



the **GOSPEL** PROJECT

FOR STUDENTS

THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

VOLUME 7

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ENDING LOW

This week, we're covering the passage and read all of the content on this page:

Matthew 1: Luke 2

THE MESSIAH WAS BORN INTO
LUKE 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from the emperor, that this first registration everyone went to be registered, and Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the house of David, and family of David, to be registered. And because he was registered, & while the girl gave birth to her firstborn son, and because there was no guest room

THE MESSIAH IS WORTHY OF
LUKE 2:8-20

And in that region, shepherds were around the flock, & then an angel of the second firm, and they were terrified & amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I have found for you, you will find a baby wrapped tight of the heavenly host with the highest heaven, and peace on earth reported to heaven, the shepherds also saw the angels, and they reported the message they were told, and the shepherds said to them, and meditating on them. At the birth of the Messiah, and the

MAIN POINT.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind yet without sin.

DISCUSSION

- What common details of the Christmas story aren't in the text? Why have we added to the story?
- What surprises you about Jesus's birth? Why do you think God chose to send His Son in this way?
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. How do you see this reflected in Jesus's birth? What does it mean that Jesus made Himself poor for us to be rich?

THE MESSIAH IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP
LUKE 2:8-20

- ✚ How does the angel describe Jesus (v. 11)? What do we see about His purpose?
- What does God first announcing Jesus's birth to shepherds instead of religious leaders show about His kingdom?
- ♥ Why do we easily lose the awe and wonder of Jesus's birth? How can we celebrate it more than just at Christmas?

THE SHEPHERDS RAN TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS
WHO IN YOUR LIFE NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

How you were so deeply loved! Jesus was born as a baby? His mother Mary just said, Jesus here to wipe out sin and death-without him coming to his sin as-except for remaining alive, of course! Well, God's plan for our salvation wasn't none other than murder plot; it was so much better. Our salvation was always God's plan. It is to be a credit card, constantly reducing up debt and requiring payment. For Jesus to act as our faithful High priest and to pay for our sins, He had to be like us in every way. He had to be a man, like us, to be able to pay for our sin. He is able to help us when we are tempted (Psalm 119:11). The best part? Jesus chose us to do this for us. He chose submission to the Father's will to come here-to leave a throne in heaven, to feel hunger and thirst, to feel grief, to experience temptation, to die a painful death. Jesus, to feel that He could pay our debt, so that we can be freed from sin. Jesus lived a sinless human life, and He alone was able to become our substitute. Because He alone was able to die, Jesus was able to atone in our place.

Intended for group and personal use, this section contains the main point of the session, questions to interact with as a group, and the key components found in the Leader Guide—Christ Connection, Theology Connection, and Cultural Connection.



The **Christ Connection** specifically points out how the Scripture passage for that session points to Jesus, connecting the dots and helping you understand how the books of the Bible fit together.



The **Theology Connection** contains an important biblical doctrine for each lesson. Each of these doctrines directly relates to the Bible study material. Knowing these doctrines will help you be more grounded in what Christianity teaches and celebrates and better equipped to explain to others what you actually believe.



The **Head/Heart/Hands** questions are designed to show how God's story connects with our own. We'll see how Scripture challenges the ways we think, feel, and live. While this certainly happens on an individual level, we do want to stress to you that this calling and mission to live differently is something all Christians share and pursue.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

In addition to the group portions of this study, the **Daily Discipleship Guide** also includes five days of devotions following each session. As we journey through the storyline of Scripture over the course of three years, we won't have time to cover some sections of the Bible. These devotions will help with that, filling in the gaps in the biblical storyline and allowing more opportunities to cover biblical themes and insights not discussed during group time. These devotions help you know how to read and interpret the Bible for yourself. Symbols for the Seven Arrows reading method are provided at the beginning of each week's devotions as a reminder of common questions to ask about Scripture as you read each day. The devotion pages are perforated so that you can take them home with you.

SEVEN ARROWS

OF BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?

DAY ONE

MATTHEW 1:18-23

How you ever felt as if you were the only person who could do something? For example, imagine you had a very specific way you liked your room cleaned and organized that only you knew how to do. Even if someone offered to do it for you, they couldn't because you're the only one who knows how to do it.

Did you know that, in the same way, Jesus is the only One who can save us from our sins and bring us into a perfect relationship with God? In the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, we see that through sin we are separated from God and brought into this world. Sin separated us from God because God is without sin. Not only did sin separate us from God, but it also required a payment we couldn't pay. The prophet Isaiah explained that "our righteous acts are like a polluted garment" (Isa. 64:6). In other words, even on our best day and with our best behavior, our good works aren't enough to pay the penalty for our sin, earn our salvation, or bring us into a right relationship with God.

So, we needed a Savior who would do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. This is why Jesus came from heaven to earth. Matthew can tell us that Jesus came to save people from their sins. Jesus came as a humble servant to give this life for ours so that we might be forgiven of our sins and brought back into perfect relationship with God. He is the only One who could have done it! This is why Jesus said that life is the way, the truth, and the life, and why the Bible boldly declares that no one comes to God except through Jesus (John 14:6).

DAY THREE

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Feeling like you're all alone and that no one cares is a terrible feeling. Usually, it's someone near the truth. Most of us have people who care deeply, who would do anything they could to help us. But that doesn't always prevent the feeling of loneliness from creeping in.

Did you know that Jesus never wants us to feel that way? In fact, He went to incredible lengths to make sure we wouldn't have to. Jesus came close and became like us so that He could both help and save us in our times of need.

Jesus "emptied Himself" and became a humble servant (v. 7). He left heaven, took on human flesh, and lived among us, not to be served, but to serve and to give this life for ours. We didn't just come to help from a distance; He came close. He became one of us so He could understand us completely, having faced every kind of temptation and suffering just like we do (Heb. 4:15). He knows what it's like to feel weak, tired, and even lonely.

Because Jesus did all of this for us, we never have to wonder if we're alone. Jesus will never leave us or abandon us (Heb. 13:5), and when we need help, we also can lean with total confidence, knowing He is not only willing to help but is ready and able (Isa. 46:1).

So, no matter how you feel or what's going on around you, remember this: Jesus is near. He cares. He understands. And He's always ready to help.

DECISIONS?

AREAS?

PRAY

• HOW DID SIN SEPARATE US FROM GOD, AND WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN?

• IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU TRIED TO FIX YOUR SIN ON YOUR OWN? HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD SAVE US FROM OUR SIN COMFORT YOU?

PRAY

GOD, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR SON, JESUS. THANK YOU THAT IN HIS NAME I AM FORGIVEN AND SAVED FROM MY SIN. I PLACE MY TRUST IN WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR ME.

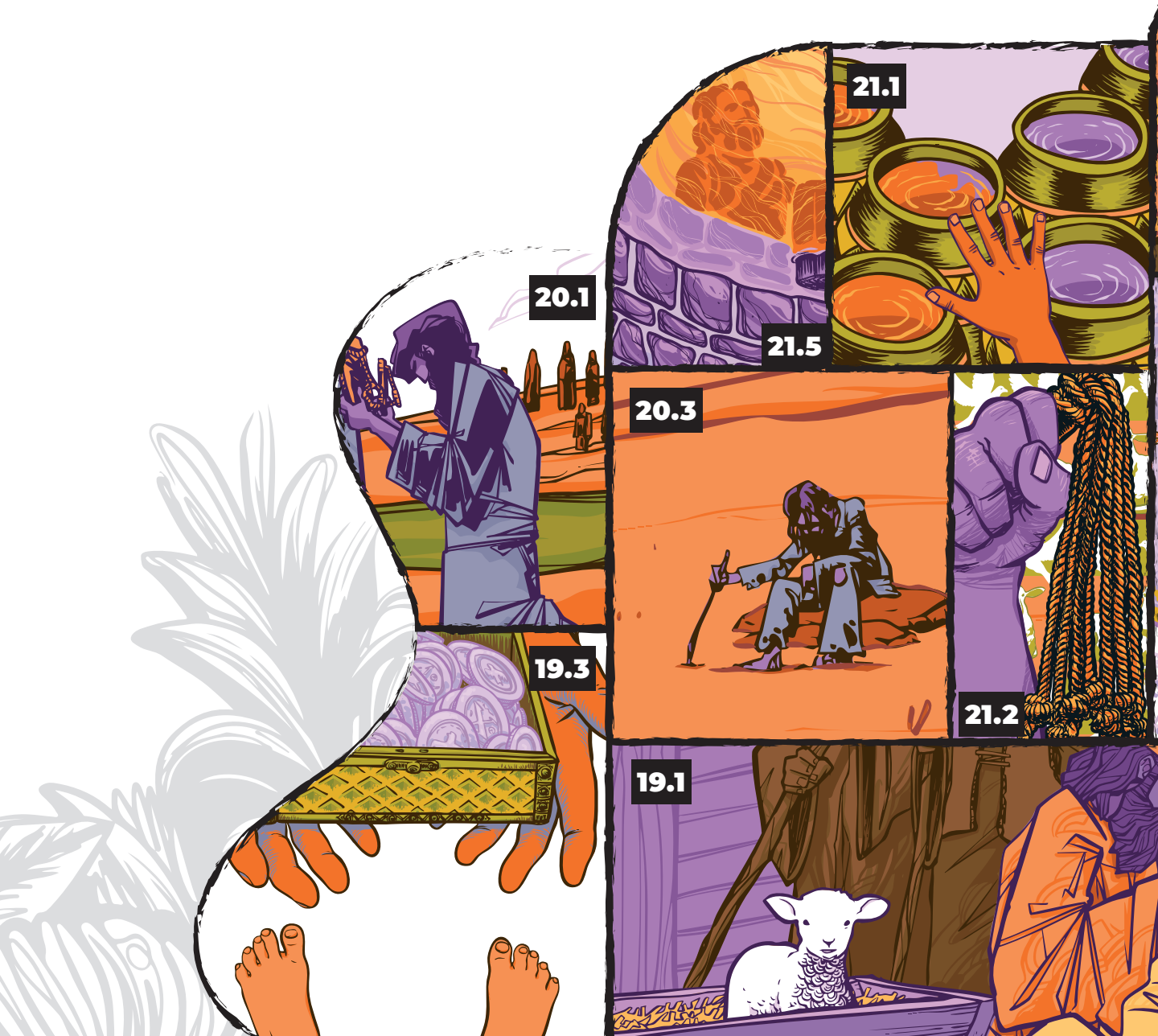
DECISIONS?

AREAS?

PRAY

VOLUME 7 | ESV

THE SON HAS COME



19.1 GOD IS WITH US

19.2 MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION

19.3 WE SAW HIS STAR

19.4 IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

20.1 ONE WHO IS MORE POWERFUL

20.2 MY BELOVED SON

20.3 IT IS WRITTEN

20.4 FOLLOW ME

21.1 THE FIRST OF HIS SIGNS

21.2 I WILL RAISE IT UP

21.3 BORN OF THE SPIRIT

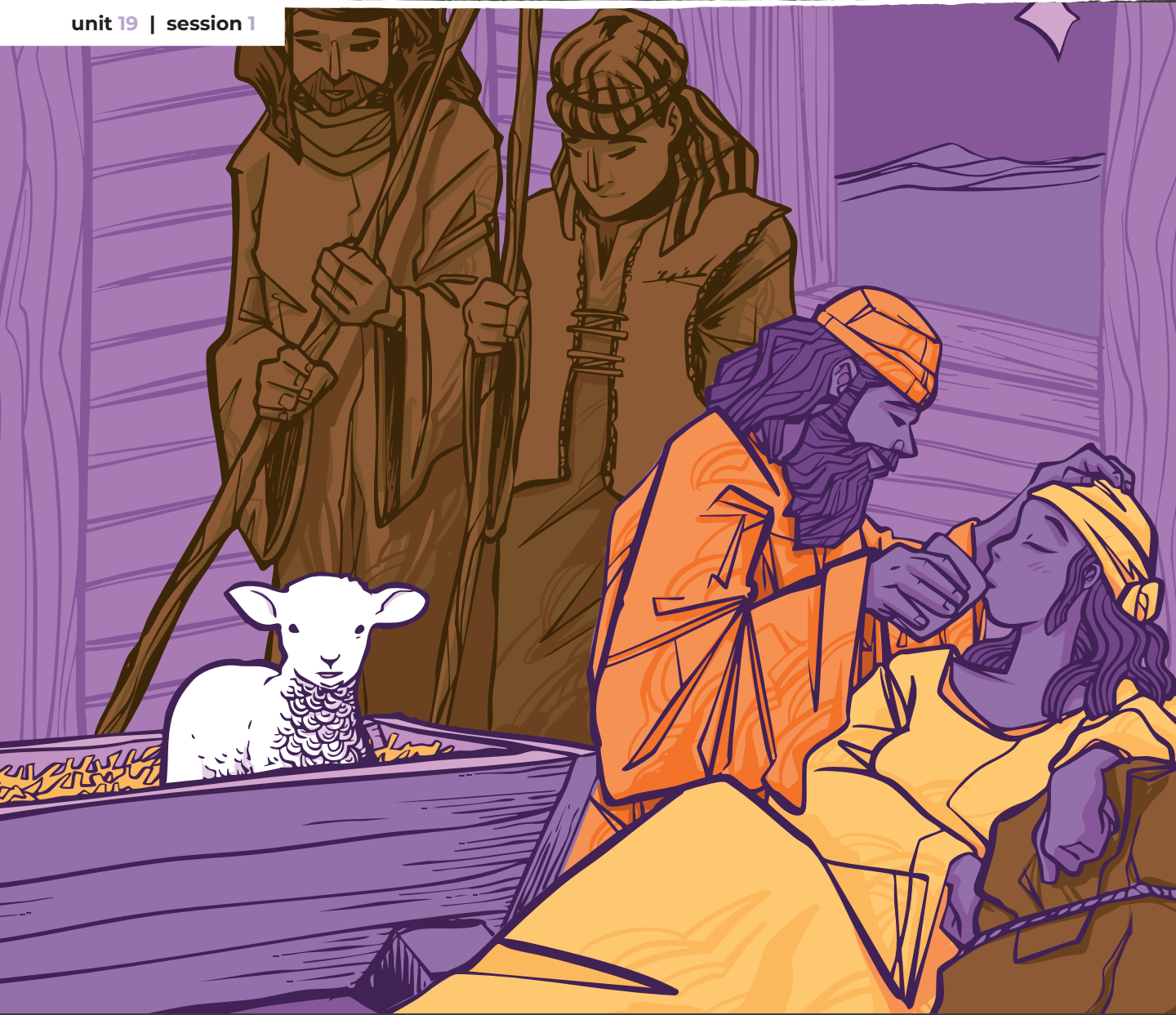
21.4 THE GROOM'S FRIEND

21.5 LIVING WATER



GOD IS *WITH US*

unit 19 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

The birth of Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in humble circumstances to be the sacrificial Lamb and would lay down His life to be our mighty Savior. One day, Jesus will return as our eternal King.

BENDING LOW

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Matthew 1; Luke 1–2

THE MESSIAH WAS BORN INTO LOWLY CONDITIONS

LUKE 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

THE MESSIAH IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

LUKE 2:8-20

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

MAIN POINT.

Our Savior lowered Himself to save us, which should move us to worship.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD THE SON

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humans yet without sin.

DISCUSSION

THE MESSIAH WAS BORN INTO LOWLY CONDITIONS LUKE 2:1-7

- What common details of the Christmas story aren't in the text? Why have we added to the story?
- What surprises you about Jesus's birth? Why do you think God chose to send His Son in this way?
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. How do you see this reflected in Jesus's birth? What does it mean that Jesus made Himself poor for us to be rich?

THE MESSIAH IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP LUKE 2:8-20

- How does the angel describe Jesus (v. 11)? What do we see about His purpose?
- What does God first announcing Jesus's birth to shepherds instead of religious leaders show about His kingdom?
- Why do we easily lose the awe and wonder of Jesus's birth? How can we celebrate it more than just at Christmas?



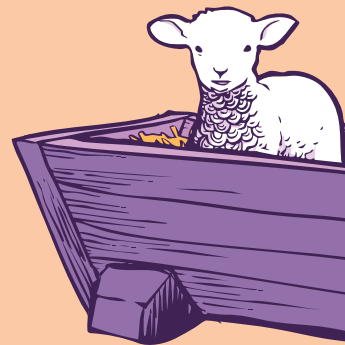
THE SHEPHERDS RAN TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS. WHO IN YOUR LIFE NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL? WHY DO WE OFTEN HESITATE TO SHARE IT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was born as a baby? Why couldn't God just send Jesus here to wipe out sin and death without Him having to be like us—except for remaining sinless, of course? Well, God's plan for our salvation wasn't some superhero movie plot; it was so much better. Our salvation was always God's plan. Sin is like a credit card, constantly racking up debt and requiring payment. For Jesus to act as our faithful high priest and to pay for our sins, He had to be like us in every way (Heb. 2:17). Because Jesus suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help us when we are tempted (Heb. 2:18). The best part? Jesus chose to do this for us. He chose submission to the Father's will to come here—to leave a throne in heaven, to feel hunger and thirst, to feel grief, to experience temptation, to die a painful death. Why? So that He could pay our debt. So that we can be freed from sin. Jesus lived a sinless human life, and He alone was able to become our sacrifice, our substitute. Because He was born like us, Jesus was able to stand in our place.



DAY ONE



MATTHEW 1:18-23

Have you ever felt as if you were the only person who could do something? For example, imagine you had a very specific way you liked your room cleaned and organized that only you knew how to do. Even if someone offered to do it for you, they couldn't because you're the only one who knows how to do it.

Did you know that, in the same way, Jesus is the only One who can save us from our sins and bring us into a perfect relationship with God? In the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, we see that through one act of disobedience, Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. Sin separated us from God because God is without sin. Not only did sin separate us from God, but it also required a payment we couldn't pay. The prophet Isaiah explained that "our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isa. 64:6). In other words, even on our best day and with our best behavior, our good works aren't enough to pay the penalty for our sin, earn our salvation, or bring us into a right relationship with God.

So, we needed a Savior who would do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. This is why Jesus came from heaven to earth. Matthew 1:21 tells us that Jesus came to save people from their sins. Jesus came as a humble servant to give His life for ours so that we might be forgiven of our sins and brought back into perfect relationship with God. He is the only One who could have done it! This is why Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and why the Bible boldly declares that no one comes to God except through Him (John 14:6).

- **HOW DID SIN SEPARATE US FROM GOD, AND WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN?**
- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU TRIED TO FIX YOUR SIN ON YOUR OWN? HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD SAVE US FROM OUR SIN COMFORT YOU?**

PRAY

GOD, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR SON, JESUS. THANK YOU THAT IN HIS NAME I AM FORGIVEN AND SAVED FROM MY SIN. I PLACE MY TRUST IN WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR ME.



DAY TWO

ISAIAH 9:2,6-7

Have you ever experienced a power outage? Maybe a big storm rolled through, and without warning, everything went dark. Suddenly, the air conditioning quit, the fridge stopped running, and you couldn't charge electronics you have come to rely on. One of the most noticeable things was probably the lights going out. And if it happens at night, you're left in total darkness, relying on flashlights or candles until the sun comes up or the power is restored.

In a similar way, when sin entered the world, it caused a kind of "spiritual blackout." Isaiah explained that God's people were walking in darkness. Sin turned off the lights in our hearts and minds, leaving humanity stumbling in the dark, trying to find our way without the ability to see. In the Old Testament, God gave His people the law and sent prophets to guide them, like flashlights and candles in the night. These were helpful, but they were nothing compared to the rising of the sun that brings the full light of day. They couldn't turn the lights back on—something only Jesus could do.

Isaiah pointed God's people forward to a Savior, who like the rising of the sun would shine the light of God into a dark world. Jesus fulfilled this promise! Through faith in Jesus, we've been called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Because of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, we don't have to live in darkness anymore—not in our identity, in our purpose, in stressful decisions, in any area of our lives. The life and the light of Jesus bring clarity, hope, and new life.

- **WHAT PARTS OF YOUR LIFE FEEL LIKE DARKNESS OR CONFUSION ABOUT YOURSELF, OTHERS, OR TOUGH DECISIONS?**
- **HOW CAN YOU INVITE JESUS TO SHINE HIS LIGHT IN THESE AREAS? WHAT ARE WAYS THAT JESUS SHINES HIS LIGHT INTO OUR LIVES?**

PRAY

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME OUT OF DARKNESS AND INTO LIGHT. I INVITE YOU TO SHINE YOUR LIGHT IN MY LIFE AND HELP ME TO SEE EVERY AREA OF LIFE THE WAY YOU INTENDED.



DAY THREE

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Feeling like you're all alone and that no one cares is a terrible feeling. Usually, it's nowhere near the truth. Most of us have people who care deeply, who would do anything they could to help us. But that doesn't totally prevent the feeling of loneliness from creeping in.

Did you know that Jesus never wants us to feel that way? In fact, He went to incredible lengths to make sure we wouldn't have to. Jesus came close and became like us so that He could both help and serve us in our times of need.

Jesus "emptied himself" and became a humble servant (v. 7). He left heaven, took on human flesh, and lived among us, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life for ours. He didn't just come to help from a distance; He came close. He became one of us! He understands us completely, having faced every kind of temptation and suffering just like we do (Heb. 4:15). He knows what it's like to feel weak, tired, and even lonely.

Because Jesus did all of this for us, we never have to wonder if we're alone. Jesus will never leave us or abandon us (Heb. 13:5). And when we need help, we can run to Him with bold confidence, knowing He is not only willing to help but is ready and able (Heb. 4:16).

So, no matter how you feel or what's going on around you, remember this: Jesus is near. He cares. He understands. And He's always ready to help.

- **HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS CAME AS A HUMBLE SERVANT, READY AND WILLING TO HELP, GIVE YOU COMFORT?**
- **IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU FEEL ALONE AND NEED JESUS TO COME CLOSE AND HELP YOU? HOW CAN YOU INVITE HIM INTO THOSE AREAS OF YOUR LIFE?**

PRAY

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR COMING CLOSE TO US AS A HUMBLE SERVANT, READY AND WILLING TO HELP. TODAY, I INVITE YOU INTO EVERY AREA OF MY LIFE AND ASK TO FEEL YOUR PRESENCE.



DAY FOUR

1 PETER 1:18-20

What is sin? Sin is missing the mark, the righteous standard that God has set for us. It's like aiming a ball at a target and missing it completely every time. God has a standard, a righteous requirement, and when we fall short of it, we sin.

