



Theme Resource Pack
May 2025
(4 - 31 May)

Introduction

'New and Improved' is an ever-present slogan, a promise continually made to us from supermarket shelves, high street windows, and the banner ads we scroll past on our phones.

'This thing is like the old thing but better!'

It's a potent combination. A recognisable brand gets a new lease of life and we get to satisfy two deep (and often conflicting) human longings — for familiarity and novelty. On the one hand we want what we know, and on the other hand we want to discover new things — to see what we could be missing out on.

While many things steadily improve over time, often of course these 'New and improved' slogans let us down. Perhaps the new thing isn't especially new or improved, or it is new but is far from improved and in fact the new version is worse. And yet we keep coming back — so deep is the pull for *what we know* and *what we don't know*, the promise of the best of both worlds.

'Can I just have what I already know... but also have it be loads better?'

And Jesus look at us with love and says, "Yes."

Because with Jesus, the loving Word at the heart of the universe, we can find — embedded in the old — the seeds of the new. God's Kingdom is new and improved — it is ever expanding, growing, blossoming, flourishing.

Those familiar stirrings and longings in our heart — for security, belonging, fulfilment, purpose — find new expression in God's kingdom. The 'New and improved' promise of Christ is not a quick fix, or a sticker slapped over the same old thing. Rather it is Jesus coming alongside us and promising to lead us step by step into a new, richer, deeper life — in all its vivid tapestry of emotion. Jesus does not promise us an easy life but he does promise us love.

And this is not a bolt from the blue — Jesus finds us where we are and takes us from the old into the new. Jesus gives us what we all long for — being cherished. It's what we already know... but it's loads better.

Weekly Overview

- Old leaves, new leaves
- Old weariness, new wings
- Old ways, new ways
- Old endings, new starts

Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2025 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! Each week runs Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

Old leaves, new leaves (Week 1, 4 May)

Introduction: Our relationship with God is not static. It is constant but it's always alive — alive to who we are in God, who we have been and who we can be. This week our readings focus on Peter turning over a new leaf. The resurrection has vividly depicted a new leaf, not only for Peter but for God's relationship with all of humanity. What new leaves are we turning over like Peter? How is our relationship with God growing and changing? And just like Peter was to use the same grit and ingenuity he showed as a fisherman in being an evangelist how is God taking our old lives and making them into something new?

Setting the scene: Pages turning in a book.

Seeds to sow: What are some of the skills Peter's old job as a fisherman could have helped him with in his new role as an evangelist for God's kingdom?

- 1. John 21: 1-3 Old boat, new possibilities...** Peter falls back on *what* he knows and *where* he knows, and in the midst of that familiarity — Jesus is able to work something new. This fisherman is about to upskill his fishing for a far bigger catch...
- 2. John 21: 4-6 Old side, new side...** The disciples do a 180, and have dramatically different results. How often in our lives does Jesus challenge us to simply change direction on one thing and try again?
- 3. John 21: 7-8 Old day, new dawn...** For Peter there were two dawns that morning. The first at daybreak and a second dawning as he recognises his Lord.
- 4. John 21: 9-14 Old fish, new fish...** Jesus already had fish on the BBQ but he still invites the disciples to contribute from their catch. Jesus loves us to contribute what we have, to join in the generosity. While his return was mindbogglingly new, the scene of a simple meal on the shore would have been a comforting one they immediately recognised.
- 5. John 21: 15-19 Old Peter, new Peter...** Three times Peter rejects Christ and now three times Peter accepts Jesus. The power of repetition to heal our souls and give them a new start.
- 6. Lamentations 3: 22-23 Old night, new morning...** God's love, God's mercies, aren't just ancient, or timeless, or eternal — each morning they are new. Always fresh, always immediate.
- 7. Lamentations 3: 24 Old fears, new hope....** With the ever newness of God we can hold on to hope, tomorrow is another day.

Old weariness, new wings (Week 2, 11 May)

Introduction: The human body is in a constant process of restoration. Our respiratory systems, our circulation, our muscles expand and contract, go round and recover, expend and recover. We are perpetually being restored, reenergised, propelled forward. Our bodies are simultaneously old and new, regenerating. Our spirits, embedded in these bodies, are similarly in a process of constant restoration. Through Christ each day we are 'new and improved', aging is a continual time of growth, we keep on growing into Christ.

Setting the scene: An eagle soaring.

Seeds to sow: What is something new that you would like to try? And what is something old that you used to do that you'd like to go back to?

