

PROPERTY OF BAPTIST



# JESUS

FOLLOWING HIM THEN, FOLLOWING HIM NOW



A 7-WEEK STUDY ON  
THE LIFE OF JESUS



# Contents

Introduction . . . . . 3

## WEEK 1

**Birth, Early Childhood, and the Beginning of Jesus' Public Life . . . . . 10**

- Day 1: Believe It or Not . . . . . 13
- Day 2: Promise Keeper . . . . . 14
- Day 3: Fight or Flight . . . . . 15
- Day 4: The Easy Way or the God Way . . . 16
- Day 5: Something Better . . . . . 17
- Day 6: A New Way . . . . . 18
- Day 7: Hometown Disadvantage . . . . . 19
- Weekend: The Woman at the Well . . . . . 20
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 21

## WEEK 2

**The Ministry of Jesus (Miracles, Signs and Wonders) . . . . . 24**

- Day 1: Direct Line . . . . . 27
- Day 2: Party Invitation . . . . . 28
- Day 3: Antidote for Busyness . . . . . 29
- Day 4: Upside Down is The Right Side Up. 30
- Day 5: Moving From What If to What Is . . 31
- Day 6: Doubt Your Doubt, Not Your Faith. 32
- Day 7: Family Matters . . . . . 33
- Weekend: The Calling of the Disciples. . . 34
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 35

## WEEK 3

**The Ministry of Jesus (Teaching and Preaching) . . . . . 38**

- Day 1: Planting Season . . . . . 41
- Day 2: Storm Survival Kit . . . . . 42
- Day 3: Time to Get Going . . . . . 43
- Day 4: Lunch to Go! . . . . . 44
- Day 5: You Are What You Eat . . . . . 45
- Day 6: When Traditions Rule . . . . . 46
- Day 7: The Cross Way, The Only Way . . . 47
- Weekend: Dealing With Rejection When Following Jesus. . . . . 48
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 49

## WEEK 4

**The Ministry of Jesus (The God-led Life). . 52**

- Day 1: Eat Humble Pie . . . . . 55
- Day 2: Second Chances . . . . . 56
- Day 3: Muddy Miracle . . . . . 57

- Day 4: We The Sheep . . . . . 58
- Day 5: Won't You Be My Neighbor? . . . . 59
- Day 6: Ban the Barn . . . . . 61
- Day 7: A Door Called Narrow . . . . . 62
- Weekend: Following Jesus Means Forgiving Those Who Wrong Us. . . . . 63
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 64

## WEEK 5

**The Years of Growing Opposition . . . . . 68**

- Day 1: Chronicles of the Lost . . . . . 71
- Day 2: When the Tables are Turned . . . . 72
- Day 3: Dead Men Tell Tales. . . . . 73
- Day 4: Double Down Prayer . . . . . 74
- Day 5: Deal or No Deal . . . . . 75
- Day 6: Digging Holes . . . . . 76
- Day 7: Donkeyback Ride . . . . . 77
- Weekend: A Zeal for God. . . . . 78
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 79

## WEEK 6

**The Final Week . . . . . 82**

- Day 1: The G.O.A.T Commandment . . . . 86
- Day 2: Heart Over Wallet . . . . . 87
- Day 3: Signs and Times. . . . . 88
- Day 4: Ready...Set...Wait!. . . . . 89
- Day 5: Extravagant Love . . . . . 90
- Day 6: Greatness Redefined . . . . . 91
- Day 7: Help ~~Wanted~~ Needed . . . . . 92
- Weekend: Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet 93
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 94

## WEEK 7

**A Sham Trial, A Cruel Death, and A Glorious Resurrection . . . . . 96**

- Day 1: *Unitate et Labore* (In Unity & Work) . 100
- Day 2: Plausible Deniability . . . . . 101
- Day 3: Guilty Until Proven Innocent. . . . 102
- Day 4: The Way of the Cross . . . . . 103
- Day 5: From Death to Life . . . . . 104
- Day 6: No Proof Required . . . . . 105
- Day 7: Your Mission, Should You Accept it. 106
- Weekend: The Resurrection Brings Life. 107
- Group Discussion Guide . . . . . 108

**Conclusion: Go and Tell . . . . . 110**

**Appendix 1 . . . . . 111**

**Appendix 2 . . . . . 114**

# Introduction

Have you ever longed to walk and talk with Jesus? Would you like to hear Him teach and watch Him perform miracles? Would you like to know what He said about His mission, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, sin, the Christian life, salvation, eternal life, and the future?



***This is a starting point and an invitation  
to follow Jesus and fearlessly make Him  
known daily.***



That is what this chronological study of the Life of Jesus is all about. We want to learn what it meant to follow Jesus from those who followed Him: His disciples. Looking through the eyes of the disciples and those who encountered Him, we want to learn what it meant to follow Him then and to know how to better follow Him now. We will see Jesus differently than we see by reading just one of the gospels or reading them one at a time. We will see all the events in the order that they likely happened. We will find details one writer may have left out but another included. We will get to read the same stories told from different perspectives.

The life of Jesus was rich beyond measure. No book can ever be written to fully capture it, and no study guide is comprehensive enough to present the complete picture of who Jesus is. This is a starting point and an invitation to follow Jesus and fearlessly make Him known daily. We hope that the Holy Spirit will reveal Jesus to you and that you will see and hear Him through your study of His life and His teachings.

Let's discover Jesus together.



# How To Use This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help us dig deeper and reflect on and apply biblical truths gleaned from *The Life and Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth*, which weaves selections from the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) into one continuous story.

Each week of this 7-week study will be composed of the following elements:

- **Big Picture** provides an overview of the life and teachings of Jesus covered by the week's reading.
- **Personal Study Guide** offers a 7-day reading guide and reflection questions. We encourage you to write your thoughts and prayers down. Each day includes a section to read, questions to reflect on, and a prayer to pray.
- **Weekend Teaching** zooms in to specific encounters and events in Jesus' life. We encourage you to attend a weekend gathering or watch the service online. Write down your takeaways and questions from the weekend teaching and think about how you will apply them.
- **Group Discussion Guide** combines personal study with weekend teaching. You can express your thoughts to others, hear their perspective, and apply the teachings to your own life.

We've also included additional resources to provide further information, insights, and teaching beyond what is covered by this study.



Get additional  
resources mentioned  
in daily readings



# Personal Study Guide

The reflection questions are designed to help you reflect on the Word and gain new perspectives on stories and teachings you may have previously studied. During your study, we pray that you will discover how the life of Jesus impacts every aspect of your life and that your relationship with Jesus will be strengthened.

When you commit to participating in this study, try to set aside *15 minutes daily* when you can read the Gospel story and work through the reflection questions without distraction.

- Pray before reading. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to you.
- Take your time to read, think through, and answer the questions. Space is provided to write your thoughts down, but feel free to use a separate notebook if you'd like.
- Note what the Holy Spirit brings to your attention and specific steps you will take in response.
- End in prayer. Ask God for the grace to live out what you've learned.

If you plan on reading the study guide with your group, read ahead and be prepared to participate in weekly discussions.

# Group Commitment

Since this study is group-based, we encourage every participant to be in a group. *Groups are most effective when participants are consistent in attending and sharing!* The goal of this commitment form is to help get everyone on the same page on goals and expectations for your time together. Our groups are designed to be a safe place to grow as a family of disciples on mission.

## ***A Family...***

Everyone longs to belong—to be known, accepted, and cared for. As a family, we cultivate an environment where we care for one another.

## ***...Of Disciples...***

Jesus is our living leader, and He's called each of us to follow Him with our lives, so our groups work together to help each other follow Jesus more closely by reading and applying the Bible to our lives, having honest conversations about where we are spiritually, and asking God to help us make Him known to the people in our lives who don't yet know Him.

## ***...On Mission.***

Jesus invites us to expand His family of followers by fearlessly demonstrating and declaring our faith. Our groups are places that help us share our stories and how the Gospel has changed our stories. Groups help us discern how the Holy Spirit calls us to reach others with the hope of Jesus and restore what's broken in our world.

Group gatherings are intentionally designed to be safe, fun, relational, and life-giving environments where relational, spiritual, and missional growth happens. To maintain this environment, we ask all participants to commit to each other in the following ways:

- ***Priority:*** While we are in this group, we will give the group meetings priority out of respect for other people's commitment to be there.
- ***Participation:*** Everyone is encouraged to participate, and no one dominates the conversation. You have the gift of your life story. Please share that gift with others.

- **Respect:** Everyone has the right to their opinions, and all questions are encouraged and respected.
- **Confidentiality:** Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the meeting without permission.
- **Care and Support:** Permission is given to call upon each other at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group will provide care for every member.
- **Accountability:** We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable for commitments we make in whatever loving ways we decide upon. Unsolicited advice-giving is not permitted.
- **Empty Chair:** Our group will work together to fill the empty chair—either someone in the church who is not in a small group or an unchurched person or couple.
- **Mission:** We agree as a group to reach out and invite others to join us and to work toward reaching and restoring the world around us.
- **Serving:** We will encourage one another to serve God within the church and to get outside the church’s walls to serve in a way that impacts the world around us.

**I agree to all the above:**

signature

date



# Foreword

Undoubtedly, Jesus is an enormously influential and important figure in world history. We count the years from His arrival. Jesus is the most talked about and written about historical figure. It all begs the question for us: **“Who is He?”**

In His lifetime, He made the audacious claim that He was the Son of God. But He also referred to Himself as the Son of Man. For much of His lifetime, He led a small, dedicated group of followers; people who believed Him to be the Messiah, the promised Deliverer King of Israel.



***This single event—God living and dying as a man—becomes the most impressive and consequential event in the entire history of humanity.***



Yet, during His time, notable religious leaders and scholars disputed His claims and rejected Him as the Son of God.

They found many of His actions offensive and His statements so contrary to their teachings and traditions that they opposed Him and eventually succeeded in having Him put to death by the hand of Roman authorities. Afterward, they fabricated lies to oppose the spread of His teachings. They used unlawful and violent means to snuff out the movement He started.

Today, Jesus remains a controversial figure. Many have disputed the record of Jesus' life in the Gospels. Others have questioned His identity and reduced Him to a gifted teacher or prophet. Gospel writers presented His miracles as supernatural. Today, however, many rationalize them away as a normal function of nature that was misunderstood at the time, or they dismiss them altogether as myths.

So, who is the real Jesus? And why should we follow Him and fearlessly make Him known?

The Gospels are a massive treasure trove of information about Jesus—detailed, personal, eyewitness, blow-by-blow accounts of what He said, what He did, and who He was. We find a picture of a man who was far more than merely extraordinary. He claimed that what He taught and did was essential and, indeed, the key to eternal life. Through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, He showed that His mission was far beyond inspiring a new religious movement; it was about forming a new people.

Let's put it this way: If the story of Jesus is a myth, if the reported events of His life along with His claims and teachings are the fabrication of a small group of conspirators, then it certainly doesn't matter, and we must define the meaning of human life from our own imaginations. But if Jesus Christ is who He says He is—the Son of God who came to earth to live as a son of man, a human being who died at the hands of fellow human beings and who was raised from the dead three days later—then that changes everything.

This single event—God living and dying as a man—becomes the most impressive and consequential event in the entire history of humanity. It demands our full response because it ultimately leaves us accountable for how we live.

As we dig into the Gospels, we will see that Jesus' conception and birth were both ordinary and extraordinary. He was conceived miraculously by the Holy Spirit, born to a virgin, and lived a normal human life. The pre-existent One became flesh and blood.

...and that is where our journey begins.

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# WEEK 1

## *Birth, Early Childhood, and the Beginning of Jesus' Public Life*

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**M**uch has been written about the birth of Jesus. But not much is available about His early childhood except small snippets. At two years old, His family had to flee to Egypt because a murderous tyrant threatened His life. The action of Herod was one of someone who was anti-Jesus. It was representative of how the kingdoms of this world would react to the rulership of Jesus. And as we follow Jesus, we will meet opposition from the world that opposes Jesus.

Upon their return to Israel, Jesus' family settled in Nazareth. Here, the Son of God grew in stature and in favor with God and man. Growth was part of His life and ours. There is no Scriptural evidence of Jesus performing miracles before His baptism. He grew as boys grow—but without sin. At age 12, Jesus astonished the Rabbis (the word "*rabbi*" comes from Hebrew and means "teacher" or "master") with His questions and His insight into the Law.

He could have stood independent from His parents but chose to "remain in submission to them" instead. Here is a model teenager working out His independence and "distance" from His parents while remaining in submission to them and without sin.

Nothing is written about Jesus after age 12 until He started His ministry. The next time we see Jesus is at His baptism. The baptism of Jesus represents His initiation into Spirit-empowered ministry. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb. His baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry. First, by stepping into the waters of the Jordan, Jesus, though sinless, was identifying with sinners and plunging Himself into the stream of human misery. He did this to "fulfill all righteousness." Immediately after His baptism, God publicly proclaimed Jesus' divine identity—The Son in whom the Father was pleased.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus and empowered Him for ministry. To be clear, the fullness of God was in Him before His baptism. He was, is, and always will be God. He did not "become divine" at His baptism or any other time. He was God before the world began and was intimately involved in its creation. However, as God, He "took on the nature of a servant," and in this limitedness, He was born of a woman, grew up as a child in submission to His parents, and, like anyone else entering ministry, needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit before He took on the burden of proclaiming the Kingdom, healing the sick, raising the dead, and suffering for righteousness' sake.

Before His baptism, not a single healing is recorded. After His baptism, all who came to Him were healed not by His diagnostic ability or His knowledge of herbs but by the power that flowed from Him, which He received when the Spirit came upon Him. Not only that, but Jesus also possessed extraordinary spiritual authority over the powers of darkness. This was, of course, latent in Jesus from the beginning, but it became evident to all when His public ministry began, and He moved in the continual power of the anointing of God.

After His baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness, where He fasted and prayed for 40 days and nights. Then, the devil came to tempt Him. The devil set traps for Jesus by tempting Him to abuse His power for showmanship, tempting Him to “test God” to prove Jesus’ sonship in a matter of foolishness leading to death, and by tempting Him with a shortcut to kingship and glory without His sacrifice on the cross. But Jesus thwarted the enemy’s lies with the truth of scripture.

Jesus was tempted so that He could help those who are tempted. When He emerged from the wilderness after the forty days, He appeared once more on the bank of the Jordan, and John the Baptist pointed Him out as the one he had often spoken about. Some of John’s disciples immediately followed Jesus, including John the Apostle. He was soon joined by Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. With His newly attached followers, Jesus left the scene of John the Baptist’s ministry and went north to Cana in Galilee to attend a wedding to which He had been invited.

