christian background. So many people think of sin as doing bad things rather than being about our attitude towards God.

Ask the group why our relationship with God might break down.

- perhaps we have never had a relationship with God because of our upbringing
- anger and rejection following an episode where we feel God has let us down or wasn't there when we needed him
- drifting apart from God without realising it
- other relationships become more important—Christian fellowship takes second place
- we develop different interests—the church no longer has any attraction for us
- we choose different values—in defiance of God
- boredom with God—there seems no spice in living as a Christian
- believing in God is no longer 'cool'—as for many teenagers
- life becomes busy—demanding job/young family, etc.

It might be best to leave this hanging at this point unless group members start identifying with particular reasons for a less-than-perfect relationship with God. If this happens, acknowledge their contribution and thank them for sharing.

One well-known story Jesus told speaks about God's longing to have a relationship with us.

*Either show the **Video** of the 'Session 1, A. The Two Sons' (Luke 15:11-32) or retell it in your own words.*

If there is time, encourage a general discussion on the story. You may find one or two of these questions helpful to begin:

1. Who do you identify with—father/younger brother/older brother? Why?
2. If we identify the father with God the Father, what does that tell us about God and his longing for a relationship with us?
3. Has there ever been a time when you 'came to your senses' and started to change your life around?
4. St Augustine said, 'You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.' Have you ever known that sense of restlessness, of searching for something or someone even if you don't know what/who it is?
5. The father accepted both of the brothers because they were part of his family, whatever they had, or had not, done. The Bible talks of God's love being completely certain and absolutely nothing can destroy it. Someone once said, 'God can never love you more

than he does at this moment and he can never love you less.’

Loving and Being Loved

Loving relationships make an impact on our lives. Think of falling in love with someone. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s song ‘Love Changes Everything’ encapsulates this.

Some change happens naturally. When people fall in love, those around them notice the change. Knowing you are loved makes you feel better about yourself. You want to do things to show your love for the other person. You think about what the other person feels or needs. But as the relationship grows, some changes have to be worked at because none of us is perfect and the broken or damaged parts of our lives can annoy or hurt the other person. It may be as silly as who puts the rubbish out at night! In a truly loving relationship people grow and fulfil more of their potential.

Jesus said, ‘My purpose is to give [you] a rich and satisfying life’ (John 10:10). Because God loves us he wants us to be more and more the people he created us to be.

Our prayer is that during the course each of us will grow in our relationship with God, whether we have been a Christian for years or whether at this point we are not even sure that God exists. He will work in each one of us differently because each one of us is unique. Each of us is at a different stage of our lives and our Christian journey.

For each of us this will mean change. Change is not something we need to be frightened about, for this is change for the better. Change is part of life and what doesn’t change is dead. If you are alive you change!

We finish our session with a short time when we can be still and meditate—you can close your eyes if you want:

*The verbal picture below is on the **Video** ‘Session 1, B. The Cottage’ or can be used by one of the leaders to draw together what has been said.*

Think of a beautiful cottage that has become derelict. The garden is overgrown, the floorboards are rotten, there are holes in the roof (*pause to let the group visualise the cottage*). It was designed to be perfect—a thing of beauty and an ideal home, but now it is broken down and in need of thorough restoration.

Someone comes along who sees the cottage, knows how it was meant to be and buys it. He then sets about restoring it to its former glory. Unlike most of us, he is not an enthusiastic amateur but an experienced expert who knows exactly what he is doing. He sets about his work of restoration in precisely the right way for that particular cottage. Some jobs are obvious and anyone looking at the cottage can see what he is doing. Others are less obvious but nevertheless essential. He does not give up until the work is complete.

(Application)

The Bible says that ‘God bought you with a high price’ (1 Corinthians 6:20) and in Christ we are being re-created to be like him. God knows us and

loves us as individuals, and he sees all our potential. Although sometimes his work in our lives may seem drastic—like taking up the rotten floorboards!—he knows precisely what he is doing, and we can trust him not to do more in our lives at any one time than the structure can take—the house is not going to collapse.

There will be times as Christians when it is obvious what God is doing in our lives and times when, though work is still going on, it will be less obvious. He will not give up on us until his work is complete. Therefore, we need not be frightened of change, because God knows what he is doing.