- 1. John 10: 22-30 Old herd, new herd...** Being a follower of Jesus is being part of a new herd. As Bob Dylan sang "You gotta serve somebody..." and as sociable humans we will always follow some herd, some trend, some habit. Are we in the herd we want to be in or do we want to follow something new? Old dogs can always learn new tricks.
- 2. Isaiah 40: 27-28 Old understandings, new insights...** The immediacy of the theology in these ancient texts is astounding. This is a God who deeply knows us — not an abstract force or a divine being living on a plane removed from us. We are not below God's notice. Every generation this insight is new — that God knows and cares, we do not slip past God's love.
- 3. Isaiah 40: 29 Old powerlessness, new strength...** Where the world sees powerlessness God see strength.
- 4. Isaiah 40: 30 Old body, new energy...** There is a youngness, and newness and vitality to following God whatever our age. The newness of God keeps us young!
- 5. Isaiah 40: 31 Old weariness, new wings...** Some seabirds like albatrosses who spend most of their lives in the air, have a 'wing lock'. They are able to fix their wings in position and just ride the air — meaning it can use up less energy just floating on the air than it does standing upright on the ground. With Christ's wingspan spread wide for us we can ride the wind too.
- 6. Isaiah 43: 18-19 Old things and new things...** We often come to God in prayer asking for new things — but perhaps even more often God comes to us and invites us to do new things. It's possible we are more set in our ways than God sometimes.
- 7. Isaiah 43: 20-21 Old wilderness, new water...** Our response to new water — ancient and ever new — is praise!

Old ways, new ways (Week 3, 18 May)

Introduction: The invitation to God's ongoing unfolding kingdom that stretches from Alpha to Omega is to a new way of living. Christian faith is not a rejection of the world — rather it offers us a new way of being *in* the world. How are we embracing the world and our new identities in it? The story of newness at the heart of Christianity is enacted every time someone becomes a Christian... Our Christian communities are ever new and are enhanced every time the community gets wider and more people discover a home there.

Setting the scene: Someone hastily getting more and more chairs and adding an extra table to the feast as more people arrive.

Seeds to sow: What old thing has been made new in your lifetime?

- 1. John 13: 31-35 Old identity, new identity...** One of the ironies of these verses is that this commandment is hardly new. This shouldn't be coming out of the blue for any disciple half-paying attention by this point! And yet there *is* something new happening... The kicker comes in verse 35 — this commandment is now to be so embedded in their lives as to become their identity, how they are known and recognised. They are not just to love another they are to be *known for loving one another*. Their acts of compassion and nurture are to be painted on a broader canvass, a bigger stage — the world. This commandment is 'new and improved' as it matures in their lives, rippling outwards!
- 2. 2 Corinthians 5: 16-19 Old creation, new creation...** We are both a 'recipient of' and a 'means of' reconciliation. We are grace in action, gifted from God, such is the creativity of life as a new creation.
- 3. 2 Corinthians 5: 20-21 Old hang-ups, new ambassadors...** Who we have been and where we have come from are not barriers to us being ambassadors for Christ — it is because of who we have been and where we have been that we are who we are and where we are now.
- 4. Romans 6: 5-11 Old death, new life...** Death has no dominion, no last word. He lives. Through him, we live.
- 5. Isaiah 65: 17-18 Old earth, new earth...** A compelling vision of a peaceable kingdom... one that will be familiar but also novel!
- 6. Isaiah 65: 19-25 Old tears, new tears...** Despair and anguish become relief and joy — the wonderful absurdity of transformed relationship — the old is not abandoned, it is transformed, made new.
- 7. Revelation 21: 1-6 Old thirst, new spring...** Alpha to Omega, all things made new, each and every thirst acknowledged.

Old endings, new starts (Week 4, 25 May)

Introduction: One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that it is ancient but ever new. Our faith does not depend on actions or contracts made between distant ancestors and mysterious forces — it depends on a real relationship between us and God right now. It has deep roots that connects us to those times, but we are not hostages to them. Jesus Christ is not afraid of the new — new chances, new starts, new life.

Life with Jesus is 'new and improved' as it draws us further into the mystery of God's timeless love. It's not a blank cheque for material prosperity... that's a hollow kind of improvement that can't buy happiness or fulfilment. But it will speak to our deepest longings and needs, with a saviour who draws right alongside us and is with us to the very end... and beyond.

Setting the scene: A whiteboard, a chalkboard, a smart board, a ledger, a spreadsheet, all wiped clean.

Seeds to sow: Where do we long for a new start in our churches today?

- 1. John 5: 1-9 Old isolation, new start...** A man, ignored and alone, literally stepped over, is given an electric new start.
- 2. John 5: 10-18 Old hierarchies, new Messiah...** The tension of Jesus, both God and man, acting with compassion to restore this man to his community — directly undermines the authority of the religious hierarchy. Rather than explain why they were custodians over a system that left a man to suffer alone for decades... they try to pin Jesus on a technicality and Jesus calls their bluff.
- 3. Ezekiel 11: 19-20 Old stone, new heart...** God softens hard hearts, making them *new and improved!*
- 4. Psalm 51: 1-9 Old transgressions, new mercies...** A chance for a new start. In this poem is the catharsis at the heart of our relationship with God. There is redemption, there is newness, there is a way back.
- 5. Psalm 51: 10-15 Old heart, new praise...** Through God our focus can move outwards and upwards, rather than inwards and downwards.
- 6. Psalm 51: 16-19 Old offerings, new sacrifice...** What does God actually want from us?
- 7. Romans 6: 1-4 The same old ways, or newness of life!** The cycle of grace is not a closed loop, it's an ever-growing spiral, that not only grants us a new start but the invitation to expand the spiral of grace ever wider, drawing more and more into newness of life. It's what we know we need deep down in our hearts... but loads better = New and Improved!