Here, He first displayed His miraculous powers by turning water into wine. It was a manifestation of His glory intended especially for His new disciples, whom, we are told, afterward, believed in Him, which means that they were convinced that He was Messiah.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day’s reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week’s reading is from p5 – p33 (Sections 1.1-2.18) of the *Life of Jesus* book.

# Day 1: Believe It or Not



*Read p5 – p9 (Section 1.1- 1.4)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus:** – Section 1.3 & 1.4: Mary and Zechariah each received an angelic visitor bearing good news that the impossible would be possible. However, the responses of Mary and Zechariah were markedly different. Mary believed. Zechariah doubted.

What's typical for you? Do you respond to God with Mary's faithful submission or Zechariah's doubtful reluctance?

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God promised and sent light into darkness. Where do you need the light of God in your life right now?

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**Prayer:** Ask God to help you discern specific instances where your doubts have made you reject God's Word. Pray for a heart that yields to God and praises Him no matter the situation.



# Day 2: Promise Keeper



*Read p10-p13 (Section 1.5-1.10)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Sections 1.5 & 1.7:** Did you know that Zechariah's name means "Yahweh remembers"? The resounding message around the birth of Jesus, whether through Mary's and Zechariah's songs of praise, the message of the angels to the shepherds, or by Simeon and Anna to Mary and Joseph, is that God had remembered and kept His promise to send a savior into the world. Jesus was God's greatest promise.

Has someone ever made you a big promise and "forgot" to keep it? How has this affected your ability to trust God?

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Which of God's promises can you hold on to today in faith that God remembers?

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**Prayer:** Reflect on the promises God has kept in your life and praise Him. Ask God to give you the grace to wait patiently for His promises yet to come true instead of acting prematurely in your own wisdom.

**Additional Resources:** *Understanding the Magi* Video Clip from Got Questions Ministries

# Day 3: Fight or Flight



*Read p14-p17 (Section 1.11-1.15)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 1.11 & 1.12:** Jesus faced opposition from the very beginning. An ancient, powerful enemy working through an insecure king sought to kill Him. But Joseph, Mary, and the wise men listened to God's promptings and got young Jesus out of harm's way.

Do you recall a time when God got you or someone you know out of a harmful situation or relationship? What does that tell you about the character of God?

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Are you sensitive enough to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and willing to respond when they come?

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**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to help you be more sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and willing to respond in obedience. Ask Him to make you more aware of the enemy's schemes and help you respond.

**Additional Resources:** Article from Desiring God Ministries on what Jesus did for the 30 years preceding the start of His public ministry.

# Day 4: The Easy Way or the God Way



*Read p18-p21 (Section 2.1-2.4)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 2.3:** Jesus went to the wilderness to fast and pray after His Baptism. There, the devil tempted Him three times, each time presenting Jesus with an easy way out of God's plan. Each time, Jesus fended off the temptation by quoting scripture.

What's the most recent temptation you've faced? In what ways does the enemy typically tempt you?

Is scripture your "go-to" whenever you are tempted? If not, what steps are you taking to fill your heart and mind with God's Word?

**Prayer:** Temptations are part of life, but we can resist temptation with the Holy Spirit's help. Pray that God will give you the power to resist temptation. If you have given in to temptation, confess it to God and turn away from it.

**Additional Resources:** Video Clip from Got Questions Ministries on the meaning and purpose of Jesus' temptations.



# Day 5: Something Better



*Read p22-p25 (Section 2.5-2.9)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 2.8:** In His first recorded miracle, Jesus showed that He'd come to offer something better. Better wine from water used for ritual washing (washing hands with a cup) pointed to a better covenant not based on rituals but on His blood to wash our sins.

Jesus responds to our scarcity with abundant and better life. Where in your life are you "running out of wine" and needing abundant and better life?

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Jesus' mother, Mary, was the catalyst for the beginning of Jesus' ministry. How is God calling you to be a catalyst in ushering in the Kingdom of God where you live, work, and play?

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**Prayer:** How would you fill in this sentence: "If Jesus cares about a wedding that runs out of wine, that must mean He also cares about..." Then, offer that situation to God in prayer.

**Additional Resources:** Video Clip from Bible Explainer on Jesus' Surprising First Sign.

# Day 6: A New Way



*Read p26-p30 (Section 2.10-2.14)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 2.10:** Nicodemus, a respected leader and teacher, humbled himself and sought Jesus out. Jesus revealed to Nicodemus the most fundamental truth of Christianity: we cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless we are born again. Sinners don't just need to try harder or have a few things adjusted. They need to be remade entirely—reborn.

Nicodemus came to Jesus because he was curious about the things of God. On a scale of 1-10, how curious are you about Jesus, and does your curiosity bring you to Jesus?

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According to Jesus, we must be born again to experience life in God's Kingdom. Are you born again? What difference has this new birth made in your life?

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**Prayer:** Take inventory of your spiritual life. Have you been trusting the wrong things to get you into the Kingdom, please God, or earn His favor? Ask the Lord to help you trust in Him fully.

**Additional Resources:** What does it mean to be born again? Video Clip from Got Questions Ministries.

# Day 7: Hometown Disadvantage



*Read p31-p33 (Section 2.15-2.18)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 2.18:** Jesus returned to Nazareth, the town of His youth. He spoke in the synagogue, but the townspeople could not accept that the boy they watched grow up could be the Messiah. They drove Him to the edge of the town, intending to throw Him off a cliff.

Have you ever faced rejection because of your faith? What lesson from Jesus' rejection can you apply to your own rejections?

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The people of Nazareth missed out big time by rejecting Jesus. In what ways have you been rejecting Jesus? What do you think you've missed as a result?

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**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith in Him so that you might be willing to stand up for Jesus even when others disbelieve and reject you. Pray that your heart will be receptive to all that Jesus offers.

# Weekend Teaching: The Woman at the Well



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. If yours is a new group, start with an introduction (name, something about your family or work, and what you hope to get out of this study).

Who is the most interesting person you've ever met, or what is the most interesting conversation you've ever had?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

The Samaritan woman was guarded and deflective in her conversation with Jesus. What are the moments in which you find yourself instinctively "guarded and deflective" in your relationship with others and God? Why?

Jesus was not afraid to admit His thirst and ask for help. What are you thirsting for? Friendship? Acceptance? Community? Forgiveness? Healing? Boldness? Economic security? How is your thirst inviting you to open more deeply to God?

At the outset, the Samaritan woman refused to give Jesus a drink and turned down Jesus' offer of living water. Have pride or past wounds that occurred when being vulnerable kept you from receiving from others? Where do you need to ask for help? (From others? From God?)

Jesus, undeterred by the woman's past, chose to reveal His identity as the Messiah to her to highlight that everyone is invited to a relationship with Jesus. As a result, she moved from invited to invitee. What practical steps can you take to become an invitee?

Jesus told the woman at the well that true worshippers must worship in Spirit and truth. How do you understand this? What is one practical thing you can do this week to live as a worshiper of God in Spirit and truth?

## Closing Prayer

Share requests based on this week's personal and group studies or on other areas of life.

*God, you met the Samaritan woman at the well that day. Meet us in our lives every day. Shower us in your living water, bringing us to new life, fresh and clean. Walk with us as we share the offer of your living water with others so that all might live. Amen.*





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# WEEK 2

## *The Ministry of Jesus (Miracles, Signs and Wonders)*

• • • •



**A**fter being rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus moved His ministry to Capernaum, on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee [See the appendix for an guide to Jesus' movements across the land]. From there, Jesus and His disciples visited villages along the lakeshore and inland. Soon, His popularity soared. Jesus became the talk of the town and the subject of conversation on every boat on the lake and every house in the region. Crowds began to gather around Him—from hundreds to thousands. Jesus became so popular that He could not stay in any town because of the crowds. He had to take them out to the fields and deserts. The country was stirred from end to end, and Galilee was excited about Him.

How was it that He produced such a great and widespread movement? The two main reasons Jesus drew so much attention were His miracles and teachings. But it was His miracles that created the greatest excitement. We are told how the news of the first miracle in Capernaum spread like wildfire through the town and brought crowds to the house where He was staying. With every miracle, the amazement of the people grew. Soon, the streets of the villages and towns were lined with the sick and the curious. Sometimes, He had so many to attend to that He could not find time even to eat.



***His miracles were a natural and essential part of His Messianic work. As the creator, the pain of watching His creation suffer was mitigated only by the joy of restoring them physically and the hope to one day fully restore everything.***



The miracles of Jesus consisted mainly of curing diseases and restoring the physical body from blindness, deafness, leprosy, and the like. He healed at a distance and up close through touch. He also cast out demons, freeing people from spiritual oppression. But the most extraordinary of the miracles of Jesus was the raising of the dead back to life. Beyond this, Jesus also performed

miracles of a physical nature. He walked on water, multiplied bread and fish, and calmed the sea, among others.

Why did Jesus perform miracles? First, as proof that He was sent by God. In the Old Testament, God gave Moses the ability to perform signs to authenticate his mission. It would have been unconvincing for Jesus to announce Himself as sent by God without any signs of a divine mission.

Secondly, the miracles were the natural outflow of the divine fullness in Christ. God was in Him, and His human nature was filled with the Holy Spirit. When such a Being was in the world, it was natural that mighty works should accompany Him. His miracles bore the stamp of His character. They were not mere exhibitions of power, but also of holiness, wisdom, and love.

Thirdly, His miracles were symbols of His spiritual work of salvation. When He opened the eyes of the blind, it showed His power to heal spiritual blindness; when He physically raised the dead, it showed that He had power over spiritual life and death; when He cleansed the leper, it showed His ability to cleanse the world of sin; when He multiplied the loaves to feed the multitudes, He showed that, as the Bread of Life, He'd multiply His life to give spiritual food to multitudes; when He calmed the storm, it was an assurance that He could speak peace to the troubled heart and mind.

Thus, His miracles were a natural and essential part of His Messianic work. As the creator, the pain of watching His creation suffer was mitigated only by the joy of restoring them physically and the hope to one day fully restore everything.

## Personal Study Guide

Before you begin each day's reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week's reading is from p34 – p61 (Sections 3.1-3.43) of the Life of Jesus book.

# Day 1: Direct Line



**Read p34 – p37 (Section 3.1-3.7)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 3.4 & 3.7:** Jesus had power and authority. Publicly, He taught with authority, cast out demons, healed the sick, and forgave sins. Privately, He rose early in the morning to pray.

Prayer is how we communicate directly with God and listen to His Spirit in order to grow in our relationship with Him. How are you doing in this area?

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Following the story of the paralytic man, what is one paralysis in your life from which you want Jesus to release you?

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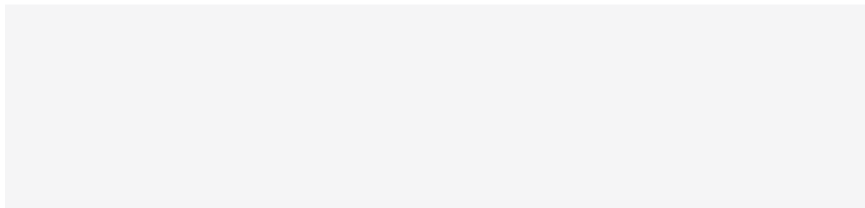
**Prayer:** Thank Jesus for the gift of prayer. Ask Him to speak to you by the power of His Spirit. Pray that you'll recognize Jesus when He shows up in your life.

# Day 2: Party Invitation



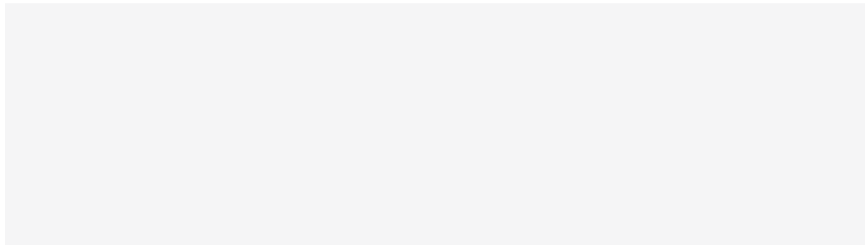
*Read p38 – p41 (Section 3.8-3.12)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

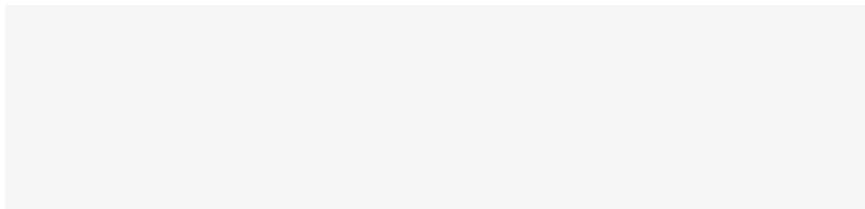


**Today's Focus – Section 3.8:** When Jesus called Levi (aka Matthew), Levi renounced his old way of life and followed Jesus. Then he threw a party and invited his friends (fellow tax collectors and other known “sinners”). He immediately thought about others who needed to meet Jesus, too.

Following Jesus requires renouncing our old way of life. Have you wholly renounced your old ways? What old patterns are you still clinging to?



Levi not only thought about his friends, but he also took a step to bring them to Jesus. What practical steps can you take to bring unbelievers to Jesus?



**Prayer:** Thank God that He has invited each of us to be His friend. Pray that God will give you the courage and opportunity to invite others to Him.

# Day 3: Antidote for Busyness



**Read p42 – p45 (Section 3.13-3.15)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.13:** The Pharisees placed following rules above everything else and, as a result, had lost sight of God Himself and the value of a person. Jesus reminded them that Sabbath was meant for man, not vice versa.

It's easy to slip into a faith based on rule-keeping or performance. How have you fallen into this trap? How do you guard against it?

The Sabbath was meant for man to rest. Where are you in terms of both *physical* and *deeper rest for your souls* that is found in Christ? How can you walk in greater rest in the days to come?

**Prayer:** Do you need rest? Pray for the grace to come to Jesus and find rest for your soul. Pray for wisdom and strength to stop the habits of busyness and to start habits of rest.

**Additional Resources:** *Practicing the Way: Sabbath* (This is a powerful tool to use after this study. You will also find other valuable resources and tools for practicing the way of Jesus).



# Day 4: Upside Down is The Right Side Up



*Read p45 – p49 (Section 3.16-3.25)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.16:** The first four beatitudes focus on our spiritual poverty and need for help to connect with God, our need for comfort in our mourning, our need for strength when we feel weak, and our longing for justice and righteousness. The next three call for an active response—to be merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. The last two warn that there will be resistance or even persecution as we seek to live as followers of Christ.

Which of the needs above have you felt in your life, and how have you experienced God's blessing in those?

Where is God calling you to be more merciful and pure or to work for peace?