Often, we don't grasp the seriousness of our sin. The Bible teaches that sin is so serious that it requires a sacrifice, the shedding of blood. Before Jesus, God's people offered a spotless lamb as a sin sacrifice, and through this, they were forgiven and made right with God. But this was only a temporary solution, a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus would make.

Today's passage reminds us that we were redeemed not with perishable things, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect. Jesus was born for this purpose. He was wrapped in strips of cloth, just as sacrificial lambs were swaddled to protect them from any blemish (Luke 2:7). He came to live the life we could not live—a perfect, sinless life. As the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus died the death we deserved and removed our sin once and for all. His sacrifice accomplished what the blood of animals never could: It cleansed our conscience from sin so that we can worship God freely and fully (Heb. 9:14). So, no matter where you've missed the mark or how short you've fallen of God's standard, turn to Jesus. Only He can offer the forgiveness and cleansing your soul needs.

- **HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING THE WEIGHT OF SIN CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT JESUS'S SACRIFICE?**
- **WHAT ARE THE CONNECTIONS IN JESUS'S BIRTH, LIFE, AND DEATH TO THE SIN OFFERING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT? HOW CAN THIS HELP YOU CONNECT THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS IN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR PROVING YOUR LOVE FOR ME THROUGH GIVING YOUR SON AS THE SPOTLESS LAMB FOR MY SINS. I CONFESS MY SIN TO YOU TODAY, AND I RECEIVE THE FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING THAT ONLY YOU CAN OFFER.





DAY FIVE

PSALM 95:6

Have you ever been passionate about something? Maybe a book, a movie, a sport, or a hobby? What you are passionate about can captivate your life in a way that feels all-consuming. You think about it constantly, you give your time to it, and you're even willing to spend your money on it. Why? Because you're passionate about it. Did you know that this kind of all-consuming passion is exactly what should describe our worship of God? The shepherds hurried to see Jesus and praised God for what they had seen and heard (Luke 2:15,20). Mary was captivated as she held Jesus in her arms and treasured all that God was doing in her heart (Luke 2:19). The wise men opened their treasures and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). Why? Because Jesus was and still is worthy of all-consuming worship.

Psalm 95:6 says to come and worship God, bowing down and kneeling before Him. Our reasonable response to all that Jesus has done is to lay down our lives in sacrificial worship (Rom. 12:1). Worship that captivates and consumes our hearts is what Jesus is worthy of because of who He is and what He has done. But why does our worship sometimes feel less than that? How is it that we can know Jesus is worthy of our worship yet not feel like giving it to Him? Ultimately, we worship what we give our time, attention, and even money to. Jesus said that wherever your treasure is your heart will follow (Matt. 6:21). So, if we want to close the gap between knowing Jesus is worthy of all-consuming worship and giving Him that kind of worship, we must be intentional. We must bend our hearts in worship toward Him by intentionally worshiping Him with our time, our attention, and our offerings.

- **CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING YOU'VE BEEN PASSIONATE ABOUT BEFORE? HOW DID IT CONSUME YOUR TIME, ATTENTION, AND EVEN YOUR RESOURCES?**
- **HOW CAN YOU, IN THAT SAME WAY, BECOME A PERSON OF PASSIONATE WORSHIP, GIVING JESUS WHAT HE DESERVES?**

PRAY

**JESUS, YOU ARE WORTHY OF ALL OF MY WORSHIP.
TODAY, I CHOOSE TO BOW MY KNEE BEFORE YOU,
TO GIVE TO YOU THE WORSHIP YOU REQUIRE
AND DESERVE.**

MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION

unit 19 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Simeon praised God when he saw Jesus, recognizing Him as the promise for which Israel had longed. Simeon also prophesied that many would oppose Jesus. Jesus came to His people, but they did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God (John 1:11-12).

EXPECTING WHILE WAITING

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Luke 2:1-39

WAIT EXPECTANTLY FOR JESUS

LUKE 2:25-35

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." 33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

WAIT FAITHFULLY SERVING JESUS

LUKE 2:36-40

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus is the One we've waited for to restore us and save us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired people to write the Scriptures and enables people to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts people of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls people to the Savior and gives them new life. At the moment of salvation, He baptizes every believer into the body of Christ.

DISCUSSION

WAIT EXPECTANTLY FOR JESUS

LUKE 2:25-35

- ♥ • How does it feel to receive or see something you've waited for?
- 📖 • How did Simeon recognize Jesus so easily? What does this show about the Holy Spirit's role in our lives?
- ✝ • How can we be more expectant for Jesus in our daily lives? Why don't we long to "see" Him the way Simeon did?

WAIT FAITHFULLY SERVING JESUS

LUKE 2:36-40

- What are ways we waste time instead of using it wisely? Why do we do this?
- 👤 • Why do you think Anna spent so much of her life at the temple?
- How does Anna's reaction to seeing Jesus compare to our reaction to getting to know Jesus?



WHAT DID BOTH SIMEON AND ANNA DO WITH THEIR WAITING? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW YOU ABOUT HOW TO WAIT FOR THE LORD?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What is hope? We use the word fairly often, even casually. We hope school gets canceled on a snow day. We hope to pass our math test. We hope someone asks us to a school dance. We hope our future turns out okay. When we express our hopes, we leave some wiggle room for disappointment. We hope for what we want, but many of us don't fully allow ourselves to believe it will happen. But hope is a confident expectation, and for believers, hope is certain. We don't have to wonder if we'll be okay; we don't have to wonder if we'll spend eternity with God. Because we have hope that is certain in Jesus. We don't have to leave wiggle room for the possibility of hope failing us. We don't have to protect ourselves from disappointment. Jesus is our living Hope (1 Pet. 1:3). He lived, died, and rose again exactly as He said He would. We can trust His promise that He has gone to the Father to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). We can trust God's promise to be with us until we arrive there and to work all things for our good—knowing Him more deeply (Rom. 8:28). Our minds and hearts can rest because our hope is secure.



DAY ONE

PSALM 42:1-2



Have you ever gotten exactly what you wanted, only to realize it wasn't what you wanted at all? What an odd feeling to be in possession of what you thought you wanted and still feel as if something is missing. If we're not careful, our hearts can play tricks on us, leading us to believe we want, even need, things that don't satisfy us at all. All the while, the things we truly need are pushed aside and easily overlooked.

Often, this is exactly what happens in our relationship with God. We allow the things of this world to become what we long for, and in doing so, we overlook our deep need for an intimate relationship with Jesus. We let our hearts desire things like achievement, praise and approval of people, and material possessions. The problem is that none of these things can truly satisfy us and only leave us feeling empty, searching for the next thing we "have to have."

Just as deer long for the refreshing waters of a flowing stream, so our souls long for God. We must remind ourselves that what we truly want is what only God can give, that what our souls really need is deep intimacy and connection with our Creator. We can ask God to help us want to want Him—to help us desire to desire Him. This confusion we feel over what we want and need is why we must allow the Bible to direct every part of our lives. Rather than letting culture or the fleeting desires of our hearts dictate what we long for, we must allow the truth of God's Word to shape the longing of our souls. We do this by choosing to pursue Him through things like prayer, worship, studying Scripture, and being in community with other believers. When we do, we're not only reminded of what we truly need, but we also find what we truly need.

- **WHAT DO YOU CURRENTLY DESIRE THAT IS NOT GOD? HOW IS THAT DESIRE DECEIVING YOU TO THINK IT WILL SATISFY YOU?**
- **WHAT ARE WAYS THAT YOU CAN SEEK GOD AND SET THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART ON HIM THIS WEEK?**

PRAY

GOD, SHOW ME WHAT I AM LONGING FOR OTHER THAN YOU. THANK YOU, GOD, THAT YOU SATISFY COMPLETELY. AS I SEEK YOU, HELP ME EXPERIENCE THE DEEP SATISFACTION ONLY YOU BRING.



DAY TWO

PSALM 63

Some things only God can do. Only God can give us divine strength. Only Jesus can save us from our sins. Only the Holy Spirit can shed light on the Scriptures so we can understand them. But God has entrusted some things to us—things He has given us the ability and responsibility to do.

One of those responsibilities is directing our thoughts toward Him. Against popular belief, we don't have to let our thoughts run wild and rule our lives. We can choose what we think about. Scripture tells us to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2) and to dwell on what is pure and lovely (Phil. 4:8). Just like you would pick up an object and set it in a specific place, we can take our thoughts and intentionally set them on God. This is what the Bible refers to as "meditating" on Him. To meditate on God is to think deeply and continuously about Him in worship and pursuit of Him. King David described the way he earnestly sought after God by saying he looked for Him in the sanctuary and meditated on Him during the night (vv. 2,6). We can meditate on God just like David did when we do things like studying and memorizing Scripture, calling out to God in prayer, and lifting our voices to Him in praise.

Studying and memorizing Scripture fills our hearts and minds with God's Word. Prayer focuses our thoughts on Him. Praise helps us remember and respond to God's goodness and the ways He blesses our lives. While these aren't the only ways to meditate on God, they form the foundation for setting our minds on Him.

- **WHERE DOES YOUR MIND GO TO THE MOST: WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE, YOUR TO-DO LIST, YOUR WANTS?**
- **HOW WOULD YOUR DAILY LIFE CHANGE IF YOU SET YOUR MIND ON GOD? WHAT ARE PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN DO THIS?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO HAVE A MIND THAT IS SET ON YOU.
I DON'T WANT MY THOUGHTS TO RULE MY LIFE; I
WANT YOU TO RULE MY THOUGHTS. I CHOOSE TO
SET MY MIND ON YOU AND MEDITATE ON YOU.



DAY THREE

JOHN 1:10-13

Have you ever missed something that was right in front of you? You're looking for it, searching everywhere, and suddenly, there it is, right in front of you. It had been there the whole time; you just didn't see it. In today's passage, we read that although God's people had been waiting and looking for the Messiah, they missed Him when He came. When Jesus came, His people didn't recognize Him; because they didn't recognize Him, they didn't receive Him (vv. 10-11).

How could God's people not see Jesus for who He was? Because He didn't come the way they expected. They imagined their Messiah arriving in a spectacular display, with all the splendor of royalty. Instead, Jesus was born in humility to an ordinary family. Yes, Jesus's birth was supernatural, but it wasn't spectacular. He was born in a cave or stable, wrapped in cloths likely used for animals, and laid in a manger where livestock ate (Luke 2:7). This was not the arrival they pictured, so they didn't see Jesus for who He was—the Messiah.

If we're not careful, we can make the same mistake. We often have our own expectations for how God will show up in our lives. But God is not bound by our expectations. Like Jesus did then, He often works in unexpected ways.

If we don't want to miss God's work, we must learn to look for Him in the unexpected places of our lives. It may not always look spectacular, but if we will learn to look, then we will experience His love and presence in a real way each day.

- **WHAT ARE OTHER REASONS YOU THINK PEOPLE MISSED JESUS WHEN HE CAME? HOW CAN WE AVOID MAKING THESE SAME MISTAKES?**
- **HAS GOD EVER SHOWED UP IN YOUR LIFE IN AN UNEXPECTED WAY? WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM THAT EXPERIENCE?**

PRAY

**JESUS, HELP ME TO SEE YOU AT WORK IN MY LIFE.
HELP ME NEVER TO MISS A MOMENT OF YOUR
PRESENCE, HOWEVER ORDINARY IT MAY SEEM.**



DAY FOUR

ISAIAH 11:1-5

Have you ever considered why you believe what you believe? You're convinced of it—but why? The Bible teaches that faith comes from what we hear (Rom. 10:17). Belief in our hearts begins with what we hear and receive as truth. This is why the Bible is such an important part of our lives—the primary way we hear truth about who God is, what He is like, and what He desires for us. As we hear the truth about God, faith begins to grow in our hearts toward Him. Not only does the Bible help our faith to grow, but it also stirs us to live in anticipation and expectation of God working in our lives.

Today's passage gives us a great example of this idea. We see a prophetic picture of who Jesus would be, what He would do, and what He would be like. Scriptures like these were received as truth and caused faith to rise in the hearts of those who waited in anticipation for the coming Messiah. One such person was Anna, a prophetess who served God continually with fasting and prayer as she waited for the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38). Anna lived in anticipation and expectation because she had heard and received the truth of what had been written—and that truth produced faith in her heart.

Reading God's Word is crucial—not casually, but with a heart ready to receive the truth about who God is, what He is like, and what He wants for us. Devoting our time and attention to the Word will strengthen our faith and help us to live in anticipation for what He will do.

- **DO YOU READ YOUR BIBLE? WHY OR WHY NOT? HOW COULD READING YOUR BIBLE CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE GOD AND WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT HIM?**
- **CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME SOMETHING IN THE BIBLE CAUSED YOU TO SEE GOD IN A NEW WAY OR CHANGED WHAT YOU BELIEVED ABOUT HIM?**

PRAY

GOD, STIR MY HEART TO HUNGER FOR YOUR WORD,
CAUSING MY FAITH AND MY EXPECTATION OF YOUR
WORK IN MY LIFE TO INCREASE.





DAY FIVE

HEBREWS 12:1-2

Have you ever wanted to quit because something seemed too hard? Life can be full of challenges that we must push through and overcome. Jesus warned us about this inescapable reality when He said that we will have trouble in this life (John 16:33). He guaranteed that no one will get through life without facing hard times. Thankfully, Jesus didn't stop there. He went on to say that we can be encouraged and find strength in the middle of these hard times because He will be with us, and He has overcome the world.

Today's passage encourages us to follow the example of those who came before us and to run after Jesus with endurance. Endurance is the ability to keep going when you feel like quitting, the determination not to give up. The Bible is full of stories about men and women who, instead of walking away, chose to trust God and endure. These men and women are recorded in what some call the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. Now, these faithful men and women cheer us on from heaven, showing us what it looks like to keep going.

God gave us His written Word to teach us, give us hope, and show us how to endure to the end (Rom. 15:4). This is not limited to His promises but includes accounts of people who are now our examples. God kept His promises to them, and He has not changed (Heb. 13:8). So, let's look to God and to the examples He has given us, and no matter what we face, let's keep running with our eyes fixed on Jesus (v. 2).

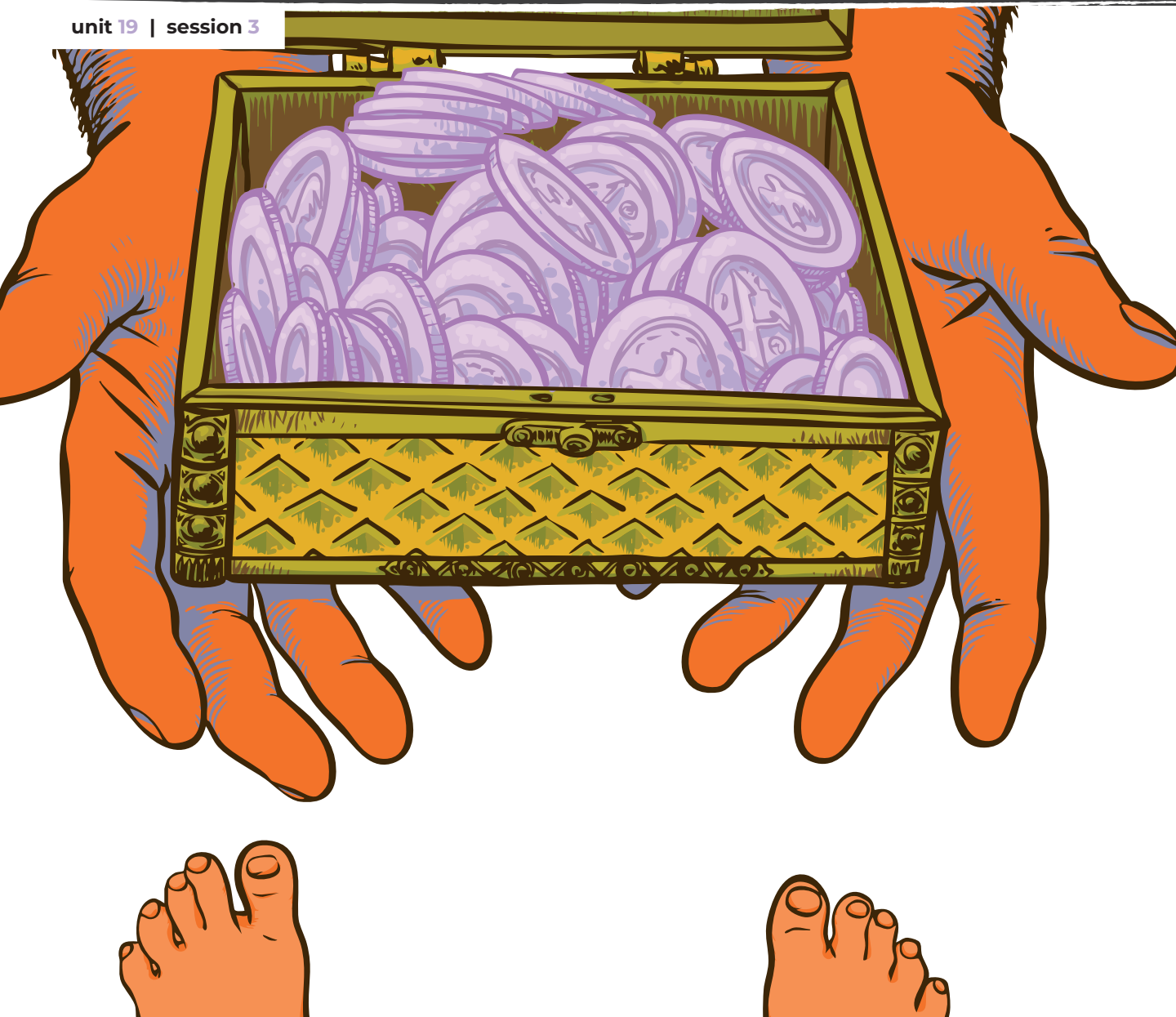
- **HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCE THAT MADE YOU WANT TO QUIT? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THAT?**
- **IN WHAT WAYS DO THE EXAMPLES WE HAVE IN THE BIBLE HELP US TO PURSUE JESUS WITH ENDURANCE?**

PRAY

GOD, NO MATTER WHAT I FACE, I CHOOSE TO ENDURE, TO KEEP RUNNING THE GOOD RACE OF FAITH. STRENGTHEN ME WITH YOUR WORD AND YOUR SPIRIT. HELP ME TO FOLLOW THE FAITHFUL EXAMPLES YOU'VE GIVEN ME.

WE SAW *HIS* STAR

unit 19 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus was born to be our great Shepherd. When the wise men came before Jesus, they worshiped Him and offered Him gifts fit for a king. Jesus, even as a baby, was the King of kings and the Lord of all creation. One day, He will return to rule His eternal kingdom.

RESPONDING WITH WORSHIP

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Matthew 2

WE'RE CALLED TO RESPOND TO THE SAVIOR

MATTHEW 2:1-8

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

WE'RE CALLED TO BRING OUR GIFTS TO THE SAVIOR

MATTHEW 2:9-12

9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

MAIN POINT.

Knowing Jesus as King compels us to surrender all to Him.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION STEWARDSHIP

God's intention is for us to serve Him as faithful stewards of His creation (Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 4:1-2). We are to invest the time, talents, and material possessions God has given us for His kingdom work (Matt. 25:14-29), knowing that God is the true owner of all we have and that our true treasure is found in heaven, not on earth (Matt. 6:19,21; Luke 12:16-21). Motivated by God's generosity to us made most clear in the gospel, we are to give God the best of what we have (Prov. 3:9), regularly (1 Cor. 16:2), sacrificially (Matt. 12:41-44), humbly (Matt. 6:1-4), and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:6-7), praying that God is glorified in our giving of His provisions.

DISCUSSION

WE'RE CALLED TO RESPOND TO THE SAVIOR MATTHEW 2:1-8

- What is something you've traveled a long way to see or do?
- What does this passage show us about why Jesus came and what He'd be like? Read Psalm 23. What connections do you see?
- Break down how Herod, the chief priests, and the wise men each responded to Jesus's birth. How do our lives reflect our response to Jesus?

WE'RE CALLED TO BRING OUR GIFTS TO THE SAVIOR MATTHEW 2:9-12

- What is the evidence that the star was more than a natural phenomenon? How would you explain it?
- What did the wise men do when they saw Jesus? How can we follow their example now?
- Why do we sometimes withhold our best (our gifts, talents, time) from God? How can we offer them in worship instead?



IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU NOT GIVING GOD YOUR BEST? HOW CAN YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Some of us grew up with a warped view of God. Maybe we didn't go to church or misunderstood Scripture. We may have believed God is harsh, stern, angry, and eager to punish us. And believing this way leads to a distorted view of God. Let's get honest: If this is our view of God, then we'll see Him as a threat—a threat to our fun, to our passions, to our lives. In response, we'll run; we'll hold back because we fear surrendering to Him. We'll fear what He'll take or how He'll change us. We need to reorient our understanding and look to Jesus to show us God's character—because He is God. God loves us. He sent His Son to save us. He gives us good gifts. He is compassionate and slow to anger. We don't have to fear surrender or that God will take away everything we love. God will use our surrender and transform our hearts to love what is good and holy. When we fully surrender and loosen our grip, God exchanges our offerings for peace and joy. He gives us meaningful, abundant life (John 10:10)! We have nothing to fear.



DAY ONE

ISAIAH 60:1-6



For many of us, summer is our favorite time of year—no school, days at the pool, popsicles, ice cream, and fun memories. However, no matter how great summer is, it always ends, and the school year comes. You can't stop it, no matter how hard you try.

In the same way, we can't stop the fact that eternity is coming. Even though it can feel long at times, life is short, and Jesus is coming back. When He returns, every knee will bow before Him, and everyone will be in awe and wonder, declaring that He is Lord of all (Rom. 14:11). Jesus reigns as the King of kings now. So, we shouldn't wait until He returns to bow our knee in worship—we should do it now.

Today's passage is prophecy concerning what would happen when the Messiah came: Caravans of camels would carry precious gifts for the newborn King (v. 6). These caravans would be accompanied by men of great honor who would bow before Him. This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus was born, and wise men followed a bright star to worship Him, bringing precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:9-11).

We can learn a great lesson from these wise men. Just as they were drawn by a shining star to a place of worship, we too can be drawn by the shining light and life of Jesus. In the same way, we can bow our knees in worship and bring to Him the very best of what we have. As we do, we live lives that honor Jesus and give Him what He truly deserves—everything.

