

An aerial photograph of the Illawarra coastline, showing a mix of residential buildings, green hills, and a harbor filled with sailboats. A white rectangular box is superimposed over the upper half of the image, containing the text 'LOVE FOR THE ILLAWARRA THE GOSPEL OF JOHN'.

LOVE

FOR THE
ILLAWARRA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LIFEGROUP STUDIES

LOVE FOR THE ILLAWARRA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LIFEGROUP STUDY - PART A (WEEKS 1-5)

Term 1 for 2025 will see Figtree Anglican Church studying John's gospel together. We will do this in two parts. Part A will survey chapters 1-12 as we are introduced to Jesus, God's son who teaches about God's love. We will see how the love of God is central to the forming of God's family.

In Part B (chapters 13-21) we will take on a companion reader, David Mansfield's book *About Love*. This will provide insight to our reading and teaching of the gospel as well as providing some questions for discussion. *About Love* explores chapters 13-21 of John's gospel, observing what it is to be 'Loved by Jesus, the king of community', and 'Loving like Jesus, in the community of the King.'

Expect to see how God's love shapes his community! In 2025, we will partner with many other churches in our region for the 'Hope for the Illawarra' movement; simultaneously we hope to see in this series God's love for the Illawarra.

Useful resources:

The Gospel According to John by D.A. Carson

John by Andreas J. Köstenberger

About Love by David Mansfield
(Available to purchase at Figtree Anglican Church)

STUDY 1

JOHN 1:1-18

A warm up: If God's love was on display in a local community, what would you expect to find?

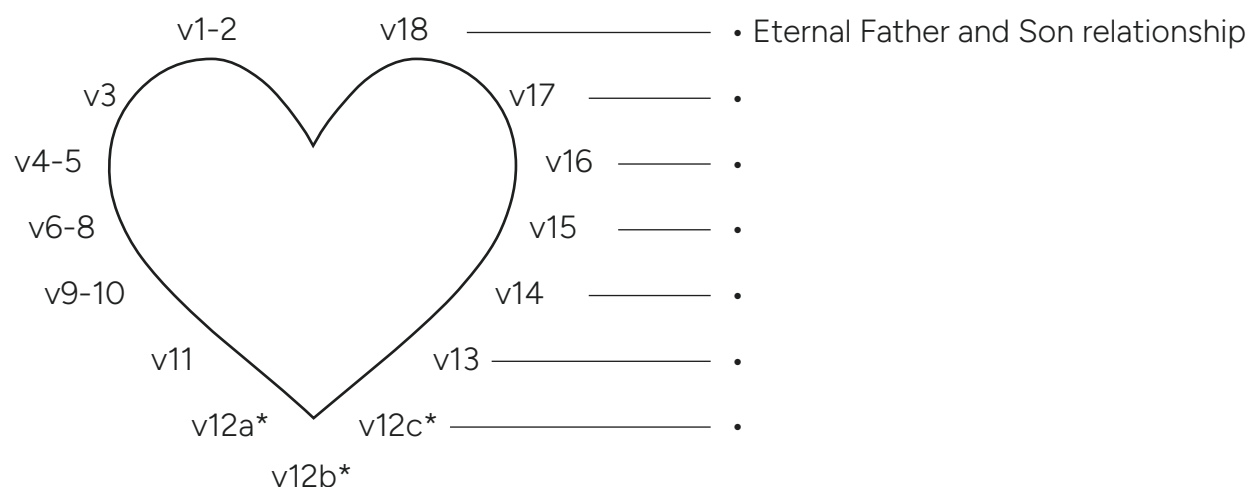
"God is love" declares John (1 John 4:8), the apostle that Jesus loved. In his Gospel, or testimony to the life of Jesus, John gives us a picture of God's love by introducing us to God's son Jesus. In his writing there are several themes all driven by the love of God.

The prologue of John's gospel (John 1:1-18) introduces all the major themes of the book. As is so often customary in the bible, John

employs a chiasm, a mirror like technique of writing designed to reinforce themes, and point to a central climactic point of focus. The verse notes in the lines below tend to mirror and/or complement one another.

Let's introduce ourselves to the book, and John's idea of love by studying the reflected themes in the verses below, attempting summaries of the themes alongside the mirrored verses. E.g. v1-2 are mirrored by v18 and the theme is an eternal Father and Son relationship.

Theme:



*the word order of verse 12 is a little mixed up in the NIV English translation. It makes for smoother reading, but loses the pattern. Verse 12 reads in the original language:

a: Yet to all who did receive him, **b:** he gave the right to become the children of God
c: those who believed in his name.

STUDY 1

2. Verse 12 Introduces is the focal point of John's prologue. Why do you think this is the focal point of the structure? (Compare with John 20:30-31). What is the relationship between Jesus and the formation of community?
3. The themes you have noted above give some shape and character to God's love as seen in John. What further comments or questions do you have about the shape of God's love so far?
4. Considering the themes you have encountered; how might you expect God's love to make a difference in your world?

