



# Leaping Together!

reshuā lōderuel:

**Connect Bible Study Questions**  
**Lent 2/March 2024**  
**(3-30 March)**

## Introduction

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2024 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. The following discussion questions adapt our theme for small Connect Bible study groups or for individual discipleship and we have additional resources in our monthly resource packs for daily and deeper reflection (check out this month's: [here](#)).

Each weekly session has questions and thoughts which correspond with our Daily Worship and Sunday Live topics. Our hope is you can use these Connect sessions as best fits your situation and discussions, so as presented or as your conversations lead with all the freedom to pick and adapt as you need. We love to hear how or indeed if, these materials are helping you grow in your faith and walk with Jesus, so please let us know!

## Theme

Welcome to our Connect Bible questions for March 2024! It takes us through the second part of Lent and runs from Sunday 3 March to Saturday 30 March.

Our word for Lent this leap year is: 'Leap'! So far we have been reflecting on what it means to leap with God — to leap into prayer, to leap into the Bible, and to leap into action. The phrase a 'leap of faith' is often seen as desperate dash, a last ditch attempt, "It will take a leap of faith..." But the leaps of faith we take in our discipleship are often more like the practiced leaps of an athlete, or an enthusiastic child playfully pushing themselves. Learning to trust and grow as we leap further, not out of desperation but out of love for God and God's world, living lives of compassion.

Like sportspeople competing in a competition or children playing a game we don't leap alone, we rely on the support of others. An individual gold medalist doesn't get over the line on their own — there are whole teams getting them there.

The work we do helping build God's kingdom through kindness, generosity and love takes leaps of faith as we learn to 'back ourselves' and back others, to grow ever more into the wonderful people God created us all to be. But, however rewarding, this can be hard work! As with all leaps, there will be falls, there will be crashes but as Christians we are not asked to leap alone. We are intended for community, to support one another as we leap through the air!

So this month we are going to take inspiration from four leapers in the Bible, who knew that they did not leap alone, who drew strength from others to make the leap:

- *The Esther Plan*: the importance of **community**
- *The Nehemiah Method*: the importance of **belonging**
- *The Mary Mission*: the importance of **collaborating**
- *The Nicodemus Trajectory*: the importance of **involvement**

## Weekly Overview

We begin by exploring The Esther Plan — reflecting on what community means when you're out on a limb, and how flourishing often comes through helping others to flourish. Loving God, amongst people who don't know God is a difficult but invaluable thing. Then in the second week we consider The Nehemiah Method and how powerful a real sense of belonging is at the heart of our efforts. It is transformative when everyone has a role and a place, leaping together, working fast and not breaking things.

In the third week we reflect on The Mary Mission and ask what it meant to work together as a community to provide for Jesus in the 1st century and then what it means to provide for Jesus as a 21st century community. How are we collaborating to become more than the sum of our parts? Finally, in the last week of the theme, we contemplate The Nicodemus Trajectory, and what it means to go on a journey from feeling on the periphery of something to becoming more involved and realising it has become central to your life as you learn to leap together with others — moving from being at the edge of something to the heart of the action.

## Seeds to sow

Each week begins with a seed to sow conversation starter. These are open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps they will inspire you to write a song or a poem, or to paint, draw, move or explore! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination. Expand, tailor and develop as suits you.

## Format

Each week is split into three question sections. We imagine the material could be the basis for a 90 minute session but feel free to adapt to your group and rearrange the order or adapt the content to suit you.

# Week 1: The Esther Plan

## Introduction:

The importance of community. What can we learn about community and leaping together from the story of Esther? A courageous woman in a perilous position forges a way forward, drawing strength from her community. She is isolated from her people but she remains connected to them. It's a mutual relationship where the community helps sustain her (not least through her uncle Mordecai) and she acts to preserve them. What inspiration does Esther offer us for mission in the 21st century?

**Seeds to sow:** Feasts are a big factor in the story of Esther, how could we use meals this week to show our love for God and others?

**Video:** Coming to [www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect](http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect) soon!

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### 1) Esther 4: 10-17

#### *The Esther Plan*

Esther's community turns to her for help and likewise she turns to them for support too. Have you noticed that in Esther before?

How do we give and receive help in our community?

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### 2) Esther 7: 1-6

#### *The story unfolds...*

Esther risks retribution and spends what precious social capital she has to reverse the fortune of her people and unmask Haman's plot. Esther is a nuanced person in a nuanced book, thinking on her feet and trying to navigate a way forward in the midst of a hostile oppressive world.

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### 3) Esther 8: 1-8

#### *The Esther Plan...*

Esther is triumphant, she has reversed the plight of her people but she hasn't short-circuited the violence as the blood shed in chapter 9 shows. The book of Esther does not offer a perfect roadmap for Christians today — rather it is a fascinating story of what it means to be dealt a bad hand and yet turn the tables and how to draw strength from others in difficult times. How do we offer strength to each other?

We often hear stories about missionaries who take risks for their faith and for other people. What risks or sacrifices (including time and resources) do we take for our communities of faith?



# Week 2: The Nehemiah Method

## Introduction:

The importance of belonging. In the book of Nehemiah we see an incredible feat unfold. The community are able to work together so rapidly and effectively because of their sense of belonging and investment, you could say their 'buy in'. They face taunts and opposition, hunger and threats, but they shoulder in together.