**Prayer:** Thank the Lord for being the source of all blessings. Pray that your life will be marked by these beatitudes and that others will see Jesus' care and compassion through you and desire to know Him, too.

**Additional Resources:** The Sermon on the Mount (Check out this 10-part series from the Bible Project. This is a wonderful presentation and explanation of Jesus' most expansive teaching on what it means for the Kingdom of God to come on earth).



# Day 5: Moving From What If to What Is



*Read p49 – p53 (Section 3.26-3.34)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.29:** Life offers an endless supply of things to worry about—finances, health, relationships, the future, etc. Jesus taught us that worrying does not add a single day to our lives. In fact, it may shorten our lives. Worrying shows a lack of faith. According to Jesus, the antidote to worry is faith.

What are you worried about now? What has this worrying cost you?

How do you think praying with thanksgiving could change the way you face worry? What are some ways you can remind yourself that every worry is a wasted opportunity for prayer?

**Prayer:** Praise God for His sovereignty over every detail of your life. Ask Him to help you with your worries, to trust Him, and to guide you in how to respond to worry with faith and trust so that He may give you peace.

**Activity:** This week, practice 'stop and pray' whenever a worry arises. It doesn't matter if it's a long or short prayer; it's about developing a habit of giving our worries over to God.

**Additional Resources:** The *One Minute Pause* app is a great tool to help you release worries and anxieties and invite the peace of God.

# Day 6: Doubt Your Doubt, Not Your Faith



*Read p54 – p58 (Section 3.35-3.39)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.37:** There's no doubt that we all doubt at some point. We doubt our faith, God's love, God's goodness, God's willingness. We doubt ourselves and others, too. John the Baptist doubted. Jesus acknowledged his doubt and encouraged John not to lose faith. Jesus showed beyond a shadow of doubt that God is for us.

John's doubts were based on what Jesus was not doing. In what ways are you tempted to focus on what God is NOT doing in your life instead of what He HAS done?

What can you learn from Jesus' response to John to help you successfully battle doubts?

**Prayer:** Echoing the words of the Father in Mark 9:23-24, "I believe, help my unbelief," bring your doubts to God and confess your faith in God's love, goodness, presence, power, and willingness.

**Additional Resources:** Article on the sources of John The Baptist's doubts and how Jesus responded.

# Day 7: Family Matters



*Read p58 – p61 (Section 3.40-3.43)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 3.43:** Jesus' family, ignorant about His mission and concerned for His safety, planned an intervention. But Jesus made a distinction between His earthly family and His heavenly family. Jesus promised that His true family would be determined by obedience, not blood, genealogy, politics, power, or money. That promise is still valid for us today.

What do you think of when you hear the word "family?" Do you focus more on your earthly family or God's family? Why?

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The greatest love you can show your earthly family is sharing the Gospel and how they can become members of God's family. Are there unbelievers in your earthly family you need to share the Gospel with? What holds you back from doing this?

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**Prayer:** Thank God that you are a member of His family through Jesus. Pray for your earthly family, especially those not walking with Jesus. Ask the Lord to open the door for you to share Jesus with them.

# Weekend Teaching: The Calling of the Disciples



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

Are you a planner or a go-with-the-flow type? Has it worked to your advantage?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

This week's message focused on Jesus' invitation to follow Him. As you begin your time together, take a moment and share a few stories of how you came to know the Lord. What was your "call" like?

Do you recall a time when Jesus called you out of something into something new? Did you accept? How was the transition for you?

In following Jesus, we are also leaving something behind. What habits, relationships, possessions, dreams, or desires do you need to leave behind to follow Jesus? Where are you in the process of leaving?

When Jesus calls us, He invites us to join Him in the work of the Kingdom in our respective fields. Where has God called you to be? How do you see His call on your life playing out in your family, work, and community?

The cost of following Jesus is high, but the disciples left what was temporary (even if valuable) for what was infinitely more valuable and lasting. This should be great news for us, but often it's not. Why do you think this total surrender to God and pursuit of Him is so difficult?

Jesus doesn't simply call the disciples to go and do ministry; He also calls them to be with Him. As you think about what it means for you to be a disciple of Jesus, is it true for you that discipleship is a relationship before it's a task? If so, how so? If not, why not?

## Closing Prayer

Share requests based on this week's personal and group studies or on other areas of life.

As you close today, reflect on the following scripture and pray for strength to follow Jesus and trust Him. Pray for those not yet following Jesus that they will decide to follow Him as Lord and Savior. Encourage each other to pursue the call in your life.

Matthew 16:24, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:7-8





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# WEEK 3

## *The Ministry of Jesus (Teaching and Preaching)*

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**T**he ministry of Jesus was also centered around His teaching. The miracles were impressive, but His preaching spread His fame far and wide. Often, such a multitude would gather to hear Him teach that no room was left even for standing. Sometimes, He'd climb on a boat to speak to the crowds on the lakeshore.

Jesus' teaching was full of images and figures of speech. He was a keen observer of nature—the ways of birds, the growth of the trees, the changes in the seasons—and an equally keen observer of the ways of men in all aspects of life—religion, business, and the household. His preaching had aspects of the country and the life of the time - the lilies growing in the fields, the sheep following the shepherd, the broad and narrow city gates, virgins with their lamps waiting in the darkness for the bridal procession, the Pharisee in his religious garbs, and the tax collector with his head bent at prayer together in the temple; the rich man seated in his palace at a feast, and the beggar lying at his gate with the dogs licking his sores; and hundreds of other images that captured the life of the time.

But the most common form of speech Jesus used to teach was parables. About one-third of all His sayings preserved in the Gospels consists of parables. This shows how they stuck in the memory of His disciples. Jesus took the most everyday objects and incidents around Him—like sewing a piece of cloth on an old garment—and turned them into perfect vehicles for carrying immortal truth. In the same way, we remember sermon illustrations better than the sermon itself, the parables of Jesus have endured for generations.

But it wasn't just His teaching style. First, Jesus' teaching was impactful because of His authority. People were astonished at His teaching because He taught as one with authority, not as the scribes. Jesus spoke as one whose eyes had gazed upon the creation of the universe. He spoke with authority because He was an authority on God and man. He knew both perfectly.

Another quality in Jesus' teaching was boldness. Jesus' boldness came from His settled sense of identity, perfect moral character, and elevated Spiritual position. He did not doubt who He was or what His mission was. That is why He boldly called out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. A third quality clear to His hearers was power. Out of His lips came forth words with creative power, bringing forth life to the dead. The Spirit of God overflowed with His words and captured the souls of His hearers, revitalizing them. A fourth quality in

His teaching was that it was full of grace and love. Despite His tone of authority, His words were gracious and loving. How could they not be when He was love incarnate? Jesus saw people not as they were but as they were meant to be, and He loved them.

What did Jesus teach about? The central idea and the most familiar phrase of His preaching was the Kingdom of Heaven. He began many of His parables with “The kingdom of Heaven...” It meant the new era, which the prophets had predicted and the saints had looked for, had come, and He had brought it. The time of waiting was fulfilled. But not in the way most people thought. Many expected the new era to be full of worldly splendor, political power, and military might. Jesus brought God’s rulership upon the loving and obedient heart.



## ***The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus’ manifesto of the upside-down Kingdom of Heaven.***



The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus’ manifesto of the upside-down Kingdom of Heaven. In this Kingdom, blessed are the poor in Spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. In this Kingdom, you gain by losing, you receive by giving, you are exalted when you are humble, you are strong when you are weak, you rule by serving, and you love those who hate you.

But the soul of Jesus’ preaching was Himself. The main outcome He sought from His listeners was that they would come to Him, learn from Him, follow Him, and obey Him.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day’s reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week’s reading is from p61 – p90 (Sections 3.44-4.19) of the Life of Jesus book.

# Day 1: Planting Season



**Read p61 – p65 (Section 3.44-3.49)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 3.44:** The expectation in planting a seed is that it will sprout and grow. However, the soil that surrounds it determines whether it will develop into a healthy plant. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus looks at four conditions of the soul—our internal soil—that can affect our ability to hear from God and grow in our walk with Jesus.

How would you describe the state of your metaphorical "soil" right now? Is your heart hard, rocky, thorny, or fertile ground?

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Why do you think you are fruitful sometimes, and not at other times? What is one practice you can adopt to help make you become more fruitful?

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**Prayer:** Ask Jesus to make your heart fertile for the seed of His Word to bear fruit in you. Ask Him to make you even more fruitful. Ask Him to grow your faith so your relationship with Him is not shallow and weak, but deep and mature.

**Additional Resources:** Video clip from *The Chosen* of Jesus teaching this parable (and a hint to how Jesus was able to speak to multitudes without a sound system).

# Day 2: Storm Survival Kit



*Read p65 – p69 (Section 3.50-3.54)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.52:** A storm pummeled the disciples' boat and punched the courage right out of them. Jesus calmed the storm, of course, but the story is about more than Jesus rescuing His disciples from a storm or even from their own fear. The story highlights Jesus' sovereignty over the chaos of sin.

How do you react to "life storms" you've experienced? Do you typically try to scoop out the water, or do you look to Jesus?

What storm(s) are you currently facing? Is it mildly upsetting, nerve-wracking, or life-threatening? Do you have faith in Jesus to calm that storm?

**Prayer:** Pray over the storms you face. Ask Jesus to calm the storm and bring peace into whatever situation it may be and peace into your heart. Pray over the storms others face that you know about.



# Day 3: Time to Get Going



**Read p69 – p74 (Section 3.55 -4.2)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.2:** Jesus continuously invited His disciples to play a more active role in ministry by bring people to Him instead of simply being part of the crowd. Instead of simply following Jesus, they were asked to bring the message of Jesus to communities that Jesus hadn't visited. Jesus expects us to do the same. Like the disciples, He gives us power, authority, wisdom, and guidance for the challenges we will face as we get going on mission.

Imagine you were one of the twelve disciples that Jesus was commissioning to go out and represent the Kingdom of God. What questions and concerns would you have?

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How does the fact that Jesus gives us power, authority, wisdom, and guidance affect your willingness to get going?

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**Prayer:** Think through your concerns and worries about going to the people God sends you to and present them to God. Pray for courage, wisdom, power, and authority to speak in the name of Jesus.

**Assignment:** Create a "go list" of people you feel God is sending you to and pray and plan to invite them for the Easter service.

**Additional Resources:** Video of the sending of the twelve from *The Chosen*.



# Day 4: Lunch to Go!



**Read p74 – p78 (Section 4.3-4.5)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.4:** This incredible story of multiplication foreshadows the Gospel truth that God multiplied life through the life, the death, and the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the one life, one death, one resurrection, and one victory of Jesus over death, there are literally millions and millions and millions of Christians around the world.

Pick one of the characters from the story: a disciple, the boy with the food, or someone being fed. Who do you relate to the most and why?

At this point in your life, if God asked you to give up (fill in the blank), would you be obedient? If not, what are some steps you could take to follow God wholeheartedly?

**Prayer:** At each meal today, be sure to thank God for feeding you so generously. Pray for those who are hungry.

**Activity:** Jesus fed the hungry. Consider donating food to a local food pantry this week and perhaps make this a regular/monthly act of kindness.

# Day 5: You Are What You Eat



*Read p78 – p81 (Section 4.6-4.8)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.7:** The phrase “You are what you eat” suggests that physical health is directly connected to the foods we eat regularly. Similarly, our spiritual health is inextricably connected to what we feed our soul. When Jesus explicitly refers to Himself as “the Bread of Life”, He is driving home the message that He is the eternal bread that satisfies our spiritual hunger.

What is the “bread” sustaining you? Where are you searching for satisfaction right now (physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, relationally)?

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Evaluate your spiritual diet. In what ways have you experienced satisfaction in Christ? What practical steps will you take to intentionally “feed on Jesus” every day?

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**Prayer:** As you ponder these, make a list of the areas in your life where you might be trying to find satisfaction in something other than God. Prayerfully ask God to help you move your focus from these things to Him. Next, make a list of things that spiritually feed you. Pray through your list.

**Additional Resources:** *How is Jesus the Bread of Life* from Bible Study Fellowship.

# Day 6: When Traditions Rule



*Read p81 – p85 (Section 4.9-4.12)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.9:** In the time of Jesus, the making and following of man-made rules got so out of control that, at times, they even took precedence over clear Biblical teaching. People were very careful to follow rules. But they were not as careful to follow God. Jesus warns us to guard against being outwardly religious and inwardly callous, and to guard against elevating man-made religious traditions over the commandments of God.

What traditions are you perhaps holding higher in your life than they should be?

This passage tells us that it's not what goes into us that matters, but what comes out of us. In what ways do your actions need to re-align with your desire to love as Jesus loved?

**Prayer:** Reflect on the two warnings Jesus gives (against hypocrisy and against elevating traditions). Is there anything the Holy Spirit is highlighting as an area of concern? Spend time confessing.

# Day 7: The Cross Way, The Only Way



*Read p85 – p90 (Section 4.13-4.19)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

A large, empty light gray rectangular box intended for the user to write their reflections on today's readings.

**Today's Focus – Section 4.17:** After Peter's confession, Jesus' first objective was met. Everything Jesus had been doing up to this point was to instruct His disciples about His identity as the Christ, the Son of the living God. This, however, was only the necessary precondition to a much fuller understanding of Jesus' mission in the world. The way of the cross was the only way to salvation for humanity.

Following Jesus means carrying our crosses. What cross are you carrying right now? Has carrying this cross deepened your relationship with Jesus?

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Where do you seek to avoid the suffering required by following in the footsteps of Jesus and taking up your own cross?

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**Prayer:** Are you bearing some crosses right now? Pray and ask Jesus to give you strength, wisdom, courage, and comfort.

# Weekend Teaching: Dealing With Rejection When Following Jesus



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

What is your favorite type of bread (e.g., bagels, rolls, doughnuts, pretzels, sourdough, banana, etc.)? Why?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

Rejection is a painful feeling, especially when it comes from those closest to you. In fact, fear of rejection can produce a sense of anxiety, and cause us to do things we shouldn't just to please people. Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Have you ever felt rejected? Share the story. What does it tell you about the importance of belonging?

When you feel rejected, how do you tend to respond? How do you cope with rejection?

In the teaching, we landed on the calling to live for the audience of one—God. Who would you say you're trying to please daily? God? Your co-workers? Spouse? Friends?

How much more of your potential do you think you could reach if you sought the approval of God and no one else?

No one is immune to rejection. We all experience it to some degree. But we can overcome rejection by putting God first. What can you do this week to seek God's approval rather than that of men?

## Closing Prayer

Share requests based on this week's personal and group studies or on other areas of life.

As you close, have each person write an area of fear or rejection on a piece of paper and turn it in for prayer.