- **THE WISE MEN BROUGHT THEIR VERY BEST GIFTS TO JESUS. WHAT CAN YOU BRING TO JESUS TO WORSHIP HIM LIKE THIS?**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO WORSHIP JESUS NOW RATHER THAN WAITING UNTIL LATER?**

PRAY

**JESUS, I BOW MY KNEE TO YOU IN WORSHIP TODAY
AND CHOOSE TO BRING YOU MY VERY BEST. MAY MY
WORSHIP AND THE GIFTS I BRING HONOR YOU AND
GIVE YOU GLORY.**



DAY TWO

PSALM 72:8-14

Have you ever heard someone compare two things that really weren't the same? For example, someone who loves to swim and is good at it might be compared to a fish. You may have heard the expression, "They swim like a fish." But no matter how good a person is at swimming, he or she will never really compare to how a fish swims.

In the same way, no earthly king or kingdom can ever compare to King Jesus and His kingdom. In today's passage, we read that God rules from sea to sea and over all the earth (v. 8) and that all kings and nations will one day bow before Him, offering worship and gifts (vv. 10-11). God is the one true God, and He has highly exalted Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus rules and reigns, and no other rulers compare to Him.

If we aren't careful, we can be deceived into allowing other things to compete with Jesus's rule and reign in our lives. In a culture filled with consumerism, self-worship, and celebrity idolatry, our hearts can be tempted to treat people or possessions as if they are "god" instead of worshiping the one true God. This world is temporary. Focusing only on what we can see is easy, but we must let Scripture direct our hearts to what is true: Jesus rules and reigns, and He has no rivals. Rather than bowing our knees to anyone or anything else, we must choose to bow before the Lord, allowing Him to rule and reign in our lives today, as He will for eternity.

- **IN YOUR LIFE, WHAT ARE YOU TEMPTED TO BOW YOUR KNEE IN WORSHIP TO APART FROM JESUS? WHY IS THIS A TEMPTATION FOR YOU?**
- **WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO BOW YOUR KNEE TO JESUS ONLY AND ALLOW HIS RULE AND REIGN IN YOUR LIFE?**

PRAY

JESUS, HELP ME TO SEE PAST THE PRESENT AND TO SEE YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE, THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. I BOW MY HEART BEFORE YOU AND INVITE YOUR RULE AND REIGN IN MY LIFE.



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 2:11

What would you consider your most valuable possession—not necessarily the most expensive, but the thing that means the most to you? Maybe a rare baseball card, a letter someone wrote to you, a meaningful gift you received, or something you worked hard for holds great value. Now, can you imagine giving that away? For most of us, parting with something so valuable feels impossible because of how much it means to us.

In today's passage, we're reminded of the kind of worship Jesus both desires and deserves—worship that costs us something. When the wise men came to Jesus, they opened their treasures and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were some of the most valuable possessions in their land. Yet, it wasn't difficult for them to give these gifts because they knew Jesus was worthy of them and worthy of their worship. In the same way, our worship should flow from the desire to offer Jesus what is most valuable to us, from a heart that doesn't hold anything back. Does God need our stuff? No. God doesn't need anything from us, but He does want our hearts fully surrendered to Him. And if we're honest, we know that our hearts often get attached to our possessions. Jesus explained that our hearts belong to what we treasure (Matt. 6:21). When we give Jesus what we value the most, we are giving Him what He deserves—our hearts. Maybe Jesus won't ask you to give up your baseball cards, but if He did, would you be willing? Our answer should be an emphatic "yes" because He is worthy of that kind of worship.

- **WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE TO YOU (POSSESSIONS, PASSIONS, RELATIONSHIPS)? WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SURRENDER THIS TO JESUS IF HE ASKED FOR IT?**
- **HOW DOES SEEING JESUS FOR WHO HE IS AND THINKING ABOUT ALL HE HAS DONE EMPOWER YOU TO FREELY GIVE HIM EVERYTHING IN WHOLE-HEARTED WORSHIP?**

PRAY

JESUS, YOU ARE WORTHY OF MY WHOLE LIFE AND ALL THAT I HAVE. I SURRENDER TO YOU ANYTHING THAT YOU ASK OF ME BECAUSE YOU ARE WORTHY OF EVERYTHING I CAN OFFER.



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 12:1

People stand to their feet and clap in celebration when someone does something incredible. This is called a standing ovation. We see this happen at sporting events, concerts, plays, or after powerful speeches. In each case, something so moving happens that people rise physically to applaud. The audience was moved by what they witnessed.

Did you know that what God has done for us should move us even more than any sporting event, concert, play, or speech ever could? We were lost in our sin, separated from God, and destined for eternal judgment. We owed a debt we could never pay and were stuck in a pit we could never climb out of. But God demonstrated His great love by giving us His Son, Jesus, when we did nothing to deserve it (Rom. 5:8). God saw us in our hopeless state, and in His mercy, He made a way for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be restored into relationship with Him (2 Cor. 5:18). We didn't earn this; we never could. God did it all because of His great love and mercy toward us.

Today's passage urges us to recognize God's love and mercy, and in response, to offer our lives to Him as living sacrifices. God offered His Son as a sacrifice, and Jesus willingly gave His life for us. Our reasonable response is to offer our lives back to God—daily dying to ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him in loving obedience—wherever He calls us to go and whatever He asks us to do. This is a type of worship that goes beyond a song we sing or a gift that we give; it is worshiping God with our lives.

- **WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU THOUGHT ABOUT ALL GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU AND WHAT IT COST HIM?**
- **HOW DOES REMEMBERING ALL GOD HAS DONE MOVE YOU TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN WORSHIP TO HIM?**

PRAY

GOD, HELP ME TO REMEMBER ALL YOU HAVE DONE
AND THE GREAT PRICE JESUS PAID. MOVE ME TO
WORSHIP YOU WITH MORE THAN SONGS AND GIFTS
BUT WITH MY WHOLE LIFE.





DAY FIVE

REVELATION 7:9-17

At times, we can feel like we are the only ones who have chosen to serve God and live for Him. Deep down we know this isn't true, but for many of us, it seems that way. We live surrounded by people who don't live the same way we do. We can feel like we're the only ones among our classmates, teammates, coworkers, or in the culture around us. Those feelings can be discouraging, even tempting us to fit in rather than standing strong in our devotion to God.

In today's passage, we find both strength and comfort in remembering that we have made the right choice in bowing our lives in worship to Jesus and that we're not alone. First, we see that eternity is real, and one day we will stand before the throne of God in worship as He rules and reigns forever (vv. 10-12). Second, we see that there will be a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, and tongue, proving that we're not alone now and will not be alone then either. Third, we see that a day will come when Jesus wipes away every tear and leads us to living waters, where we will find rest and restoration for our souls (vv. 16-17). While we can't see it with our eyes right now, this is the foundation of our faith. The hope of our salvation is eternity (Rom. 8:24).

Worshipping God and serving God with our whole heart does cost us and does require endurance. But knowing that Jesus will reign forever, and that we will stand with Him among countless others who have made the same choice, should give us the strength, courage, and endurance to keep going and to stand against temptation.

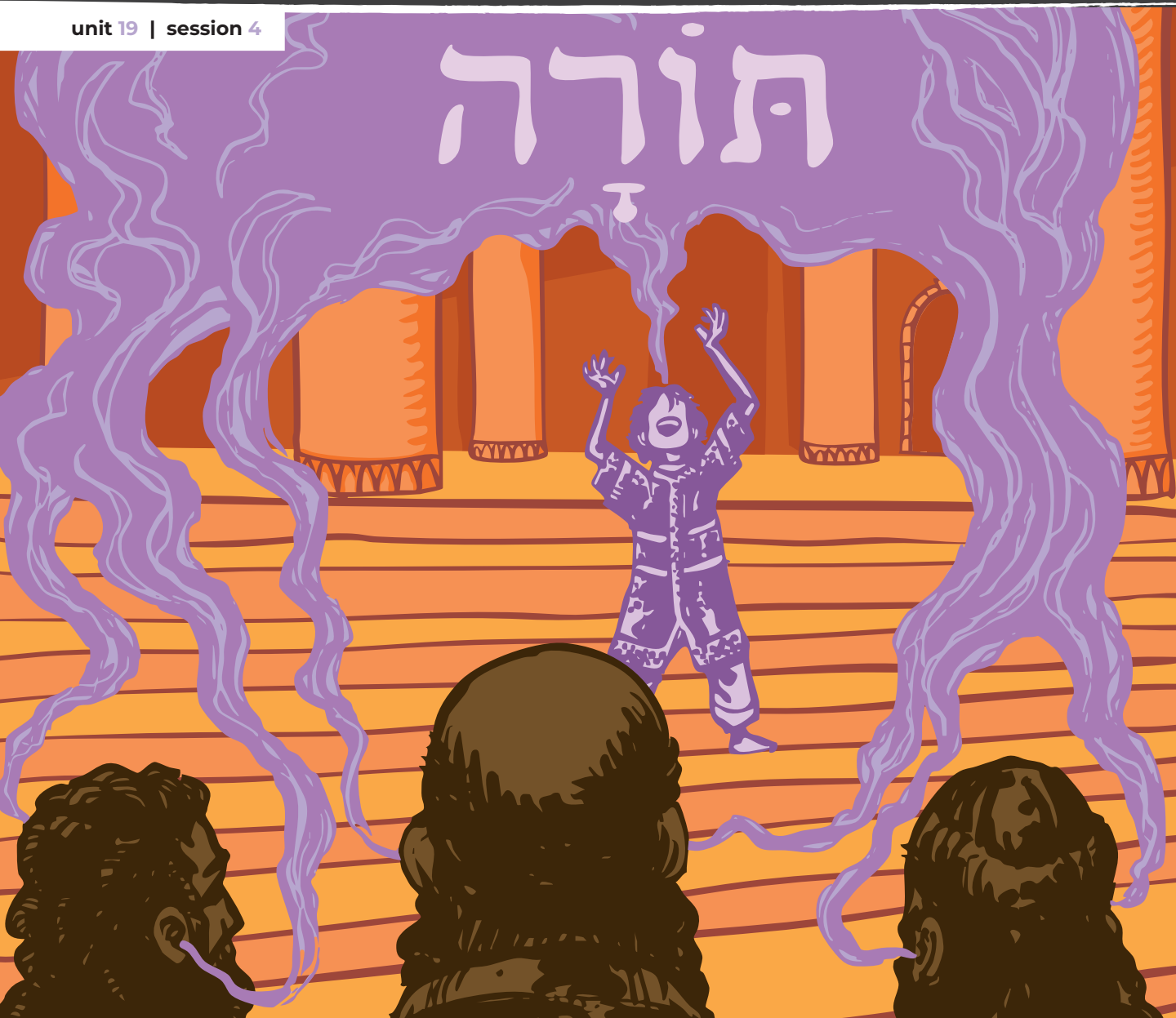
- **HOW DOES JESUS'S PROMISE OF ETERNITY STRENGTHEN US FOR THE TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS WE FACE TODAY?**
- **WHAT ARE WAYS WE CAN BE MINDFUL OF ETERNITY WHILE LIVING HERE ON EARTH, WHERE WE CAN'T SEE ETERNITY WITH OUR EYES?**

PRAY

**GOD, I KNOW THAT ETERNITY IS REAL AND THAT
ONE DAY I WILL WORSHIP YOU FACE TO FACE BEFORE
YOUR THRONE. MAY THIS PROMISE STRENGTHEN ME
WHEN I'M STRUGGLING WITH TEMPTATION.**

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

unit 19 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

As Jesus grew, He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with people. Each step of His life prepared Him for the eternal mission His Father had given Him: to live a life of complete obedience, to die on the cross for our sins, and to rise again in victory.

BREAD AND PRESENCE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Luke 2:39-52

PRIORITIZE GOD'S WORD

LUKE 2:39-47

39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. 41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. 43 And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 44 but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, 45 and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

SPEND TIME IN GOD'S PRESENCE

LUKE 2:48-52

48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. 51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

MAIN POINT.

We grow in our faith by following Jesus's example.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

JESUS'S HUMANITY

In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully human. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (Messiah) would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:3), but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus endured all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances common to living as a human being, such as hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (Matt. 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (the crucifixion).

DISCUSSION

PRIORITIZE GOD'S WORD

LUKE 2:39-47

- What passion or hobby could you talk about for hours? Why do you think Jesus was drawn to the temple and to talking about God?
- Why do you think the teachers were shocked (v. 47)? Where did Jesus's answers come from?
- What excuses do we give for not prioritizing time in God's Word? Why do we need to read it consistently?

SPEND TIME IN GOD'S PRESENCE

LUKE 2:48-52

- What do you think of Jesus's reaction to Mary's question (vv. 48-49)? What did Jesus know?
- Read Psalm 84:1-2,10. Compare the writer's desire to Jesus's desire to be in the temple. How does loving God first affect our desires?
- What did Jesus do to grow in wisdom and in favor with God and others? How can you apply this?



WHERE ARE YOU SPIRITUALLY? ARE YOU GROWING IN WISDOM? WHY OR WHY NOT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

How would you answer this question: "What can you not live without?" You may say you can't live without your family, your friends, your phone, your favorite food, your car. But how many of us would say that we can't live without God's Word? Ouch. The Bible actually teaches that we need it to live (Deut. 8:3), so how are so many of us living without it each day? Well, the quick answer is that if we try to live a meaningful, abundant life without taking in God's Word each day, we'll starve spiritually. Trying to live for the Lord without ingesting His Word as spiritual food leads to performing, striving, and checking off boxes to feel "good enough." But Jesus showed us a better way. We can't thrive spiritually without spiritual food—God's Word and His presence. Thinking we can get by with what we get from church or youth group is a lie; we need more, daily. The truth is that the enemy, Satan, would love to see us starve. God offers us a feast—His Word and His presence.



DAY ONE

1 PETER 2:2-3



A soda company once built an entire advertising campaign around the slogan, “Quench your thirst.” Their commercials showed athletes working out or playing sports, then reaching desperately for a soda as if it could satisfy their need for hydration. While the ads were catchy and may have convinced some people, the reality is that no soda can give your body what it needs the way water can.

In the same way, our spiritual needs can only be satisfied in God. We live in a culture consumed by an abundance of content and entertainment that may capture our attention and fill our minds, but this content can’t refresh our souls or lead to real spiritual growth. In today’s passage, Peter explained that believers need the pure milk of God’s Word to grow in salvation. Salvation isn’t the finish line but the starting point of a lifelong process of spiritually maturing and becoming more like Jesus. The most critical component of our growth and maturity is the Word of God with the help of the Spirit.

The Bible is no ordinary book. It is living and active (effective), the very words of God given to us for our good (Heb. 4:12). Through Scripture, God teaches us, corrects us, and trains us in righteousness so that we can be fully equipped to live out His purposes for us (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This is why, if we want to grow into the fullness of our salvation, we must build our lives around God’s Word. We need to read it, study it, memorize it, and apply it daily. Just as soda can never truly quench your thirst the way water does, only God’s Word gives us what we need to grow and mature spiritually.

- **IN WHAT WAYS DOES GOD USE HIS WORD TO HELP US GROW SPIRITUALLY AND BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS?**
- **WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT YOU’RE FILLING YOUR HEART AND MIND WITH GOD’S WORD INSTEAD OF WORLDLY IDEAS?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR YOUR WORD. BY YOUR SPIRIT,
HELP ME TO HUNGER FOR YOUR WORD LIKE NEVER
BEFORE SO THAT I CAN BECOME MORE LIKE YOU.**



DAY TWO

HEBREWS 5:11-14

Why do we accept certain truths in one area of life yet ignore or reject them in others? For example, we expect that anyone who has been doing something for any length of time should be improving. Time and experience should lead to growth. We embrace this truth in school, sports, music, and hobbies. But when it comes to our spiritual lives, we often ignore and even deny it; time doesn't always lead to spiritual growth. In today's culture, it's common for Christians to remain stagnant in their faith. Spiritual growth and maturity are rare, almost exceptional, while spiritual infancy is normalized. While this may be culturally acceptable, it is biblically unacceptable.

In today's passage the writer of Hebrews challenged believers who should have been teachers but still needed someone to teach them the basics (v. 12). They are described like infants who need "milk" rather than "solid food," like those who have grown and are growing. The writer identified one of the root causes for spiritual stagnation as laziness (v. 11). God's desire for us is growth and maturity in Him. But just like any other area of life, growth doesn't happen by accident; growth requires intentional effort. We must engage with God's Word, apply its truth to our lives, and consistently practice obedience to Jesus. Over time, this kind of intentional engagement moves us from milk to meat, from immaturity to maturity, and into a deeper understanding of God's Word and His ways (v. 14). Rather than settling for cultural norms that make excuses for spiritual immaturity and stagnation, let's answer the biblical call to growth and maturity in Christ. Let's give ourselves to God's Word, apply it to our lives, and live in obedience to Jesus.

- **WHY HAS IT BECOME ACCEPTABLE FOR BELIEVERS NOT TO GROW AND MATURE SPIRITUALLY? HOW HAVE YOU FALLEN INTO THIS TRAP?**
- **WHERE DO YOU NEED TO GROW SPIRITUALLY? HOW CAN YOU TAKE STEPS TOWARD GROWTH IN THESE AREAS?**

PRAY

GOD, I DON'T WANT TO LIVE A LIFE OF SPIRITUAL STAGNATION. I WANT TO LIVE A LIFE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH, PURSUING YOU AND YOUR PLAN. HELP ME TO MAKE CHANGES TO GROW IN MY WALK WITH YOU.



DAY THREE

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-3

How do you get somewhere if you don't know how to find the location? Either you get lucky or you use a map. Today we have something even better: GPS. By simply typing in the destination, we get step-by-step directions to take us where we need to go. Like GPS, the Bible serves as the primary way God leads us to the purposes and promises He has for us.

God has great plans for our lives! Even more, He has given us great and precious promises through what Jesus did on the cross (2 Pet. 1:4). God desires for us to live in a way that fulfills His purposes for us and for us to experience all He has made available to us through Jesus. But how do we do that? How do we arrive at this destination? We can't get there on our own but must carefully follow the commands God has given us in His Word.

In today's passage, God spoke to the children of Israel, showing them how to reach the place He had promised. He told them that if they followed His commandments, they would live, enter the land He prepared for them, and be blessed in it (v. 1). Even though we live under the new covenant thousands of years later, the principle is still true for us today. Living according to God's commands and plans for us leads to blessing. The Bible teaches that the life God wants for us isn't found by doing whatever seems best in our own eyes but is found by living according to His Word (v. 3). God's Word is like a map that guides us into His purposes and leads us in wisdom. So rather than living life blindly trying to figure it out ourselves, let's seek His will in all we do and allow Him to guide our lives (Prov. 3:5-6).

- **WHAT SIMILARITIES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN GOD'S PURPOSE AND PROMISES FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AND HIS PURPOSE AND PROMISES FOR OUR LIVES TODAY?**
- **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT NOT TO LEAN ON OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING BUT TO TRUST GOD IN ALL OF OUR WAYS?**

PRAY

GOD, MY DESIRE IS TO EXPERIENCE ALL YOU HAVE FOR ME. I CHOOSE NOT TO FOLLOW MY OWN DESIRES OR LIVE BASED ON WHAT I CAN SEE. RATHER, I CHOOSE TO TRUST YOU AND TO LIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR COMMANDS.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11

Have you ever had to humble yourself and admit that you couldn't do something? That can be painful and even humiliating. Why? Because we all want to prove to ourselves and to others that we're capable of anything if we just put our minds to it. But the truth is that we're not always capable. We all have limits, and no matter how hard we try, we simply can't do some things on our own.

This truth is that God does the work in our hearts to make us new. Do we have a role to play? Absolutely! But our role is one of cooperating with God, not replacing Him. The work of transformation in us is divine and supernatural. Scripture reminds us that Jesus is both the Author and the Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He is the One who begins His work in us, and He is the One who brings it to completion (Phil. 1:6).

In today's passage, Paul prayed that God's work would continue in us so that we might be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Notice Paul didn't pray for human willpower or determination; he prayed for God's ongoing work. He asked that our love would grow, our discernment would deepen, and our lives would overflow with righteousness that comes from Christ. This shows us two things. First, although we must be diligent in seeking God, our part is not the main part. Second, because the part we play is one of cooperation, we must, like Paul, prayerfully acknowledge that we can't finish what God has started. He finishes His work in us! We join Paul in his prayer that God would keep shaping us and filling us with His love and righteousness as we surrender and cooperate with Him.

- **HOW DOES IT CHANGE THE WAY YOU APPROACH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD KNOWING THAT HE IS THE ONE WHO IS DOING THE WORK?**
- **ARE YOU COOPERATING WITH GOD OR WORKING AGAINST HIM? HOW CAN YOU COOPERATE WITH WHAT GOD IS DOING?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR DOING THE WORK IN MY LIFE!
HELP ME TO RECOGNIZE AND BE AWARE OF ALL YOU
ARE DOING SO THAT I CAN COOPERATE WITH YOU
AND SEE YOUR PLANS FOR MY LIFE.





DAY FIVE

JOHN 15:1-8

Have you ever bought someone flowers? They look beautiful sitting in a vase, but their beauty doesn't last long. Soon they begin to wilt, wither, turn brown, and eventually, die. The dried petals fall off, and what was once beautiful ends up being thrown away.

Why do flowers die once they're given? Because they've been disconnected from their source of life. Flowers are not self-sustaining; they need the nourishment the vine once provided. In the same way, we must never forget that we are not as self-sustaining as we think we are, especially in our spiritual lives. Just like flowers depend on the vine, our spiritual lives depend on staying connected to Jesus.

Jesus tells us that He is the vine and we are the branches. He says that apart from Him, we can do nothing, but if we remain in Him, we will bear much fruit (v. 5). In other words, a life disconnected from Jesus may look good for a while—especially by worldly standards—but ultimately fades away and has no eternal significance. A life connected to Jesus bears fruit that glorifies God now and forever.

The key to remaining in Jesus is remaining in His Word and allowing His Word to remain in us (v. 7). We don't just read our Bibles and then move on with our day. We let God's Word take root in us, shaping how we live, think, and act. When His Word is alive in us, it goes with us everywhere we go so that no matter where we are, what we're doing, or who we're with, we remain connected to Him. This is a life that bears much fruit, glorifying and honoring God.

