



**Theme Resource Pack  
Lent 1/February 2024  
(4 Feb - 2 March)**

## Introduction

Welcome to our theme resource pack for February. It covers the first part of Lent running from Sunday 4 February to Saturday 2 March.

This leap year we are going to ask what it means to leap with God!

The phrase 'leap of faith' can have a bit of a sense of desperation to it can't it? A mad dash and jump to the other side! "Ooft, I made it!" But what if most of the 'leaps of faith' that we make in our journey of discipleship with God aren't wild lunges, but more like the leaps made by an athlete, or a child excitedly playing a game! Made enthusiastically and for the love of it!

We leap to follow God in hope and expectation — leaping into the Kingdom! Athletes need focus, practice, folk cheering them on, and people to coach them, and to catch them when they fall. All the same applies in discipleship! The leaps of faith we make are not made alone — just as even elite solo jumpers have whole support teams to enable them to perform at their best.

When we leap, we leap with others. Just like a child playing a game trying again and again while our friends help us. We leap to get somewhere, we leap for fun, we leap for adventure! This Lent let's make leaps of faith with our eyes wide open. Not leaps of desperation but leaps of gladness, faith and enthusiasm as we follow where God is leading us.

This year, let's leap into Lent!

## Overview

We begin by thinking about what it means to leap into life with God — who are we focusing on, what is our motivation, what's the first step? Then in the second week we think about leaping into prayer, taking inspiration from swimmers diving into the water. What happen we submerge ourselves in prayer? What does it mean to inhale and exhale with God.

In the third week we take our lead from cyclists fixing their bikes to think about how the Bible is a powerful tool in our lives. Finally, in the last week of the theme, we reflect on how we leap into action as a team!

## Format

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. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, Sunday Live streams and all sots of other creative things we get up to! It is broken into four section that focus on a different topic each week. The weeks run Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

## Setting the scene

Each week we offer a visual motif. This is an optional additional focus point for preparing worship services or multimedia inspired by the material.

## Seeds to sow

Open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps a song, some drawing, or creative writing! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination. Expand, tailor and develop as suits you. Often they take the form of a question, to encourage reflection.

## Connect group videos

Each month we create a series of Bible study questions for Connect groups, find out more here: [sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect/leaping-with-god-connect-groups](https://sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect/leaping-with-god-connect-groups)

## Leaping into life with God (Week 1, 4 February)

**Introduction:** What if 'a leap of faith' is not a mad desperate dash? But more like the practiced leap of an athlete, who with training and encouragement is going to stretch themselves to go that bit further? Like athletes we don't leap alone, we have the support of others who can help us prepare. Over our lives of discipleship we make all kinds of leaps of faith as we learn to trust God and one another. For the jumper on the track and the disciple on the road: focus and motivation are hugely important. Who are we leaping towards and why? Why leap with God and after God? Why bother!?

**Setting the scene:** An athletics track with people warming up.

**Seeds to sow:** What are some of the small 'leaps of faith' that we make in our daily walk with God?

- 1. Isaiah 40: 28-31 Who is God?** So, who is that we are leaping after? Who has led the way? Who lifts us up? Our creator, our coach, our champion!
- 2. John 14 What's the point?** You could say that we leap after God so that we can look *forward* with hope, *around* with love, and *inwards* with peace.
- 3. Ephesians 1: 3-14 Is this still relevant?** We are inheritors of a living legacy of hope, one that is still unfolding today. We leap where others have leapt before us! We can draw strength from the long tradition of people learning and relearning what it is to be God's children.
- 4. 1 John 3: 1-3 Who are we to God?** We are children! Beloved children who are growing into who we really are. God loves to see us leap the way a loving parent delights in their children.
- 5. Matthew 11: 28-30 Why follow Jesus?** Because he lives up to the hype! For he is powerful but also gracious, gentle and humble in heart!
- 6. 2 Samuel 6: 12-23 Why make the leap?** We leap after God because God isn't static! God is not an abstract concept — but a living being that we are to follow. Like children with puddles, and kings getting our groove on in a packed city square — sometimes we just gotta move! Our faith, like all aspects of our lives, benefits from this movement. We leap to follow where God is moving, working to build the Kingdom, because God inspires us to move!
- 7. Romans 10: 10 What's needed from me?** Simply to respond. A leap of faith doesn't have to be big, sometimes it's just taking a step. The first step of the athlete is not the one that takes them over the bar, it's the one when they shows up at the track.

## Leaping into Prayer (Week 2, 11 February)

**Introduction:** When watching competitive swimmers we get to see the rhythms of breathing and moving gracefully and powerfully through the water! There is a well practiced drill of when to turn the head and breathe, often knowing how long they can wait before needing to breathe. If it is too long it hinders the performance due to a lack of oxygen. There is a basic need to breathe! To inhale with the head out of the water and exhale usually in the water. If we think about prayer as the water we swim through in life of faith it can help us understand the rhythms within prayer. The swimmer dives into the water. We dive into — leap into — prayer! We need to inhale by listening and taking in what God says to us in prayer and we exhale, giving out to God in prayer — sometimes with puffed out cheeks from the depths of our lungs! And amazingly, in this water of prayer, it is a place where we can breathe under water. This week we take a diving leap into prayer.

**Setting the scene:** Swimming goggles.

**Seeds to sow:** You could find time this week to sit and read Matthew 4: 1-11 a few times and then dive into some time of open-ended prayer with God.

