

ALIVE

Series Brief

WELCOME TO ALIVE

The following brief is designed as an outline for a six-part teaching series to help guide your preparation. It provides an outline for each talk within the ALIVE series, including the suggested title, Bible passage, structure, content, some application points, and ways people can respond. These notes are intended as a starting point for message preparation, and speakers are encouraged to make each talk their own.

Within the ALIVE series, we are especially conscious of the need to make all Sunday teachings as accessible as possible for people who may not have personally encountered the risen Jesus yet but are open and exploring faith with us. Additionally, we aim to encourage and minister to our church family on the life-transforming power of His resurrection in a fresh way, with the hope of increasing their confidence in the Gospel.

Join with us to take your group on a journey of discovery to see that Jesus being alive has a profound impact on us today – it changes everything!

We have included the full texts for each encounter. You may want to edit these for the sake of time.

If you want further material to help you in your preparation, then you can refer to the 'Alive' book by Dave Smith.

INTRO SESSION: FULLY ALIVE

See example transcript

SESSION ONE: TRANSFORMED BY LOVE

JOHN 20:1-18

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

¹⁷Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Introduction

Series set-up – including reminder of three key themes:

- **Jesus is alive**
- **We can come alive** (now) – especially as we experience new Love, Hope, Peace, Freedom, Purpose
- **We will come alive** (then)

Options: use the trailer, the intro to the film series, hosting before the message, or as a brief opener for the message.

Our need for Love

Personal Connection – story of ‘love’.

Different types of love – land on ‘agape’ – unconditional love of God – a primary key to feeling truly ALIVE!

1. A Love that Frees like No Other

Brief backstory about Mary Magdalene – emphasising the fact that she was someone seriously oppressed (7 demons). Met Jesus and was set free – whole new sense of identity, belonging and purpose.

Application – Jesus’ love is like no other – He alone can meet our deepest needs, and free us through the power of His unconditional love.

2. A Love that Overcomes like No Other

Mary – sees Jesus die and his body laid in the tomb (she was a witness of both of these key facts). Overwhelming sense of grief at the loss of the One who loved her so. Yet Easter Sunday morning – number of indicators that things have turned:

- Darkness turning to light (dawn).
- Stone rolled away
- Jesus’ body gone
- Testimony of angels (other gospels) - He is not dead, He’s risen!

Application – there is a love that is stronger than death. Death is not the end for Jesus, nor for us who follow Jesus – we will experience His love now and forever!

3. A Love that Transforms Like No Other

Jesus comes to Mary. Initially she doesn’t recognize him (gardener), until He calls her name “Mary”. She clings to Him, He talks about His coming ascension and calls her to be the first ‘witness’ – i.e. she was transformed all over again!

Application – because Jesus is Alive (and has ascended), we can experience His risen presence through the power of His Spirit. Like Mary, if we seek Him, He will reveal Himself to us – in way that is personal to us.

Response

- Invite those who are seekers or feel distant, to come to Jesus
- Encourage everyone to come on the rest of the journey – and to expect to encounter His love in a new way
 - Come back next Sunday
 - Go to a group (watch the videos/experience community)
 - Get the book – and read – intro and chapter 1 to reinforce lessons

SESSION TWO: SURPRISED BY HOPE

LUKE 24:13-35

¹³Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹"What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²²In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." ²⁵He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³²They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Introduction

One of the primary keys to being 'fully alive' is to have our HOPE restored.

Some connecting point with the congregation – e.g. via personal story or illustration concerning the importance of Hope.

Different Types of Hope:

- **Vague Hope**
- **Optimistic Hope**
- **Resilient Hope**
- **Living Hope** – based on the resurrection. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Set-up or link back to Emmaus Story – journey of hope lost and restored. Discovery of living hope.

Backstory - 2 travelers leaving Jerusalem on Easter Sunday afternoon – thinking all was lost; Jesus joins them on the journey – they don't recognize Him. Specific story with broad application for all of us in finding living Hope. Reminder that Jesus is still Alive, and now with us spiritually.

3 keys to experience 'living Hope':

1. Open Our Hearts: Jesus Meets us in Our Disappointment

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). Briefly unpack theme of disappointment e.g. personal story.

Relate to Emmaus story and pick up on the 'we had hoped' phrase. Highlight that in this story God had a better plan. Even when things don't work out as we hope in this life, we have the promise of an eternal hope.

Application – even when things don't work out as we hoped for, Jesus comes to us and wants to meet us in our disappointment. So, let's open our hearts to him.