STUDY 2

JOHN 2:13-23

1. Write your own acrostic poem for Love, e.g.:

Labour **L**_____

Overwhelming **O**_____

Vigilant **V**_____

Emotional **E**_____

Share and discuss some of the words you have used.

2. "John 2:13-25 is a love story". Read the passage and then discuss your feelings about this statement.
3. a. At first glance, what do you think is the catalyst for Jesus' strong reaction in this event?
- b. Are you surprised/unsurprised that Jesus might act forcefully? Why or why not?
- c. How would you explain this as an account of Jesus being God's love in this community?
4. Take note of the verses that bookend this story (v13-23). What is the season that John wants us to take note of as we read? What themes come with this?

5. Read John 1:6-8,15, 29-30, and 35-36. Consider how Jesus has been introduced. Why might this be highly relevant to Jesus' place in the temple story?
6. How might Jesus' reaction to the sacrificial animals for sale reinforce the main thrust of John's gospel? (Recall John 1:12)
7. What sign does Jesus offer that he is the authority and which people can come, meet, and indeed pray to God?
8. Reflect on what we have seen so far, along with the closing comments of v23-25. What expectations could we have for true love to be among people? What is needed?

STUDY 3

JOHN 5:31-47

*Archaeology is the search for fact, not truth.
If it's truth you're interested in, Dr. Tyree's
Philosophy class is right down the hall.*

- Indiana Jones

Discuss Dr Jones' statement.

Read John 5:31-47

1. There seems to be some key elements for truth communicating according to Jesus (v31-35). What key elements do you observe from these verses?
2. Jesus notes the strongest witnesses he has to his identity. What things does he point to? (v36-40)
3. How do you think Jesus arrives at the conclusion that the Jewish leaders 'do not have the love of God in your heart' (v42)?
4. a. What seems to be blocking these leaders from receiving Jesus and the testimony about Him? (v39-44)
 - b. Who is the object of their love?
5. a. How do you understand that their 'accuser is Moses' (v45)?
 - b. What might this reveal?
6. What is the effect on love when truth is absent? Where have you seen this?
7. What is the effect on truth when love is absent? Where have you seen this?
8. When Jesus is brought into a community, how might his love and truth shape that community?

STUDY 4

JOHN 10:1-21

Read **John 10:1-10** and then complete the following bios:

Name (v1):

Distinguishing style (v1):

Sheep reaction (v5):

Mission (v10):

Name (v2):

Distinguishing style (v2):

Sheep reaction (v3-4):

Mission (v3,9):

1. Consider the distinguishing style of the two figures above. What does Jesus mean when he says, 'I am the gate'? (v7)
2. What does Jesus want the Pharisees to understand?
3. What are the implications of Jesus' discrimination here for us today?

Read **John 10:11-18** and then complete the following bios:

Name (v11):

Distinguishing style (v11,15):

Sheep/shepherd relationship (v14,16):

Mission (v15-16):

Name (v12):

Distinguishing style (v12-13):

Sheep/shepherd relationship (v12-13):

Mission (v13):

4. Consider what Jesus wants the Pharisees to learn about him from the following now:
 - a. "I am the good shepherd" v11,14
 - b. What drives Jesus to fulfill his role?
 - c. Who are the 'other sheep that are not of this pen' (v16). What does Jesus demonstrate to the Pharisees with this statement?
5. a. What do the themes of surrender, sacrifice, courage, care, and seeking teach us about the kind of shepherd Jesus esteems?
 - b. Where have you seen this, where have you seen it lacking? What could you do?

STUDY 5

JOHN 11:1-37

Outside of the Bible, what is your favourite love song or story? What makes it so appealing?

Read John 11:1-37

1. Jesus' feelings for Lazarus are named three times (v3, 5, 36).
 - a. How does Jesus feel about Lazarus?
 - b. Who tells you? What is their perspective?
 - c. What do you think this does to shape the story?

Now stand in the shoes of others:

2. Standing in the shoes of Mary and Martha:
 - a. What surprises you about how Jesus shows his love?
 - b. What have you learnt about how Jesus loves?
3. Standing in the shoes of the Jews:
 - a. What surprises you about how Jesus shows his love?

- b. What have you learnt about how Jesus loves?

4. Led by the narrator:
 - a. Are there some actions of Jesus that are surprising?
 - b. What do you suppose the narrator is trying to help us see about Jesus' love?
5. What might we remind ourselves when God's love and perhaps his actions are hard to understand?

LOVE FOR THE ILLAWARRA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LIFEGROUP STUDY - PART B (WEEKS 6-14)

STUDY 6: THE SERVANT KING WHO RULES WITH A TOWEL

JOHN 13

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What has been a highlight for you in John's gospel so far? | 5. What might be some of the 21st Century equivalents of Jesus washing his disciples' feet? |
| 2. We have come to a shift in the Gospel of John. The last 12 chapters covered around 3 years; you will note the three Passover occasions. (Chapter 2, 6, 12-13). As a group create a story board of what you recall happening so far. | 6. What range of emotions might you have felt if you had inclined at that Last Supper table with Jesus? |
| 3. Once you have done this, go back to your work on chapter 1:1-18. Which of the themes you identified do you see in your story board? | 7. Which of the people who Jesus loved as his own (John 13:1), that we read about in John chapters 1-12, do you identify with the most and why? |

Now Read John 13:1-17

4. In just a sentence, what do you think this passage has to say about:*

Love

Forgiveness

Service

Trust

*The following is adapted with permission from *About Love* by David Mansfield.