## Group Experience: Communion

Communion is a time when we remember that Jesus is the Bread of Life. In Acts, the early church would take a moment to remember the sacrifice of Christ when they gathered (Acts 2:42, 20:7). To close out your group time, you're encouraged to take communion together as a group. The form of bread and juice does not matter. You may choose bread or tortillas. You may serve juice in plastic cups or glassware. The goal is to create a moment to focus your heart on God. Before taking communion together, consider reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 or one of the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper. Then, take some time to pray together as a group before you take the bread and juice.



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# WEEK 4

## The Ministry of Jesus (The God-led Life)

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Jesus was the supreme example of a God-led life, and in Him, we learn how to be God-led people. Most people live lives aiming at nothing. They drift along under the influence of varying moods and instincts or are driven by society's currents, and achieve nothing. But Jesus had a definite purpose which absorbed Him completely—to do the will of God. Not only did Jesus declare that He had come to do the will of the Father, but He also went as far as saying that only those who do the will of God will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is critical for us to prayerfully discern the will of God and make it our mission.

Secondly, Jesus demonstrated incredible faith. He had absolute confidence in God to accomplish His purpose. Considering His status as an uneducated Galilean peasant, and how lofty His purpose was - to defeat sin and death and establish the Kingdom of God, His quiet and unwavering confidence in God is remarkable. Jesus did not construct an elaborate machinery for a world-changing movement. He did not take over centers of influence such as education, politics, and economy. He instituted the Church. But He did not leave detailed explanations of its constitution. He did not stress out over whether the plan would work. His was a simplicity of faith that went forward and did the work in trust that God's plan would be fulfilled. It was this faith that He said could move mountains.

Thirdly, Jesus loved people. Beneath His great life-purpose was a passionate love for people which directed, inspired, and compelled Him to die on the cross. It was the kind of love that completely swallowed up self-love, constantly considering others before Himself. Why? Because He knew the infinite value of the human soul. Differences in social class or nationality did not quench His love. He treated the poor, wealthy, enemy, foreigner, and outcast alike. But it was especially to save the soul that His love compelled Him. He knew this was the real treasure worth everything to acquire. It was this love that filled Him with boundless pity for sinful humanity and enabled Him to set His eyes like flint on the cross. He knew He was doing His very best for them when He was saving them from their sins.

Jesus' love for humanity was exceeded only by His love for God. So deep was this love that He was of one mind with the Father. Many of us don't live with an awareness of God. Those who do have to discipline their minds to contemplate God. Often, it brings forth the awareness of how far we are from who God wants us to be. But Jesus was aware of God always. He never spent an hour, or said or did anything, without direct reference to Him. His thoughts were God's thoughts. His desires were never in the least different from God's. His purpose was God's purpose for Him.

How did Jesus attain this perfect unity with God? It was partly because of the perfect harmony of divine and human natures within Him. But He also got it by the same means by which we seek it - by the study of God's thoughts and purposes in Scripture, by cultivating the habit of prayer, and by resisting temptations to entertain thoughts and purposes of His own rather than God's. For He brought every thought and wish into obedience to His Father's will.

It is amazing how Scripture so frankly records the errors of even the greatest of its heroes, including Abraham, Moses, and David. Yet for Jesus, not a single sin or error in judgement was to be found. Jesus never confessed a sin because He had no sin to confess. The reason Jesus was sinless was because He was full of love. Sin against God is an expression of a lack of love for God. Sin against others is lack of love for others. Jesus, full of love for God and others, could not sin against either.

Now, we cannot attain a perfect state of sinlessness this side of eternity. But our example is the disciples of Jesus. They observed the character of Christ and, filled with the Holy Spirit, lived God-led lives, submitting to the will of God even unto death. We have the same gift and power of the Holy Spirit. We are empowered to have faith in God and do His will. We are empowered to love God and love others. And we are empowered to overcome sin.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day's reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week's reading is from p90–p118 (Sections 4.20–4.52) of the Life of Jesus book.

# Day 1: Eat Humble Pie



*Read p90 – p96 (Section 4.20-4.27)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.22:** When the disciples asked Jesus who was the greatest in the Kingdom of God, He didn't chastise; He flipped the script. They may have imagined great men like Moses or Elijah, but He drew their attention to a child. This is a picture of insignificance. Children did not have status in the first-century world. Jesus taught that to be great, we must lower/humble ourselves. It's what Jesus did. He lowered Himself to save us.

Jesus points to humility as the highest characteristic of greatness. What is the greatest challenge for you to live in child-like humility?

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How do you need to change what you focus your attention on so that you can walk in child-like humility with Christ?

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**Prayer:** Note the areas where you need to grow in humility. Present a prayer to God asking for the grace to be humble. Be ready to experience some humbling situations.

# Day 2: Second Chances



**Read p96 – p100 (Section 4.28-4.31)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.30:** The woman caught in adultery was definitely guilty. She had no excuse for her behavior. No justification. She was simply found out. But so was the crowd that brought her to Jesus. In fact, we are all guilty of sin. This unnamed adulterous woman reminds us of the most hidden parts of ourselves. It reveals our desperate need for forgiveness and the unshakable reality of grace.

Is it easier for you to identify with the crowd or with the woman caught in adultery? In what ways are you convicted by Jesus' actions and words?

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Think about your answer to the question, "What is your sin?" What stands in the way of you deciding to sin no more?

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**Prayer:** Thank Jesus for His mercy and grace that has brought us salvation. Ask Him to forgive the sin you've noted above and give you the strength to "sin no more" in this area.

# Day 3: Muddy Miracle



*Read p100 – p104 (Section 4.32-4.36)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

A large, empty light gray rectangular box intended for the user to write their reflections on today's readings.

**Today's Focus – Section 4.35:** Our sight is a wonderful gift from God. We marvel at the sunset, the rich colors of the Fall, and the delicate beauty of a flower. How tragic it must be to never see the light of day. But there is a far greater tragedy than physical blindness. Some people with 20/20 vision are blind spiritually to God and to His work all around them. The blind man's faith and the response of the people illustrates that those who are blind often see clearly, while others with sight see nothing at all.

What events have occurred in your life that have shown God's power and glory?

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What do you need to wash off, so you can follow Jesus more closely, hear Him more clearly, and love Him more dearly?

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**Prayer:** Thank God for the powerful story of the healing of the blind man. Ask that He would give you the strength to trust in His plan, overcome legalism, show compassion, and focus on the transformative power of faith.



# Day 4: We The Sheep



*Read p104 – p108 (Section 4.37-4.40)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.38:** Sheep are not particularly bright animals. They can't fend for themselves very well. They get lost easily, too. They can't defend themselves. Sheep need a shepherd. It's not much of a compliment when Jesus calls us His sheep. The term wasn't designed to exalt us; it was designed to exalt our shepherd. Jesus uses the scene of a shepherd enclosing His sheep in a sheepfold to give us a moving picture of our salvation and assurance in Christ.

Are there any areas of life where it can be hard for you to trust Jesus as a "good shepherd"?

How can you grow in trusting Jesus and following Him like a faithful sheep?

**Prayer:** Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with confidence in Jesus' promises to you.

**Additional Resources:** Video Clip on why Jesus compared Himself to a shepherd from Bible Study Fellowship.

# Day 5: Won't You Be My Neighbor?



*Read p109 – p113 (Section 4.41 -4.44)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

A large, empty light gray rectangular box intended for the user to write their reflections on the readings.

**Today's Focus – Section 4.41:** An expert posed a question to Jesus: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He was seeking a bare minimum approach to obedience to God. Many of us do the same thing. Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, not to show how to get to heaven, but to help us see that we are not good enough to make it to heaven on merit. But here is what we can do. Jesus reveals to us that everyone is our neighbor, especially those in need. God wants us to do good to everyone. In doing so, we demonstrate God's love to them.

In what ways are you like the priest and the Levite? What "neighbors" has God placed in your path that you would rather avoid?

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How are you like the injured man and the good Samaritan? How has Jesus provided and cared for you in your most vulnerable or hopeless moments, and how have you cared for others?

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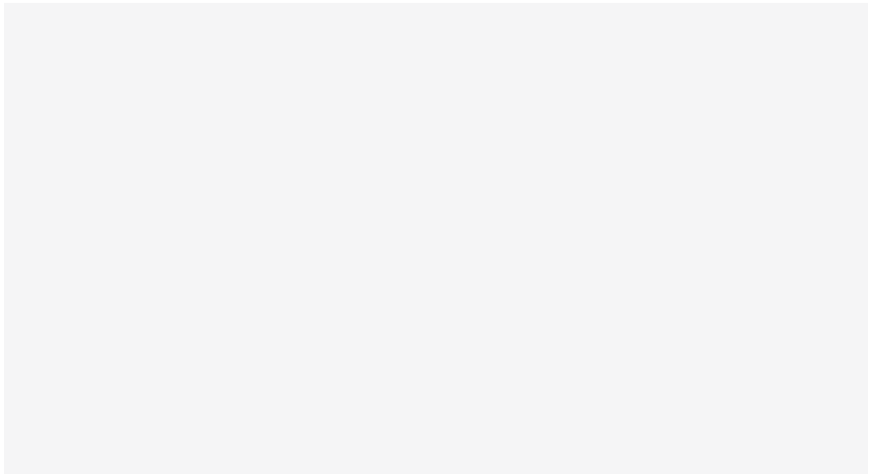
**Prayer:** Ask the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God in your heart so that you can love others with God's perfect love. Ask the Lord to help you consider others more important and to put their needs first, and treat them the way you'd like God to treat you.



**Next Steps:** We all have neighbors, whether they live next door or are in our broader circle of influence. God has placed us where we are so that we can come around our neighbors in creative ways and show them the love of Jesus. The following are six steps to take to be a good neighbor to those who live around us.

- **Step 1:**  
Determine who your neighbors are.
- **Step 2:**  
Meet your neighbors.
- **Step 3:**  
Show a creative (and safe) act of kindness.
- **Step 4:**  
Make a connection; develop a friendship.
- **Step 5:**  
Seek an opportunity to share the Gospel.
- **Step 6:**  
Expand your neighborhood and repeat!

In your neighborhood, what step are you on according to this list? What steps can you take to move just one more step this week?



# Day 6: Ban the Barn



**Read p113 – p115 (Section 4.45 -4.48)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

A large, empty light gray rectangular box intended for the user to write their reflections on the readings.

**Today's Focus – Section 4.46:** Why live for something that is not going to last? Why spend your days accumulating what you cannot take beyond this life? Why structure your entire life around growing a portfolio that is unable to provide any actual security and is ultimately meaningless in eternity? In this passage, Jesus warns us of the perils and short-sightedness of materialism and desire for financial "security". The reality is, if we pursue security first, we will lose it. But if we seek first the kingdom, we will lay up treasures in heaven—true and lasting treasures, and all other things will be added to it.

What might be signs in your life that material security is more important to you than trust in your Father in heaven?

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Do you have any items that are "stored in barns" that you could give away, or invest in God's kingdom this week?

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**Prayer:** Pray that God would reveal the idols of earthly treasures in your heart and that you would be instead filled with love for Him. Pray for generous hearts that seek to honor God with our possessions and resources. Take time to pray for those in need in our church family, and in our wider community.

# Day 7: A Door Called Narrow



*Read p116 – p118 (Section 4.49 -4.52)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.51:** In Jesus' time, being Jewish didn't automatically ensure salvation. Similarly, today, being morally upright or attending church doesn't guarantee a place in heaven. All world religions offer a road to salvation. The wide road is walked by those trying to earn their salvation, which is not guaranteed. According to Jesus, walking the narrow road by believing and trusting in Him is the only way we can be assured of salvation.

Are you walking the wide road or the narrow road? What does walking the narrow road mean to you?

This passage makes it very clear that the opportunity for salvation is time-limited. Are there people in your life who are not in the kingdom? List their initials here.

**Prayer:** Thank Jesus for opening the door to the Kingdom of God for us. Pray for the people in your life who are not in the Kingdom, that they would find the way God has provided through Jesus.

# Weekend Teaching: Following Jesus Means Forgiving Those Who Wrong Us



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

If you could travel back in time, where would you travel to and why?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

What are some of the reasons why you might find it difficult to forgive someone who has wronged you or hurt you in some way?

Rabbinical law said that you are to forgive a person three times when they have wronged you, so by this standard, Peter looked very generous. What do you think about Jesus telling us to forgive a person so many times?

To illustrate extravagant forgiveness, Jesus told a story about an unforgiving servant. What do you think it would have felt like to have that large of a debt forgiven? Share about a time someone extended wild forgiveness to you.

Have you ever experienced difficulty in accepting the forgiveness of God? Have you ever experienced how failing to forgive impacts your relationship with Jesus?

God forgives us because of what Jesus has done for us; but then He obligates us to forgive ourselves and others because of what Jesus is doing in us. Do you feel stuck in the process of forgiveness? Share if you can.

Many people think that getting revenge will make them feel better. Studies show that the opposite is true. What is one thing you will do this week to extend mercy and forgiveness to another person as you've received it through Christ? How can your group or others pray for you and support you in this through the coming week?

## Closing Prayer

Share requests based on this week's personal and group studies, or on other areas of life.

*Dear Lord. You are the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We thank you for forgiving our impossible debt and we pray that you will give us the strength to forgive others. We thank you for the power we have through Jesus Christ to forgive. We do not want to be imprisoned by our sin or shackled by our hatred. Give us wisdom for our next steps in forgiveness as we walk with you.*

**Activity:** Dissolving Paper Forgiveness Exercise. As the Holy Spirit leads, decide who or what to forgive and write it on rice paper, then drop it into the water as a symbolic act of releasing it to Jesus.

## Digging Deeper

Forgiveness is often hard because of the nature of the offense. Tough questions often arise. Check out the additional resources for an article that attempts to answer some of the tough questions about forgiveness.

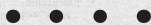




PROPERTY OF HARVARD

# WEEK 5

## The Years of Growing Opposition



**A**s Jesus' popularity increased, so did opposition to His ministry. Beginning in Galilee, many began to rise against Him, forcing Him to move with His disciples to Peraea and Judea, often avoiding the villages and towns as He slowly made His way to Jerusalem. Opposition to Jesus came from several fronts. The learned and politically influential class of the Sadducees and Herodians did not pay much attention to Jesus at first, assuming Him to be like the many who had come before, proclaiming the Messiah title. It was only after Jesus' popularity rose and people attempted to take Him by force and make Him king, that is, the leader of a Messianic revolt, that they started paying attention. A popular uprising would bring down the wrath of Rome and an end to their position and power.

A more consistent and vicious opposition came from the religious class of the Pharisees and scribes. They held strong expectations for a Messiah, so when Jesus came claiming to be the Messiah, they took notice immediately. The Pharisees and scribes followed Jesus every step of the way. They examined His doctrines and protested His claims. In their minds, Jesus did not fit the bill of the promised Messiah.