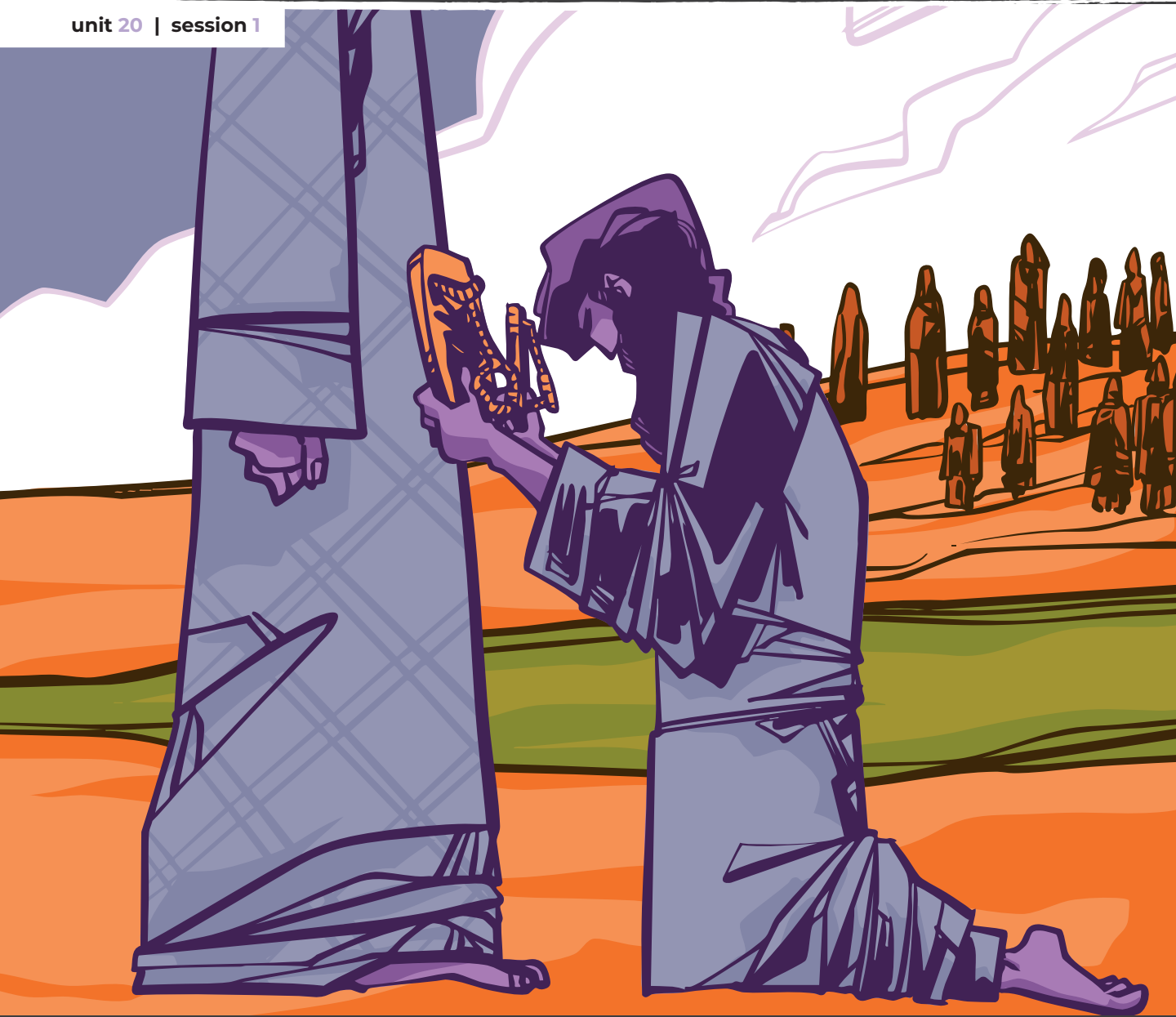
- **WHY IS IT SO EASY TO GET DISCONNECTED FROM JESUS? CAN YOU SEE PATTERNS IN YOUR LIFE THAT DISCONNECT YOU FROM HIM?**
- **HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF YOU TOOK GOD'S WORD WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO AND INTO ALL YOU DO?**

PRAY

**GOD, I WANT MY LIFE TO GLORIFY AND HONOR
YOU NOW AND FOREVER. PLANT YOUR WORD DEEP
WITHIN MY HEART AND GO WITH ME WHEREVER I GO
AND IN ALL THAT I DO.**

ONE WHO IS *MORE POWERFUL*

unit 20 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

John the Baptist said he wasn't the groom; he was the friend of the groom. As the friend, it was his responsibility to decrease in status and to elevate Jesus. Jesus is the Groom from above who came to give His life for His bride—those who receive His Word and believe in Him.

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Matthew 3:1-12

WE ELEVATE JESUS WHEN WE REPENT

MATTHEW 3:1-6

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" 4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

WE ELEVATE JESUS WHEN WE'RE AUTHENTIC

MATTHEW 3:7-12

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

MAIN POINT.

Our lives must elevate Jesus instead of ourselves.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION




REPENTANCE

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). This is the human response to God's salvation, in other words, how we turn to Him and accept what He's done for us.

DISCUSSION


WE ELEVATE JESUS WHEN WE REPENT

MATTHEW 3:1-6

-  • What was John's first word to the crowds? Would his message attract crowds today? What messages attract people now?
-  • Describe John's lifestyle. Why did he live this way? Should we?
-  • What is the kingdom of heaven? Where is it? How is it "at hand" (v. 2)?

WE ELEVATE JESUS WHEN WE'RE AUTHENTIC

MATTHEW 3:7-12

- What is John's attitude toward the religious leaders? Does it surprise you? Explain.
- What does John mean in verse 8? How can our lives contradict that we follow Jesus? Why has this become "normal" for believers?
-  • What does John say won't make people right with God (v. 9)? What kinds of things do people point to today to say they're right with God?



IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE HAVE YOU LET IT BECOME NORMAL TO LIVE LIKE THE WORLD? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT YOU LIVE AS A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN?

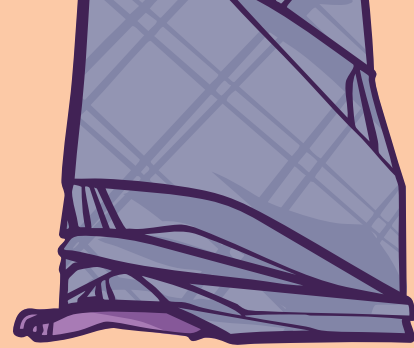
CULTURAL CONNECTION

Do any of us strive to be fake? Do any of us want people to look at us and see a hypocrite, an impostor? Probably not. We want people to see who we really are—to be known. At the same time, we fear being known because people will see the worst parts of us—qualities and insecurities we so desperately try to hide. Want a little hope? Actually, a lot of hope? God knows you (Ps. 139:1). He knows every single part. He has always known you—your failures, your sin, your fears, your questions, your worries, your insecurities, your shame. He doesn't want you to pretend or to hide any of it from Him. God calls you to bring what He already knows and lay it all down in exchange for abundant, authentic life. How? Confess and repent of your sin, throw off all the things that hinder you (Heb. 12:1), be transparent with the Lord, and walk in the joy of being known by Him.



DAY ONE

LUKE 3:4-14



Today's passage begins with a quote from Isaiah 40, foretelling John the Baptist's ministry hundreds of years earlier. John the Baptist clearly understood his role to "prepare the way of the Lord" (v. 4), meaning he was called by God to tell others about Jesus coming to earth and how they needed to prepare their hearts to follow Him. How would they prepare their hearts to follow Jesus? By repentance. Repentance is the act of turning from sin, turning to God, and seeking Him wholeheartedly. As John the Baptist spoke to the people coming to be baptized, he explained that salvation and repentance are an individual's decision. Every single person must personally surrender his or her life to Jesus and turn from sin in order to be saved.

Repentance absolutely happens in that moment where we surrender our lives to Jesus and receive God's gift of salvation; that is a one-time decision. Repentance, though, does not stop there! John told the crowd to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (v. 8). In other words, he urged them to live in such a way that their actions proved their faith to be real—repenting from sin, obeying God, and living for Him day after day. Those who do not produce good fruit of a real faith will be cut down and burned (John 15:2-6). May we be like the crowds of people, the tax collectors, and the soldiers who asked what they should do in response to this call to repentance (vv. 10-14). And may we also be people who follow the command to obey God and care deeply for others.

- **WHERE IN YOUR LIFE DO YOU NEED TO REPENT? WRITE OUT A PRAYER TO GOD, CONFESSING SPECIFIC SINS YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH, ASKING GOD FOR FORGIVENESS, AND TURNING BACK TO HIM WITH YOUR HEART AND MIND.**
- **HOW CAN YOU ALLOW GOD TO PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT THIS WEEK THROUGH SERVING OTHERS AND POINTING THEM TO JESUS?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT THE ACTIONS OF MY LIFE TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE FAITH I CLAIM. HELP ME TO LIVE OUT THE DAILY PRACTICE OF REPENTANCE, WHERE I KEEP TURNING FROM MY SIN AND KEEP TURNING BACK TO YOU.



DAY TWO

GALATIANS 5:22-25

If you think about it, our lives are a lot like clay. We are all being shaped by someone or something. The question is: Who or what is shaping you? If you are consistently choosing to walk in sin, then the ways of the world are shaping your life. If you are consistently choosing to repent of sin and turn to God, then you're allowing God to shape you and produce good fruit in you! Producing fruit consistent with repentance leads to a life of true freedom and godly living. This true freedom invites us to follow the example of Jesus and serve others through love; it calls us away from sin and works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). When we are in Christ, sin does not have the final say in our lives; by God's power, we can run from sin and run to Him. This is very good news!

Godly living is about loving God and obeying Him. Today's passage explores the fruit of the Spirit. Notice that "fruit" is singular, not plural. Yes, we read a whole list of things that we want to show up in our lives, but they all make up one fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is the evidence, or result, of God's work in our lives, and the proof of it is whether or not love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control show up in our lives. Verse 25 explains what we can do for this fruit to grow in our lives: "Keep in step with the Spirit"—step by step, over and over again. Keep walking with the Lord. Keep being transformed. Keep trusting Him to do the work.

- **WHICH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT STANDS OUT AS SOMETHING THAT YOU NEED TO GROW IN? ASK GOD TO HELP YOU CHANGE.**
- **WHAT IS SHAPING YOU: GOD OR THE WORLD? WHAT HABITS CAN YOU PUT IN PLACE THIS WEEK TO HELP ENSURE YOU'RE BEING SHAPED BY GOD INSTEAD OF BY THE WORLD?**

PRAY

GOD, ONLY BY YOUR POWER AND PRESENCE IN MY LIFE CAN I LIVE FOR YOU INSTEAD OF FOR THE WORLD. HELP ME TO KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT AND LET YOU BE THE ONE WHO SHAPES ME.



DAY THREE

PROVERBS 28:13

Have you ever done less actual cleaning of your room and more shoving your things into the closet (or under your bed or into any spot where you can find space)? Your room might appear cleaner, but the mess is still very much there. Whether or not you can relate to ever fake cleaning your room, we all do something similar with our sins. Instead of confessing our sin, we can sometimes turn to hiding our sins or pretending like they don't exist. (Humanity has done this from the very beginning, starting with Adam and Eve in Genesis.) Do we ever successfully hide our sins from God? Nope! He sees and knows everything about us, and He wants more for us than frantically hiding our sin. God invites us into a better way—out of hiding our sins from Him and into confessing our sins to Him.

Covering up or hiding sin might feel like the comfortable or safe thing to do in the moment to avoid feelings like guilt, fear, and embarrassment, but this verse reminds us that in the long run, we will never prosper from it. It may feel good at first to cover up our sins, but when we do that, we miss out on God's forgiveness and true freedom. In fact, according to God's Word, fear, shame, or duty will never lead us to true repentance; only God's goodness and kindness actually compel us to run from our sin and instead run to Him (Rom. 2:4). When we confess and repent of our sins, we find God's rich mercy and total forgiveness. He is patient and faithful to forgive, so let's run to God and repent!

- **WHAT IS HARD FOR YOU ABOUT CONFESSING YOUR SINS TO GOD INSTEAD OF TRYING TO HIDE THEM?**
- **WE ARE SAFEST WHEN WE RUN TO GOD WITH OUR SINS AND CONFESS EVERYTHING. TAKE SOME TIME TO WRITE OUT A PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE, EVEN IF IT FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE.**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME MERCY AND FOR BEING FAITHFUL TO FORGIVE. HELP ME TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO STOP TRYING TO HIDE MY SINS FROM YOU AND INSTEAD RUN TO YOU IN REPENTANCE SO THAT I CAN FIND TRUE FREEDOM.



DAY FOUR

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10

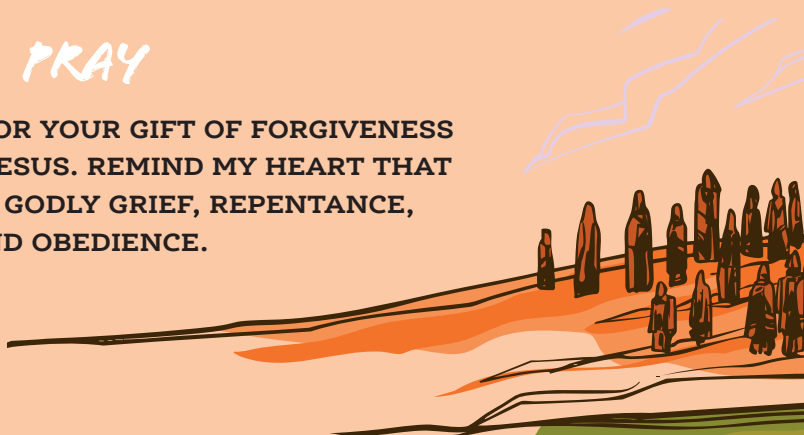
We pick up in the middle of 2 Corinthians 7 today, but in the first eight verses of the chapter, Paul addressed the letter he previously wrote to the believers in Corinth, urging them to return to God. He explained how he rejoiced when he heard that these believers grieved (yes, you read that right). The grief that Paul celebrated in these believers was what he called “godly grief.” Paul introduced the major difference between godly grief and worldly grief. Godly grief leads to repentance. Repentance is true brokenness over sinning against God—our Father, Creator, and Friend—but is not only a feeling of brokenness. True brokenness or godly grief always leads to the action of turning from our sin and returning to God in repentance. Alternatively, worldly grief leads us into a spiral of shame that we were never meant to experience. Grief must be so much more than just something we feel; it must lead to action and obedience.

Worldly grief keeps you feeling stuck in shame. Godly grief wakes you up to the reality that you are set free from the power of sin because of God’s gift of forgiveness. Worldly grief says, “I am a failure or mistake.” Godly grief says, “I have failed or made a mistake, but I am not defined by my sin. I am loved by God, forgiven, and invited to repent.” Worldly grief may lead to despair and distraction, but godly grief leads to dependence and devotion. Paul pointed out “what earnestness” this godly grief has produced in these believers (v. 11). In other words, godly grief leads believers to quickly and sincerely obey God. Great fruit always comes from godly grief, including love for God, anger towards sin, longing for God’s Word, and passion to obey.

- **WHERE DO YOU SEE WORLDLY GRIEF SHOW UP IN YOUR LIFE WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH YOUR OWN SIN?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO APPROACH YOUR SIN WITH GODLY GRIEF AND REPENTANCE? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT OF FORGIVENESS
AND FREEDOM IN JESUS. REMIND MY HEART THAT
YOU CALL ME TO GODLY GRIEF, REPENTANCE,
AND OBEDIENCE.**





DAY FIVE

MATTHEW 3:1-3,11

We live in a world of constant winners, gold medals, championship rings, and celebrations for “The Best Whatever.” It can be tempting to live with the mindset that we must constantly compete against others, prove our worth, and be better than everyone else. In a world of people trying to become greater, John understood that the gospel of Jesus invites all believers to live differently and become less. To be clear, when John says in verse 11 that he is not worthy to remove his sandals, John is not contradicting the Word of God and saying that his life has no value. Being “less than” and becoming less is hugely different. John knew that he was made by God, loved by God, and chosen by God to come before Jesus to point others to Him. He was even related to Jesus, but he did not let those things lead him to live from a place of pride or false significance. Instead, those things led him to live from a place of humility and worship. John knew he was a messenger of the gospel; he was not the Messiah. John knew he was beloved by God, but not better than or equal to God.

May we adopt the same heart and mindset that John modeled for us—humbling ourselves in order to magnify God alone, making sure God’s work in us is the most important thing about us, and pointing others to Jesus instead of ourselves. This doesn’t mean that we live like we have no value. We have great value! We are made in the image of God and forever loved by Him. But we should let the good news not puff us up in pride but free us up to share His love with everyone we meet.

- **HOW DO YOU RELATE TO THE STRUGGLE TO PROVE YOUR WORTH, BE RECOGNIZED BY OTHERS, OR BE BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND BECOME LESS SO THAT EVERYONE AROUND YOU SEES MORE OF JESUS IN YOU?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME AND CREATING ME IN YOUR IMAGE. HELP ME FIND MY WORTH IN YOU ALONE AND FIGHT THE TEMPTATION TO BE IMPORTANT IN THE EYES OF OTHER PEOPLE. I WANT MY LIFE TO MAKE MUCH OF YOU AND ONLY YOU.

MY BELOVED SON

unit 20 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus completely obeyed God and identified with sinful humans by being baptized. His baptism points to His death on the cross and to His resurrection from the grave. For those of us in Christ, the words spoken over Jesus at His baptism are also true of us: We are the Father's beloved children with whom He is pleased.

OBEEDIENCE **AND IDENTITY**

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Matthew 3:13-17; John 1:29-34

JESUS'S OBEDIENCE REVEALED HIS IDENTITY

MATTHEW 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

OUR OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR IDENTITY

JOHN 1:29-34

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

MAIN POINT.

When we're devoted to following Jesus, we will live in obedience to God's Word.





THEOLOGY CONNECTION

BAPTISM



Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony of faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Baptism is a church ordinance and comes before the privileges of church membership and taking part in the Lord's Supper.

DISCUSSION

JESUS'S OBEDIENCE REVEALED HIS IDENTITY MATTHEW 3:13-17

- How important is fairness to you? How have you seen life be unfair?
-  • Jesus was sinless, so why did He insist on being baptized?
-  • When have you needed someone to back you up or support you? Why was it important that God confirmed Jesus's identity at His baptism?

OUR OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR IDENTITY JOHN 1:29-34

- What causes us to act pridefully or arrogantly? How do you keep this in check?
-  • How do we know what John believed about Jesus? How will people know what we believe?
-  • What does it mean to be devoted? What are things people can tell you're devoted to right now?



HOW COULD YOUR LIFESTYLE CONFUSE PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR BELIEF IN JESUS? WHY DOES YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD MATTER?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What's the big deal with baptism? Can we skip that step? First, baptism doesn't save us from sin or make us clean. When we confess Jesus as Lord (confessing and turning from sin) and believe He was raised from death, we are saved (Rom. 10:9). But Jesus commanded us to follow His example in baptism (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus, who had not sinned, was baptized to show us the way of obedience. Baptism is a declaration of our salvation: Our old self is buried and we're new creations, able to walk in a totally new way because of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:3-5). Many times, people resist baptism because they're fearful of being in front of others or because they don't feel it's necessary. But Jesus commanded it, so we're called to obey. We must ask ourselves how we can inwardly commit our heart yet outwardly refuse to obey Him in this matter—in any matter. Jesus didn't command us to do anything that He didn't do too. He showed us how. We can obediently follow Him and trust His example.



DAY ONE

1 PETER 3:21-22

People wear jerseys to show they are fans of an athlete, specific colors to show support for a school or team, and rings if they get married—all examples of ways that people can publicly display their loyalty to someone or something. For example, if you decided to wear someone else's wedding ring for the day, would that make you married? No way! What makes someone married is not the jewelry they wear but the covenant love two people enter into before God and others. A wedding ring, as precious as it might be, is still just a symbol for the commitment made. Baptism works in a similar way. It is a powerful act of obedience that tells the world who you are loyal to, but it is still a symbol to show the work that Jesus has already done in your life.

When Peter said that baptism “now saves you,” he did not say that the act of being submerged into water automatically made you a Christian, but he explained that baptism is a symbol that shows others you have been saved by placing your faith in Jesus. To be very clear: We are forgiven of all sin and saved only when we repent, believe, and surrender our lives to Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead to reign victoriously as King forever. This gift of salvation was always meant to be shared with others as an act of obedience. We obey God when we not only commit to follow Him for the rest of our days but also when we share with others that we have been made new by God and are now loyal to Him alone. If you have called on Jesus for salvation but have not been baptized, talk to a trusted adult today about this step of obedience!

- **IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT IS BAPTISM? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**
- **IF YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN BAPTIZED, WRITE OUT A PRAYER REFLECTING ON THAT DAY AND THANKING GOD FOR SAVING YOU. IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BAPTIZED, WRITE OUT A PRAYER ASKING GOD FOR COURAGE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT TAKING THIS NEXT STEP.**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME BY THE DEATH
AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS. GIVE ME THE
COURAGE TO CHOOSE OBEDIENCE. YOU ARE ALWAYS
WORTH FOLLOWING AND SHARING!**



DAY TWO

ROMANS 6:1-11

Every time we watch someone get baptized, we watch the gospel demonstrated. If we aren't careful, we can get so used to watching baptisms that we treat them as normal and miss the beauty, hope, and power each baptism declares. Someone going under the water symbolizes death—Jesus's death and ours. Salvation is only possible because Jesus first laid down His life for us on the cross. We also died to sin and our old ways of living when we surrendered our lives to Jesus. Then, someone coming out of the water symbolizes life—abundant life now and eternal life forever, all because of Jesus.

Because of God's great love and mercy, death is never the end of the story for anyone who loves God and truly walks with Him. Baptism reminds us of an important truth: Resurrection and new life come only after death. Abundant and eternal life are only made possible by Jesus first dying on the cross. New life is only made possible by us first dying to our old self and our sin. God's Word promises that because of Jesus, sin and death have been defeated. When we surrender to Jesus, we put to death our old ways and are made alive in Christ permanently. Praise God! Here's the thing—when we follow Jesus, sin no longer has power over our lives because Jesus defeated sin and death, but for the rest of our days on earth, sin still has presence in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin, which is great news. But, we still need to practice daily repentance and self-control, considering ourselves dead to sin and instead alive to God.