2. Open Our Bibles: God Speaks to us through the Scriptures

Surprising way that Jesus does and doesn't reveal Himself. He doesn't first reveal Himself personally, but rather points to what the Scriptures say about Him. Worth briefly unpacking here the way that Jesus validates the Bible, and the Bible ultimately points to Him.

Application – this is still a primary way that Jesus reveals Himself to us – through the Scriptures. Invitation for new people to start reading the Bible (give practical tips); and for existing believers to delve deeper and with expectancy that we will meet with Jesus through the Scriptures.

3. Open Our Lives: Jesus Comes where He is Welcomed

Even with presence of Jesus, and the Scriptures, disciples still could have missed Him. Hence the significance of them inviting Him into their home – where, through a meal and breaking bread, their eyes are opened.

Application – the importance of us personally welcoming Jesus into our lives.

Response

- Start with an invitation for everyone (seekers or believers) to welcome Jesus into their lives – in a fresh way
- Pray for all who are experiencing disappointment – encourage them to offer this to the Lord – maybe pray Romans 15:13 over them.
- Conclude with some encouragement that even when things don't work out in this life, we have a hope that is forever – something that will be further unpacked in Session 2 of the Video series.
- Encourage everyone to
 - Come back next Sunday
 - Go to a group (watch the videos/experience community)
 - Read chapter 2 of the book to reinforce lessons

SESSION THREE: FILLED WITH PEACE

JOHN 20:19-29

¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²²And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Introduction

Our longing for peace and wellbeing. Personal story and / or stats.

Holistic wellbeing – and concept of the dashboard.

Biblical wellbeing expressed in the idea of 'shalom' (OT) and 'eirene' (NT).

God's Plan – possibly show diagram.

Link to Bible passage – two incidents – one week apart – in both occasions – Jesus comes into the midst of the disciples – and speaks 'peace' to them.

Read John 20:19-23

1. Receive the Peace that is greater than our fears

Highlight – double proclamation of peace here – more than just a greeting, but a declaration that the Prince of Peace has triumphed and is present in their midst...

a. Frees us from our Fears

Disciples – living in fear (vs. 19-20). Obvious link to how we all face many fears (worth unpacking). Into the midst of this, Jesus, came, speaking a word of 'Peace' and showing Himself fully alive.

Worth a brief segway into the 'physicality' of the resurrection body – especially in Luke's version (24:39, 42-43). This is true peace and wellbeing in our physical world – as well as a foretaste of the complete 'shalom' in the new creation.

Application – invite the Prince of Peace to come, reveal Himself to us and free us from our fears.

b. Empowers us for our Purpose

Second proclamation of peace, is accompanied by Jesus commissioning them and breathing the Spirit on them. It's as if, having given them peace for themselves, they are now to go and proclaim this true message of peace to a broken world, that needs reconciling to the Creator (notice the emphasis on forgiveness). The breathing of the Spirit is a sign of the new life and the new power that they are to receive.

Application – receive the Spirit, in order to fulfill our true purpose in the world (signpost to Session 5 on purpose).

2nd incident a week later – read *John 20:24-29*

2. Receive the Peace that is greater than our doubts

Brief background on Thomas – missed the first meeting! Clearly someone who wanted physical evidence and signs. Briefly unpack whole issue of doubt.

Jesus appears again with another proclamation of peace, this time specifically addressing Thomas' doubts. (Significant that Jesus directly addresses what Thomas has verbalised, highlighting that He's alive and present, even when we don't see Him!).

Jesus graciously invites Thomas to see and touch. Thomas responds with his magnificent declaration: "my Lord and my God". Jesus' response is very significant for Thomas and for us: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (vs. 29).

Application – importance of true faith (the word 'believe' appears six times in vs. 24-31). This true faith (believing without seeing), is more than just intellectual assent, it's even more than trusting in Jesus – it's a commitment of our whole lives to him.

Response

- Invite the risen Jesus to come to You – to free you from your fears and your doubts, and to fill you with His Spirit.
- Come back – two more sessions – freedom and purpose. Go to groups. Read chapter 3.

SESSION FOUR: LIVING IN FREEDOM

JOHN 21

¹Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way:

²Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³“I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Reinstates Peter

¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

²⁰Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²²Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” ²³Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

²⁴This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Introduction

Highlight the universal longing for freedom – focus in on the importance of us being free on the inside – in the present, from our past, for the future.

Set-up story of Simon Peter – brief recap of his ‘failures’, majoring on his thrice denial of Jesus. Yet within a few weeks of this incident, he’s there on the Day of Pentecost – the first leader of the new church, and someone who is still celebrated today.

