



JOHN





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GETTING STARTED

WHAT IS JESUS XP?

Jesus XP is a cohort based, Jesus centered discipleship experience. Together, cohorts explore the ways Jesus connected with God and others by reading The Gospels, discovering practices that center us in the Jesus way and learning how to apprentice with Jesus in everyday life.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A JESUS XP SESSION?

Jesus XP sessions include the following: check in, Bible reading and practice. The check in creates space for participants to unpack what Jesus is inviting them into through the Bible reading and practices. The Bible portion helps participants immerse themselves in the words and ways of Jesus. And practice exploration provides participants with tangible ways to connect with God, themselves and others.



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John's Gospel, one of the four accounts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection found in the New Testament of the Bible, is quite unique when compared to its counterparts. Whereas Matthew and Luke begin with Jesus' birth, and Mark with his adult life and public ministry, John locates Jesus as from "In the beginning..." (John 1:1 and following). From this starting point, The Gospel of John employs a variety of conversations, signs and discourses all designed to help the hearer, or reader, arrive at the following destination: ". . .written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name."
(John 20:31).

JESUS THE CONVERSATIONALIST

Conversation between Jesus and those he engages is a key feature in The Gospel of John. During those exchanges Jesus' identity is regularly brought to the forefront, while those he engages are offered a moment of reflection, an invitation to consider their identity in light of his and his message, an invitation to "come and see".

SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH

John also utilizes seven signs to clearly reveal Jesus as The Messiah, the hoped for liberator of the Jewish people (2:1-11, 4:46-54, 5:1-15, 6:5-14, 6:16-24, 9:1-7, 11:1-45). This is significant because John's first hearers were Jewish followers of Jesus who were encountering growing opposition due to their belief in and allegiance to Jesus as Messiah, even to the point of being expelled from their synagogues, the faith communities that they had belonged to and shared much life with. And this aspect of John's Gospel, the revealing of Jesus as Messiah, is also significant for all of humanity because longing for liberation and the world to be set right are not just the longings of some, but the longings of the entire world.

I AM. . .

In addition to the signs that John uses to present Jesus as Messiah, the Gospel writer also includes seven “I am” statements that are reminiscent of God’s communication with Moses in Exodus 3:14, “I Am Who I Am”, and that further identify Jesus as Messiah. These seven statements can be found in 6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

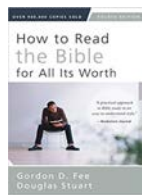
As you prepare to apprentice with Jesus while reading through John’s gospel, here are a few recommended resources that you may want to utilize.



The Bible Project, Book Overview For John



John For Everyone, N.T. Wright



How To Read The Bible For All It's Worth, Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart

SESSION 01



CHECK IN

If your cohort is just getting to know one another, here's an exercise designed to help you connect through story telling. You'll need three colors of sticky notes and something to write with for each person. If your cohort is already familiar with one another, take time to discuss the following question: What are you hoping for from this Jesus XP cohort experience?

01

Choose one color of sticky note, then write out, one per sticky note, all of the relationships, events and significant moments that have positively contributed to your life story. Once you think you've captured them all, take a moment to pause, and then write down any others that come to mind.

02

Chose a different color sticky note, then write out (again, one item per sticky note) the moments of pain or struggle that have also contributed to your life story. (Again, as in step 1, after you think you're done with this step, pause, and then write down anything else in this category that comes to mind.)

03

Next, arrange the sticky notes in chronological order.

04

Once all items are arranged in chronological order, take a moment to identify the natural "chapters" that you see and create a title for each.

05

Take 3-5 minutes to share your story.

BIBLE

Read John 1:1-18 together, paying attention to what the text says about Jesus, his identity and any other characteristics about him.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 1-2

John chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the Gospel. The way it is written is different than any other gospel beginning. It does not include the birth narrative or a genealogy, but a theology. In his introduction, John refers to Jesus as the "Word" and he makes it clear that the stories you are about to read are about Jesus, who is God. He traces the origin of Jesus all the way back to creation when he writes, "In the beginning, the Word existed." John also makes it clear that Jesus is God when he writes, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." John's gospel includes stories that are not in the other 3 gospels (called the Synoptic gospels). The Wedding at Cana in John, chapter 2 is one such story. Look for the way people respond to Jesus as you read John's gospel. This gospel includes unique conversations and a special insight into Jesus's relationships with the Father and people. John also tells stories you might have heard before in a different order than the other gospels. What do you notice about Jesus as you read?