**Seeds to sow:** What could we physically build together this week to help grow community?

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### 1) Nehemiah 2: 11-20

*DIY 'DIO', Do-It-Ourselves*

"It's broken, I can't fix it on my own!"  
There is need for community. What communities are you a part of?

How do we let others know they are valued parts of our community?

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### 3) Nehemiah 5: 1-13

*'The thing that you are doing is not good', speaking out for justice*

Restoring welfare, dignity and agency. As a group what issues of injustice are you concerned about and what can you do about them?

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### 2) Nehemiah 3: 9-14

*A shared endeavour*

The names here are not beside the point, they show us how the community got invested in this massive project. Builders in their place — even at the dung gate.

Re-read this passage and think of what modern day equivalents of these places and names would be in your community! And where do you fit in?



# Week 3: The Mary Mission

## Introduction:

The importance of collaborating. Jesus didn't come as a warlord or a rich businessman. He was a poor wandering teacher, preacher and storyteller. One who needed fed and sheltered by others. One of the people who provided for him was Mary Magdalene, a woman who is prominently mentioned several times across all four gospels, looking out for Jesus. This week we are taking inspiration from her practical, unstinting ministry. What's fascinating is that Mary is almost always mentioned as part of a group. The story of her individual liberation (Luke 8: 2) quickly becomes a story about deepening relationship, friendship and community. Mary, Joanna (and many other unnamed women) stayed with Jesus throughout his ministry. Mary and others supported him when the going got tough, unwilling to abandon him even at the cross. As women whose lives had been transformed by Jesus they were a crucial part of forming a new community where all could contribute and collaborate together.

**Seeds to sow:** What support and encouragement can we provide as a community for the Kingdom this week?

**Video:** Coming to [www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect](http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect) soon!

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## 1) Luke 8: 1-3

### *Providing for Jesus*

Mary Magdalene is always shown to us as looking out for Jesus. She was not just a passive recipient of Jesus's ministry, but an active and engaged member of the community.

What would it have been like to be Mary, life transformed, creating a new network of supportive women (like Joanna and Susannah mentioned in the passage) to help transform the lives of others? What was involved in providing for Jesus then and how are we collaborating with others to use our resources, ingenuity and leadership to provide for Jesus today?

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## 2) Mark 15: 40-41, Matthew 27: 57-61

### *Standing by Jesus, the last to leave him*

Mary, along with several other women, didn't abandon Jesus at his lowest ebb. When the disciples are in disarray, these women stand by united together, drawing strength from one another. We can contrast this image with Peter alone in the crowd by the fireside as the cockerel crowed. In our Matthew reading we see the two Marys sitting opposite the tomb of their Lord, united and present.

In these readings we have a beautiful picture of friendship and devotion, not only friendship with Jesus but friendship in the community. What are our insights on friendship from these women? What are we learning?

## Week 3: The Mary Mission *Continued*

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### 3) Luke 24: 1-12

#### *The first evangelists*

In the face of the disciples' scepticism Mary makes the leap, apostle to the apostles! Let's reflect on the incredible legacy of Mary Magdalene. At a time when a woman's testimony had little legal or social weight — it is her and her community of women who are entrusted with this news. But then, who better than these women who knew the true value of collaboration, relationships and standing by one another?

Jesus championed women, how can we champion women? Jesus wanted men to know the good news, how are we reaching out to them?



# Week 4: The Nicodemus Trajectory

## Introduction:

The importance of involvement. From being on the fringes of a movement to it reaching to his very own heart — Nicodemus is learning to leap with others! His trajectory from the fringe to the heart is one we go on many times in our lives and through our faith. As well as following the trajectory of Nicodemus we are following the trajectory from darkness to light over Holy Week, and the static in-between as the passion unfolds.

**Seeds to sow:** Over Holy Week we are thinking about a movement from darkness to light. Our week is bookended by Nicodemus under the cover of darkness, but how do we think he might have felt come the bright light of Sunday morning?

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## 1) John 3: 1-21

*Questions from the edge*

Nicodemus comes to Jesus with his questions under the cover of darkness.

What questions of faith have you got for Jesus? We may not have the answers! How do we take our questions to Jesus?

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## 2) John 7: 45-52

*De-compartmentalising Jesus!*

Perhaps for Nicodemus, Jesus was compartmentalised, just part of one aspect of his life. Here we see him starting to reconcile his nighttime questions with the day job.

Faith is not just something between us and God, it weaves through all of our lives.

How do we de-compartmentalise Jesus and acknowledge him throughout our lives?

And how do we encourage each other to not stay as a compartmentalised community of faith but rather be diffused into the wider community around us?





## Week 4: The Nicodemus Trajectory *Continued*

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### 3) John 19: 38-42

*Murmurs and Myrrh: Leaping together*

We conclude this week with Nicodemus in the hushed mourning at the heart of the Jesus movement. Nicodemus is all in. He is beginning to separate himself from one community (the Pharisees) and transition into another community (of Jesus's disciples). Nicodemus is moving from one way of thinking to another way of thinking.

In our faith we are constantly growing, and in order to grow we continually change how we think about God as we develop a richer and deeper relationship. We do this as individuals and as a group.

As a group how can we look out for people who have questions of faith and are looking to start, grow or deepen their relationship with God?