- **HOW ARE YOU PERSONALLY ENCOURAGED BY THE TRUTH THAT SIN NO LONGER HAS POWER IN YOUR LIFE BECAUSE OF JESUS?**
- **WRITE OUT A PRAYER TO GOD THANKING HIM FOR DEFEATING DEATH AND SIN ON YOUR BEHALF AND FOR CALLING YOU TO ABUNDANT LIFE NOW AND IN ETERNITY.**

PRAY

**GOD, MAY WATCHING SOMEONE GET BAPTIZED
NEVER GET OLD BECAUSE OF ITS PICTURE OF THE
GOSPEL. THANK YOU FOR DECLARING ME FREED
FROM THE POWER OF SIN. HELP ME TO REPENT AND
RUN BACK TO YOU.**



DAY THREE

1 JOHN 3:1-3

Earlier this week, we studied Matthew's and John's accounts of Jesus's baptism, when God declared that Jesus was His beloved Son. Today's passage shows us that through Jesus, we are also declared God's dearly-loved children! The fact that we get to be called children of God is further proof of His great love. We did nothing to earn His love, and we can do nothing to lose it. While we can receive His gift confidently, we must also steward it wisely. We don't obey God to earn His love; we do so in response to the perfect love He has already given us.

John said that "everyone who thus hopes in [Jesus] purifies himself as he is pure" (v. 3). In other words, when you understand that you are already dearly loved by God as His child, you can't help but respond in gratitude. We are then compelled to purify ourselves just as God is pure, meaning that we seek to become more like Him day after day. The beautiful promise of the gospel is that the more we look to Jesus, the more we will look like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). We take part in purifying ourselves by repenting of sin and following His Word; God does the actual work of transforming us. May we keep our eyes focused on God, live as His children, and walk in obedience to become more like Him each day.

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD— PERFECTLY LOVED AND SINCERELY DELIGHTED IN? THANK GOD FOR HIS GREAT LOVE THAT YOU COULD NEVER EARN OR LOSE!**
- **WHAT IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF JESUS YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON TODAY IN ORDER TO BECOME MORE LIKE HIM?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR YOUR WONDERFUL LOVE THAT I CAN NEITHER EARN NOR LOSE. HELP ME TO LIVE AS ONE WHO IS LOVED, WALKING IN OBEDIENCE AND TRUSTING YOU TO MAKE ME MORE LIKE YOU.



DAY FOUR

ACTS 1:8

Acts is the second book written by Luke and is a continuation of his Gospel account—how the work of Jesus persists through the Holy Spirit. When we pick up in Acts 1:8, Jesus has already died on the cross, resurrected, and defeated death forever. These are the final moments before His ascension, when He returned to heaven to reign and rule (Luke 24:50-53). Acts 1:8 is a pivotal verse for all believers, as Jesus gave both a miraculous promise and a missional command. First, the miraculous promise from Jesus is that “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” This is God’s power to equip believers to follow Him and accomplish His plans. In John’s Gospel account, Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Helper (or Advocate, Comforter) and Spirit of truth, who will be with believers forever (John 14:16-17). When you surrender your life to Jesus by repenting of sin and recognizing Jesus as Lord, you are completely forgiven and made new, and God gifts you with the Holy Spirit, who guides you, empowers you, and forever marks you as His (Eph. 1:13-14).

Next, the missional command from Jesus is to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” If we look at a map while we read this verse, we see how Jesus commanded the disciples to share the good news in their hometown, surrounding areas, and also the whole world. A witness is someone who tells others what they have experienced firsthand. Those who walk with Jesus and experience His grace, mercy, and compassion should tell their experience to everyone around them. When you have the Holy Spirit through a relationship with Jesus, you also have the power to go wherever God leads, to do whatever He tells you to do, and to be a witness all the days of your life so that others also encounter the miraculous power of God for themselves. Let’s go!

- **WHAT IS SO MIRACULOUS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVING YOU POWER TO DO EVERYTHING GOD LEADS YOU TO DO?**
- **WHERE CAN YOU LIVE AS GOD’S WITNESS TODAY? WHO DO YOU NEED TO HAVE A GOSPEL CONVERSATION WITH TODAY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR FILLING ME WITH YOUR HOLY SPIRIT. REMIND ME THAT BY YOUR POWER, GRACE, AND TRUTH, I AM ABLE TO BE A WITNESS FOR YOU AND ACCOMPLISH EVERYTHING YOU CALL ME TO DO.



DAY FIVE

PSALM 71:15-19

The life of John the Baptist is a powerful example of boldly proclaiming who God is no matter the cost. Until his last breath, John magnified the name of Jesus and pointed everyone to Him. When you have truly experienced for yourself the miraculous power and compassion of God, you can't help but share the news. Today's passage is part of a psalm that shows this same idea. The psalmist encountered God's righteousness, salvation, and mighty acts over and over again, to the point that he couldn't count them or fully understand them. When we can't understand this good news or fully comprehend God's kindness toward us, we often think, "How can this be?" We can let this question lead us into either unbelieving suspicion or humble submission. Unbelieving suspicion says, "If I can't fully understand something, it can't be true," while humble submission says, "I may not be able to fully understand, but praise God that my faith is so much bigger than what I can grasp and that I am safe in the hands of the One who understands it all."

Even when we know God is wildly kind to save us, we can grow comfortable, distracted, or numb to the gospel. But if we will fight against the temptation to get "used to" the good news and the miraculous mercy God has shown all of us, we will find ourselves like the psalmist who can't help but proclaim the goodness of God all the days of his life. Even if you are a follower of Jesus who is afraid to face rejection, unsure of what to say about God to others, or currently numb to God's goodness, the Holy Spirit will awaken you, fill you, and empower you. If God is as good and worthy as we say that He is (and He is!), let's make sure every breath we are given tells others about Him!

- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM BOLDLY SHARING GOD'S GOODNESS? WRITE OUT A PRAYER CONFESSING THESE FEARS.**
- **WHAT IS ONE CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD THAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED RECENTLY?**

PRAY

GOD, WHILE I MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND YOUR GOODNESS AND POWER, I KNOW I CAN HUMBLY SURRENDER AND PRAISE YOU ALL MY DAYS. GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO PROCLAIM WHO YOU ARE TO A WORLD THAT DESPERATELY NEEDS YOU.

IT IS WRITTEN

unit 20 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus stepped into our world and overcame the temptation Adam did not overcome. Jesus showed He is fully obedient to the Father. He is the only One worthy of undoing the consequences of Adam's sin and bringing blessing to all people (Gen. 12:3). Jesus's life of obedience led Him to the cross, where He conquered sin and death as our Savior.

WORD AND SPIRIT

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Luke 4:1-14; Matthew 4:1-11

GOD'S WORD IS OUR WEAPON

LUKE 4:1-4

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." 4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

SATAN FLEES WHEN WE CLING TO TRUTH

LUKE 4:5-14

5 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" 9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" 12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

MAIN POINT.

God's Word is our powerful weapon against Satan's lies and against temptation.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

TEMPTATION AND SIN

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Instead, temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), yet He never sinned; He faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

DISCUSSION

GOD'S WORD IS OUR WEAPON

LUKE 4:1-4

- How did Jesus wind up in the wilderness? What does this show you about our lives?
- Why do you think Satan tempted Jesus with bread first? Why would many people justify Him giving in?
- What temptations do teenagers face today? Read Deuteronomy 8:3. How does seeing Jesus apply this verse show you the way to fight temptation?

SATAN FLEES WHEN WE CLING TO TRUTH

LUKE 4:5-14

- Read Psalm 119:11. How did Jesus apply this verse? Can we really do the same?
- Is sin ever unavoidable? Look at 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this verse show you?
- Look at verse 10. What did Satan use against Jesus? Read 2 Timothy 4:2-4. What happens if we don't know and rightly understand Scripture?



BASED ON THE PASSAGE, HOW MUCH POWER DOES SATAN HAVE IN TEMPTING YOU? HOW CAN YOU DEFEAT TEMPTATION THAT KEEPS DEFEATING YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

The world teaches us that sin isn't a big deal; it's normal to experiment; we're only young once. Culture lowers the bar for sin, or eliminates it completely, and teaches that we all have our own truth. We try our best to keep these ideas from permeating our hearts and minds, but they creep in—especially if we stop paying attention, if we crack open the door to a sinful desire instead of closing it and walking away. We think we can handle just a little bit of sin and stop anytime. Sin doesn't work on those terms; sin is slavery that leads to death (Rom. 6:16). And when you give it room, sin seeks to invade every part of you. You may sometimes feel like you have to sin because you don't have a choice, but this is another lie from the enemy of your soul. You have the power of the Holy Spirit living within you, directing you to the way out. God won't allow you to be tempted more than you can handle (1 Cor. 10:13), but you have to use the tools God has given you to stand: His Word and the help of His Spirit.



DAY ONE

HEBREWS 4:14-16



Jesus is fully God and fully man, which is a wonderful mystery about who He is and a powerful truth for us to hold tightly. Being fully man, Jesus understood what it means to be human and to face suffering, weakness, and temptation. Today's passage tells us that Jesus was not just tempted in some of the ways that humans are tempted, but He was tempted in all the ways we're tempted (v. 15). Because Jesus endured all suffering and faced every temptation, He doesn't look at us with pity, feeling sorry for us. He understands what we walk through and has great compassion for us, identifying with us. To serve a God who understands suffering, grief, and temptation is to serve a God who is completely trustworthy.

Not only was Jesus tempted in every way, but He also faced every single temptation without ever giving in to temptation and sinning. This is where we see that He is fully God, perfect and without sin. While we are sinful apart from the blood of Jesus, the life of Jesus gives us great hope that no temptation is so great that we can't resist and find victory. To be clear, we can never find victory over sin within ourselves and apart from God, but we can always find victory through the power of the Spirit and the truth of God's Word. We are urged to go boldly to the throne of grace, meaning that we can confidently go to Jesus in our weaknesses. When we run to Jesus, we receive mercy for our failure and grace to help us in our need. Whatever you are facing today, go to Jesus with confidence—He loves you, He gets it, and He is ready to meet you with His grace and mercy.

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR WEAKNESSES AND TEMPTATIONS? WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT WE SERVE A GOD WHO GETS IT?**
- **WHAT SIN OR STRUGGLE ARE YOU FACING AND NEED TO RUN BOLDLY TO JESUS TO FIND HIS HELP, GRACE, AND MERCY?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU SEEING ME IN MY WEAKNESS
AND UNDERSTANDING MY SUFFERING. YOU'RE
PERFECTLY TRUSTWORTHY AND GIVE ME GREAT
HOPE TO KEEP RUNNING TO YOU.**



DAY TWO

1 CORINTHIANS 10:12-13

We find great encouragement and conviction in today's passage. Verse 13 encourages us that no temptation we ever face is uncommon or impossible to resist, which means we are never alone in our struggle and never without hope of overcoming every temptation. The greatest encouragement from these verses is the reminder of God's faithfulness. We will not find victory over temptation by our own willpower or strength but only by God at work in our lives. Because God has always been and will always be faithful, we can trust that He will always meet us with the power to endure suffering and overcome temptation.

The life of Jesus shows us a difference between facing temptation and giving in to temptation. He was tempted in every way, but He never once gave in. This gives us great hope but also shows that we can't ever get away with the excuse that we couldn't resist the sin. We can expect to face temptation and testing all the days of our lives because Jesus absolutely did. But temptation doesn't equal sin. Sin happens when we choose to give in to temptation instead of running to God for the strength to resist. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days, He fought against every lie from Satan and found victory against every temptation by clinging to God's Word (Matt. 4:1-11). God's Word is our weapon, a sword to protect us, help us endure, and equip us with what we need to fight well (Eph. 6:17). Fighting well is both running from something and running toward something else. Not only should we run far from sin, but we also need to run to God. We work to remove sin from our lives by the power of God, and we replace all ungodliness with His truth!

- **WHAT TEMPTATIONS ARE YOU FACING RIGHT NOW? WHY IS GIVING INTO TEMPTATION (AND CHOOSING SIN) SOMETIMES EASIER OR MORE DESIRABLE?**
- **HOW DOES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS GIVE YOU HOPE THAT YOU CAN ENDURE TEMPTATION AND CHOOSE GOD INSTEAD?**

PRAY

GOD, IT CAN BE EASY TO BELIEVE THE LIE THAT RESISTING TEMPTATION IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT I KNOW WITH YOU, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. HELP ME RUN FROM ALL TEMPTATION AND RUN TO YOU FOR HELP AND HOPE.



DAY THREE

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

Compromise is one of the main temptations we all face. Compromise is agreeing to meet in the middle for the benefit of everyone involved, but that's not the kind of compromise we are talking about today. The temptation of compromise means to waver from godly living and settle for less than God's best—to lower the bar when it comes to sin. When friends are living for the world and having a lot of (temporary) fun, you may wonder what it would be like to join them. You may feel tired of standing firm because settling would be so much easier. The temptation of compromise can sound a lot like: I'm tired of feeling left out. What's the big deal? So what if I give in a little? I can get serious about living for God later or when I'm older.

Today's passage provides guidance for finding victory over compromise. Paul encouraged followers of Jesus to walk carefully and wisely. From these verses, we see that wise people are those who are filled by the Spirit, who live from a place of constant gratitude to God, and who make the best use of their time. This requires courage and perseverance to walk the narrow way of Jesus, even when others choose to follow the crowd. When you find yourself wrestling with compromise from a place of loneliness, exhaustion, discouragement, or apathy, look to Jesus! Don't get tired of doing the good work of living for God (Gal. 6:9). God will always equip you and strengthen you to endure whatever comes. Be filled by His Spirit and completely led by Him. Only then will you find a life truly worth living—the narrow way. And you'll be a light for the world to see.

- **WHERE ARE YOU COMPROMISING? WHAT IS THE ROOT OF THAT TEMPTATION (APPROVAL OF OTHERS, EXHAUSTION, DISCOURAGEMENT, OR SOMETHING ELSE)?**
- **WRITE OUT A PRAYER CONFESSING TO GOD WHERE YOU HAVE COMPROMISED AND ASK HIM TO HELP YOU LIVE WISELY.**

PRAY

GOD, WHEN MY HEART IS TEMPTED BY THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, HELP ME TO REMEMBER THAT I ONLY NEED YOU. HELP ME STAND FIRM IN YOUR WAYS EVEN WHEN IT FEELS LIKE I HAVE TO STAND ALONE BECAUSE YOU ARE WORTHY OF MY HEART.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-8

Our world loves to establish winners and losers. This competition can be healthy in sports, band, and other extracurricular activities, but it can be seriously dangerous when it leads us to live selfishly and self-righteously. Even social media sets us up to compete for followers and likes. When we are tempted to compete against someone else, we take our eyes off of Jesus and forget that He taught us to serve others in humility and love. Jesus calls us to set aside our pride and the desire to be “the best” in order to love people well. Seeking what’s best for ourselves and living with a mindset of “What’s in it for me?” can be tempting because the world justifies this way of thinking. Jesus calls us to a better way. In a world of competition and comparison, Jesus calls us to compassion and care.

Even Jesus, the Son of God, did not come to be served by others; His mission, even as the King of kings, was to serve others (Mark 10:45). Today’s passage commands us to do nothing out of selfish ambition (v. 3), meaning that we are to follow Jesus’s example of selfless humility and seek to serve others. While pride tempts us to think too highly of ourselves, shame tempts us to think too lowly of ourselves; neither of these are how God calls us to live. Considering others more important than yourself does not mean that your life has no value or that you are a doormat; instead, it is knowing that you are already fully loved and valued by God. This truth frees you to focus on caring for others, even at the cost of your pride, convenience, or time. It frees you from needing applause and attention because you’re loved deeply by God.

- **HOW HAVE YOU FELT THE DESIRE TO COMPETE WITH OTHERS? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU’RE TEMPTED TO DO THINGS OUT OF SELFISH AMBITION?**
- **READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8 AGAIN. HOW WILL JESUS’S EXAMPLE OF SERVING OTHERS CHANGE THE WAY YOU LIVE AND SERVE OTHERS THIS WEEK?**

PRAY

GOD, IN A CULTURE OF COMPETING AND COMPARING, HELP ME FOLLOW YOUR EXAMPLE OF SELFLESS HUMILITY. GIVE ME AN UNSELFISH CONCERN FOR OTHERS, SEEKING WAYS TO SERVE PEOPLE, NOT LOOKING FOR WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME.





DAY FIVE

JEREMIAH 17:5-9

We are living in a world that says things like, “Live your truth,” “Follow your heart,” and “Do what makes you happy.” Similarly, throughout the Old Testament, God’s people repeatedly chose to disobey Him and do what seemed right in their own eyes. Time and time again, their choices led to destruction. If we know that sin is destructive, why do we still choose it at times? Because sin is fun and often feels good in the moment. In fact, Hebrews 11:25 describes it as a “fleeting pleasure.” Comfort tries to sell the lie that “if I feel like it, I can or must fulfill the desire.” Whether we are avoiding, escaping, numbing, or trying to find satisfaction in worldly comfort, this lie can lead us into watching shows or movies, listening to music, consuming harmful content, and making decisions that dishonor the Lord and destroy us.

Today’s passage reminds us that our hearts, or our thoughts and feelings, are sick and more deceitful than anything else (v. 9). Following your heart is dangerous because your heart, apart from God’s transforming work, is drawn to sin and darkness. By His grace and power, God transforms our hearts and changes our desires as we follow Him. But this requires discipline to turn from sinful desires, humility to let people hold you accountable, and perseverance to chase after the things of God. To be clear, the Lord cares deeply for you and wants the very best for your life, but the Lord’s very best for your life is more about your holiness than your happiness. God calls us out of comfort and recklessness and into courage and self-control.

- **WHERE ARE YOU TEMPTED TO CHOOSE WHAT’S COMFORTABLE? WHERE DO YOU NEED SOMEONE TO HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU ARE TEMPTED TO TURN TO TEMPORARY PLEASURES OR FUN FOUND IN SIN? WRITE A PRAYER CONFESSING WHERE YOU ARE STRUGGLING AND THANK GOD FOR GIVING YOU A NEW HEART AND NEW DESIRES.**

PRAY

GOD, WHEN I AM TEMPTED TO DO WHAT FEELS GOOD, CONVICT ME, CALL ME HIGHER, AND FILL ME WITH YOUR TRUTH. HELP ME DESIRE YOU ABOVE ALL ELSE AND LEAN ON YOU FOR THE STRENGTH TO PURSUE HOLINESS.

FOLLOW ME

unit 20 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance and to lay down His life on their behalf. Likewise, as His followers, we are to tell others about Jesus and call on them to turn from their sin and trust in Jesus.

FINDING AND TELLING

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 1

WHEN WE FIND JESUS, WE TELL OTHERS

JOHN 1:35-46

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). 43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

JESUS SEES US AND KNOWS US

JOHN 1:47-51

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

MAIN POINT.

Following Jesus changes us and gives us new purpose.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

EVANGELISM

Every Christian and every church has the duty and privilege to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of a person's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary efforts rest on a spiritual necessity for all people to be renewed and is clearly and repeatedly commanded in Jesus's teachings. Jesus commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. Every child of God has the duty to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness and by a Christian lifestyle.

DISCUSSION

WHEN WE FIND JESUS, WE TELL OTHERS

JOHN 1:35-46

- What do people search for in life? What did Jesus ask the two men (v. 38)? What does Jesus's response show about Him (v. 39)?
- Share your nicknames. Why did Jesus rename Simon?
- How did Andrew and Philip react to realizing that Jesus was the Messiah? Why don't we have this same reaction and desire to tell others?

JESUS SEES US AND KNOWS US

JOHN 1:47-51

- How did Nathaniel first react to news about Jesus? How can Jesus's response to his questions comfort us?
- Have you ever felt like God didn't understand your life or see you? What does verse 48 help you know?
- How do people try to get to God or heaven on their own, apart from Jesus? Read Genesis 28:10-17. What did Jesus reveal about Himself in John 1:51?



IF PEOPLE "COME AND SEE" WHERE YOU'RE GOING IN LIFE (V. 46), WHERE WOULD YOU LEAD THEM? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT YOUR LIFE LEADS TO JESUS?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Does the idea of sharing your faith make you nervous? Do you freeze? Do you worry how people will react if you talk about Jesus in class, on your teams, or with your friends? If you do, you aren't alone. When we encounter Jesus, He changes us. Some of those changes are drastic and immediate, while some happen more slowly, as God continues to work in us. But the people who knew us before we knew Jesus may not understand the change. Instead of being up front about who Jesus is and what He has done in our lives, we stay quiet. Why? We worry more about people's opinions of us than their salvation. We worry that they'll think we're strange, radical, or judgmental. But if the gospel is really the best news—if we've been saved from sin and death—how can we keep silent? How can we not share the best news with others?



DAY ONE

1 KINGS 19:19-21

In the verses leading up to today's passage, God told Elijah to anoint Elisha to be the next prophet in his place. Elijah calling Elisha to join him in ministerial service gives us an example from the Old Testament of what it looks like to give up everything to follow someone. When Jesus walked on earth and invited men and women to follow Him as disciples, Jews would have remembered Elisha being called and understood the weight of the call. The call to follow Jesus is not a casual invitation to be acquaintances with Him but a strong call to live with Him, walk with Him, and forsake all else to follow Him.

This story of Elisha paints a picture of what it means to give up everything for something much greater. Choosing to follow Jesus comes at a great cost. When Elijah found Elisha, Elisha was working in the fields with twelve pairs of oxen, which symbolized Elisha's great wealth. The call to follow Elijah meant that Elisha must walk away from wealth, material possessions, his way of life, and even his family, but Elisha considered following Elijah worth it. How much more should we as believers consider following Jesus as worthy, even when it costs us our life, our popularity, our wealth, and our own desires? No matter what it costs us, we can trust that Jesus is always better. Following Jesus comes at a cost, but we will study this week that not following Him is more costly. Do you believe God is worthy of your whole life? Then trust Him and make Him the most important thing in your life. Do you believe God is worth it to follow all the days of your life? Then live like He is worthy.

- **WHAT HAS IT COST YOU TO FOLLOW JESUS? WHAT HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO GIVE UP, AND WHY WAS IT SO HARD?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT COST YOU TO NOT FOLLOW JESUS? WHAT WOULD YOU MISS OUT ON IF YOU CHOSE TO FOLLOW THE WORLD INSTEAD OF JESUS?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE WORTHY OF MY WHOLE LIFE AND OF FOLLOWING FOR ALL OF MY DAYS. WHEN I AM TEMPTED TO BE DISCOURAGED BY THE COST OF FOLLOWING YOU, REMIND ME OF THE FAR GREATER COST OF NOT FOLLOWING YOU.