PRACTICE: LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice focused on prayerfully engaging the biblical text and encountering Jesus, the Living Word, through it. The term is derived from Latin words meaning reading (lectio) and divine (divina).

PRACTICING LECTIO DIVINA

FIRST READING

Slowly read the passage of Scripture that you have selected. As you do so, pay attention to any word, phrase, or idea that catches your attention. Then, pause for a moment, keeping that word, phrase, or idea in view.

SECOND READING

Read the passage again, slowly, and then pause to sit with the word, phrase, or idea that captured your attention. What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on the word, phrase, or idea? What are you reminded of in your life? What does it make you hope for? What might God be inviting you into through that word, phrase or idea?

THIRD READING

Read the passage once more, and begin to converse with God about it. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. Listen for how God might be using the word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you. Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated.

A photograph of two men sitting at a table in a bright, modern setting, possibly a cafe or office. The man on the left is seen from the back, wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt. The man on the right is facing him, wearing a dark blue t-shirt, and is looking towards the other man with an attentive expression. Large windows in the background let in bright, natural light, creating a soft, airy atmosphere. The text 'SESSION 02' is overlaid in the center of the image.

SESSION 02

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 1-2 and practiced Lectio Divina?

BIBLE

Read John 3:1-21 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 3:16-21 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 3-4

John chapter 3 contains one of the most famous things Jesus says. Jesus has an unlikely late night guest when Nicodemus, a religious leader comes to see Jesus asking him about what it is he came to teach. Jesus responds with a conversation many followers of Jesus have come back to over and over again to understand the reason Jesus came. He came to give life – a new life, like a rebirth. He came not to condemn, but to offer a new way to be human. John 4 follows with another unlikely encounter with a Samaritan woman with a reputation. This unexpected woman is the first person Jesus clearly states his identity to – that he is the Messiah. Notice how people respond to Jesus in these encounters.

PRACTICE: DAILY RHYTHM

A simple practice for connecting with Jesus, self and others throughout the day.

MORNING + MIDDAY + EVENING PRAYER

The world is made of words. Even small, repeated words have power. Regular, carefully placed prayer is one of the keystone habits of spiritual formation and is the beginning of building the trellis of habit. By framing our day in the words of prayer, we frame the day in love.

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE

Refusing to check the phone until after reading a passage of Scripture is a way of replacing the question "What do I need to do today?" with a better one, "Who am I and who am I becoming?" Daily immersion in the Scriptures resists the anxiety of emails, the anger of news, and the envy of social media. Instead it forms us daily in our true identity as the beloved children of God.

NO PHONE WHILE WAITING

We are made for presence, but so often our phones are the cause of our absence. To be two places at a time is to be no place at all. Choosing to be present with ourselves, others and God's good creation is an act of love.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTION WITH OTHERS

The habit of connecting with someone during a shared meal, coffee or conversation each day helps us orient our schedules and lives towards a posture of hospitality - which Jesus regularly embodies and extends to us in every moment.

A warm, inviting bakery scene. In the foreground, a wooden counter holds several baskets and trays of fresh bread. A large wicker basket is filled with round loaves, some with dark crusts. To its right, a smaller basket is overflowing with golden-brown croissants. In front of the large basket, a rectangular wicker tray is filled with small, braided rolls. To the left, another tray holds a different type of bread. In the background, a window with white horizontal blinds is partially open, allowing soft, natural light to filter through. A hanging lamp with a brass shade is visible on the left, and a metal rack with a glass jar is on the right. The overall atmosphere is cozy and rustic.

SESSION 03

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 3-4 and practiced the daily rhythm?

BIBLE

Read John 6:26-69 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 6:32-40 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 5-6

All throughout John's gospel, Jesus makes "I am" statements. He points out things about his nature and connects himself to the God of Abraham, who called himself "I Am." In John, chapter 6, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." This statement comes after Jesus heals a man and does a miracle with bread, and walks on water, the moment is full of tension. Notice how Jesus speaks to the people and how they respond to his claims and commands. What is Jesus actually saying? What does he want from those who follow him?