Neither do we need to be dismayed if at times he seems to be more obviously at work in someone else than he is in us.

Jesus came to show us that the Father's love does not have to be earned but is free—he loves us just as we are, and he longs to forgive us and put right the break in relationships.

More about that next week.

Conclude with a short prayer thanking God that he loves us and wants a relationship with us.

Introduce the Journals

Make sure everyone has got a book. (These should have been given out at the Introductory Meeting but some of the group may have missed this.)

Take them to Week 1 and show them the three sections:

- *An outline of this session and space to make their own notes*
- *Chunk Reading*
- *Daily Bible Readings*

This pattern is followed every week.

Show them the Introduction where there is an explanation of how to find passages in the Bible and different ways to pray. (This is important even for church members, fewer of whom read the Bible at home than you may imagine.)

Explain that during the course we will read Mark's gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letter to the Philippians in 'chunks'. This is not as daunting as it sounds as the chunks will never take longer than thirty minutes to read. But some people may prefer to listen to the Chunk Readings on a CD or on the internet. The YouVersion app has an audio function. Encourage them, if they do nothing else this week, to read or listen to Mark chapters 1 to 8 because we shall be talking about what we have read in the next session.

Assure the group that the Journal is for their personal use. No one will ever ask to see it, let alone mark it!

Refreshments

It might be worth offering further refreshments as it gives anyone who wants to an excuse to hang around and talk further or ask questions they daren't ask in the group.

Send them on their way and say you look forward to seeing them next week.

PARTICIPANT'S JOURNAL

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LIVING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT TODAY
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DAVID  COOK™
transforming lives together

SESSION 1

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Summary of the Session

In this first session you will have had the opportunity, if you have not done so before, to meet your leaders and fellow group members. Perhaps you would like to jot down any of their names that you can remember to help you next time you meet. Most will be feeling a mixture of anticipation and anxiety as the course begins. Why not pray for them?

Your group leaders will have reminded you of some of the things said at the Introductory Meeting, especially:

- No prior knowledge is expected. No contribution will be thought silly. Please do ask questions.
- You don't have to say anything unless you want to.
- Please keep personal things shared within the group confidential.

Relationships

We all have a network of relationships, some with people we are close to and others with those we don't know so well. These can bring us both joy and pain.

The quality of our relationships varies—not least within families. Some sisters and brothers get on well, but others don't! Work relationships may be supportive or destructive. Some relationships will be deeper or more superficial than others.

Time also matters. Lovers do not always love forever.

When relationships are positive we probably feel:

- good about ourselves;
- valued/supported;
- able to grow and try new things.

When relationships are poor we may feel:

- without worth/unloved;
- angry;
- anxious/bitter;
- unable to reach our full potential.

Relationships can end when:

- there is an almighty quarrel with anger and slammed doors;
- people drift apart without realising it;
- other relationships take priority;
- people develop different interests;
- people have different aims and priorities;
- people get bored with each other.

A Relationship with God

The Bible and Christian experience down the centuries tells us that, amazing as it may seem, God wants a relationship with us. God created us and loves us. Loving relationships are at the very heart of God, whom Christians know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus prayed to God as Father. Not everyone has a good relationship with their parents, but we all know what is involved in good parenting. For example: appropriate care as we grow up; stability; food and warmth; love; discipline and forgiveness; freedom to grow and be ourselves.

The other side to this is what we think an ideal child should give to their parents. For example: love, helpfulness, trust.

If children are unsure of the love of a parent they may try to 'buy' their love by

- slaving round the house;
- over-working at school;

- being strangely well-behaved,

or they rebel against their parents and

- have temper tantrums;
- go their own way;
- are deliberately disobedient.

Neither is good. The first leads to a worried, over-conscientious person and the second to an adult who finds it difficult to trust others or make deep relationships.

Often a poor relationship with our parents can be one of the factors that influences the way we see God.

How Do People Think of God?