DAY TWO

MATTHEW 16:24-26

These words of Jesus continue to help us form our understanding of how much it will cost us to truly follow Him. While the invitation to follow Jesus is absolutely extended to everyone, it comes with some costly requirements: Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. Denying yourself is intentionally turning away from selfish or worldly living. Taking up your cross is committing to endure whatever comes in this life, knowing Jesus is always worth any cost or suffering. Finally, following Jesus is not being casually familiar with Jesus, but wholeheartedly trusting Him, conforming to His ways instead of the world's ways, and remaining steadfast even when life gets hard.

If you spend your life clinging to worldly comforts, you will lose everything in the end. But if you die to your worldly desires and live for God instead, you will find eternal life. New, abundant, eternal life is guaranteed for every believer who gives up the worldly way of living to follow Jesus; it's as simple as that! But something being simple doesn't make it easy. Knowing that God walks with us and gives us strength to die to ourselves and live for Him gives us great hope. If you want to find real life here on earth and for all of eternity, then it's time to put your selfish desires to death and live for Someone so much greater. Following Jesus is a narrow road that many will not choose, but that doesn't mean it's not worth it in the end. Jesus's death and resurrection give us the promise that while death may be part of the story, it is never the end of the story for His followers. In His kingdom, death to sin always leads to new life. Will you decide that Jesus is worth following no matter what you have to give up?

- **IN THE PAST, HOW HAVE YOU LIVED FOR THE WORLD? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THAT LIVING FOR THE WORLD TEMPORARILY WORKS OR FEELS GOOD BUT IS ULTIMATELY DESTRUCTIVE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU REMIND YOURSELF THAT LIVING FOR JESUS IS WORTH PURSUING EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD OR LONELY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR MAKING A WAY FOR US TO HAVE A FULFILLING LIFE HERE ON EARTH AND ETERNAL LIFE WITH YOU. HELP ME TO REMEMBER THAT FOLLOWING YOU IS THE ONLY PATH TO A FULFILLING, ABUNDANT LIFE.



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 6:25-34

Following Jesus brings peace, joy, and fulfillment that we can never know apart from Him. But this decision can also come with moments of rejection, loneliness, and fear. What if my friends stop hanging out with me? What if my family makes fun of me or feels offended when I try to share the gospel with them? What if people view me differently? What if I stop getting invited? What if I mess this up? These are just a few examples of how doubts, fears, and what-ifs can enter our minds and spiral into worry that keeps us distracted and stuck. The words of Jesus in Matthew 6 remind us that only when we listen and obey Him will we find peace and a cure for the anxious feelings that cause us to spiral. Worries and fears will pop into your head and show up in your life; the question is what will you do with them? Will you choose to lean into that fear and stay stuck, or will you choose to live by faith, running to God with every worry?

To live from a place of fear and worry is to live a life that is distracted from the abundant life God has for you. Jesus gives us a better way in verse 33: “Seek first the kingdom.” Other verses in the Bible teach similar ideas, commanding us to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2) and to focus on what is unseen and eternal (2 Cor 4:18). We are commanded to intentionally and consistently focus our minds and hearts on Jesus alone. When we feel tempted to wander into worry, we confess that to God and redirect our attention to Him. And we practice that over and over again. Following Jesus comes with uncertainty; we may not always know how our lives will play out, but He promises us His presence and His peace for every step of the journey!

- **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WORRIES OR WHAT-IFS THAT POP INTO YOUR HEAD AND DISTRACT YOU FROM LIVING FOR GOD?**
- **HOW DOES JESUS’S PRESENCE AND PEACE CALM YOUR FEARS?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR SEEING EXACTLY WHERE I AM,
MEETING ME THERE, AND DEEPLY CARING FOR ME.
HELP ME TO KEEP MY FOCUS ON YOU—THE ONE WHO
CALMS THE STORMS AND WALKS WITH ME.**

DAY FOUR

JOHN 1:43-49

Toward the end of John 1, we read about multiple encounters where Jesus invited people to follow Him as His disciples. A few of the first disciples to follow Jesus were brothers named Andrew and Peter and a man named Phillip from Bethsaida. When Jesus invited Phillip to follow Him, Phillip not only decided to follow Jesus, but he also couldn't keep it to himself. He went to Nathanael to share the news that he had met Jesus—the promised Messiah prophesied about for centuries—and to invite Nathanael to meet Him too. What a beautiful picture of how we are also called to follow Jesus and then spend our lives inviting others to meet this same, life-changing Messiah for themselves.

Nathanael went with Phillip to meet Jesus. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, He said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit” (v. 47), demonstrating His supernatural ability to know our hearts. Nathanael confusedly asked, “How do you know me?” (v. 48). Jesus answered his question with a powerful truth about who Jesus is. Jesus explained to Nathanael that He already knew him before his friend Phillip ever went to find him under the fig tree. This brings us to a second beautiful picture of the gospel—before we ever knew or went looking for God, He knew us and looked for us. In other words, God created you, saw you, loved you, and pursued you before you were ever aware of Him. As followers of Jesus, we must remember where God brought us from and how He pursued us. And may we share our personal testimony with others so that they, too, can find God, who has always been pursuing them.

- **WHERE DID GOD SEE YOU AND CARE FOR YOU BEFORE YOU EVEN KNEW THAT YOU NEEDED HIM? WRITE OUT YOUR TESTIMONY OF HOW GOD CALLED YOU.**
- **HOW CAN GOD'S GREAT LOVE AND PERSISTENT PURSUIT OF YOU ENCOURAGE YOU TO LIVE IN GRATITUDE TO HIM AND TO SHARE THIS GOOD NEWS WITH OTHERS TODAY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME AND PURSUING A RELATIONSHIP WITH ME BEFORE I WAS EVER LOOKING FOR YOU. HELP ME TO BE BOLD IN SHARING WITH OTHERS HOW YOU FOUND ME AND HOW YOU WANT TO FIND THEM TOO.





DAY FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9

Gold is a precious metal that is recognized as a valuable treasure. Fool's gold, on the other hand, is shiny like gold and looks like gold but has no value. In a similar way, our achievements and worldly treasures may shine and look impressive, but they have zero eternal value. Knowing Jesus personally, however, is like real gold—a precious treasure that is eternally and immeasurably valuable. In the verses leading up to today's passage, Paul basically explained that he had what the world would recognize as an impressive list of achievements and titles. Then, he takes a sharp turn to say that the whole list is nothing compared to the value he found in following Christ. He even goes so far as to say that he now considers those things to be to be rubbish. Yes, you read that right; Paul described everything that he once considered valuable to now be manure, garbage, and waste.

As we have studied this week, following Jesus does cost us. Paul's words in this passage remind us that even though the cost is great, we find a far greater reward in following Jesus. Does Paul's testimony that Jesus is better than everything else mean that he never faced hardship in following Jesus? Absolutely not. Paul suffered persecution, imprisonment, and even violent death, but something being easy is different than something being worth it. For Paul, knowing Jesus intimately was better than anything and everything he had once considered valuable; his relationship with Jesus was his greatest joy and source of fulfillment. Jesus invites us to do the same—to give up worldly “treasures” that might seem shiny but have no lasting value and to treasure the valuable, eternal gift of relationship with Him.

- **WHAT WORLDLY TREASURES AND ACHIEVEMENTS ARE YOU TEMPTED TO VALUE ABOVE GOD?**
- **WRITE A PRAYER TO GOD REFLECTING ON WHO HE IS TO YOU AND HOW HE IS BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE.**

PRAY

GOD, NOTHING IS BETTER, MORE VALUABLE, OR MORE IMPORTANT THAN KNOWING YOU. REMIND MY HEART THAT A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU IS WHERE THE REAL TREASURE IS.

THE FIRST OF *HIS SIGNS*

unit 21 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

From the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry, the people recognized that He was different. Jesus performed miracles to fulfill the purpose of His earthly ministry and to show that He is the Son of God, the One who came to proclaim and provide salvation.

TRANSFORMING POWER

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 2

JESUS PROVIDES SOMETHING BETTER

JOHN 2:1-8

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

JESUS'S MIRACLES REVEAL HIS IDENTITY

JOHN 2:9-11

9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus meets our needs to help us see Him and know Him.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

MIRACLES

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or defies natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were often evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

DISCUSSION

JESUS PROVIDES SOMETHING BETTER

JOHN 2:1-8

- Would people today expect Jesus to be invited to a fun event? What does Jesus being invited show us?
- What did Mary's instructions reveal about her view of Jesus (v. 5)? What role did the servers' obedience play in the miracle?
- ✝ • What was the jars' purpose (v. 6)? How does knowing their purpose help us understand the meaning of the miracle?

JESUS'S MIRACLES REVEAL HIS IDENTITY

JOHN 2:9-11

- ♥ • How does this miracle help you see that Jesus cares about more than just our needs? How have you seen Him work in small ways in your life?
- 📖 • Why did Jesus perform miracles? Do we still trust God to do miracles today? Have you seen any?
- 👤 • How did the miracle affect Jesus's new followers?



GOD CAN CHANGE WATER INTO SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY, SO WHY DO WE STRUGGLE TO TRUST HIM WITH BIG AND SMALL DETAILS OF OUR LIVES?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever promised to do better—to be a better person, friend, son, or daughter? Or maybe you wanted to be a better athlete or student, a better brother or sister. Our efforts to be better often fall short. We try for a while, but we revert back to old patterns and behaviors. The truth is that we can't be better on our own. When it comes to sin, we can't do better at all. Our efforts to be good will come up short. The more we try to be good enough apart from Jesus, the more disappointed and ashamed we'll feel. The good news is that Jesus doesn't just help us be better; Jesus makes us new (2 Cor. 5:17). He changes us into something we're not. This transformation is a beautiful exchange that none of us deserve; we receive Jesus's righteousness in exchange for Him taking our sin. So, can you be a better person, friend, daughter, son? No, Jesus makes you even better than better; He makes you new.



DAY ONE

PSALM 145



When we read through the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels, we see Jesus meet two kinds of needs: physical and spiritual. Miracles show us that only Jesus can meet both. This is a big deal because being physical and spiritual is what makes us human. God knows this because He made us, so only He can care for us completely. He cares about our eternal life, but He also cares about the here and now.

We don't just see this truth in the Gospels but also in the Old Testament. Look again at verses 14-19 and pay attention to how David described God's love and care for us. The actions that God takes toward us are unbelievable! Each word in these verses is filled with so much intention and purpose. God helps us, sees us, feeds us, and satisfies us. He is a good and giving God!

God is always reaching toward us. Are we receiving His love and walking in it? The way God works in our lives can be a mystery. On our worst days, we may take our frustration out on God; we may accuse Him of not meeting our needs. But God never leaves us, and His care for us is constant. Other people and situations in life will let us down, but God always remains the same, regardless of how bad life gets. He sees the big picture and is working a greater, eternal plan. God's goodness and faithfulness should lead us to praise Him and speak about Him to others, just as David did.

- **HOW HAVE YOU SEEN GOD MEET BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS IN YOUR LIFE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES ABOUT BOTH TYPES OF NEEDS?**
- **WHAT NEEDS (BOTH BIG AND SMALL) DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW THAT YOU HAVEN'T BROUGHT TO GOD?**

PRAY

LORD, THANK YOU FOR CARING ABOUT EVERY PART OF ME. NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM YOU, AND YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR ME. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU AND TO COME TO YOU FOR ALL OF MY NEEDS.



DAY TWO

1 KINGS 17:1-7

One of the most beautiful things about being a Christian is that you can rest when the world can't. When you catch up on the latest news, you probably aren't encouraged. For the most part, the news showcases the bad things that are happening around the world. There may be the occasional update that is positive, but for the most part, the news shows a picture of unrest.

Yesterday's passage reminded us that God truly cares for us, even when life may not make sense in the moment. One way that God cares for His children is by giving us what we need when complete chaos is raging around us. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of the prophet Elijah for a minute. God used Elijah to speak God's truth to His people who were worshiping the false god Baal. God's own people, the nation of Israel, strayed away from Him and gave into the chaos of false worship. They followed cultural norms instead of God's truth. God gave Elijah a message to deliver to Israel's king: A drought and famine would come to Israel because of their disobedience.

Even though Elijah was outnumbered, God took care of him because Elijah was faithful. Even though Israel would be hungry and thirsty, Elijah wouldn't be. The way God took care of Elijah is incredible! So, when those around you seem to be caving into chaos, you have the option to rest because God cares for you and always works for your good. Keep your eyes on God and know He will never leave you.

- **IN YOUR LIFE, WHAT KIND OF DISTRACTIONS AND CHAOS ARE YOU TEMPTED TO GIVE IN TO INSTEAD OF RESTING IN GOD'S CARE?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO RESIST THOSE TEMPTATIONS AND REST IN GOD'S PRESENCE?**

PRAY

LORD, I CONFESS THAT AT TIMES I'M TEMPTED TO DO THINGS THAT DON'T PLEASE YOU. HELP ME TO REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE BETTER AND THAT YOU WILL NEVER LET ME DOWN.



DAY THREE

1 KINGS 17:8-16

Wants and needs are completely different. You may want those new shoes to show off to your friends, but you definitely don't need them. Wanting nice shoes or the newest phone isn't bad, but when we obsess over new things and think we need them, we are heading the wrong way!

God knows exactly what we need and when we need it. He knows what we can handle in each season of our lives. Although we should bring every desire that we have to God, we should also trust Him with the results. Can you imagine what this world would be like if every single person got what they wanted every time they asked? Talk about a disaster waiting to happen! Thankfully, God helps us with this.

Yesterday we read from 1 Kings 17:1-7 about Israel experiencing a drought and famine because of their worship of the false god, Baal. The one person who was spared from all of this was Elijah. God then continued to provide for Elijah. As he journeyed, a widow gave him some bread and water. It was just what he needed for the next step along the way. God would make sure Elijah's needs were being met, but he would do so in a way that required Elijah to remain completely dependent on Him for every bite of food and drink of water. Elijah would experience God's hand in each step of the journey.

Sometimes God provides for us in huge ways, where a breakthrough seems to happen and everything changes. Other times, He gives us just what we need in a moment, so that we can learn contentment and remember to trust Him. How will you trust Him in either situation?

- **THINK OF A TIME WHEN GOD GAVE YOU WHAT YOU NEEDED AND NOT WHAT YOU WANTED. HOW DID YOU GROW THROUGH THAT TIME?**
- **HOW CAN YOU SHIFT YOUR PERSPECTIVE TO SEE EVERYTHING YOU HAVE AS A GIFT FROM GOD?**

PRAY

**LORD, HELP ME TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN MY WANTS AND MY NEEDS. TEACH ME TO
BE THANKFUL AND CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU GIVE
ME. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU.**



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13

Most of us know what it feels like to really want something; many of us also know what it feels like to have more than enough. Do we know how it feels to be content, though? Contentment is satisfaction with what you have, not desiring more or less.

One of the greatest examples of contentment in the Bible comes from the apostle Paul. Before Paul met Jesus, he had quite the resume. Not only was he extremely smart, but he was also in charge of a lot of people and heavily mistreated Christians. Then one day, his life changed forever for the good! Jesus appeared to him in a miraculous way, and Paul surrendered his life to Him. Paul then went on a life-long journey to spread the gospel across the known world at that time. Paul had a radically different view of life, so much so, that he described his past accomplishments as if they didn't matter anymore. You can read about this in Philippians 3. Everything about Paul changed because that's what Jesus does: He transforms us and makes us new!

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi from prison. He had experienced the highest of highs in life. Remember that resume? Paul had reached the height of his career and leadership, from a worldly sense, but from a prison cell, none of his worldly accomplishments mattered. Christ was enough! As a student, a lot of worldly desires try to steal your contentment, whether on a screen, in a relationship, with your grades, or in your athletic goals. You'll struggle to be content when you're constantly comparing what you have or don't have to others. When your satisfaction is in Christ, then you can be content when those other things aren't going well. When you build your life on Christ, then and only then, will you be content.

- **IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU COMPARE YOUR LIFE TO OTHERS? HOW HAS THIS MADE BEING CONTENT MORE DIFFICULT?**
- **WHAT IS AT LEAST ONE PRACTICAL STEP YOU CAN TAKE TO LIVE A LIFE OF MORE CONTENTMENT? WRITE IT DOWN AND TRY IT!**

PRAY

LORD, TEACH ME TO BE CONTENT. THIS DOES NOT COME EASY OR NATURALLY FOR ME. OPEN MY EYES TO ALL THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME AND SHOW ME THE BETTER WAY OF LIVING THAT COMES THROUGH A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU!





DAY FIVE

EXODUS 7:14-25

Behind every gift is a giver. What's your favorite gift you received at Christmas or on your birthday? You may have asked for this gift and had a feeling that you might get it, or maybe you were completely surprised. When you opened the gift, you were locked in on that moment. Full of excitement and anticipation, you were ready to enjoy that gift. Hopefully before you used the gift, you recognized and thanked the person who gave it to you. If it wasn't for that person, the gift wouldn't be yours, right?

Throughout Scripture, we read about God giving good gifts to His people, sometimes in unexpected ways. In Exodus, we see God's wondrous work through Moses, as he embarked on the journey to free Israel from Egyptian slavery. God's provision for His people came in many ways, but one way was through bringing plagues on the Egyptians. The Nile River was crucial to Egyptian survival and to their way of life. Pharaoh had previously thrown Hebrew male infants into the Nile as a method of cruel control (Ex. 1:22). But through Moses's obedience, God changed the Nile River to blood as judgment on Egypt for mistreating His people. This act of provision for Israel's release from slavery points to the ultimate provision of Jesus releasing us from slavery to sin. Many years later, Jesus transformed water again, this time into crimson wine—blessing instead of judgment. Do you see the connection? Jesus reversed the curse of judgment through His own blood, and this miracle at the wedding in Cana hinted at His perfect sacrifice. The water turned to wine foreshadowed that Jesus would provide for our deepest need—forgiveness for sin and freedom from judgment!

- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU THANK GOD FOR THE AMAZING GIFT OF FREEDOM FROM SIN AND JUDGMENT?**
- **WHY DO WE OFTEN FORGET THAT OUR GREATEST GIFT IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS? WHY DO WE ALLOW FOLLOWING JESUS TO FEEL LIKE A BURDEN?**

PRAY

LORD, FORGIVE ME WHEN I FORGET THAT EVERY GOOD GIFT COMES FROM YOU. THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME AND FOR GIVING YOUR SON, JESUS. GIVE ME THE EYES TO SEE YOUR WORK IN ALL THINGS!

I WILL RAISE *IT UP*

unit 21 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

The Passover, along with the temple and perpetual sacrifices, revealed God's desire to be with His people and the way they could be made right with Him. These signs pointed to the greater way that God would restore people to Himself through Christ. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven and made right with God forever.

ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 2

GOD DEMANDS A BETTER SACRIFICE

JOHN 2:13-17

.13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

JESUS IS THE BETTER TEMPLE

JOHN 2:18-25

18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. 23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus is worthy of our best worship.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS HOLY

God's holiness refers to His uniqueness in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for "holy" means "separate" or "set apart." God's holiness also refers to His absolute purity. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's image, we are called to holiness.

DISCUSSION

GOD DEMANDS A BETTER SACRIFICE

JOHN 2:13-17

- When someone disrespects you or someone you love, how do you typically react?
- What does Jesus's reaction help you understand about anger?
- In what ways do we cheapen worship or treat God's house with disrespect?

JESUS IS THE BETTER TEMPLE

JOHN 2:18-25

- Why did the Jews ask for a sign (v. 18)? Is there ever an okay reason to ask God for a sign?
- What did Jesus realize about many of the people who believed in Him after the signs? What does this type of belief look like today?
- Why does Jesus compare Himself to the temple?



WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING GOOD TO BRING TO GOD? HOW CAN YOU REST IN JESUS'S PERFECT SACRIFICE?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What is worship? How do we worship God the right way? We use the word "worship" a lot in Christian culture, but the word even bleeds into secular, or worldly, culture. We say things like, "She worships the ground he walks on" and make people, brands, and activities our idols. Only God is worthy of worship, but we often bow before lesser "gods"—false gods that can't save us, gods that lead us away from the one true God and to destruction. Worship is giving God the glory and praise He deserves; worship involves our words, but even more, worship is bowing our hearts before the Lord and living in submission to Him. Here's how we know we're worshipping God the right way: We examine what our love and adoration point to; we examine what we're devoted to; we ask if our heart is divided between God and anything else. And if it is, we lay that thing down in surrender. Worship requires us to surrender our hearts, minds, and actions to the only One who is worthy.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 23:23-26

If you could have one superpower, what would it be? A lot of really cool options are available to choose from, like being invisible, being able to fly, traveling through time, or having super strength. What about mind reading, though? It may sound cool at first, but when you start thinking about it, would we really want to know what people are thinking?

The only person who can read our minds and see our hearts is Jesus. He knows each person inside and out. What's incredible is that He still loves us, even when our thoughts are sinful, selfish, and ugly. Jesus doesn't look for perfection in us; He looks for faithfulness. In today's Scripture, we see a picture of people who were obsessed with looking perfect, but who didn't truly love God and love people. They loved self-image more than their neighbor. So, Jesus called them out. He was able to do this because He is God. He saw through the people's exterior and straight to their hearts. He sees through our attempts to look the part too.

Jesus wants His children to bring their imperfections to Him. When we do that, we show a desire for God to transform our hearts and our minds. Many of us may not come to God with honesty because we feel ashamed on the inside. But God can handle it! We can put our trust in Him, and He will take care of the rest. You may be tempted to stay away from God because of shame you feel over something you've done. God wants to heal your heart; He wants to transform you and give you peace. God sees you and loves you. No matter how ugly your heart and mind are, you can go to God in honesty and ask Him to make you new.

- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU TRIED TO APPEAR ONE WAY ON THE OUTSIDE BUT YOUR INSIDE WAS THE OPPOSITE?**
- **WHAT SIN AND SHAME DO YOU NEED TO BRING TO GOD SO YOU CAN TRULY LIVE FOR HIM?**

PRAY

LORD, YOU DESIRE FOR A TRANSFORMED HEART TO DRIVE MY OUTSIDE ACTIONS. SHOW ME WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THIS SEASON OF MY LIFE AND GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION.



DAY TWO

ISAIAH 1:16-18

The kitchen table is meant to be the place in the house for eating meals. On occasion though, we might eat on the couch or in our bed. We've probably all spilled our food or drink and ruined a good piece of furniture too. Cleaning up the mess usually takes more than some hot water and a washcloth and requires the best cleaning supplies we can find because nothing else will do the trick.