PRACTICE: EXAMEN PRAYER

This prayer practice was developed by Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556) and is focused on being attentive to and interacting with God’s loving presence in the midst of daily life. Followers of Jesus might pray this prayer at the end of a day or at a time of transition.

LIGHT

The Examen is a way to create space in which to carry on a conversation with God. Begin by asking the One who “is pure light, undimmed by darkness of any kind” (1 John 1:5) to grant you the ability to clearly see, hear, understand, and respond to his loving presence.

THANKS

As moments of grace come to mind, give thanks for the good that has come to you today through God’s generosity. As Ignatius said, “I will ponder with great affection how much God has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much ... the same Lord desires to give Himself to me.”

REVIEW

Watch the day play back before you as if you were watching a movie. When did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God? When were you resisting?

RESPOND

After reviewing, take time to converse with God, expressing your thoughts on the actions, attitudes, feelings, and interactions you saw. You may want to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, express gratitude, or resolve to make a change and move forward.

NEXT

Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to be present in your thoughts, actions, and relationships.

A person is sitting on a mountain peak, looking out over a valley. The sun is setting behind the mountains, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds. The person is in silhouette, with their arms resting on their knees. The foreground shows some dark, silhouetted vegetation.

SESSION 04

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 5-6 and practiced the prayer of Examen?

BIBLE

Read John 8:1-30 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 8:9-12 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 7-8

The conversation about who Jesus is and what he came to do continues in these chapters. Jesus compares himself to living water again in this chapter (he did this before in chapter 4 with the woman at the well). He also makes the next "I am" statement when he calls himself the "light of the world." The story is starting to gain some tension as people start to notice the claims of connection Jesus is making to the God of Abraham. These stories are set within an important Jewish festival and the attention Jesus is getting from these interactions is not all good. The most shocking claim Jesus makes to a Jewish thinker is found in John 8:58. What might Jesus be trying to communicate to those who follow and oppose him in these chapters?

PRACTICE: COMMUNION

Just before his sacrificial death, Jesus shared a meal, commonly referred to as The Last Supper, with his disciples (Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-39). During their time at the table the following took place: "He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' After supper he took another cup of wine and said, 'This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.'" (Luke 22:19-20)

Communion is a practice that emerges from this scene and that helps us remember Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. Jesus' great act of love roots us in a reconciled and never ending relationship with God, the one who loves us completely.

Communion is also a practice that we are invited to participate in regularly, for Jesus says "Do this in remembrance of me." While we participate in communion as part of our gathering together with the church, we are also free to participate and remember in the midst of daily life.

So as we find ourselves around tables - at home, at school, at work, at the cafes and restaurants we frequent, or anywhere else . . . Gather something to eat (bread, cookie, cracker, etc.) and something to drink (whatever you prefer). As you eat and drink, remember this: The body of Christ has been given, broken for us and the entire world. The blood of Christ has been poured out, shed for us and the entire world.



SESSION 05

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 7-8 and practiced communion as part of your daily table experiences?

BIBLE

Read John 10:1-21 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 10:11-16 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 9-10

John chapter 9 holds an important story and a metaphor Jesus uses to teach about who has access to God. John will often use visual language or point out those who can and cannot see the Kingdom. Chapter 10 holds the next two "I am" statements. Jesus paints a picture of some sheep who are led by either a hired hand or a Good Shepherd. He calls himself "the door" or "the gate". Then, Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd." He actually calls himself the good shepherd twice. Jesus offers an important warning in this conversation about the motivation of the hired hand, or the enemy, and the motivation of the Good Shepherd, or himself. John chapter 10 gives us a clue into what Jesus wants for us.

PRACTICE

Now that you've explored the four core Jesus XP practices, which one has helped you experience loving union with God during this current season of life? Share which practice you'll lean into during the coming days with your cohort. Finally, conclude your cohort meet up by taking communion together.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye. The person has dark, well-defined eyebrows and long, dark eyelashes. The eye is looking slightly to the right. The skin is fair and has a soft texture. A white, textured fabric, possibly a towel or sheet, is draped across the lower part of the face, partially covering the cheek and chin. The text "SESSION 06" is overlaid in the center of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

SESSION 06

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 9-10 and leaned into the practice that you engaged?