First, Jesus' humble background confounded them. They thought that a prophet, and above all the Messiah, should have been born in Judea, raised in Jerusalem, the center of culture and religion, and allied with all that was distinguished and influential in the nation. They could not get beyond the fact that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. To them, nothing good came from Nazareth.

Secondly, they were offended by the company Jesus, a rabbi, chose and kept. Jesus' closest associates were uneducated laymen and fishermen. One of them was a former tax collector. Nothing offended the Pharisees more. To them, tax collectors were worse than sinners because they served the colonialist Romans. Moreover, Jesus mingled freely with known sinners such as prostitutes, as well as the ritually unclean. They couldn't reconcile Jesus' behavior with their expectations of a rabbi, let alone the Messiah. To them, Jesus was a pretender and a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

A third and more serious ground for their opposition was that Jesus did not practice rituals such as fasts and ritual washing, nor did He require His disciples to do so. To them, this was a flagrant violation of the law. But these laws were not in the Torah and were not divinely mandated. They were later inventions added to the law to regulate every hour, every activity, and every detail of life. These laws

became an intolerable burden to the people, for it was impossible not to break one law or another. But no one doubted their authority, and those who carefully observed them were seen as godly.

Jesus neglected these man-made laws and encouraged others to do so. The result was that He was looked upon as an ungodly man and a deceiver of the people.

The most serious law to break was the law of the Sabbath. Jesus was in the habit of healing on the Sabbath, to the bitter objection of the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes who saw it as a breach of the Sabbath command. Jesus tried to point them back to the fact that Sabbath was meant for man and not vice versa. But they could not be swayed. Seeing through their hypocrisy, Jesus often called them out by speaking parables against them. Jesus also warned His disciples against “the yeast of the Pharisees.” Meanwhile, they did everything to poison the public mind against Jesus. The greatest weapons in their arsenal were Jesus’ own claims to be able to forgive sins and to be on equal footing with God. They accused Jesus of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death.

Soon, many disciples deserted Jesus and only the twelve were left, for they believed that Jesus was truly the Messiah. At Caesarea-Philippi, Jesus began to ask His disciples what the popular views about Himself were, and they told Him the various suggestions flying around—that He was Elijah, or John the Baptist. But Jesus turned it around and asked the disciples who they thought He was. To this, Peter spoke with divine conviction that Jesus was the Son of the Living God. This declaration was a turning point for Jesus and the disciples.

Thereafter, Jesus began to reveal to them His true mission—that He’d have to be tortured and killed, but that He’d rise again. With that, Jesus set His mind towards Jerusalem, for the time to fulfill His destiny had arrived.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day’s reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week’s reading is from p119–p146 (Sections 4.53 -5.7) of the Life of Jesus book.

# Day 1: Chronicles of the Lost



**Read p119 – p122 (Section 4.53-4.58)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.56-4.58:** Jesus tells three stories to help us understand the heart of God. The story of the shepherd who had 100 sheep and lost 1 shows that Jesus cares about the lost and is willing to do whatever it takes to find them. The story of the widow who had 10 coins and lost one shows that Jesus isn't willing to accept the loss of a sinner who belongs to Him. He goes to great lengths to find what was lost, and when He does, He can't help but celebrate because what was once lost is found. Finally, the story of the prodigal son reveals that we cannot out-sin God's grace. It doesn't matter how far you've run or what you've done. You can always come home. But those who, like the older son, think they are more deserving than others miss the heart of God.

As you think back over your own life, what "other countries" do you run to and how do they fail you?

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What is Jesus inviting you to do in these parables? What steps will you take to do it?

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**Prayer:** Thank God for His Never-Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love. Thank Him that there is no distance that we could go where His love can't reach us. Ask Him to give you a heart that yearns for the lost and to place you where He can use you to help bring others home.

**Additional Resources:** Explanation of the parable of the lost son from *Bible Project*.

# Day 2: When the Tables are Turned



*Read p123 – p126 (Section 4.59-4.61)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.60:** Everyone will spend forever in one of two destinations. Most people think they are going to heaven because they are good people. Few believe they are going to hell. The rich man thought he was going to heaven too! So did his five brothers; otherwise, the rich man would not have wanted Lazarus to warn them. The testimony of the Bible is that salvation is only found in Christ by believing in Him. That's the only way to heaven.

Based on this parable, what changes in your life does Jesus want you to make?

Is there someone in your life that you would like to warn, like the rich man wanted to do with his brothers? How might you have that conversation with them?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the blessings He gives to us, no matter whether we have an abundance or are lacking. Ask God to give you contentment and provide insight and direction on how you can help those in need. If you are in need, call out to God and receive comfort knowing He hears you. Spend time with God, recognizing that a deepened relationship with Him is the richest blessing of all.

**Additional Resources:** Article on the meaning of the story of the rich man and Lazarus.



# Day 3: Dead Men Tell Tales



*Read p126 – p129 (Section 4.62-4.65)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 4.62-4.64:** Jesus delayed. He knew of the situation with Lazarus and yet He purposely waited to go help. The reactions were expected: His disciples were confused. Martha struggled to put her brother's death into perspective. Mary was accusatory. But Jesus wept. The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead shows our human response to the movement (or perceived lack of movement) from God. All of this, however, pointed toward a far greater glory of who Jesus was, the power He had, the compassion that hurt His heart and His using others to be part of the process of delivery.

Have you ever shared in Mary and Martha's question, "God, where were you?" How is the hope of resurrection more reassuring to you after reading this?

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What feelings do you have when you think about death? What facts about death (if you knew for sure they were true) would ease your concerns?

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**Prayer:** Pray that the past resurrection of Jesus and the promise of our future resurrection would be a present encouragement in our daily lives. Pray that God would help you to see the incredible value and immortal nature of humans, and that these truths would give you urgency to share Jesus.

**Additional Resources:** Watch this 3-part video from John Piper on "Why Did Jesus Let Lazarus Die?"

# Day 4: Double Down Prayer



*Read p130 – p133 (Section 4.66-4.70)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.68:** The widow in this story had no advocate to speak on her behalf, which left her in a hopeless state. But rather than giving up, she was relentless in her pursuit of justice. The unrighteous judge finally gave in to her plea because he knew that she would not stop coming to him until she received justice. Jesus used this parable to show the importance of persistence and resilience. Life involves disappointment, loss, injustice, and persecution—all very good reasons to give up and lose hope! Resilience is more than something we do; it is who we are in Christ. It's about understanding that our strength comes from the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

In what situation or circumstance in your life do you long for God to move? With what plea do you want to keep coming before God?

How does your prayer life reflect your faith? In answer to Jesus' final question, will He find true faith in you when He returns?

**Prayer:** Think about the situations in your life where you long for God to move, and double down on praying over them. It could be for the salvation of a loved one, for healing, or for some kind of miracle. Keep asking in faith.

# Day 5: Deal or No Deal



**Read p133 – p137 (Section 4.71-4.75)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.72:** Jesus wanted the rich man to sort out who or what was first in his life. Was it money, possessions, or doing his religious duty? For this man, money and wealth were number 1, and this is what caused him to be sad. Whatever you put on the throne of your life is what or who will direct and rule your life. If money (or lack of it) is what is on your mind when you get up, or throughout the day, then it is your number 1. We can substitute any number of other things into this number 1 slot. But this number 1 slot belongs to God; Father, Son, & Holy Spirit. You don't have to get rid of what you have, but you must ask yourself and decide daily, is God number 1 in my life—or have I let someone or something else take His rightful place?

What are you tempted to put in the number 1 slot in place of God? What do you think Jesus might ask you to 'sell' and come follow Him?

Peter was concerned about the sacrifices he had made to follow Jesus. What sacrifices have you made to follow Jesus? How have you seen God bringing a return on those sacrifices in your life?

**Prayer:** Name the things you've put in the number 1 slot and let them go, inviting Jesus to take the throne of your life. Ask for the ability to let go of the illusion of control, giving up whatever that may require, to trust more fully in Jesus.

**Additional Resources:** Article on 12 ways to discern if something is becoming an idol.



# Day 6: Digging Holes



*Read p137 – p140 (Section 4.76-4.79)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 4.78:** As Christians we can often get caught up thinking we are just citizens of God's kingdom. Citizens take pleasure dwelling within a kingdom; servants, however, are given a task. Jesus mentions three levels of responsibility, but those are representative of a wide range of individual resources among people, who vary greatly in natural talent, intellect, finances, freedoms, time, health, and other ways. We also vary greatly in opportunity and privilege. Some of us have heard the gospel and studied Scripture since early childhood; others know only the basics of the faith. We are also given spiritual gifts that vary widely from person to person. God knows intimately the abilities, gifts, opportunities, and circumstances of every person, and He graciously assigns responsibilities accordingly.

Are you more like the servants who earned more money for the Master, or like the servant who dug a hole in the ground?

How can you be more like the servants who were wise with the Master's money?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the gifts, talents, and opportunities He's given you. Ask Him to forgive you for the "gifts" that you have wasted in your life. Ask Him to help you be a faithful servant who multiplies His resources and grows the Kingdom of God where you live, work, and socialize.

# Day 7: Donkeyback Ride



**Read p141 – p146 (Section 5.1-5.7)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 5.1:** The Jewish people during this time wanted nothing more than to be liberated from Roman rule. If there was ever a time of hope for liberation, it was now. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, people took off their cloaks to symbolically convey the notion of victory over one's enemy. Their savior had arrived, and they greeted Jesus with the loud chants of "Hosanna!" (Please save us now). The crowd was correct in that Jesus was the long-awaited savior, but He was not the military leader they mistakenly hoped for. Jesus would save us from an adversary far greater than any political power—He would save us, once and for all, from sin and death.

What are some ways that Jesus has worked in your life that were surprising or unexpected?

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Are there any areas that you are not letting Jesus be King over (have authority over)?

A large, empty light gray rectangular box intended for the user to write about areas where they are not letting Jesus be King.

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to help your heart grow in rightly understanding and enjoying Christ for who He truly is. Confess specific struggles in letting Jesus be King.

# Weekend Teaching: A Zeal for God



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

What kind of things make you angry? Can you think of the last time you reacted to something because you were angry? Was it the appropriate way to react?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

Jesus' confrontation with the religious leaders of the day was because they were taking advantage of those coming to see God and preventing them from gaining access to Him. Where do you see people exploiting or preventing others from accessing God? Does it make you angry?

Is there anything that you've done to distract people from connecting with God? How can you encourage people to connect with God in worship?

What do the actions taken by Jesus in this interaction inform us about what He values? How do you find yourself responding to the way He acted?

Jesus' biggest problem with the religious leaders was that they were blocking "outsiders" from worshipping in their rightful place in the temple. Where and how do you find yourself wrestling with including "those outside the church"?

Jesus was upset over misguided zeal, selfish intent, and blatant disregard for the foreigner. What does true desire for God look like? How is that exhibited in your life?

## Digging Deeper

Elsewhere in the Scriptures, it is said that our bodies (both individually and corporately) are the temple of God. God no longer lives in a structure; He resides with His people.

- How is this made possible?
- How does this impact the way you view yourself? Your actions? Participation within the church?
- Do you live as though you have direct access to God?

## **This Week's Challenge**

Think about someone "on the outside of faith" that you can invite to the Easter service. Write their name down and commit to inviting them. Let the group hold you accountable.

Consider your posture towards those on the other side of an issue (politically, socially, or theologically). What does making room for them require of you? Note some steps you can take in this direction.

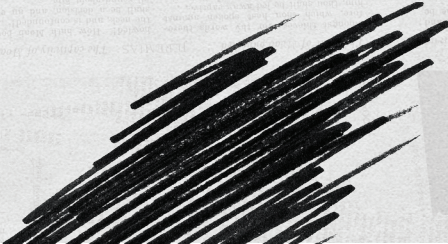
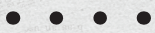
## **Closing Prayer**

Consider the names you've written down to invite to Easter and pray over them. Ask God to give you the right moment to talk to them, the right words to use, and to soften their hearts to respond.



# WEEK 6

## The Final Week





**T**he annual Passover feast often drew hundreds of thousands of Jews and converts to Judaism from all over Israel as well as other regions where the Jews were dispersed. By this time, many of them had heard about all the wonderful things Jesus said and did. Messianic expectations were at fever pitch. Many were hoping to see Jesus at the feast. Even among His disciples was the hope that He'd finally throw off the guise of humility, overthrow the Romans, and re-establish the Kingdom of Israel.

Six days before the Passover began, Jesus and His disciples arrived in Bethany, the village of His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (whom Jesus had raised from the dead). Bethany was a convenient place to stay during the feast because it was half an hour from Jerusalem on the other side of the Mount of Olives. Bethany was still ringing with the recent resurrection of Lazarus, and the people in Bethany brought news to Jerusalem that Jesus had come.

After resting over the Sabbath in Bethany, Jesus left on Sunday morning to go into Jerusalem. Besides His disciples, Jesus was accompanied by an immense multitude of the pilgrims who had seen Him restore the sight of Bartimaeus in Jericho. Still, more came from Jerusalem to receive Him. They welcomed Him with enthusiasm, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" This was a kingly proclamation to which Jesus yielded. But with it, He made clear what kind of King He was. For He came not armed for battle but riding a colt as a sign of humility and a symbol of peace.

The procession moved toward Jerusalem, waving twigs from palms and singing songs. The authorities, knowing too well what the songs meant, ordered Jesus to stop it, suggesting that the Roman authorities might accuse them of causing a riot and punish the city. Jesus rebuked them, saying the stones would praise.

The crowds expected a signal from Him, and in their excited mood would have obeyed it, whatever it might have been. But He gave them none. Instead, Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He approached the city. Then, after looking around the temple, He left them and returned to Bethany, leaving behind a very disappointed crowd. On Monday and Tuesday Jesus appeared again in the city and continued the work of healing and teaching. But the Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, and scribes all came together and demanded to know by what authority He did such things. They came prepared with questions to entrap Jesus. Their goal was to



either discredit Him before the crowd or to find grounds for an accusation before the civil authorities.

For example, when they brought the woman caught in adultery, they wanted to trap Jesus to break the law. They also asked Him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar. If He answered "Yes", they knew that His popularity would perish instantly, for it would be a complete contradiction of the popular Messianic ideas. If, on the contrary, He answered "No", they would accuse Him of treason before the Roman governor.



***He felt forsaken by the Father as He bore  
the crushing weight of human sin.***



But Jesus was far more than a match for them. Not only did He answer their questions tactfully, but He also exposed their duplicity. After He had silenced them, He let loose His indignation in an unrestrained criticism of their hypocritical practices, shaming them before the crowds. This was the final straw that broke the camel's back. Jesus had utterly humiliated the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes before the people, and they could not let it go. They were determined to eliminate Jesus by any means necessary. That very evening the Sanhedrin met to devise a plan to do away with Him.