Our hearts are a lot like that mess we made from the food we spilled. Because of our sin, our hearts are stained beyond what we can fix. In fact, nothing can fix it—not our good works, moral living, or serving others. Jesus is the only One who can clean and remove the stain of sin for good. Today's verses in Isaiah speak about the cleansing work Jesus does. As we discussed yesterday, Jesus sees the inside of our hearts and diagnoses our problem. He doesn't leave us in that diagnosis without hope for healing. When we bring our sin problem to Him with honesty and desperation, He wipes it away. We receive a clean slate and are able to live the way God intended us to live.

That's the power of the gospel message! The sacrifice Jesus made on the cross is more than enough to clean our sinful stains. When He died and shed His blood for us, He took on all the sins of the world. Then, He appeared to hundreds of people and went to heaven. He sent His Holy Spirit to live in us so we can be clean and live with new purpose! Thank you, Jesus, for making us clean!

- **THINK ABOUT SINS YOU CURRENTLY STRUGGLE WITH. HOW HAVE YOU TRIED TO CLEAN UP THOSE SINS ON YOUR OWN?**
- **WHAT IS ONE STEP YOU CAN TAKE TODAY TO ALLOW JESUS TO COVER YOUR STAINS WITH HIS GRACE?**

PRAY

LORD, THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON TO THE CROSS. YOU CHOSE TO SEND JESUS BECAUSE YOU LOVE US. TEACH ME TO REMEMBER THIS TRUTH EVERY DAY.



DAY THREE

HEBREWS 4:1-10

There is nothing like having a Saturday to sleep in, watch TV, and enjoy some good breakfast. After a long week of school and extra activities, we need those Saturdays at times. Actually, we need them more than we think! God created us to work, but He also created us for rest. They both matter, and one doesn't work well without the other. We have all felt the tension of work and rest; we've all experienced fatigue that comes from living without balance.

This idea of work and rest also connects to our spiritual lives. God's people in the Old Testament felt this tension too. Before Jesus came to earth, God's people had to keep the law and make sacrifices for their sins. Can you imagine how tired God's people must have been at times? Maybe even how they worried if they were doing it "right" or doing "enough"? God still provided them rest by giving them a weekly sabbath. The word Sabbath means to cease and stop. God still commands us to cease and stop all our work to just rest. But rest doesn't come easy for a lot of us. We struggle to stop; some of us avoid pausing because doing so allows us time to think, and maybe there are things we don't want to think about. Maybe we find too much satisfaction in our work. But God intended for us to rest. Our physical rest points to the spiritual rest God offers us through His Son, Jesus. The book of Hebrews was written for Christians who were used to earning righteousness through following the law. The people needed to receive the spiritual rest Jesus brought through the cross and resurrection. They could stop trying so hard and striving for righteousness because Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law and earned their rest. He offers us rest too. The weekly Sabbath is a reminder that we don't have to work for our salvation. We can rest in what Jesus did.

- **WHAT CONNECTIONS DO YOU SEE BETWEEN PHYSICAL REST AND SPIRITUAL REST?**
- **DO YOU HAVE AT LEAST ONE DAY A WEEK TO SLOW DOWN AND REMEMBER JESUS AND THE GIFTS HE HAS GIVEN YOU? IF NOT, WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

PRAY

**LORD, THANK YOU FOR THE REST THAT COMES
THROUGH A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.
HELP ME TO RECEIVE AND LIVE IN THAT REST AND
SET ASIDE THE TIME TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE
DONE FOR ME.**



DAY FOUR

HEBREWS 13:15-16

Sometimes churches use the word worship only when referring to a service on a Sunday morning or at youth group, a retreat, or at camp—when music plays, people sing, and someone teaches from the Bible. Although that's not wrong, worship is much more than a service and singing songs. Because many of us are used to hearing worship described this way, we limit worship. Worship is actually a lifestyle! We worship who or what our thoughts and attention focus on the most. The question isn't if we will worship but who or what will we worship?

Today's passage tells us to offer a continual sacrifice of praise to God. At times, praise comes easily for us; at other times, praising God can feel like a sacrifice because life hurts. In those seasons, we honor God by giving Him glory despite walking through suffering or disappointment. Our sacrificial worship pleases God because we were made to give Him glory—when life is good and when life is painful. Why? Because God's goodness never changes and isn't dependent on our circumstances. So, how can we do this? First, we can worship God with our words, consistently expressing gratitude for who He is and what He has done for us. When you talk to others, you can tell them how Jesus gave you new life and purpose. Next, we can praise Him by being kind and generous with people in need. Worshiping with our words and our actions is like a spiritual offering, showing that Jesus has changed our hearts. When we praise God, we take the attention off of ourselves and direct it to Him. We celebrate His goodness and His glory.

- **IF YOU WERE TO TAKE AN HONEST LOOK AT YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW, WHO OR WHAT DO YOU WORSHIP THE MOST?**
- **HOW CAN YOU BEGIN TO SEE YOUR WORSHIP OF JESUS AS A LIFESTYLE INSTEAD OF AN EVENT?**

PRAY

LORD, SHOW ME HOW MY WORSHIP FALLS SHORT OF GIVING YOU THE GLORY AND PRAISE YOU DESERVE. LEAD ME TOWARD A DAILY LIFESTYLE OF WORSHIP SO I CAN LIVE EACH DAY WITH JOY AND PURPOSE.





DAY FIVE

ISAIAH 1:11-15; 6:1-8

What's the difference between doing what's right and having a right heart? We can do something good for others and appear to care deeply for them while really hating them in our hearts. We can fool others when we do good works for all the wrong reasons: to get attention, to please others, to earn forgiveness.

The people of Judah looked like they were doing all the right things, but God saw past their actions to the real problem in their hearts. The prophet Isaiah wrote to the people of Judah, who had lived a double life for years and years. We see in chapter 1 just how bad the situation was. Although God had not abandoned His people, they had abandoned Him over and over. Because of this, God allowed the destruction of their temple and their city. God desired for His people to be made new. In chapter 6, Isaiah encountered God and saw his own sin in all its heaviness and ugliness. He saw God for who He was too—holy. This encounter with the holy God changed him forever. God then told Isaiah to go and preach to Judah. Judah had a heart problem. Because their hearts weren't clean, their worship wasn't meaningful to God and fell short of what God demanded—of what He deserved. Isaiah confronted this problem but also assured the people that a Messiah would come to cleanse their hearts for good.

Does your heart resemble Judah's? Does your worship fall short of what God demands and deserves, which is everything? Confess this to God. Receive His grace. If you do, God will send you out with great purpose. You'll never be the same!

- **HOW DID ISAIAH RESPOND TO ENCOUNTERING GOD? DO YOU RESPOND TO GOD IN THIS WAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU DONE GOOD WORKS—EVEN GODLY ACTIONS—FOR THE WRONG REASONS? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE IN YOUR HEART?**

PRAY

**LORD, HELP ME TO SEE MY SIN FOR WHAT IT IS AND
TO SEE YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE. THANK YOU FOR
LOVING ME, FORGIVING ME, AND SENDING ME OUT
FOR A GREAT PURPOSE!**

BORN OF *THE SPIRIT*

unit 21 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus taught that new birth, not religious activity, is how a person enters the kingdom of God and receives eternal life. New birth is given from God the Father through faith in God the Son as a work of God the Spirit. Because of God's love, we are no longer condemned because of our sin, but we have been given eternal life in Christ.

WORTHLESS CREDENTIALS

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 3

JESUS OFFERS US NEW LIFE

JOHN 3:1-13

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."

JESUS OFFERS US FREEDOM FROM CONDEMNATION

JOHN 3:14-21

"14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

MAIN POINT.

Jesus offers us the gift of new life.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION REGENERATION

Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person's life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

DISCUSSION

JESUS OFFERS US NEW LIFE

JOHN 3:1-13

- Have you ever wanted to ask God a question? What would you ask?
- What was Nicodemus's opinion of Jesus? Why wasn't it enough?
- Does the truth that you can't be good enough to see God's kingdom comfort you or concern you? Why?

JESUS OFFERS US FREEDOM FROM CONDEMNATION

JOHN 3:14-21

- Why do people sometimes doubt God's love for them? How deep is God's love for us?
- What could you share with people who feel like God just wants to condemn them?
- What does it look like for teenagers to love and choose darkness today (v. 19)?



HOW CAN YOU BE AN INSTRUMENT OF LIGHT IN THE WORLD? WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE LOOK MORE LIKE DARKNESS THAN LIGHT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

You've probably messed up before and wanted to just start over. Maybe you made a horrible grade and wanted to retake a test. Maybe you gossiped about a friend, and you'd love to undo your words and the damage they caused. Maybe you sinned and did something you never thought you'd do, and you'd love to go back in time to make the right choice. In some situations, we can start over, but when it comes to our sin, we can't. We can't go back to the beginning and choose never to sin. Why? When Adam and Eve fell to sin, all of humanity was infected by it. We are born into a sinful world, and we can't fix it. This may sound hopeless, but it just means that we needed someone else to fix it for us—someone never infected with sin. Jesus's sacrifice provides something better than a second chance because, if given another chance, we'd squander it. Instead, we are reborn! When we call on Jesus for salvation, He gives us His Spirit. We are renewed, continuously covered by Jesus's blood and no longer bound to our sin!



DAY ONE

NUMBERS 21:4-9

Raise your hand if you can be stubborn! Let's be honest, we want to prove to ourselves and to others that we can do what we think and say we can do. We can hit that new record in the gym and crush that ACT score. Some of us struggle to realize when we need help with something. The reality is that sometimes, we need someone else to step in for us, and that's okay.

As much as we try, we can't purify our hearts and minds. We need help from the only One who is capable of making us new: Jesus. So, God sent His Son down to earth to cleanse our hearts and minds—to give us new life (John 3:16). The problem with the heart is that it is deeply rooted in sin, going all the way back to the beginning—with the first humans, Adam and Eve. In this week's lesson, Jesus referenced today's passage. God's people lost sight of all the Lord had done for them on the journey to the promised land. God saw Israel's complaining and rebellion and sent poisonous snakes as a painful consequence of their distrust. But let's not miss this important part: God made a way for them to heal. Restoration could happen only if they had the faith to look up at the bronze serpent. This act probably didn't make sense to many of them, but they had to trust what God commanded if they wanted to be healed.

This cycle repeated for most of Israel's history: freedom, rebellion, restoration. We repeat this cycle too. God freed us from sin, but we so easily forget and wander away from Him. You may feel ashamed, embarrassed, or even afraid to approach Him. But God sees you and loves you. He grants new life to each of us, but we must look up in faith!

- **HOW HAVE YOU FALLEN INTO A CYCLE OF COMPLAINING AND DISOBEDIENCE TOWARD GOD?**
- **HOW CAN YOU RELEASE THOSE THINGS AND EMBRACE THE NEW LIFE THAT JESUS OFFERS?**

PRAY

**LORD, FORGIVE ME FOR WANDERING FROM YOU.
THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME AND FORGIVING ME.
HELP ME TO LOOK TO YOU FOR RESTORATION.**



DAY TWO

JEREMIAH 29:13

Think about your favorite teachers. Maybe they were relaxed and funny. Maybe they helped you easily understand the subject they taught by keeping class fun and interesting. Maybe they gave extensions on really hard assignments. More than likely though, one reason they are your favorite is because they were approachable. They were easy to talk to because they listened. They tried to relate to what you were going through and always had your back because they wanted you to succeed. These are the great teachers.

Being approachable is one of the qualities that separates the one true God from false gods. God desires for us to come to Him; in fact, He has always made a way to be near to His people—through sacrifices, the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle, the temple, His Son, and now, through the Holy Spirit. Because God wants us to come to Him, He welcomes our struggles and questions. We saw this in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3. Every question Nicodemus asked drew him closer to recognizing Jesus's identity as the Messiah. Jesus didn't push away his questions but engaged him in conversation. Jesus revealed God's character, and His character remains the same. When His people seek Him, God promises to respond. Jeremiah was writing to the Jews exiled in Babylon and spoke of a future, when they would be freed and return to their land. God hadn't left them and promised that though they were exiled, He would restore them. Though we aren't exiled in Babylon, these verses give us hope too. God desires a relationship with us, and when we seek Him, we will find Him. He isn't hiding and wants us to find Him. Even when you feel like you've wandered too far from God, you can take a single step toward Him and know He will respond.

- **DO YOU VIEW GOD AS BEING APPROACHABLE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHERE ARE YOU NOT BEING HONEST WITH GOD ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR HEART? SPEND TIME IN HONEST PRAYER.**

PRAY

**LORD, THANK YOU FOR NOT PUSHING ME AWAY
WHEN I'M STRUGGLING OR ASKING QUESTIONS.
HELP ME TO STEP TOWARD YOU, KNOWING YOU
DESIRE AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH ME.**



DAY THREE

JOHN 3:16-18

We all mess up from time to time and make a wrong choice. When this happens, we face the consequences of our actions. Maybe you recently disobeyed your parents, and they grounded you or took your phone away for a few days. Hopefully, you learned a lesson and grew as a result of that wrong decision.

The reason we make poor choices is because our hearts are broken by sin. Only God can fix this problem, and He did this by sending His Son for us. Today's passage includes a verse that is probably one of the most well-known verses in the Bible. Can you see which one it is? You probably chose John 3:16! The verse gives us hope and assurance of God's love, but you must also read the next two verses to really get the point. If we believe in the Lord and trust in Him for salvation, we are not condemned, though we will still face consequences here on earth for our sins. But if we know Jesus, we are forgiven and set free from the bondage of sin and death.

This doesn't mean we get a free pass to keep doing the wrong thing because we are forgiven. Our forgiveness should lead us to do the opposite because God is so good and so kind! Paul wrote, "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). When we sin against God, not only do we receive His love and forgiveness, but we also learn what it means to follow and obey Him. As we walk with Jesus, we desire Him more than sin! God's love meets us and teaches us to desire Him. So, the next time you do the wrong thing, confess it to God, receive His love, learn from your mistake, and ask God to help you desire Him more.

- **HOW SHOULD KNOWING THAT GOD DESIRES TO SAVE YOU AND NOT CONDEMN YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU VIEW YOUR SIN?**
- **WHAT STEPS DO YOU NEED TO TAKE TO KNOW GOD BETTER AND TO ALLOW HIM TO TRANSFORM YOUR DESIRES?**

PRAY

LORD, THANK YOU THAT YOUR LOVE ISN'T BASED ON ANYTHING I DO OR DON'T DO BUT ON THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS. MAY THIS TRUTH CHANGE THE WAY I LIVE EACH DAY.



DAY FOUR

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Let's go back to the story of Jesus and Nicodemus talking about being "born again" in John 3. Nicodemus asked questions that many of us may ask the first time we read this passage: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about being born again physically, but Jesus was speaking about being born again spiritually.

The apostle Paul described this later as being a "new creation." Paul chose these words because they carry a lot of weight! Think about it: If something is new, it stands out next to other things that are old, used, broken, and worn out. It has an extra shine and glow to it. The word creation then speaks to the beginning of something. If you have surrendered your life to Jesus, then you have been made new! You are not the person you used to be. You have Him living inside of you, convicting you of sin and forgiving you, leading and guiding you, and giving you an eternal purpose and hope. As a student, living in this reality can be really hard because so many distractions are fighting for your attention. Maybe it's the temptation to be popular and liked by everyone, to get good grades, to never lose a game, to worry about who you're going to go to the prom with or what you're going to do after graduation. When we remember who we are in Christ and that He has made us new, then we'll remember that we can trust Him with all the other details of our lives. You're a new creation—a living, breathing testimony of God's power to transform even the worst of us into something new!

- **HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS "NEW CREATION" HELP YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND GOD'S HEART FOR YOU?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO KEEP DISTRACTIONS FROM HARMING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS?**

PRAY

LORD, REMIND ME THAT I'M A NEW CREATION. HELP ME TO LIVE IN THAT WAY AND NOT ALLOW THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE WORLD TO PULL ME AWAY.





DAY FIVE

1 JOHN 1:5-10

While we create many of the distractions that pull us away from God by not prioritizing our relationship with Him, many of them are due to the darkness around us. Ever since sin entered the picture, our world has been broken. The world isn't how God intended it to be—without sin, without sickness and pain, perfect, peaceful. One day Jesus will come back to make all things right, but until that day, we live in a dark world. Satan works hard to put lies in our minds, and the temptation to sin is everywhere.

We aren't powerless! Not only is Jesus with us in the darkness, but He also overcame it already. So, we have a choice to make: Will we live as new creations and walk through life empowered by the Holy Spirit living within us, or will we cave to the darkness? Walking in the light means that you desire a closeness with God above anything else. You want to know Him more, align with His heart, and do what Jesus would do. Walking in the light is choosing godliness over the sin that you desperately want to commit. And it's confessing your sin and embracing God's grace when you do give in.

The best time to start walking in the light is each morning when you wake up. Giving God the beginning of your day will set the tone for the rest of your day. Think about your daily schedule. Once the day gets going, it doesn't stop between school, extra activities, and maybe work. Prioritizing time with God at the beginning of your day helps you determine to walk in the light with Him, not giving darkness a chance!

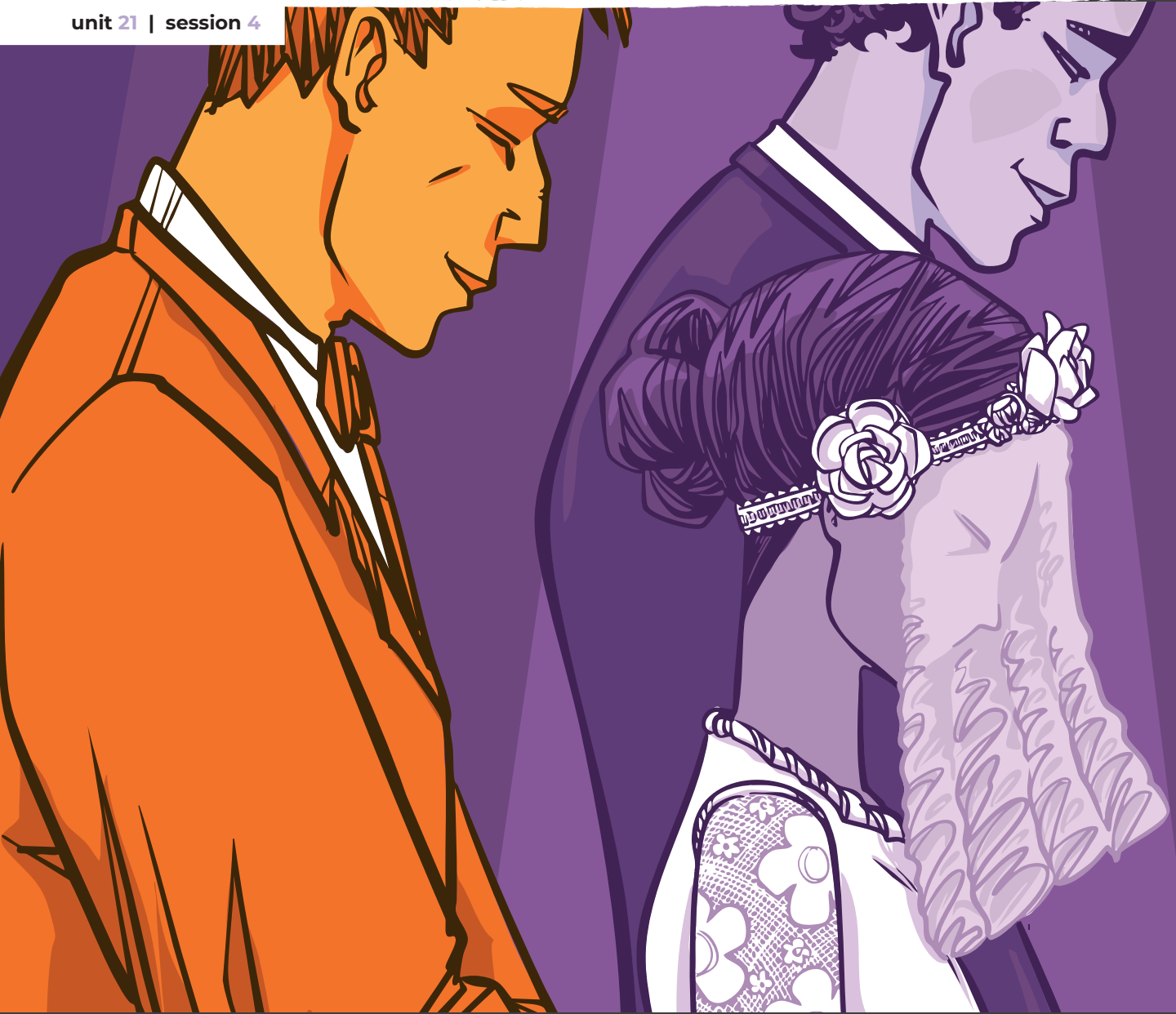
- **HOW HAS DARKNESS DISTRACTED YOU LATELY? HOW CAN YOU BE MORE INTENTIONAL ABOUT WALKING IN THE LIGHT?**
- **WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO CONSISTENTLY BEGIN YOUR DAY WITH GOD? MAKE A PLAN. WRITE IT DOWN!**

PRAY

**LORD, I RECOGNIZE THE DARKNESS AND
TEMPTATION TO SIN ALL AROUND ME. I DESIRE TO
WALK IN THE LIGHT, BUT I CAN'T DO IT ALONE. HELP
ME TO COME TO YOU AND DO WHAT IT TAKES TO
WALK IN THE LIGHT.**

THE GROOM'S FRIEND

unit 21 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus showed us how to decrease when He lowered Himself in obedience to the Father's will and came to earth as a human. He took on our sin and paid our debt so that we could have right relationship with the Father and forgiveness for our sin. Jesus pointed all glory to the Father and took on the role of a servant.

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 3

WE MUST DECREASE

JOHN 3:22-30

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison). 25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." 27 John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

CHRIST MUST INCREASE

JOHN 3:31-36

31 "He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

MAIN POINT.

Our lifestyle should point to Jesus and bring Him glory.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

BRIDE OF CHRIST

The church is described as the bride of Christ, faithfully waiting for the day when Christ will return and heaven and earth will be one. Made up of all believers from all tongues and nations, the church is the bride that Christ redeemed. The picture of a bride also speaks to the permanence of Christ's relationship with the church, for marriage was intended by God to be a lasting covenant between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

DISCUSSION

WE MUST DECREASE

JOHN 3:22-30

- How does fame change people? What pressures come with it?
- ♥ • How do John's disciples seem to feel in verses 25-26?
- ✝ • How do churches and believers get caught in the trap of influencer culture, in seeking worldly fame or influence?