BIBLE

Read John 11:1-44 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 11:17-25 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 11-12

These chapters relay a fairly detailed pair of stories about Jesus and some friends of his who live in Bethany. See if you can notice the "I am" statement that is found in John, chapter 11. This shocking story is only found in John's gospel, and it is one that gives great insight into the emotional life and prayer life of Jesus. John 12 kicks off what is often referred to as Jesus's Passion week as the events that will lead to his arrest and crucifixion begin in earnest in this chapter. In every other gospel, the next thing we would read about is the Last Supper, but instead, we will get an insight into the way Jesus interacted with his disciples and the Father in a very special way.

PRACTICE

Share with your cohort which practice you'll lean into during the coming days, then conclude your time together by taking communion.

A first-person perspective shot of someone sitting on a vast desert sand dune. The person's feet are propped up in the foreground, and their legs, wearing dark pants, are visible. The sand is golden-brown and covered in numerous footprints. In the background, more sand dunes stretch towards a horizon where the sun is setting, creating a bright, hazy glow. Distant mountains are visible under a clear sky.

SESSION 07

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 11-12 and leaned into the practice that you engaged?

BIBLE

Read John 14:1-14 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 14:1-7 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 13-14

John is the only gospel that records Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Cleansing is a theme in John you might notice as you read, but his focus seems to be on spiritual cleansing, not physical cleansing. In Jesus washing his disciples' feet, the connection between physical and spiritual are brought together. We see another "I am" statement in John 14, as well. The famous statement Jesus makes that he is "the way, the truth and the life" is found in these chapters. John 14 and the coming chapters also give us the clearest insight into the trinity in the gospels as we listen in on Jesus talking about the Father and the Spirit.

PRACTICE

Share with your cohort which practice you'll lean into during the coming days, then conclude your time together by taking communion.

A teal garden trowel is the central focus, filled with dark brown soil. To its right, a green plant stem with several yellow, bell-shaped flowers is visible. In the bottom left corner, a pair of silver scissors is partially shown. The entire scene is set on a light grey, textured surface. The text "SESSION 08" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font in the upper middle part of the image.

SESSION 08

CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 13-14 and leaned into the practice that you engaged?

BIBLE

Read John 15:1-17 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 15:1-8 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

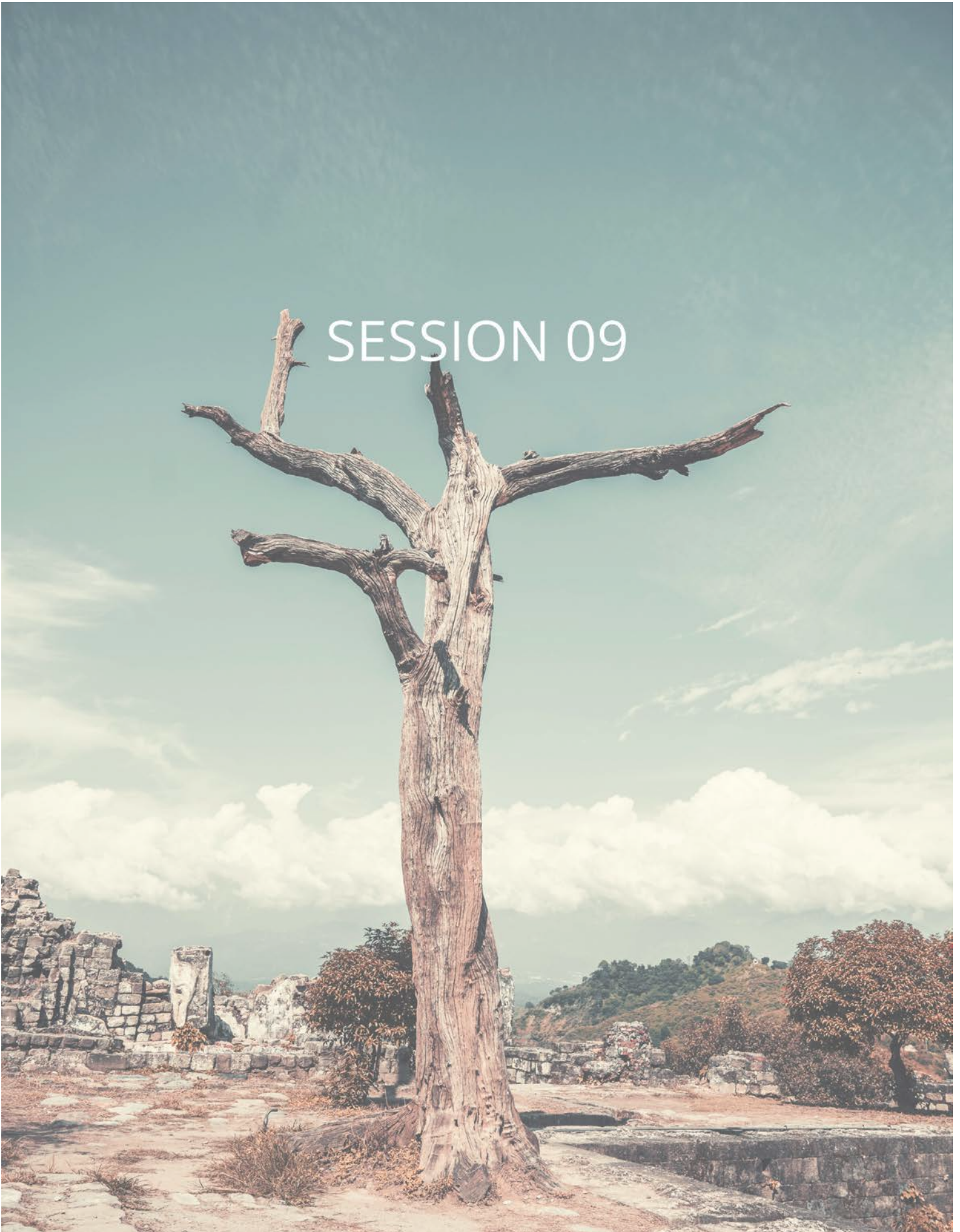
THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 15-17