Since they couldn't arrest Jesus publicly for fear of the crowds that followed Him, they would have to wait until the pilgrims had left the city. They had just, with great reluctance, arrived at this conclusion, when they received a most unexpected and gratifying surprise. One of Jesus' own disciples appeared and offered to betray Him for a price. So, Jesus fell victim to the treachery of one of His own whom He had chosen and loved.

None of this was surprising to Jesus. He came to Jerusalem aware that He was going to die there. He knew it was God's will and when the time came, He

submitted Himself. However, Jesus was also human. So, the prospect of death did not come without conflict of feelings. He was in anguish, yet for the joy set before Him, He was willing to endure the cross.

Often, Jesus spent hours in solitude and prayer on the Mount of Olives. When He felt abandoned by man, He turned to His Father. The world was against Him, the religious establishment was buying for His blood, the people only after His power, and His disciples caught up in delusions of grandeur. Not even His beloved apostle John was aware of the real situation, for Jesus could not entrust Himself to any man. His depth of anguish was beyond understanding, and such that no man would endure. But Jesus endured by the power of the Spirit.

On that final night of freedom, Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples. It was the greatest evening of His life. His soul overflowed in indescribable tenderness and love. Jesus washed His disciples' feet, instituted a new covenant through the Lord's Supper, gave His farewell address, and prayed the great high-priestly prayer. Rising from the table, Jesus and the disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane. Here ensued the awful and memorable agony of the soul. It was the final onset of temptation, from which His life had never been free. He felt forsaken by the Father as He bore the crushing weight of human sin. Under extreme duress, He pleaded with the Father that the cup of sorrow might be taken away. Yet knowing this was a prayer God would not answer for the sake of the world, Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father.

Strengthened, Jesus faced the ensuing hours with a calmness which nothing could ruffle and a majesty which converted His trial and crucifixion into the pride and glory of humanity.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day's reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week's reading is from p146 – p174 (Sections 5.8 -5.36) of the Life of Jesus book.

# Day 1: The G.O.A.T Commandment



**Read p146 – p150 (Section 5.8-5.12)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.11:** Jewish teachers in Jesus' day often fought over the relative importance of commandments. Some felt observing the Sabbath was the most important. Others valued circumcision. Still others believed that the *Shema*: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength (Deut. 6:5) was the most important. When a law expert asked Jesus to weigh in on the question of which commandment in the law was the greatest, he might have wanted Jesus to pick sides in an already contentious debate. Yet Jesus adds a second commandment to the *Shema*, "Love your neighbor the same way you as you love yourself" (Lev 19:18). For Jesus, loving God is inextricably linked to loving other people.

What does loving God with all your soul, mind, and strength look like for you?

What are some practical ways that you could love your literal neighbors this week? How are you already doing this or how have you done this recently?

**Prayer:** Pray for grace to love God with all your heart and to believe that God loves us with all of His heart. Pray for the opportunity and courage to step out and show love to those around you.

# Day 2: Heart Over Wallet



**Read p150–p153 (Section 5.13-5.14)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.14:** God doesn't need our money. He owns everything. However, He is interested in the sacrifice and the faith in the heart of the giver. The widow's gift was more valuable in the faith that was required to give it. The poor widow gave "more", not in money, but in sacrifice. God knows how much He's given us, so the amount we give back to Him is seen in proportion to what He's given us rather than in comparison to how much others give. While others may see what we give, only God can truly know the sacrifice and the faith involved in the giving. Sacrificial giving is equally hard for those who have and those who don't. Giving what we think we "need" to live demands faith and trust in God's provision. That's how giving becomes worship.

This widow offers more than expected; she gives all she has in complete trust to God. Would you give everything to God? What holds you back from trusting God with your finances?

Consider your current level of giving both to the church and to other Kingdom work. Can you honestly describe it as sacrificial? If not, how can you move in a more sacrificial direction?

**Prayer:** Thank Jesus for His sacrificial giving of Himself to save you. Ask God to reveal to you areas of your life that are not being lived in selfless sacrifice. Repent and trust Jesus to help you grow in obedience in those areas.

# Day 3: Signs and Times



*Read p153 – p157 (Section 5.15-5.16)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.15:** Jesus made clear that the end times would bring bad news and good news. There would be upheavals in the social, political, and natural worlds. Yet, there would be good news—the gospel, the message of God's love in Jesus — would be proclaimed to all nations. Yes, we are pained and dismayed over wars, natural disasters, and traumas that Jesus said would come. And yet, the fact that He told us about them, and that He gives us words of encouragement, should help us maintain faith despite the terrible state of the world.

What should it mean in practical terms to be on guard or watch because we do not know when Jesus will return?

If you knew He was to return in two months, how would your life change now? What things would be less important and what things would be more important? Can you make those changes now—because of the real possibility He MAY just return in two months?

**Prayer:** Give thanks that Jesus loves us enough to prepare us for His return. Pray that God will help you be ready for Christ's return by keeping you fervent, prayerful, and diligent as you seek to follow Christ in the days and weeks ahead.

**Additional Resources:** Podcast from Tim Keller on Watching for the Return of Christ

# Day 4: Ready...Set...Wait!



**Read p157 – p160 (Section 5.17-5.19)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.17:** All the girls were invited to the wedding. They all anticipated the Groom's arrival, bringing their lamps to the wedding feast. After arriving, the ten girls all grew drowsy and fell asleep. There was no shame in any of those things. So, what happened to reveal the foolishness of five of them? Five of them were wise enough to be properly prepared by bringing enough oil for their lamps.

The five foolish ones, on the other hand, were not prepared and were caught off guard by the Groom's arrival. It wasn't a matter of possessing the oil, because they eventually showed up with their lamps and oil. They were foolish because they didn't prepare. Spiritual preparedness for the return of Christ is an individual responsibility. Unfortunately, many of us are oblivious to Christ's return.

How does your "lamp" (your spiritual well-being) feel right now—burning brightly or burning out; empty or full?

What is the meaning of the five unprepared virgins being locked out? How does it impact your understanding of your position in Christ?

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to help you stay aware and prepared for Jesus' return, and also to help you remain focused on serving Jesus. Ask Him to grant you the power and diligence to remain in steadfast service to God, keeping you from temptation, and helping you to flee evil.

# Day 5: Extravagant Love



*Read p160 – p164 (Section 5.20-5.25)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.21:** This is a story of costly love. While Judas traded Jesus for a few bucks, Mary “wasted” a year’s worth of wages in a beautiful act of love for Jesus. It is also a story about timing. The disciples scolded the woman for “wasting” money that could have been used to care for the poor. But Jesus, far from rebuking her, commended her because she understood what that moment in time called for. Good things (like caring for the poor) emphasized at the wrong time can blind us to the most important things God is calling us to do.

Of all the “good things” you could be doing right now to know and love Jesus, what do you think is the most important thing at this moment?

Do others know Jesus is your highest priority, your greatest treasure, and the one thing that matters most to you? Why or why not?

**Prayer:** Ask God to give you love for Jesus the way Mary had. Ask Him to protect your heart from the love of money, which blinded Judas to the infinite worth of Jesus. Like Mary, pray that He’d give you the grace to discern the moment’s need, courage to love no matter the cost, and faith to look upon Jesus’ saving death.

# Day 6: Greatness Redefined



*Read p164 – p170 (Section 5.26-5.32)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 5.28:** It's usually easy to tell the people who are considered important because they have others waiting on them and they can order everyone else around. That is not true of Jesus' Kingdom! In the Kingdom of God, the greatest, most important people are not the ones being served but the ones doing the serving. Service to others is the definition of greatness in Jesus' Kingdom.

So, how well do you stack up on the greatness scale of Jesus? Do you desire status, rank, and recognition more than serving without drawing attention to yourself?

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How can you adopt an attitude of servanthood and love towards others, even in challenging or unexpected situations?

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**Prayer:** Ask God to forgive you and help you always to remember that service is His measure of greatness and should be yours also. Ask Him to mold your heart by the Holy Spirit to serve others just as Jesus has served and blessed you.



# Day 7: Help Wanted Needed



**Read p170 – p174 (Section 5.33-5.36)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 3.44:** Jesus had a conversation with His disciples about the aftermath of His death. The disciples were confused, disappointed, and afraid. Much like us in moments of sorrow or despair, they did not fully understand or embrace the promises of comfort and hope that Jesus gave them. He reassured them with the promise that He'd send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been present since the beginning of time, and is now active in the lives of those who follow Jesus today. The Holy Spirit is God Himself taking up residence within us to empower us to follow Christ. He is Christ in us. He is the one who we listen to, follow, and rely on daily as we live in His power.

How do you see the Holy Spirit helping you live the Christian life? Do you think He is a necessary part of living for God? What are some specific ways that He helps you?

What can you do this week to become more open to the teaching and guiding of the Holy Spirit?

**Prayer:** Thank Jesus for the gift of His Spirit living in you. Pray that you will walk in step with the Holy Spirit, following His leading. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to you so that you may serve Him by doing the work of His Kingdom today.

**Additional Resources:** Video Clip from *Real Truth Real Quick* - How do you know you have the Holy Spirit in you?

# Weekend Teaching: Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?

# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

When it comes to house chores, what's the last job you'd pick?

## Week's Review

What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

Is it easy or difficult for us to serve others? Does the ease or difficulty of the action depend upon the "others" that are being served?

Is it easy for you to receive being served? How would you react if, say, the President of the U.S. came to wash your feet? Would you refuse, question his motives, accept because you deserve it, or receive it as a gift? Why?

This week's teaching showed Jesus stooping low to do the menial task of foot washing. Why did Jesus do it? To humble them? To show them an example of servanthood? To illustrate His mission? To show the true nature of leadership? To show them how deeply He loved them? All of these? None of these? Others? Please brainstorm.

Who is the one person you can think of who most clearly demonstrated what it means to “wash feet?” What did they do, and how did it impact you? What task or responsibility you currently do is most like washing feet?

It is impossible to be a servant if we are self-focused. Are there areas in your life where self-absorption is hindering your ability to serve others? How do we become a person who looks “not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”?

What would it mean in your life to practice foot washing daily? Take care of someone? Let someone take care of you? Spend quality time with your family? Show more appreciation or affection? Practice patience and forgiveness? Serve others with no strings attached? Do things that are “not my job”? Write it down, reflect on it, and put it into practice this week. Discuss with your group.

## Closing Prayer

End by discussing how you might serve one another in the group. Are there any needs you can meet?

One of the primary ways we serve one another is through prayer. Share prayer requests and pray for each person around the circle in turn. Consider the people God is asking you to serve and the ways you intend to serve them. Pray for the grace to follow through in your act of service.

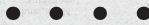
**Activity:** Foot Washing. A guide for this activity is provided in Appendix 1.

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# **WEEK 7**

## ***A Sham Trial, A Cruel Death, and A Glorious Resurrection***



Jesus had just finished praying when His enemies arrived to arrest Him. At the head of the throng was Judas, the betrayer. Judas was well acquainted with Jesus' habits and knew He'd be there praying. For the Pharisees, nighttime better suited their motives because they feared the inevitable riot if they dared to arrest Jesus during the day. But a night arrest and speedy trial meant that Jesus would already be a condemned man in the hands of the law when the masses awoke. They had brought lanterns and weapons thinking they might have to pursue Him in the darkness and fight off His supporters. But Jesus came forth and freely surrendered Himself into their hands.

Back in the city, they subjected Jesus to a sham trial in the middle of the night and into the wee hours of the morning. There were two trials: a religious trial and a civil trial, each of which included three stages. The first stage of the religious trial was before Annas, a former High Priest who still wielded significant influence. The second stage was before Caiaphas, the ruling High Priest, and an informal committee of the Sanhedrin. The third stage was before a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin. The civil trial was first before Pilate, then before Herod, and, lastly, before Pilate again. The reason for this double legal process was the political situation of the country. Judea was directly governed by a Roman officer, who resided at Caesarea. If the sentence passed on Jesus was a capital one, it could only be authorized by the governing Roman official, in this case, Pilate.

This was a sham trial from the beginning. Everything was dictated by the desire not for justice but for a guilty verdict. The same people served as prosecutor, jury, and judge. No witnesses were called for the defense. The prosecutors' witnesses presented various false and contradictory accusations, none of which rose to the level of their predetermined sentence of capital punishment. Jesus stood silently as all this unfolded. Finally, in a fit of frustration, and wanting Jesus to incriminate Himself, they demanded an answer: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?" Jesus could have kept silent. But this was the only thing He was guilty of, and He answered that indeed He was. The answer sealed Jesus' fate. The Sanhedrin unanimously pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death. Having passed judgment, all that was left was a formal sentence by Pilate. In the meantime, Jesus was subjected to dehumanizing torture.

Pilate at first refused to condemn Jesus to death based on a blasphemy charge, forcing His accusers to bring formal charges against Him. The Jewish authorities presented a volley of accusations, out of which one clearly emerged: fomenting



insurrection by forbidding people from paying taxes to Rome and claiming to be king. Pilate, trying to hand over this problem, sent Jesus to Herod only to have Herod send Him back. Again, Pilate offered to have Jesus scourged and released but the Jewish authorities would not have it. Finally, Pilate, knowing the jealousy of the leaders, saw a way out by appealing to the masses. It was customary to release a prisoner to the people, so Pilate offered the option to have either Jesus, or a murderer and insurrectionist called Barabbas, released. But the leaders incited the masses to demand the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

Was Pilate innocent of the blood of Jesus? Not in the least. He still had the power to overrule the crowd. But in this moment, he chose self-interest. His pen condemned Jesus to be crucified. Crucifixion was an unspeakably horrible death. It was a death reserved for those of whom they wished to make an example. On the cross, Jesus suffered not only physical torture but also verbal abuse. And by His death, Jesus converted a symbol of torture into a symbol of hope for all nations. His cry on the cross, "It is finished", marked the complete absorption of the wrath of God. The darkness that covered the earth marked His descent into hell. The veil that was torn into two meant He had made a way for us. And just as the light returned to earth after a period of darkness, the light of the world returned in resurrection power three days later.



***The enduring proof that Christ rose  
from the dead wasn't just the testimony  
of His followers but the change it  
produced in them.***



It is easy to look back at the resurrection with little wonder. But when Jesus was buried, no one believed or expected that the one who had raised the dead would Himself rise from the dead. The Jewish authorities were thoroughly satisfied with the death of Jesus, because for them, death settled all their problems with Him. To them, death was the end of this budding movement, for His followers were few and uninfluential, and with Him in the grave, nothing more would be thought of Him. They couldn't have been more wrong.