Some people may see 'God' as

- identified with creation;
- a benevolent old-man-in-the-sky;
- an autocrat who makes demands—a policeman or head teacher who keeps accounts of wrongs;
- one among many—as in some religions;
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- 'something out there that has influence over my life'—through the stars, crystals, extra-terrestrials, hexing, etc.;

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The Bible speaks of God as a person who wants a relationship with human beings and is continually reaching out to them in love. Christians believe that Jesus shows us what God is like. We shall be thinking a bit more about that next week.

God the Father has all that we look for in an ideal parent and much, much more. But we can behave like children trying to earn their parents' favour by giving presents to our heavenly Father, e.g., going to church or living a 'good' life.

Our capacity to want to do our own thing means our relationship with God breaks down in very similar ways to human relationships breaking down:

- Perhaps we have never had a relationship with God because of our upbringing.
- An episode where we feel God has let us down or wasn't there when we needed him leads to anger and rejection.
- We drift apart from God without realising it.
- Other relationships become more important—Christian fellowship takes second place.
- We develop different interests—the church no longer has any attraction for us.
- We choose different values—in defiance of God.

- We feel bored with God—there seems no spice in living as a Christian.
- Believing in God is no longer ‘cool’—as for many teenagers.
- Life becomes busy—demanding job/young family, etc.

Jesus told a well-known story that speaks about God’s longing to have a relationship with us. You can read the story of *The Two Sons* in Luke 15:11-24. The video script of *The Two Sons* can be found on page 150 at the back of this Journal.

Your group leaders may have asked some or all of these questions about this story:

1. Who do you identify with—the loving father, the younger brother, who has come to his senses, or the resentful older brother?
2. If we identify the father with God the Father, what does that tell us about God and his relationship with us?
3. Has there ever been a time when you ‘came to your senses’ and started to change your life around?
4. St Augustine said, ‘You [God] have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you’. Have you ever known that sense of restlessness, of searching for something or someone even if you don’t know what/who it is?
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done. The Bible talks of God's love being completely certain and absolutely unconditional.

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Jesus said, 'My purpose is to give [you] a rich and satisfying life' (John 10:10). Because God loves us, he wants us to be more and more the people he created us to be.

The prayer of the leaders is that during the course each person (including the leaders) will grow in their relationship with God, whether you have been a Christian for years or whether at this point you are not even sure that God exists. He will work in each one of us differently because each one of us is unique. Each of us is at a different stage of our lives and in our Christian journey. But for each of us, this will mean change. Change is not something we need to be frightened about, for this is change for the better.

Change is part of life, and what doesn't change is dead. If you are alive, you change!

At the end of the session you will probably have taken part in a short meditation about a cottage. You can find the script on page 152 at the end of this Journal.

Thinking Back over This Session

If you would like to, jot down here any thoughts or questions you have about this week's session:

CHUNK READING

In church we often read only short passages from the Bible, though its contents were not written to be read in that way. An important part of Saints Alive! is the Chunk Reading, which allows us to see the bigger picture. If you prefer to listen to rather than read these passages, then the YouVersion app, which we recommend, has an audio option so you can listen to passages from the New Living Translation. None of the Chunks we recommend should take longer than thirty minutes to read.

The first four books in the New Testament are known as Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They all tell the story of the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus. They are not biographies or histories as we understand them today. They don't set out to tell us everything there is to know about Jesus, though scholarly research has shown that they are historically reliable. They were written to pass on the story of Jesus so that the first Christians could be strengthened and grow in their faith and so that enquirers could discover for themselves who Jesus is and what he taught.

Matthew, Mark and Luke have much material in common with one another. John's approach and style of writing is rather different. Mark is the shortest of the Gospels, and many people think it was the first to be written. We have chosen to begin our Chunk Reading with Mark. Some of the daily readings will help you dip into the other Gospels and different parts of the Bible.

This week's Chunk is Mark Chapters 1-8.

Try to read it through, or listen to it, in one sitting. Have two questions in your mind as you do so:

- What sort of person was Jesus?
- What kind of things did he do?

You might like to jot down or draw some of your thoughts in this space as we shall be thinking about these questions in Session 2. (Don't worry though, no one will put you on the spot to give an answer!)

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need. (Luke 12:31)

Day 1

The Bible tells us that God loves each one of us and that he wants us to know him and trust him as the very best of Fathers. Jesus came to show us what God is like and to make it possible for us to know him and experience his love.