Some consider these chapters a recounting of the last words of Jesus to his disciples. John 15-16 contains a long discourse from Jesus about the nature of his connection with the Father and the Spirit and what that means for those who follow him. Consider how these words would be a great comfort to the disciples in the days to come. An entire chapter of Jesus praying follows in John, 17. Notice how Jesus speaks directly to the Father and how he speaks about those who follow him, both then and today.

PRACTICE

Share with your cohort which practice you'll lean into during the coming days, then conclude your time together by taking communion.

SESSION 09



CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 15-17 and leaned into the practice that you engaged?

BIBLE

Read John 18:28-40 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 18:1-12 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 18-19

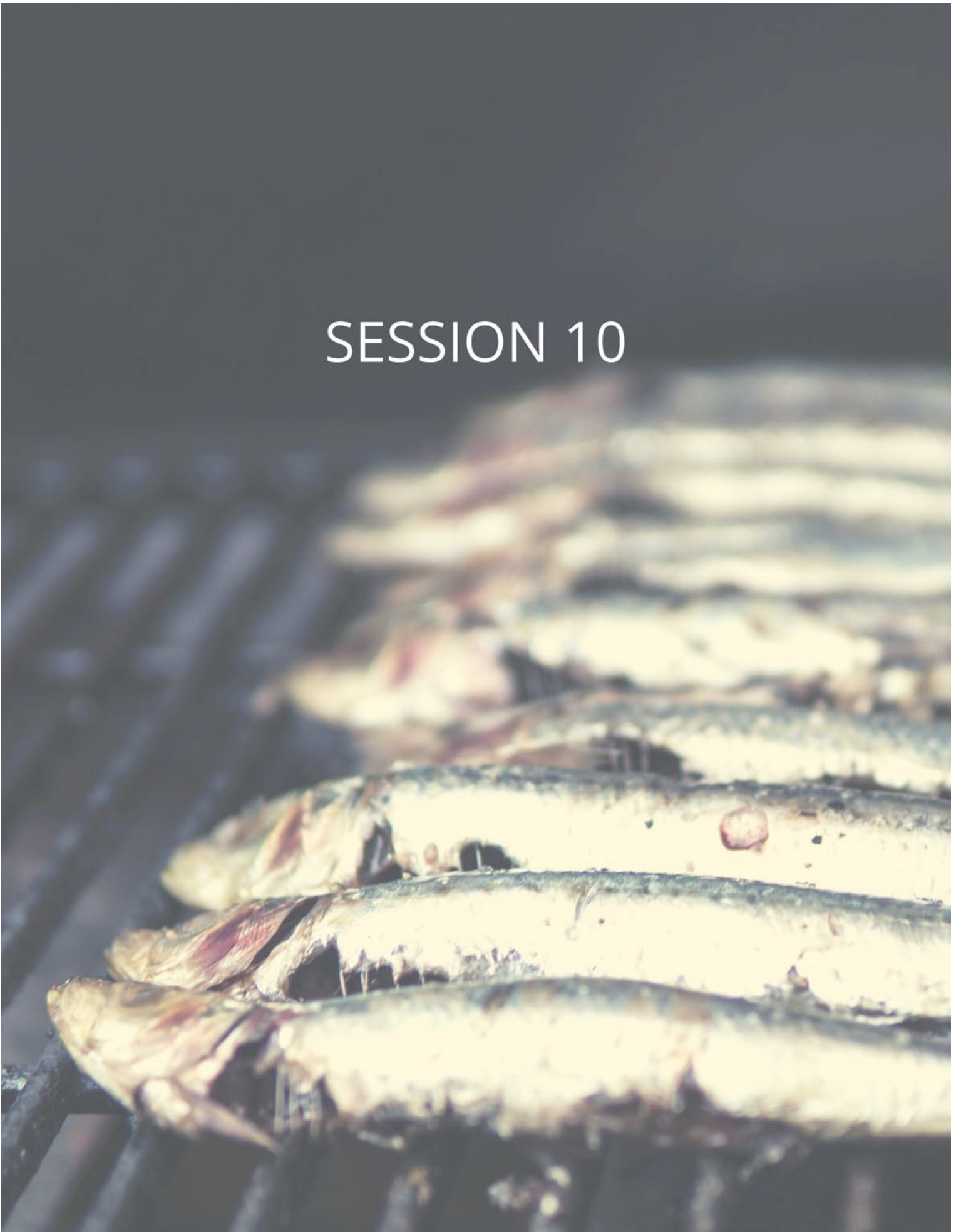
The action changes in John 18. The book turns toward the cross and resurrection. We see Jesus betrayed and arrested in these chapters. There were also two things Jesus predicted in John 13, and both happen in John 18.

We are given an inside look at the conversation between Jesus & the High Priest and Jesus & Pilate after Jesus is arrested. Pilate seems to struggle with the decision to crucify Jesus, but ultimately gives the people what they are asking for and Jesus is sentenced to death. As you read through Jesus's crucifixion, notice the exchange Jesus has with the "disciple he loved" – this statement seems to be how the author of John's gospel views himself. In John 19:39, someone unexpected shows up to help bury Jesus's body (hint: he was in John, chapter 3).

PRACTICE

Share with your cohort which practice you'll lean into during the coming days, then conclude your time together by taking communion.

SESSION 10



CHECK IN

What did you sense Jesus inviting you into as you read John 18-19 and leaned into the practice that you engaged?

BIBLE

Read John 21:1-25 together. As part of this time, consider reading John 21:15-17 as a Lectio Divina exercise.