Jesus had, indeed, foretold His sufferings, death, and resurrection. But the disciples either never understood or gave His sayings such an allegorical spin that His resurrection took them by surprise. The women who went to anoint His body in the tomb were not looking to the resurrected Jesus either, and at first considered His body stolen rather than raised. When the angels appeared to them, they ran to tell the disciples, who by their own admission, did not believe them either. Yet evidence of the resurrected Jesus kept pouring in until Jesus Himself appeared among them.

What was the evidence of the resurrection? The disciples said Jesus had risen, and they had seen Him. They told of how He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Peter, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to ten of them at once, to eleven of them at once, to James, to the five hundred, and so forth. But are these stories credible? They might not be, if they stood alone. But the resurrection of Christ was accompanied by the indisputable change in the disciples of Jesus. These followers, who had fled into hiding only a few days before, turned around and became advocates willing to give their lives to the very cause they had abandoned. What effected this kind of change? We might say that Jesus had filled their minds with glorious dreams of a wonderful career, which they at first did not see, but then afterwards, they caught the vision and invented this story to live out this dream.

But what dream would that be? These disciples, filled with faith in Jesus, no longer pursued earthly gains or earthly thrones but gave themselves over to persecution and death. They pursued their mission with intensity and devotion that could only be compared to that of Jesus. The enduring proof that Christ rose from the dead wasn't just the testimony of His followers but the change it produced in them.

## **Personal Study Guide**

Before you begin each day's reading, ask the Lord to help you in your study today. Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things you may have missed before.

This week's readings p174 – p202 (Sections 5.37-6.14) from Life of Jesus book.



# Day 1: *Unitate et Labore (In Unity & Work)*



**Read p174 – p178 (Section 5.37 -5.41)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 5.39:** John 17 is often called “the high priestly prayer.” It is one extended prayer that Jesus prays the night He is betrayed. This prayer is given for His followers and those who will believe on account of their testimony, which means this prayer is for you if you follow Jesus. Jesus prays for His followers to have the same kind of fellowship with God that He shares with the Father, to be unified in their lives, to go out into the world on mission, and to grow in those three areas as they walk with God.

What do you think are the greatest hindrances to unity, no matter the setting?

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What is one way in which you feel specifically impressed to pray for unity in your own life, the life of the church, or in the city, state, and country?

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**Prayer:** Read through Jesus' prayer for His disciples, those who would follow on account of the testimony, and for the whole world, and make that your prayer, asking God to answer Jesus' prayer again and again.

# Day 2: Plausible Deniability



*Read p178 – p182 (Section 5.42-5.47)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 5.44, 5.46:** Why did Peter deny Jesus? He was among the first to follow Jesus. He had seen Jesus heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. He had witnessed the transfiguration. He had even walked on water, briefly. So why did Peter, of all people, deny Jesus? Because he was afraid. Fear cripples us. In fearful moments, all we can think of is how to protect ourselves. Seeing his powerful Master so helpless must have confused Peter. Why did the one who stilled the storm not use that power now? In fear and confusion, Peter did the very thing he swore he would never do. He denied Jesus, not once, but three times, just as Jesus had prophesied.

Have you ever “denied” Jesus at work, in your community, or when with your friends because of fear?

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Where is God calling you to take a stand for Jesus today even at a great personal cost to yourself?

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**Prayer:** Pray that God would reveal to you any areas of your life where you've denied Jesus, and ask for forgiveness. Pray that when you are tempted to deny Jesus, either in words or deeds, or by failing to speak or act, God will give you strength to stand for Jesus.

# Day 3: Guilty Until Proven Innocent



*Read p182 – p184 (Section 5.48 -5.51)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 5.49-5.41:** Pilate was not an unwilling pawn of the Jewish leaders and crowds. He wasn't caught between a rock and a hard place. Pilate issued the verdict that sent Jesus to the cross. Yet he did so in such a way as to appear innocent of Jesus' blood. By washing his hands, he did not take responsibility for what he had done. How often do we do this sort of thing ourselves? How often do we rationalize our sins, blaming them upon others? How often do we try to evade responsibility for our own sins by pointing to the sins of others—our parents, spouse, society? When we fail to accept responsibility for our sins, then we lose the opportunity to experience forgiveness.

Can you think of times when you did not seek God's forgiveness because you rationalized your sin?

What goes through your mind when you realize Jesus willingly chose not to defend Himself?

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to help you to acknowledge your sins, both to yourself and to Him, rather than seeking excuses. Ask His Spirit to help you to experience the forgiveness He offers in Christ and to live in the freedom of that forgiveness.

# Day 4: The Way of the Cross



**Read p185 – p191 (Section 5.52 -5.57)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

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**Today's Focus – Section 5.54:** The last hours of Jesus' life leading up to His death on the cross are packed with symbolism and meaning as prophesy after prophesy was fulfilled. The darkening of the sky, the shaking of the earth, and the resurrection of the dead would have been clear signs to the Jews that the present age was ending and the age to come had begun. Jesus' crucifixion was the deathblow for a world system founded on pretensions of human power and wisdom. His resurrection marks the definitive intrusion of God's Kingdom into the world. The reign of God's kingdom has not yet taken in the entire earth, but Christ governs all those who will follow Him.

In what ways has the crucifixion of Jesus become "familiar" to you? Do you find yourself taking His death for granted, even as you try to keep the fact of His death present in your mind?

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What are some practical steps you can take to learn to appreciate more fully what our Lord endured on the cross for us?

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**Prayer:** Thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that has brought you eternal life. Pray that you will live out the reality of the resurrection every day.

# Day 5: From Death to Life



**Read p192 – p196 (Section 6.1-6.5)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 6.1:** The Resurrection is the starting point of our faith. It is because of the glorious hope that comes to us in the Resurrection that we can have the assurance needed when we are called to identify with Jesus in both His suffering and His obedience. Scripture is clear: Jesus did not rise from the dead immediately from the cross. He died, was buried, and then raised—but not until the third day. The gospel intentionally includes that second day in the grave. Instead of rising immediately, there was a pause, a time of waiting between the cross and the empty tomb. God, of course, is never random with His timing. He is always on time and exact with the execution of His plans. There was a reason for the timing. The day in between was not just any other day—it was the Sabbath. The day after the crucifixion, the disciples were on a day of Sabbath rest being reminded of the fact that God does the saving! They just needed to stand still and watch the salvation God was working for them.

Do you think it was easy or hard for the disciples to rest on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter? How easy is it for you to rest?

What's something that you can do differently this week to live out the resurrection and victory?

**Prayer:** Pray that you would personally experience God's resurrection power in your own heart and mind, aligning them to God's will. Pray that God would use you to help spread the Gospel message into this world.

# Day 6: No Proof Required



**Read p196 – p198 (Section 6.6-6.8)**

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 6.7:** It's good for us to ask questions and to seek understanding. But there are some claims that Jesus and the Apostles make that we won't be able to verify independently. Instead of always demanding to see things for ourselves, we are often called to trust the testimony of trustworthy witnesses. The problem with doubting Thomas is that he had witnessed several miracles, he'd already heard Jesus predict the resurrection, and he'd received news that Jesus had risen from reliable sources, but he still wouldn't believe until he could see it for himself. Like Thomas, we sometimes want to see first before we can trust Jesus. But our understanding on its own is insufficient. By trusting Jesus first, our minds can be opened to greater understanding than we can achieve on our own. As Saint Anselm famously said, "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand."

What is the most difficult thing for you to believe about Jesus?

Are you able to look at Jesus and declare, "My Lord and my God!"?

**Prayer:** Come before the Lord in prayer asking for faith to believe without seeing, and to trust without fully knowing. If there's any specific situation where you need faith and trust, mention it to the Lord.

# Day 7: Your Mission, Should You Accept it



*Read p198 – p202 (Section 6.9-6.14)*

What stands out to you in today's readings?

**Today's Focus – Section 6.10:** Imagine for a moment that you found the cure for cancer. If you really knew and believed that what you had would cure thousands of those sick with cancer, what would you do? Naturally, you would go and tell everyone you could. You would post it on social media, get on the news, write a blog, tell your friends. It would be unloving to keep the cure to yourself. We have not found the cure for cancer. But we have found the cure for sin! The resurrection means the penalty for sin has been satisfied, its power is broken, and salvation is available for everyone! It also means that those of us who have experienced salvation have a mission! Our mission is to tell the world that salvation is not only possible, but it is also available because of Jesus. So how will we "go" today? Will we justify staying silent? Will we assume that no one will listen? Will we drag our feet? Or will we hurry, running with the good news to those who need it most?

How have you made yourself (your time, money, story, skills, and talents) available to be used by God?

The disciples were fully committed to the course of Christ. What's your level of commitment to the course of Jesus? How do you rate? (1 – not committed, 10 – I will die for Jesus). How can you move a step up?

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to give you the awareness that every person without Christ faces an eternity in hell. Ask Him to grant you the boldness to share the gospel with the people around you, and to fill you with joy that overflows so that you naturally tell others about Jesus.

# Weekend Teaching: The Resurrection Brings Life



Message Notes

What did the Holy Spirit teach you through this message?

How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to what you heard?



# Group Discussion Guide

## Getting Started

Open your time together with a prayer, then spend some time catching up or answering the ice-breaker question below. Remember, the goal of this discussion is not to get through all the questions but to have meaningful conversations about Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

Have you ever been caught off guard and later realized you should have seen what was going to happen?

## Week's Review

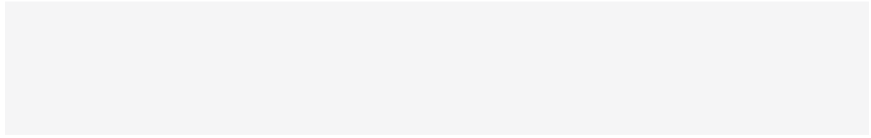
What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

## Deeper Dive Questions

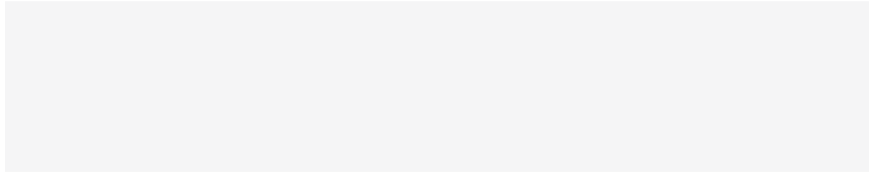
We often jump from Good Friday to Easter, without thinking about the day in-between. What do you think were some of the thoughts and emotions the disciples felt after Jesus was crucified?

Why were the women and the disciples shocked that Jesus had been raised?

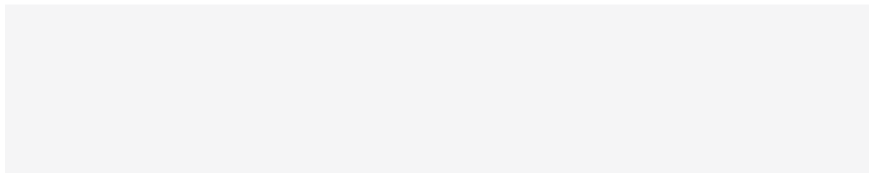
What sorts of situations might we be in that can make it especially difficult for us to believe and take Jesus at His word? Why?



What easily drowns out or blunts our spiritual senses and makes us forget God's Word, promises, and calling to us?



Consider the anxiety, fear, suffering, or unfulfilled desire that you might be wrestling with at this present moment. How does Jesus' resurrection ultimately address and speak into that?



## **Closing Prayer**

Thank God the Father for sending His son to die. Thank Jesus for dying and rising again. Ask God to help us grasp the impact of what He has done and is doing.

# Conclusion: Go and Tell

We have come to the end of our journey through the life of Jesus. But we have not reached the end of His story. Indeed, His story has no end. Jesus came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God, the fullness of which awaits that great feast at the marriage ceremony of the lamb. In the meantime, we live in the interlude - the here and now and not yet. But we are not merely waiting. We are on a mission. Our mission is to follow Jesus and fearlessly make Him known. It is a mission fraught with dangers of all kinds. But it is the same rescue mission that Jesus started those many years ago. Our marching orders are simple. Go and tell. We are to go and tell everyone everywhere about Jesus so that they too may follow Jesus and receive eternal life.

This mission mandate is captured in the poignant words of the Great Commission:

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Matthew 28:19-20**

We don't need the approval or commissioning of others to start telling people about Jesus. We don't need the perfect words. Think again of Mary, out of breath, bursting into the disciples' room. We don't know for sure, but maybe the only words she could get out were, "He's here!" or "Jesus is alive!" She ran and she told the others because the news was so good! Her beloved Lord was back! If we don't think of sharing the gospel with the same fervor, perhaps we need to revisit why the good news is so good.

Go and tell. It could be as simple as texting a quick encouragement or squeezing a friend's hand and saying, "He is here." It could be more involved, like writing a blog post, or leading a Bible study, or sharing the gospel with someone for the first time. Whatever it looks like, the story of Matthew 28 reminds us that Jesus has commissioned us; opportunities to tell others about Him are all around us. Let's ask for eyes to see those opportunities and the courage to get up, go, and tell whenever He asks.

# Appendix 1

## Foot Washing Guide

Activity time: 20 minutes

### Materials needed

- Liquid soap, preferably ecologically friendly
- Large basins, one for every three participants
- Paper towels for wiping the basins
- Washcloths, one per participant
- Hand towels, one per participant
- Unscented lotion

### In Preparation

- Identify a water source near the meeting space where you can fill, empty, and refill basins.
- Shortly before beginning this activity, fill the basins with hot water so the water will be comfortably warm for use.
- Set each basin in front of a chair. Next to each chair, place three washcloths and three hand towels.

### Description of the Activity

In this activity, participants experience giving and receiving love and care by washing one another's feet. Before you begin, explain the meaning of this experience:

The Bible tells a story about how Jesus washed the feet of His apostles. Jesus did this to show them that greatness in the Kingdom of God was about serving each other. He wanted people to realize that none of us is more important or valuable than another.

Because of this story, foot washing is a Christian ritual. When we wash each other's feet today, it is a way to show humility, love, care, and service.

- Have one person read John 13:2-17.
- Have participants take off their shoes and socks. Then, form trios by counting off ones, twos, and threes. Ask all the "ones" to sit in a chair and the "twos" and "threes" to sit at the seated person's feet. If your group is made up of couples, you may want to have couples wash each other's feet. You may also do gender specific foot washing.
- If in groups of three, have each person wash one foot of the person in the chair, using the soap and washcloth. After a few minutes of washing, one foot-washer should towel the feet dry with a towel and rub lotion on both feet. The other foot-washer should dump out the dirty water and fill the basin with warm, clean water. If the water source is far away or the basin heavy, co-leaders should do this job.
- Once there is a second basin full of clean water, one of the foot-washers should now sit in the chair. Repeat the process until everyone in the trio has had an opportunity to have their feet washed.
- If any in the group are especially ticklish, unable to feel their feet, or squeamish about the foot-washing ceremony, have the group wash one another's hands instead.

