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FBC Arlington
Easter 2023

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A Plan for First Baptist Arlington

2023

BIBLICAL CONTEXT: The Gospel of John

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

-John 20:30-31

EASTER 2023

February 22 – April 15, 2023

Your Story: Why Does It Matter?

Core Text: John 1:9-13

Each of us has a story. We all are living real lives in real time. Our lives actually matter. Our stories matter. Life is lived in the everyday. That is where meaning is discovered and manifested. This Easter Season, we invite you to consider your story ----- and enter into The Big Story.

We will use John's Gospel to assist us in this journey. We will explore some of the profound conversations between Jesus and various characters in the Gospel. We will ask God to guide us to "enter into" these conversations as participants and not mere bystanders.

So, think about it --- what if you had been present when Jesus and Nicodemus met that fateful night? Why did Jesus respond to Nicodemus with a treatise of new birth? What did He mean by "being born of water and the Spirit?" What questions do you have for Jesus? Are you at a place where you also would approach Jesus "at night" because your issue is so private?

What about the miracle at the wedding at Cana? The family hosting the wedding was desperate. Have you ever sensed "desperation" in your own marriage? Do you know of

someone else who is experiencing a desperate moment in theirs? Would you bring it to Jesus just like Mary in the story in John 2 brought the situation to her Son's attention?

Here is a lengthy quote from N.T. Wright's insights on this type of Scripture reading where we learn to read, prepare ourselves to hear God's message to us, and listen attentively:

I said before that the conversations between Jesus and various people in John's gospel—much fuller and more wide-ranging than any conversations in the other three gospels—give us a strong sense of what Jesus was like as a person, as a friend, as someone you could talk to, even though he might frequently switch tracks and answer the question you *should* have asked instead of the one you actually did. And I've said that reading these stories encourages us to treat him like that in real life too. Jesus is alive and real. When he calls his followers "friends" in John 15 and elsewhere, he clearly intends that circle of friends to grow, to include us today.

But suggesting that we could have conversations with Jesus *rather like* those conversations in the gospel only goes so far. What if we could actually become part of those conversations? Supposing we join in?

Many readers will be familiar with this idea. Some, in fact, may have learned it as a way of reading the gospels before they began to read them any other way. But it bears repeating, because others may not have heard of it, and even those who have may value a reminder.

It's all about bringing prayer and scripture reading together in a fresh way. When you read the Bible you ought, in any case, to be laying yourself open to whatever God wants to say to you. But this requires that you go on the initiative. You pray for God's Spirit to guide you. You take, shall we say, that remarkable story of Jesus and Nicodemus and, in prayer, you say to Jesus, "D'you mind if come in on this?" Nicodemus may be surprised; but if Jesus is happy (which he will be), Nicodemus has no cause for complaint.

So you join the conversation. This is the point where the line between prayer and imagination become thin to a vanishing point. "And yes, I know that imagination can then take over and lead you into mere fantasy. That's always a danger. But the imagination too is a gift from God to be used prayerfully.) So you listen, respectfully, as Nicodemus asks Jesus his opening question and Jesus replies to a different one. This happens a lot with Jesus, but you learn to go with it. He cuts to the heart of it: being born from above is what counts in God's kingdom. Nicodemus has obvious questions: How can an old person be born again? Jesus responds, talking about water and Spirit. More questions, more answers. Then, before it gets any more complicated, they both pause for breath. Now it's your turn. What do you have on your heart and mind as you listened to what's been said so far?

. . . But there's no reason to confine yourself to things Nicodemus and Jesus were talking about. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, presumably because he didn't want to be seen. What is there about your life—and what is there about Jesus!—that might make *you* want to come to him secretly, without anybody knowing? What would you really want to ask him about? Jesus isn't fussy about the time of day. Come in the dark if that's what you need to do.

-N.T. Wright, *Broken Signposts*, pp. 133-135

So, here we go. Let's lead our people to reflect upon their own faith journey --- *their story*. Past, present, and future. What has happened so far? What is happening right now in their relationship with Jesus? What do they need to do? What do they need to know? How do they connect *their story* with *The Grand Story of Redemption*?

Each Sunday we will explore a significant conversation or encounter in John's Gospel. We will learn what happened between Jesus and these characters. What does Jesus reveal about Himself? What did the characters in the story learn about Jesus? What did they miss? What are we learning? How can we "enter into" the story and connect our story to it?

EASTER 2023

February 22 – April 15, 2023

Your Story: Why Does It Matter?

Core Text: John 1:9-13

Ash Wednesday 2023:

The Big Story

John 1:1-18

We begin our Easter journey by setting the context. God has answered the deepest need of humanity by sending His Son to answer the darkness of this world with the brilliant light of His glory. We join our lives to Him and we are written into the script of the Greatest Story of all.