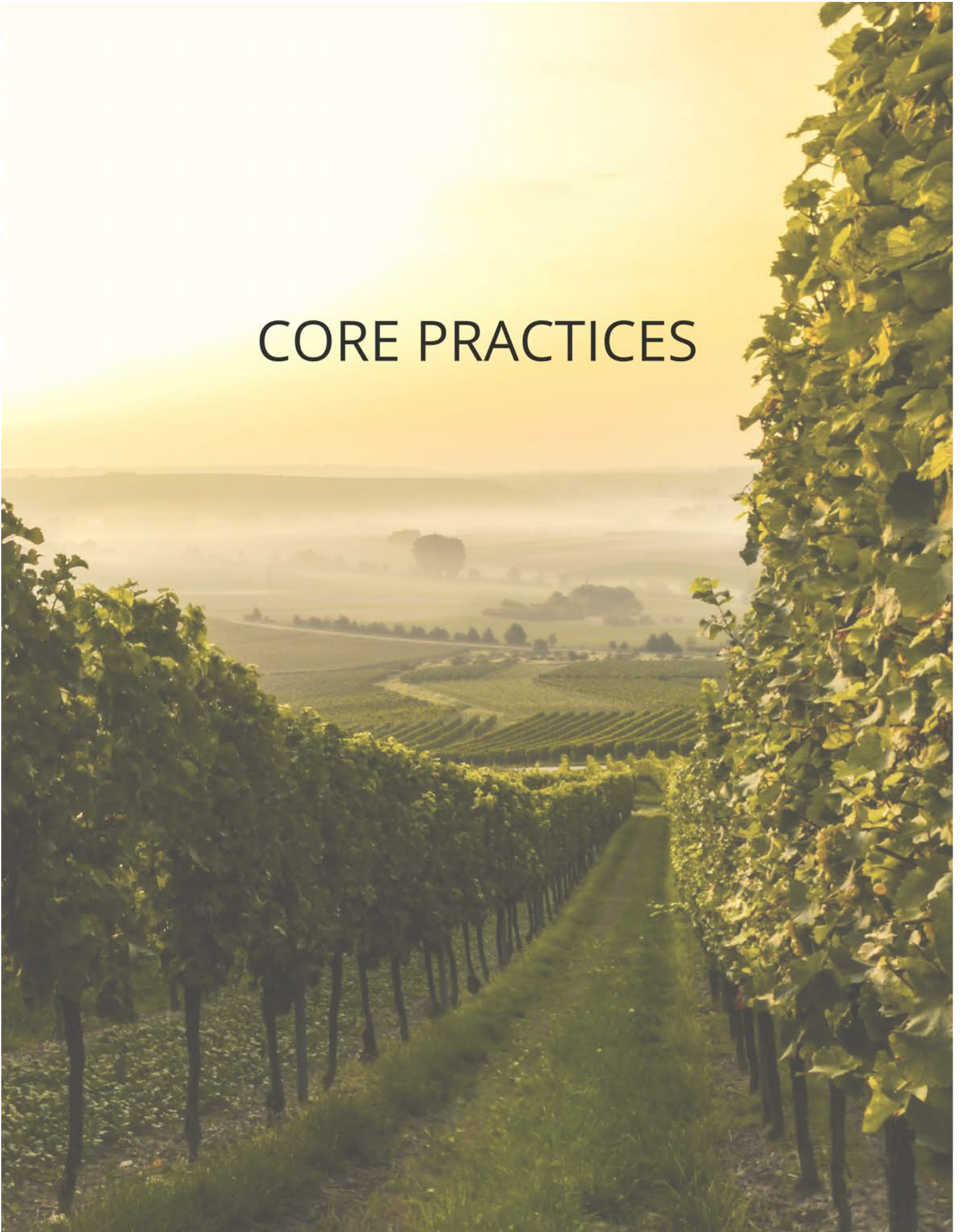
THIS WEEK'S READING: JOHN 20-21

The final chapters of John focus on the resurrection of Jesus and what happened next. After the resurrection account, John shows how Jesus appears to a number of people and the varied ways they react. Jesus again promises peace and the Holy Spirit and then the book seems to close. Like many of the stories we love, at the end of the story, there is a very special epilogue. John, chapter 21 includes an encounter between Jesus and seven of his disciples. Jesus reminds these disciples both of who he is and who they are in the events shared in this chapter. Notice the reason the author says this Gospel was written in John 20:30-31. It might be interesting to go back and read John, chapter 1 after you finish chapter 21 to give yourself a full view of the heart and purpose of John's gospel and how it relates to you and your journey of apprenticeship to Jesus.

PRACTICE

As a cohort, share which practices have been most beneficial for you during Jesus XP, and which one(s) you plan on engaging in the days ahead. Finally, conclude your time together by taking communion.

CORE PRACTICES



LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice focused on prayerfully engaging the biblical text and encountering Jesus, the Living Word, through it. The term is derived from Latin words meaning reading (lectio) and divine (divina).

PRACTICING LECTIO DIVINA

FIRST READING

Slowly read the passage of Scripture that you have selected. As you do so, pay attention to any word, phrase, or idea that catches your attention. Then, pause for a moment, keeping that word, phrase, or idea in view.

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COMMUNION

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