Read what John says about Jesus in **John 1:10-14**. What strikes you about these few verses?

Spend a few minutes thanking God for his love and asking that you may come to know him better.

Day 2

Jesus spent much of his time with the ordinary people who often felt that God didn't love or care about them. Indeed, some of the religious leaders looked down on them and criticised them and called them sinners. In the first session we thought about the story of The Two Sons in Luke's gospel. Jesus told two more stories about things that were lost in

Luke 15:3-10. How do you think the ordinary people would have felt when they heard him tell these stories?

How do you think God feels about you?

Day 3

John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus by his preaching and by baptising people in the river Jordan. One day John pointed out Jesus to two of his followers, who followed Jesus wanting to find out more. You can read about this in **John 1:35-39**. Jesus invited them to 'Come and see'. It was the beginning of a big adventure for those first disciples of Jesus. Being on the Saints Alive! course is an opportunity to come and discover more about Jesus for ourselves.

Are you just at the beginning of your journey, or have you been following him for some time? How do you feel about his invitation to 'come and see'?

Day 4

Zacchaeus was someone who was curious about Jesus. He had heard about him, and when Jesus came to town he wanted to see him. He went to extraordinary lengths to do so. You can read his story in **Luke 19:1-10**. What things strike you as important about this story?

Day 5

Another story Jesus tells is of two sisters who were friends of Jesus. Their names were Martha and Mary. You can read their story in **Luke 10:38-48**. Most of us have more than a little sympathy with Martha. Our lives tend to be very full of things we need to do. (Or things we *think* we need to do!) Why do you think that Jesus says to Martha that her sister has made the right choice?

Is God saying anything to you through this story about the choices you make?

Day 6

Today we are going to delve into the middle of the Old Testament and look at **Psalm 63:1-8**. It speaks of one person's longing for God. Can you identify with the writer? Can you echo his words? Try saying the verses through again as if you are saying them to God.

Perhaps you could write a psalm or prayer expressing your longing for God. Or perhaps you want to say to God that you don't feel like the psalmist.

Day 7

One of the best known passages in the Bible is **Psalm 23**. It may have been written by David, who was a shepherd before he became King of Israel. It speaks of God's provision, guidance and protection. Are there ways in which this psalm speaks to you? Can you think of a time when you felt that God provided in some way for your needs?

Or guided you in a decision you had to make? Or protected you in some way, even if at the time you did not realise it might be God?

Pray today for the next group meeting and for all who will be there, that everyone will grow in their understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

Journal Pages

*Lord Jesus, I don't know much about
you, but I am willing to learn;
and I am ready to give all that I know
of myself to all that I know of you;
and I am willing to go on learning.*

Donald Coggan

Journal Pages

*Almighty God,
give us the wisdom to perceive you,
intellect to understand you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit of
our Lord Jesus Christ.*

St Benedict (480-543)

Journal Pages

THE BEATITUDES

*God blesses those who are poor and realize
their need for him,*

for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble,

for they will inherit the whole earth.

*God blesses those who hunger and thirst
for justice,*

for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

*God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.*

God blesses those who work for peace,

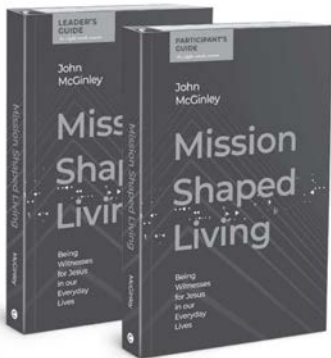
for they will be called the children of God.

*God blesses those who are persecuted for
doing right,*

for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

(Matthew 5:3-10)

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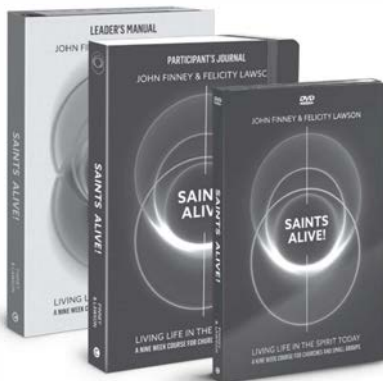
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