STUDY 7: THE BROTHER KING WHO BRINGS US HOME SAFELY

JOHN 14

Reflection: What are the things that you are conscious of that make you ill at ease or trouble you deeply?

Read John 14:1-10

1. 'Believe also in me.' – Jesus.
 - a. What does Jesus reveal about his person and work in these verses?
 - b. What makes you confident that you can believe in him based on what has been said here?

Think: I was behind a lady in a queue and noticed a tattoo on her arm that read Harsh World. What is it about the world in which we live that makes us hungry for heaven?

Consider: Does the Christian vision of heaven sound too good to be true? Does that make it untrue? What makes it true?

2.
 - a. What do these verses tell us about our heavenly home?
 - b. Think again, what notable things about our heavenly home are omitted here?

Read John 14:11-14

3.
 - a. What might these greater things be? Think about what changes for the people of God after Jesus returns to the Father.
 - b. How is a of life discipleship for us today greater than that of those who walked alongside Jesus when he was teaching these words? (Think: what are the next major moves of God following Jesus' ascension?)

STUDY 8: THE LOVING KING WHO CALLS US HIS FRIENDS

JOHN 15

Think about it: What range of responses are evoked in you by the idea that Jesus calls his disciples, friends?

Read John 15:1-4

1. How significant is the absence of Judas to Jesus teaching in this chapter of John's Gospel?
2. How can Jesus' warning to Peter in John 13:36-38 be understood considering Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-4?
3. What can we learn as disciples of Jesus when we think of the pitfalls of both Judas and Peter?
4. What are the features of John 15 that define followers of Jesus and assure us of Jesus' friendship?
5. Jesus is our Friend, and God is our loving Father. Jesus promises that God prunes.
 - a. Describe what you think it means for God to be pruning you.
 - b. How is this sometimes painful process an expression of God's love for us?
6. How might God's expression of love influence our friendship with one another?

STUDY 9: THE WARRIOR KING WHO PREPARES US FOR BATTLE

JOHN 15-16

What do you think lies at the heart of the opposition towards Christianity, not just in our generation, but throughout history?

Read John 15:18-16:4

1. What does Jesus have to say about conflict, and the expectations of those who follow him?
2. In this context, what significance do you draw from Jesus referring to the Holy Spirit as 'the advocate?' (v26)?
3. What do you think causes some Christians to struggle with being unliked?

What's your opinion:

Is the current antagonism towards biblical Christianity warranted?

Read John 16:5-11

4. When the Holy Spirit, the advocate comes, what kind convictions will he bring upon people?
5. How can we see evidence of the Spirit in someone?

What can we do?

How should we as Christians respond to this rising tide of antagonism? What can we do personally, and collectively, in our local church communities? Try and come up with at least three practical ideas.

Read John 16:12-15

6. What do these verses suggest is the mark of Spiritual speech?
7. Is there ever a time to back off from God's truth? Why / why not – Is your answer spiritual or fleshly?

STUDY 10: THE PRAYERFUL KING WHO LEADS ON HIS KNEES

JOHN 17

Who have been some of the most helpful examples and models of prayer?

Read John 17:1-5

1. To whom does Jesus pray?
2. For what does Jesus pray?
3. How do you explain God praying to God?
4. Is praying according to your will or your will be done a lack of faith or an expression of faith?

Read John 17:6-19

5. What does Jesus pray for his first disciples? What is important to him?
6. How might the prayers of Jesus influence your own patterns of prayer?
7. What are some of the prayers of the Bible that have been most significant and helpful for you?

Read John 17:20-26

8. Who is Jesus praying for?
9. Why do you think he prays this prayer?
10. What does he ask his Father for?
11. How does Jesus demonstrate his love in his prayer life?
12. How can we demonstrate love in our prayer life?

STUDY 11: THE STEADFAST KING WHO STANDS FIRM IN THE FACE OF BETRAYAL

JOHN 18

What are some of the paradoxes of Christianity that you have learnt to live with and how have you managed this?

Read John 18:1-11

1. What observations do you make about Jesus' arrest? Who is in control?

Read John 18:15-18 and John 18:25-27

2. How do you think Peter's failures on this morning will have ultimately made him a better leader?

How have failures in your own life helped to spur you on to be more faithful in your relationship with Jesus and other significant people in your life?

Read John 18:12-14 and 18:19-24

3. What values do you think drive Annas? How do these differ to Jesus? Have you ever seen a set of values become an obstacle to truth seeking?
 - a. Can you think of a time when this seemed noble?

Read John 18:28 – 19:7

4. Why should Pilate, of all leaders whose character was tested that day, have stood up for Jesus?



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4-10 Gibsons Rd, Figtree, NSW
connect@figtree.church | 02 4272 1322 | figtree.church



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