What happened? 1. He encountered the risen Jesus. 2. He was freed, forgiven and restored by Jesus.

Hence, there is hope for us all: “Your future is greater than your failure; the call is greater than the fall!”

1. Freedom from Past Frustration (vs. 1-14)

Personal illustration, connecting points about the frustration when things aren’t working!

Briefly connect with the story of Peter and the other 6 disciples – fishing, all night, caught nothing. Yet into this picture of frustration, Jesus comes to them, instructs them, they obey Him and experience the miraculous catch of fish. They go ashore and receive His invitation to ‘come and have breakfast’.

Application – Jesus is alive and willing to help (He knows more about life than we do); we have to obey His instructions; let the ‘miracles’ draw us closer to the ‘miracle-maker’.

John 20:15-17

2. Freedom from Past Failure

We have all failed – many times! But don’t need to be held back from the consequences of past failure – Simon Peter is the supreme example of this.

Highlight how Jesus helped Peter face up to what had happened in order to free him – charcoal fire, 3 times asking ‘do you love me?’, mirroring Peter 3 times denying Him. Jesus loves us enough to go to the root of our sin and failure – in order that we might be truly forgiven.

Application – open up to Jesus – invite Him to speak to you about areas of past sin and failure – and receive his forgiveness and freedom.

3. Freedom for Future Purpose

Focus on how for Peter, it looked like his whole future (as a disciple and a leader) was over. Yet, Jesus not only forgave him and freed him from his past failure he recommissioned him for his future calling as a shepherd of God’s people. Again note, the 3-fold commission: “feed my lambs...take care of my sheep...feed my sheep”. The early chapters of Acts and the early church history show us how stunningly effective this restoration and recommissioning was.

(If time – you could include a brief conclusion on the whole theme of comparison. Jesus lovingly

confronts Peter for his all-too-human response of comparing his future to 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' – see vs. 18-23).

Application – receive fresh words of restoration and recommissioning. (Get free from the comparison trap).

Response

- Invite Jesus to come and free you – past, present and future
- Encouragement – group; chapter 4 of the book – final session next week on Purpose.

SESSION FIVE: FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

ACTS 9:1-9

¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

Introduction

Connecting points on the importance of purpose and why we all need a 'reason for being' in order to feel fully alive.

All at different points. It may be that right now you are

- Living with a *Lack of Purpose*
- Living with a *Misguided Purpose*

Great news today is that we can all go on a journey of finding and fulfilling our true purpose.

Example of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul. Some who had a very misguided sense of purpose, and whose whole purpose was transformed by meeting the risen Jesus... three key lessons, three things we, like Saul need:

1. A Transformed Motivation

Brief background to Saul – persecution of the followers of Jesus. Likelihood of him being 'convicted' that something was wrong (see Acts 26:14b).

Brief link to the story – a real encounter with the risen, glorified Jesus – which led to him falling to the ground, and being blinded. (Not just a vision – light and a voice). Significance of this encounter, because of his outright hostility to Jesus and His followers. Led to a completely transformed motivation – the greatest proponent of Christianity.

Application – Jesus is Alive. We can now encounter Jesus by His Spirit. As we do, He will begin to change our motivation.

2. An Eternal Perspective

Living just for this current life is short-sighted and ultimately futile. Paul is one of the best sources for what our future life will look like – which frees us from the fear of death and fills us with the hope of resurrection life.

Worth briefly unpacking in this final message the ‘transformed physicality’ (Tom Wright) of our future beyond death – a future that means that, like Jesus, we will receive new resurrection bodies, and we will live in a new creation (heaven on earth).

Application – Rather than providing an escapist mentality, this eternal perspective, helps us make the most of our current lives, in serving God’s purposes (see 1 Corinthians 15:58). This new freedom from the fear of death and eternal hope, gives us the confidence to make the most of our lives right now. (This gives a link into point 3).

3. Discovering our Unique Life Pathway

As well as recognising our overall life purpose, each of us need to go on a journey of discovering our specific life pathway. Example of Paul – a unique calling.

Application – briefly cf. to practical keys to discovering one’s unique life pathway –

- Recognise Your Uniqueness
- Take a Holistic Approach
- Go on a Journey of Discovery
- Receive Ongoing Guidance and Strength.

Response

- Final invitation – receive Jesus and His purpose for your life.
- Ongoing exhortation – to keep journeying with Jesus – to pray, to read your Bible, to stay