Daily Bible Readings

February 22:	John 1:1-18
February 23:	John 1:19-34
February 24:	John 1:35-50
February 25:	Reflection

February 26, 2023:

Wedding Planning!

John 2:1-12

Weddings are great celebrations in most every culture. However, they can be very stressful. So much planning goes into these special events. Sometimes things go awry! However, it turns out, *marriages* are much more than weddings! The family in this story faced a desperate moment in their wedding. Many couples can identify with this experience. Even more couples can identify with desperate moments in their *marriages*. We will watch and see how Jesus responds to this couples' needs ---- and then reflect on how Jesus can respond to the moments of desperation in our marriages.

Daily Bible Readings

February 27:	John 2:1-12
February 28:	John 2:13-25
March 1:	John 3:1-15
March 2:	John 3:16-21
March 3:	John 3:22-36
March 4:	Reflection

March 5, 2023: ***How Can This Be?***

John 3:1-21

Nicodemus had some questions. He was looking for answers. Finally, “at night” he came to Jesus to get some insight. Jesus gave him more than he could have ever imagined! Jesus offered insight to Nicodemus that has enlightened billions of people since that fateful conversation! What do you need to know from Jesus? What is troubling you? What is your ---- “How can this be? ---- issue? Do what Nicodemus did. Come to Jesus. Even if you need to come “at night” as well.

Daily Bible Readings

March 6:	John 4:1-26
March 7:	John 4:27-42
March 8:	John 4:43-54
March 9:	John 5:1-15
March 10:	John 5:16-30
March 11:	Reflection

March 12, 2023: ***The Past is . . . Past!***

John 4:1-42

Everyone has a past. For some folks, the past is really hard to overcome. Our present circumstances are often the result of past decisions. However, Jesus can enter into our lives and bring healing and hope. He can redeem our past, restore us, re-frame our present, and bring hope for our future. The woman at the well had a past. We don't know all the details. She may have been more victimized than we might first realize. Regardless, she felt a certain level of “imprisonment” because of what had happened to her. Jesus brought healing and hope to her. What about you? What does He need to redeem in your life? How can He re-frame your present circumstances? He can bring hope into the midst of hopeless situations.

Daily Bible Readings

March 13:	John 6:1-15
March 14:	John 6:16-24
March 15:	John 6:25-40
March 16:	John 6:41-59
March 17:	John 6:60-71
March 18:	Reflection

March 19, 2023: ***The Great Physician***

John 5:1-14

As the story in John’s account unfolds, Jesus reveals more and more about Himself. He is God in the flesh. He is providing signs along the way that point to His glory and demonstrate His authority. He is manifesting the Kingdom of God in unprecedented ways. His power is real and personal. At the pool of Bethesda, he demonstrated His power to heal and restore a hopeless paralytic. As we enter into this story, we may need to acknowledge the need for healing in our own lives. Jesus is still the Great Physician. He heals ----- physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually, and holistically. Who needs His healing touch today in your life?

Daily Bible Readings

March 20:	John 7:1-24
March 21:	John 7:25-52
March 22:	John 8:1-30
March 23:	John 8:31-59
March 24:	John 9
March 25:	Reflection

March 26, 2023: ***The Great Provider***

John 6:1-15

What happens when you need a miracle? The disciples knew they could not possibly feed the crowd that had followed Jesus. They felt responsible but overwhelmed with the need. Sometimes we find ourselves in a similar position. We have an overwhelming need and limited resources. Jesus is never limited in resources! His power to provide in miraculous ways is not limited to the New Testament era. He is alive today and He still provides for His children!

Daily Bible Readings

March 27:	John 10
March 28:	John 11
March 29:	John 12
March 30:	John 13
March 31:	John 14
April 1:	Reflection

April 2, 2023: ***What Can You Give?***

John 12:1-11

Mary seized a moment in this story and gave something precious to Jesus. She broke open the alabaster vial and poured the sweet perfume on his feet. This act of grace and generosity filled the house with a beautiful aroma. Generosity does that. It is beautiful and contagious. As we reflect on all that Jesus does for us, sometimes we need to pause and ask --- What can I give to Him? What might you offer to Jesus today?

Daily Bible Readings

Holy Monday:	John 15
Holy Tuesday:	John 16
Holy Wednesday:	John 17
Maunday Thursday:	John 18
Good Friday:	John 19
Holy Saturday:	Reflection

Easter Sunday, 2023: *He is Risen!*

John 20

It is Easter Sunday! He is Risen! He is risen indeed! The resurrection of Jesus Christ changes . . . *everything!* Let's join with the disciples today at the empty tomb and rejoice! We serve a risen Savior! He is in the world today. He is in your life and mine! Hallelujah!

Daily Bible Readings

April 10:	John 20
April 11	John 21
April 12:	John 1:1-18
April 13:	John 3:1-21
April 14:	John 14
April 15:	Reflection