## Debrief the Experience

- What were you thinking while you washed someone's feet?
- Was it difficult to wash the feet of someone you love?
- How much harder would it be to wash the feet of someone who has been mean to you or someone who is homeless, a leper, or a criminal?
- What were you thinking while having your feet washed? Why do you think you thought/felt that way?
- How does it make you feel that Jesus would wash our dirty feet?
- Why do you think Jesus wants us to do this?

- Brainstorm ways you can practice the posture and lifestyle of serving others.

Close with a prayer of gratitude for the love of God shown to us through the sacrificial service of Jesus, and that He entrusts us to share that love with others around us.

# Appendix 2

## A Graphical Timeline of The Movements and Ministry of Jesus

Jesus spent the entirety of His life (besides a short stint in Egypt as a child) in Israel. Following a harmony of the Gospels, we have compiled the following itineraries and maps to give an indication of Jesus' movements over three years of ministry, albeit with some discrepancies.

### The First Year of Ministry (Approx. AD27-28)

[1] Jesus, about 30 years old, traveled from his hometown of Nazareth in Galilee.

[2] At the River Jordan, possibly near Bethany-across-the-Jordan, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

[3] Jesus went into the Judean Desert or wilderness to face the devil's temptation.

[4] At the River Jordan near Bethany-across-the-Jordan, and according to John's Gospel, Jesus called His first five disciples (Jn 1:35). These included Philip, Andrew, and Simon Peter, all from Bethsaida in Galilee (Jn 1:44).

[5] Jesus returned north to Galilee with his disciples (Jn 1:43), and at a wedding in Cana, changed the water into wine - His first recorded miracle (Jn 2:1).

[6] He continued to Capernaum, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, with His mother, brothers, and disciples, and stayed there a short time (Jn 2:12).

### Early Ministry in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee

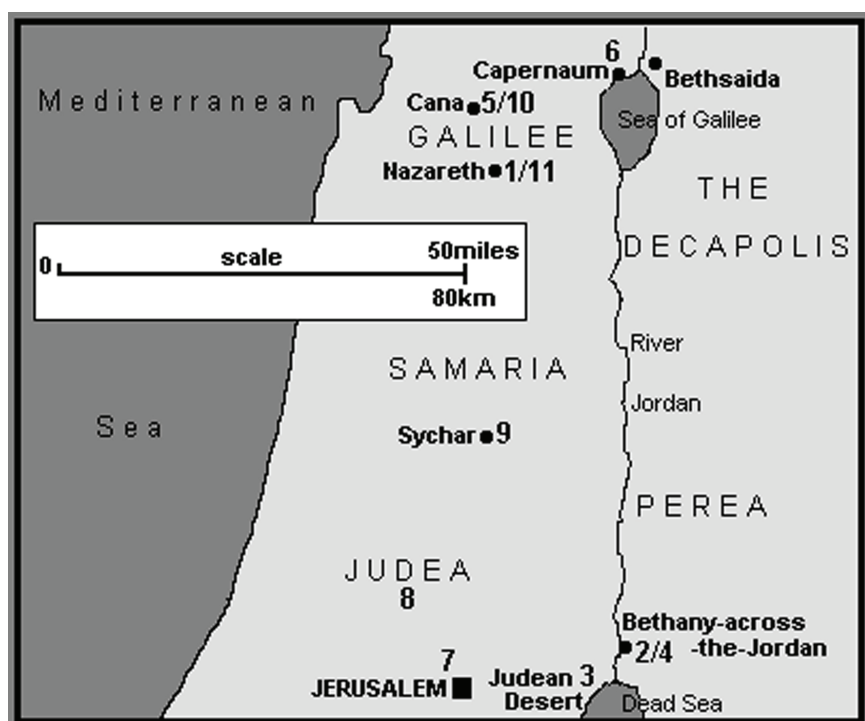
[7] Jesus traveled south to Jerusalem for the Passover - the first one mentioned in the Gospels (Jn 2:13). There He drove the moneychangers from the Temple for the first time (Jn 2:14). He also met the Pharisee, Nicodemus (Jn 3:1).

[8] Jesus left for the countryside of Judea where His disciples baptized believers (Jn 3:22).

[9] Jesus and His disciples continued northwards from Judea (Jn 4:3), passing through the territory of Samaria (Jn 4:4). Near Sychar, Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:5). Many Samaritans believed in Him (Jn 4:39), after which He continued to Galilee (Jn 4:43).

[10] Jesus reached Galilee (Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14; Jn 4:45), and back in Cana healed the official's son who was sick in Capernaum (Jn 4:46).

[11] Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth and preached in the synagogue (Lk 4:16). He was rejected for the first time (Lk 4:28).



Map 1: The First Year of Ministry



# The Second Year of Ministry (Approx. AD28-29)

[1] Jesus moved to Capernaum (Mt 4:13; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:31). According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus called His first disciples - perhaps only now to full-time service (Mt 4:18; Mk 1:16; Lk 5:1). In Capernaum He healed the madman in the synagogue (Mk 1:23; Lk 4:33) and Peter's mother-in-law of her fever (Mt 8:14; Mk 1:29; Lk 4:38).

## First Preaching Tour of Galilee

[2] Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, preaching and healing (Mt 4:23; Mk 1:39), including the leper (Mt 8:2; Mk 1:40; Lk 5:12).

[3] Returning to Capernaum (Mk 2:1), a paralyzed man was healed (Mt 9:2; Mk 2:3; Lk 5:18) and Jesus called Matthew (or Levi) the tax-collector to be a disciple (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27).

[4] Jesus traveled from Galilee south to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival - possibly the Second Passover identified in the Gospels (Jn 5:1). At the Pool of Bethesda Jesus healed the crippled man (Jn 5:2).

[5] Returning north to Galilee, Jesus healed the man with a shriveled hand (Mt 12:9; Mk 3:1; Lk 6:6) and many others (Mt 12:15; Mk 3:7).

[6] On a hillside in Galilee, probably near Capernaum, Jesus selected His twelve apostles (Mt 10:1; Mk 3:13; Lk 6:12) and delivered the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1). In Luke's report Jesus came down from a hillside to give the Sermon (Lk 6:20).

[7] Back in Capernaum, (Mt 8:5; Lk 7:1) Jesus healed the Roman centurion's servant (Mt 8:5; Lk 7:2).

## Second Preaching Tour of Galilee

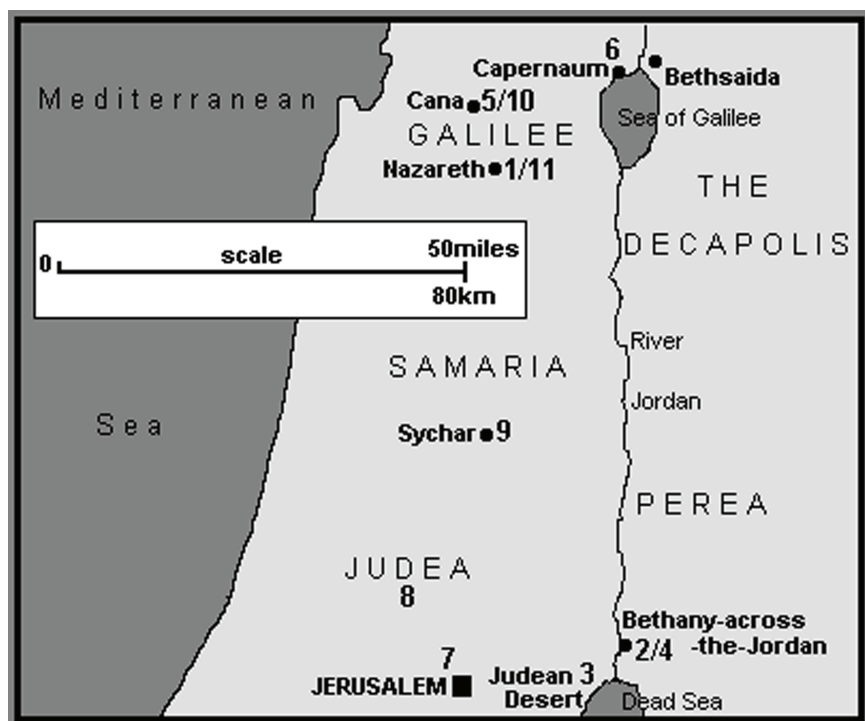
[8] Jesus continued preaching and healing in Galilee, and in Nain brought the widow's son back to life (Lk 7:11).

[9] Accompanied by the twelve apostles and some of His women helpers, Jesus continued His second Galilee tour (Lk 8:1).

[10] He sailed across the Sea of Galilee (Mt 8:18; Mk 4:35; Lk 8:22) and calmed a

storm (Mt 8:24; Mk 4:37; Lk 8:23). Landing in the region of the Gerasenes (Mk 5:1; Lk 8:26) or Gadarenes (Mt 8:28) in Gentile Decapolis - the Ten Towns or Cities, Jesus healed the madman in the story of the Gadarene Swine (Mt 8:28; Mk 5:2; Lk 8:27).

[11] Sailing back across the Sea of Galilee (Mk 5:21), Jesus landed at "His own town" of Capernaum (Mt 9:1). Here He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.



Map 2: The Second Year of Ministry

# **The Third Year of Ministry (Approx. AD29-30)**

## **Third Preaching Tour of Galilee**

[1] Jesus traveled from Capernaum to “His own native town” of Nazareth (Mk 6:1).

[2] In Nazareth, He was rejected for a second time (Mt 13:54; Mk 6:1).

[3] He continued through Galilee (Mt 13:58; Mk 6:6) and sent out the twelve apostles to preach the Gospel (Mt 10:5; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1).

[4] The Twelve returned to Capernaum from their mission (Mk 6:30, Luke 9:10).

[5] From Capernaum, they went off by boat with Jesus to a quiet place (Mk 6:32) near Bethsaida (Lk 9:10), where He fed the 5,000 (Mt 14:14; Mk 6:33; Lk 9:11; Jn 6:5).

[6] The disciples returned across the Sea of Galilee (Mt 14:22; Mk 6:45). Jesus came walking on the water to join them (Mt 14:25; Mk 6:48; Jn 6:19). They landed near the Plain of Gennesaret and Jesus healed many people (Mt 14:34; Mk 6:53).

[7] From Gennesaret they made their way back to Capernaum (Jn 6:24) and Jesus taught about the Bread of Life (Jn 6:26).

## **Jesus Preached and Healed in Syrian-Phoenicia, Iturea and Trachonitis, The Decapolis**

[8] Jesus retired from Galilee to the region of Tyre and Sidon in Syrian-Phoenicia (Mt 15:21; Mk 7:24), where He healed the daughter of the Gentile Syrophoenician woman (Mt 15:22; Mk 7:25).

[9] He left Syrian-Phoenicia via Sidon for Galilee (Mt 15:29) but traveled through the Decapolis (Mk 7:31).

[10] In the Decapolis, He healed the deaf and mute man (Mk 7:32) and fed the 4,000 (Mt 15:32; Mk 8:1).

[11] Reaching the Sea of Galilee, He crossed by boat to the Magadan/Dalmanutha region (Mt 15:39; Mk 8:10). There the Pharisees and Sadducees asked for a sign from heaven (Mt 16:1; Mk 8:11).



Map 3: The Third Year of Ministry

[12] Continuing on to Bethsaida, a blind man is healed (Mk 8:22).

[13] Jesus then traveled from Galilee, north to Caesarea Philippi in Iturea and Trachonitis, where Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ (Mt 16:13; Mk 8:27).

[14] Continuing on from Caesarea Philippi, possibly further north towards Mount Hermon, three of the disciples saw Jesus Transfigured in the presence of Elijah and Moses (Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). On His return, Jesus healed the boy with epilepsy (Mt 17:14; Mk 9:14; Lk 9:37). Other traditions place the Transfiguration to the south,

on Mount Tabor. The epileptic boy would then have been healed in the Galilee area.

[15] In Galilee (Mt 17:22; Mk 9:30), in Capernaum (Mk 9:33), Jesus paid the Temple Tax with a fish. (Mt 17:24). Then, to avoid the dangers in Judea, He remained in Galilee (Jn 7:1).

## **Later Ministry in Judea**

[16] Jesus left Capernaum and Galilee for the last earthly time (Mt 19:1; Mk 10:1) and headed for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51; Jn 7:10). Travelling by Samaria, He healed the ten lepers (Lk 17:11) but was rejected in a Samaritan village (Lk 9:52).

[17] Arriving in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles in the Fall of c AD29 (Jn 7:10), Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:2) and healed the blind man who was taken before the Sanhedrin (Jn 9:1).

[18] During His travels in Judea, Jesus visited Martha and Mary in Bethany (Lk 10:38), returning to Jerusalem for “Hanukkah”, the Feast of Dedication, in December c AD29 (Jn 10:22).

## **The Last Few Months of Jesus’ Life**

[19] Jesus withdrew to Bethany-across-the-Jordan, and into the province of Perea, and stayed for a while (Jn 10:40).

[20] Following the death of Lazarus, Jesus returned to Bethany near Jerusalem, and rose (Lazarus) from the dead (Jn 11:1).

[21] Because of threats to His life, Jesus withdrew to Ephraim to the north of Jerusalem (Jn 11:54).

## **Jesus’ Ministry in Perea (Modern Day Jordan)**

[22] Jesus then crossed the River Jordan and worked in Perea (Mt 19:1; Mk 10:1). There, He blessed the little children (Mt 19:13, Mk 10:13; Lk 18:15) and spoke to the rich young man (Mt 19:16; Mk 10:17; Lk 18:18).

## **Jesus’ Final Journey to Jerusalem**

[23] Jesus now traveled towards Jerusalem for the last time (Mt 20:17; Mk 10:32; Lk 18:31). Passing through Jericho, He healed one (or two) blind men (Mt 20:29; Mk 10:46; Lk 18:35) and converted Zacchaeus the tax collector (Lk 19:1).

[24] Reaching Bethany (Jn 12:1), the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, Jesus was anointed by Mary either now (Jn 12:2), or later (Mt 26:6; Mk 14:3) after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1; Mk 11:1; Lk 19:29; Jn 12:12).

[25] During the Easter week, Jesus returned to Jerusalem each day after staying overnight in Bethany on the Mount of Olives (Mt 21:17-18; Mk 11:11-12; 19; Lk 21:37).

Maps from <https://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN160-TRAVELS.htm#one>