- 1. Matthew 4: 1-2 Taking the dive.** Jesus dives into the wilderness, and into intimacy with God. Sometimes when we are reaching out to God it can feel like we are in a wilderness, but we are never alone.
- 2. Matthew 4: 3-4 Hitting the water.** Brace for impact...
- 3. Matthew 4: 5-7 Inhaling.** What does it mean to inhale with God?
- 4. Matthew 4: 8-10 Exhaling.** What does it mean to exhale with God?
- 5. Matthew 4: 11 Turning point.** Resting with God when an inhale turns to exhale.
- 6. Matthew 4: 17 More than one length of the pool.** The prayers of others have come before us and they will come after us, prayer is for the generations.
- 7. Matthew 4: 18-22 Keep on swimming!** Persevere following Jesus in prayer, it might start to look or feel different as our prayer life deepens, but keep on praying, this is the way! The disciples didn't tread water, they didn't stay where they were in their faith, they took the leap!

## Leaping into the Bible (Week 3, 18 February)

**Introduction:** Watching cyclists fix their bikes at the side of the trail during a race can be so inspiring! To see them manage their adrenaline and know how to use their tools to solve problems and get going! But it isn't just cyclists who know how to use the tools of their trade. Bakers know just which cake tins or spoons to use, musicians which instruments to achieve the sound they are aiming for. There are lots of different areas in our lives where knowing how to use the tools of our trade is essential to living well. It is the same with our faith and this week we want to get to know the tool of our Bibles better. The Bible is of course much more than a 'tool' (like it is more than a book!) but, like a handy gadget for the cyclist at the roadside, the Bible is a fantastic resource in our faith toolkit. So, what exactly is the equipment of our faith we pick up when we open the Bible? What kind of tool is the Bible, and how does it grow the muscles of our faith?

**Setting the scene:** A cyclist fixing their bike by the side of the trail.

**Seeds to sow:** What books of the Bible do you find yourself going back to time and again? If you've not read the Bible before, or not for a long time, what parts interest or intrigue you?

- 1. Psalm 19: 7-9 A truthful tool.** David's poetry tells of the truth of the Word of God. You can picture him holding a Spirit Level!
- 2. 2 Timothy 3: 14-17 Formed by God.** God-inspired Scripture. Just as God breathed life into Adam in Genesis 2:7 so He did with the Bible. In this reading Paul is encouraging Timothy to get a handle on scripture in the same way a cycling coach would encourage the cyclist to get to grip with their tools, to familiarise themselves with it.
- 3. 2 Peter 1: 20-21 A reliable tool.** When authors partner with God to equip us with His Word there is holy richness.
- 4. Psalm 119: 105 Lit by God.** When we speak scripture in faith and rely on it as the word of God it illuminates life for us.
- 5. Ephesians 6: 11-17 A powerful tool.** Paul describes how we can use the Word of God in our faith and prayer life.
- 6. John 1: 1-3 Continued by God.** The Word, Jesus, was there at the start of creation and He is there at the end in Revelation. The Bible isn't two separate books, they connect and depend on one another to make sense and fulfil one another.
- 7. Luke 4: 4 A relevant tool.** Jesus uses Scriptures on many occasions as part of his daily conversation with purpose. There are scriptures that are helpful in our everyday life, to guide and encourage us too.



## Leaping into Action (Week 4, 25 February)

**Introduction:** This theme we have leapt a lot on our own but this last week we consider that faith is not an individual sport or activity. Our life of faith is a team sport where we encourage and depend on one another. Watching synchronised divers we see how they know what the slightest movement means, when the other is going to turn, and they trust the other to do their best. Quite inspirational! When we leap and keep on leaping into faith we are not on our own, Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit and we have others around us, to help and be helped by. We all have an important role with and for one another. This is the beauty of the Body of Jesus, so let's leap together!

**Setting the scene:** A team huddle before the big game.

**Seeds to sow:** How does movement play a part in your faith?

- 1. Matthew 20: 20-28 We leap with one another, not over one another.** Christianity is not an elaborate metaphysical talent scout agency! We can't call in favours and look to be headhunted and assigned to privileged positions in the starting team. Leaping with God is not leapfrogging others, it's leaping with others — helping them up and over the line. We get there together!
- 2. Mark 7: 1-23 We leap and raise the bar.** A warning against hypocrisy and an invitation to raise our game! We shouldn't make hurdles to force people to make unnecessary leaps of faith! We're a team.
- 3. Luke 18: 18-27 When we fall flat.** The rich ruler is earnest, he's sincere, but he still thinks he can earn his way into his inheritance. That if he's good enough he can thread the needle. But he's fallen short of the leap, he hasn't realised it's not up to him to 'earn' his inheritance... and he falls flat. Faith is not about pulling away, it's about pulling together.
- 4. John 13: 1-19 We get back up.** Peter doesn't get it. He then gets it and overcompensates by jumping too far the other way! Landing the leap too long. Jesus gently brings him back to the point. The impulsive Peter is irrepressible, he keeps getting back up. In a team we often have different roles and it's fair to say Peter was a champion leaper!
- 5. Acts 2: 43-46 We reflect.** Gathering together in community, working together as a team.
- 6. Romans 12: 1-8 We help 'spot' one another for the leaps.** Living sacrifices working with one another, different approaches and skillsets all fitting in together.
- 7. Romans 12: 9-21 We leap again and again.** Lifting one another up, spurring each other on as we leap after God!