CHRIST MUST INCREASE

JOHN 3:31-36

- What does verse 31 show us about who we are in relation to who Jesus is? How should this impact the way we live?
- 📖 • Read verse 36. How does the world teach very different ideas about getting to heaven or having eternal life?
- 🧠 • How does our faithfulness to Jesus help Him "increase"? What does our unfaithfulness do?



HOW CAN YOU USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO LIFT UP JESUS INSTEAD OF ELEVATING YOURSELF?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why do jealousy and competition exist between believers and in the church? Real answer: People are sinful; people make up the church. Jealousy creeps in, even between friends who follow Jesus. Maybe a friend is making an impact on others, and you feel jealous because you know his faults. Jealousy urges you to point them out instead of celebrating how God is changing your friend for the better and using him to help others. Maybe you desire attention and applause. You see people receiving attention for their good decisions, and you struggle with bitterness. Feeling jealous or competitive reveals our motive: We want the spotlight. Jealousy and competition harm the church, causing division and bitterness and shifting our focus off of Jesus and onto ourselves. We all struggle with these feelings, but we must recognize them immediately instead of allowing the feelings to simmer. We can confess how we feel to God and to the other person and ask God to help us shift our focus onto Him. We can clap for others and celebrate their wins. The truth is that following Jesus isn't about attention or applause. Following Jesus means pointing to Him and away from ourselves because He is the One worthy of glory.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 20:20-28

Have you ever watched small children form a line? If so, you probably saw several of them race and push to be first in line. Being the line leader is a high privilege when we're young! The position makes us feel powerful over our peers. Our world encourages us to elevate ourselves—to do whatever it takes to be first, to be seen, to be applauded. Jesus taught another way. In today's passage, the mother of James and John, two of Jesus's disciples, asked Jesus to promise that her sons would have seats next to His throne in the future kingdom. She wanted her sons to have the highest place of honor. Jesus used this moment to teach an important, radical truth: If we desire to be great, then we must serve and put others first. This concept was backwards and went against cultural norms. Jesus made the point that even He, the Son of God, came to serve and to give His life for others. He calls us to do the same—to lay down the desire for recognition in exchange for serving others, even when we receive no applause.

Think for just a moment about what happens when you receive attention from others. Sure, attention feels good and can encourage us to keep going, but more often, pride starts to sink in. We begin to make unwise decisions, hurting not only ourselves but others too. Now, think of a time when you served or helped others out of the desire for God to use you. Chances are not only did that feel better than becoming prideful but you likely felt greater peace and purpose. The Bible teaches us that Jesus should be elevated above all things. We can and should pursue great dreams and goals and strive for success. But we do these things to elevate Jesus and show Him to others. When we point to Jesus instead of to ourselves, we enjoy lasting satisfaction rather than fleeting applause from others.

- **THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU ELEVATED YOURSELF OVER OTHERS. HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?**
- **WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT OUR MOTIVES IF SERVING OTHERS MATTERS ONLY WHEN OTHERS SEE IT AND APPLAUD?**

PRAY

**LORD, FORGIVE ME FOR PUTTING MYSELF FIRST,
EVEN BEFORE YOU. THANK YOU FOR JESUS'S
EXAMPLE OF HOW TO SERVE OTHERS. HELP ME TO
POINT TO YOU INSTEAD OF TO MYSELF!**





DAY TWO

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

What separates humans from every other creature is that we are made in God's image. It's not that animals, bugs, birds, fish and other things don't matter; they just aren't made in God's image! We're the only ones who get to be God's managers for everything on earth. Only humans love others the way that God does. How? Because of Jesus living in us. If this is true (and it is), then that means that every single human in the world matters!

In our culture, we are often tempted to elevate ourselves over others. We may think that we have more to offer or are better than other people because of the country, the town, or the neighborhood we live in. This is a very dangerous mindset because none of these things matter when it comes to our eternity. The car we drive, the shoes and clothes we wear, the perfect test scores, and the state championship can't make us right with God. Only a relationship with Jesus can do this. Jesus repeatedly called out religious leaders for viewing themselves as better than others. We must examine if we're guilty of the same.

Paul taught what this idea looks like. If we are walking with Jesus, then loving and serving others should come naturally. Why? Because walking with Jesus—really learning from Jesus—transforms us to live like He lived. Jesus modeled humility by coming to the world as a human, living a life of service and love to others, and then dying on a cross for our sins. If He is our example and He lives in us, then we should strive to live humbly too.

- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU CONSIDERED YOURSELF BETTER THAN OTHERS LATELY? WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY FOR BELIEVERS?**
- **HOW CAN YOU IMITATE THE WAYS JESUS SERVED AND LOVED OTHERS THIS WEEK?**

PRAY

**LORD, I'M HUMBLLED WHEN I REMEMBER THAT I HAVE
A HEART PROBLEM ONLY YOU CAN FIX. PLEASE RID
ME OF MY PRIDE SO I CAN LIVE A LIFE OF SERVICE
TO YOU AND OTHERS.**



DAY THREE

PROVERBS 27:2

Have you ever been around people who brag constantly about the things they're good at? Even when everyone recognizes their talents, they still feel the need to announce them. Maybe you've struggled with this too. The truth is that we all fight this part of our human nature. We are designed to recognize glory—God's glory—but our common struggle is desiring glory for ourselves. You may be an all-star athlete or a straight-A student. Maybe you're a great reader or the best baker in the world! The truth is that we're all good at something because God placed within each of us certain abilities and gifts. How do we use these gifts and talents wisely and humbly instead of using them as billboards to announce our own goodness?

We can be confident in God's gifts without being prideful. Pride celebrates our ability but godly confidence points to God's ability. When we hoard applause for ourselves, we're standing on our own ability, and the truth is that we will fail at some point. Our ability is limited. But when we humbly use the gifts God has given us, we let go of needing people's approval. Instead, we stand on the firm foundation of God's ability that will never fail us and on His approval. We are confident only because we're not standing on our own goodness! When we do something really great, the glory should go to God's name. Jesus lives in us, empowering and strengthening us for good works. Other people may notice our success, but we will have greater impact on others when we direct their gaze to Jesus. Instead of announcing our wins, we can use any applause or attention to invest in eternity, in spreading Jesus's name. This week, walk in confidence because of God's good work and His ability!

- **IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING CONFIDENT AND BEING PRIDEFUL?**
- **WHAT ARE YOU ARE REALLY GOOD AT? HOW CAN YOU USE THIS TO POINT OTHERS TO JESUS MORE THAN YOURSELF?**

PRAY

**LORD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME CERTAIN GIFTS
AND TALENTS. I RECOGNIZE THAT THEY COME
FROM YOU. HELP ME TO USE THESE GIFTS TO POINT
OTHERS TO YOU.**



DAY FOUR

JAMES 3:13-18

Ambition is the desire and determination to reach a goal. Is having ambition wrong? Well, no—and maybe. James, the brother of Jesus, explained that bitter envy, which is the jealous desire for what others have, and selfish ambition lead to all kinds of evil. The key word is selfish. So, we can determine that ambition and selfish ambition are rooted in different motives: One strives to lift up God and the other strives to lift up self. We've established that pride is rooted in sin and that we need to rid our hearts of it each day. Sin directs us to look only at ourselves—at our wants and our needs. In other words, sin reinforces selfishness. We wrestle with selfishness on a daily basis—in the big and small choices we make in our classes, at the lunch table, with our teammates, in our friendships, in our homes, with our siblings.

James wrote about the dangerous outcome of a selfish lifestyle. He explained that ambition rooted in selfishness leads to “disorder and every vile practice.” As crazy as that sounds, selfish ambition lures us into doing whatever it takes, even when it's sinful, to look out for our own good. Selfish ambition leads us to comparing and competing against others. When we stop comparing our lives and successes to others, we fight feelings of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. Why? Because we find fulfillment and peace in pleasing God, not in pleasing ourselves. This is the way forward: We center all of our ambition on lifting up Jesus's name.

- **IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH SELFISHNESS? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THAT BRING YOU AND OTHERS DOWN?**
- **WHAT AMBITIONS DO YOU HAVE IN LIFE? HOW CAN YOU CENTER THOSE GOALS ON JESUS INSTEAD OF ON YOURSELF?**



PRAY

LORD, REVEAL TO ME THE GREATEST AREAS OF SELFISHNESS IN MY LIFE. SHOW ME HOW SELFISHNESS BRINGS ME AND OTHERS DOWN. GIVE ME GRACE TO MOVE FORWARD AND LIVE A DIFFERENT WAY.



DAY FIVE

PSALM 96

We've been studying how glorifying the Lord fulfills us more than glorifying ourselves. In case you need a refresher, to glorify means to elevate above other things. You may wonder how glorifying someone else could possibly feel better than glorifying yourself, but we were created for this! God designed us to glorify Him, so we are most satisfied when we do what God designed us to do. God made us to enjoy Him forever, but sin distorts our view and convinces us that chasing worldly comforts will give us peace. Worldly comforts will always disappoint us because we weren't designed to be satisfied by them. Let's think about technology for a minute. Technology can be a great tool, but being addicted to it brings us down and affects our personal well-being. We seek validation from social media, but instead, we're often left feeling like we're not enough and comparing ourselves to other people. We seek joy and escape in video games, but they all come to an end. Our feelings of depression and anxiety remain. The truth is that we won't—we can't—find satisfaction and peace in worldly pleasures.

The writer in Psalm 96 experienced God's goodness, especially in comparison to what the world offers. The writer was overwhelmed by God's glory and power in creation. The psalmist reminds us that everything except the Lord and His kingdom will fade away. If you've experienced God's goodness and His glory, then the worldly comforts you used to depend on won't satisfy you anymore. They'll come up short. Instead, you can look to God's glory and join with creation in worshiping Him and proclaiming His goodness!

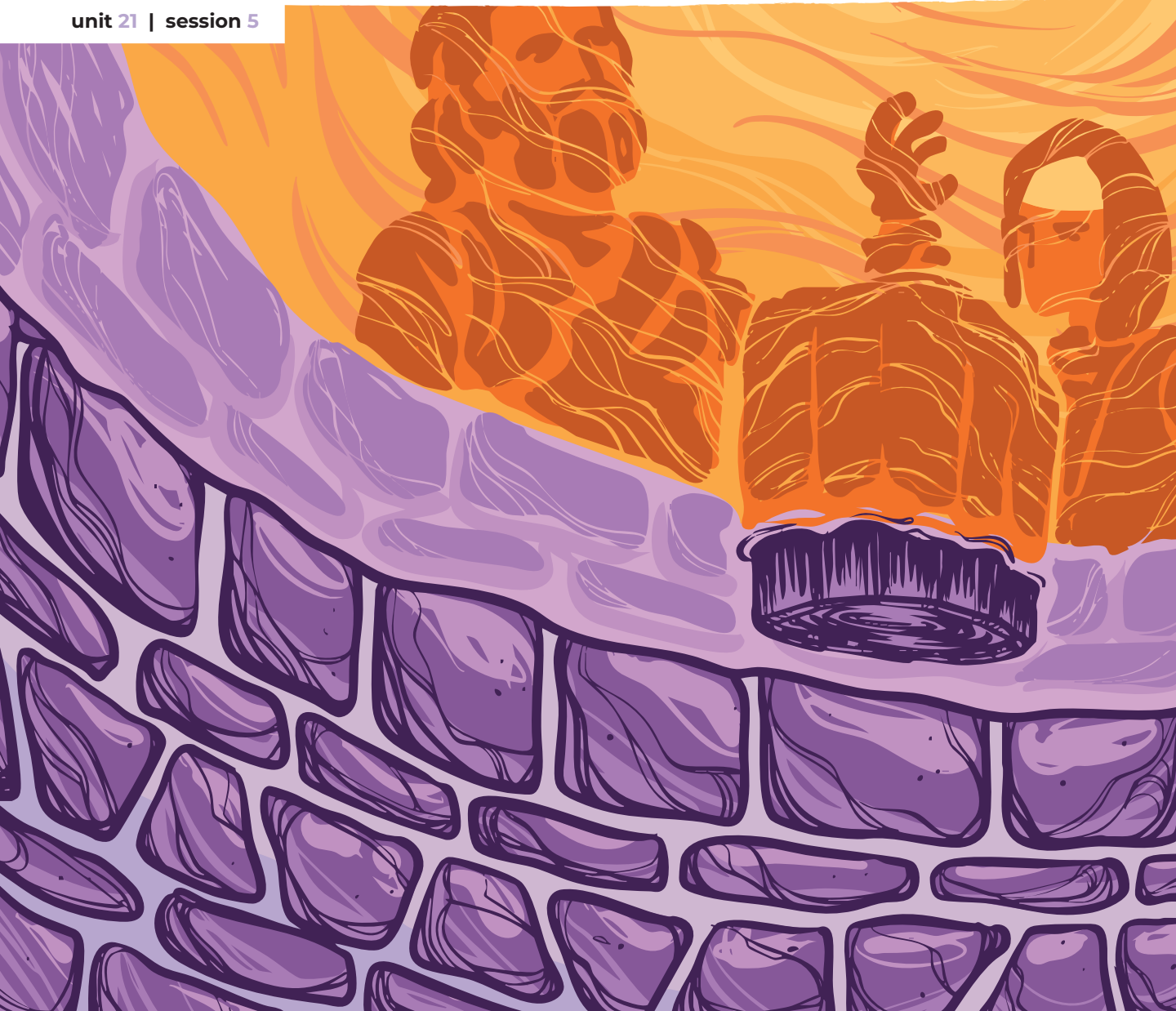
- **HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED MORE SATISFACTION IN GOD THAN IN WORLDLY COMFORTS? THINK OF A SPECIFIC TIME AND REFLECT ON THAT EXPERIENCE.**
- **HOW CAN YOU DAILY REMIND YOURSELF THAT GOD IS BETTER THAN EVERYTHING ELSE?**

PRAY

LORD, I'VE TASTED AND SEEN JUST HOW GOOD YOU ARE, BUT I'M STILL PRONE TO FORGET. BRING ME BACK TO WHAT I KNOW IS TRUE AND HELP ME TO BE A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

LIVING WATER

unit 21 | session 5



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that a day was coming when worshipers would not focus on the physical location of their worship, but they would worship God in Spirit and truth. Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, our worship is no longer confined by geography. We worship Jesus as the Savior of the whole world, wherever we are.

EXPOSING SIN LEADS TO FREEDOM

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

John 4:1-42

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

JOHN 4:7-14

7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

GOD'S LOVE SATISFIES

JOHN 4:15-30

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." 27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" 30 They went out of the town and were coming to him.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus knows us fully and still loves us deeply.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHRIST AS RECONCILIATION

Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in creating opposition between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and has sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides the means for that broken relationship to be restored and renewed (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

DISCUSSION

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

JOHN 4:7-14

- How does the woman react to Jesus speaking to her?
- ♥ • How does culture value some people more than others? What does Jesus's interaction with this woman teach us about our worth?
- ✝ • Read Jeremiah 2:13. What is the difference between the well water and the water Jesus offered? How does the living water change our lives?

GOD'S LOVE SATISFIES

JOHN 4:15-30

- Read verses 19-24. What point was Jesus making?
- 📖 • Was Jesus's attitude toward the woman condemning or something else? What does this show you about His heart?
- 🧠 • What did the woman do after Jesus exposed her sin? What does this help you realize?



WHO AROUND YOU NEEDS TO HEAR THAT GOD LOVES AND VALUES THEM? HOW CAN YOU INTERACT AND SHARE HOPE WITH PEOPLE CULTURE IGNORES?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

We're a culture that chases emotional highs and runs after adrenaline. We seek what makes us feel good. But the problem is that feeling good wears off after a while. Emotions fade; adrenaline diminishes. When we begin to feel sad, bored, lonely, or empty, we look for the next fix—for anything we can find to make us feel better. In a way, we've learned to numb the voice deep within us saying, "This isn't enough. This isn't what you need. There's something better." The truth is that temporary highs will disappoint us. And chasing them will wear us out. Why? God didn't design us to chase worldly comforts. He designed us for a relationship with Him. He designed us to depend on Him for peace, joy, and contentment. Since Eden, we've searched everywhere else but in a relationship with God to fill an emptiness that only grows and deepens without Him. In Jesus, we find real satisfaction that lasts—even when life is stressful, lonely, and sad—because it's rooted in the assurance of eternal life with God.



DAY ONE

JOHN 4:7-9



We've talked a lot about how Jesus offers abundant life. We often read this on paper but struggle with living it out and experiencing it for ourselves. Many of us are walking in this abundant life, while others of us haven't experienced it yet. Maybe you don't know Jesus and you're searching for answers. You may wonder if He really loves you or if you could fit into the "Christian" life. The passage this week shows us a powerful example of how Jesus offers abundant life to all people, regardless of who they are or what they've done.

Verses 7-9 teach us that Jesus does not have favorites. He sees all people the same and offers each the same invitation. The encounter in these verses was anything but normal. First, Jesus approached a woman in public by Himself. This may sound weird to us, but during Jesus's day, this was very uncommon. Next, this woman was a Samaritan. Not only did Jews and Samaritans not associate with each other, but many of them hated one another. Jews held prejudiced beliefs about people from Samaria. But Jesus saw her as a person created by God. He talked with her at a well, and the conversation changed her life forever! Jesus called her out of sin and into new identity.

The truth is Jesus sees you and He loves you as you are! He makes no distinction and plays no favorites. The abundant life is open to anyone who believes. As a student, you may have a list of reasons why you think God shouldn't love you. Each of those are a lie. You can come to Jesus as you are.

- **WHEN YOU READ ABOUT JESUS APPROACHING THIS SAMARITAN WOMAN, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND?**
- **WHAT LIES ARE YOU BELIEVING THAT MAKE YOU QUESTION GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU? IDENTIFY THEM AND GIVE THEM TO GOD.**

PRAY

LORD, THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME. THANK YOU FOR LOVING ALL PEOPLE AND FOR SENDING JESUS TO DIE FOR ALL PEOPLE. HELP ME TO LIVE A LIFE THAT REFLECTS YOUR LOVE.



DAY TWO

JOHN 4:10-15

Have you ever had anyone share a bold claim with you? In other words, has someone ever told you something that you had a really hard time believing because it seemed bizarre? Usually, these bold claims only carry weight if the person making the claim has a track record of being truthful. We more easily believe others when they've proven to be trustworthy.

Picking back up in John 4, we see Jesus and the Samaritan woman continue their conversation. Jesus approaching this woman wasn't ordinary, but then He continued to engage her. Jesus told her that He was the Living Water. Jesus pointed to drinking water as a temporary remedy for thirst and to Himself as eternal water that satisfies our thirst forever. As Jesus spoke, she became more curious.

The abundant life begins with seeing that Jesus offers something better, something much more than the temporary comforts of this world. Jesus made a bold claim that He fulfilled perfectly with His death and resurrection. Many of us may struggle with believing Jesus's words. Maybe our friends and family have let us down. Maybe one of them made a promise or gave us hope but then didn't come through. Maybe you've been on the other side and let someone else down too. Jesus kept all of His promises to us. When we read His claims, we can know with certainty that He won't fail. His promise that we won't thirst again is true. When we accept the gift of salvation, Jesus meets our deepest need, our spiritual thirst.

- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE PEOPLE FAILED YOU? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO TRUST OTHERS AND EVEN GOD?**
- **IN THESE VERSES, JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE WATER THAT WILL NEVER RUN DRY. WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR THIS CLAIM TO SHAPE EVERY PART OF YOUR LIFE?**

PRAY

**LORD, SOMETIMES I STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE TRUTH.
HELP ME TO BLOCK OUT THE LIES AND FILL MY
HEART AND MIND WITH YOUR TRUTH. HELP ME TO
LIVE BY FAITH.**



DAY THREE

JOHN 4:16-18

Having the ability to read minds could be helpful, right? But if people could read our minds, would that always be a good thing? Probably not! Our thoughts aren't always pure or godly.

As the conversation continued between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, she struggled to understand who Jesus was. She was curious and interested in what He had to say, but she thought Jesus offered unlimited drinking water. If that was the case, she wouldn't have to carry a heavy water jug under the hot sun to the well each day. Jesus asked her a question to dig a little deeper and revealed that He knew her heart, her sin, and her shame. When the woman realized what Jesus knew, she understood that He wasn't an ordinary person. Jesus intended to show her that He was the Living Water, the Messiah. He met her exactly where she was to show her this truth.

Maybe you feel stunned that Jesus knows everything about you and still pursues you. But this truth is comforting. Why? You don't have to hide. Actually, you can't! Jesus sees you—all of you—and says, "I love you!" We can't do anything to earn God's love or forgiveness. We certainly don't deserve it. But God offers us Living Water through His Son's sacrifice. He sees our sin and our shame, and instead of casting us away, He comes close to us and meets us where we are. He calls us out of our sin to follow Him. Will you hear His call today?

- **WHAT SIN OR SHAME HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO HIDE FROM GOD? CONFESS IT TO HIM RIGHT NOW.**
- **HOW SHOULD KNOWING THAT JESUS LOVES YOU, REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE, CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOVE OTHERS?**

PRAY

LORD, IT'S AMAZING THAT YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME AND STILL LOVE ME. I KNOW I CANNOT EARN YOUR LOVE. LEAD ME ON TO LOVE OTHERS AS YOU HAVE LOVED ME!



DAY FOUR

JOHN 4:19-26

God is not bound to time or space like we are. Don't forget, He's the one who created those things! Even though He isn't bound by time and space, He is still directly involved in them. In fact, God loved us so much that He came to us through Jesus.

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman moved from surface level to deeper understanding. After Jesus revealed that He knew her sinful past and present, the woman asked about where true worship happened. Jews believed true worship happened in Jerusalem, where the temple stood. Maybe she was trying to change the subject and distract Jesus from discussing her sin, but He shared a shocking truth: A time was coming when anyone could worship God in Spirit and truth anywhere, not just in Jerusalem. And get this, Jesus then shared with her that He was the Messiah. The first person Jesus told was a woman, a Samaritan, and a known sinner!

Do you want to know God's character? Look at Jesus. He is not only the visible picture of what God looks like, but He is God! This woman had an encounter with God in the flesh, and it changed her forever. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, this means that you know God. He also lives in you through the Holy Spirit. You interact with people every day who are looking for abundant life—for Living Water. They're looking to sports, grades, relationships, technology, and other temporary pleasures. But all of these things make terrible gods. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus is the way to eternal life and He offers the gift of salvation to all people—to the very worst of us sinners. And once we encounter Jesus, we're never the same.

- **WHAT DOES THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND JESUS TEACH YOU ABOUT JESUS?**
- **HOW SHOULD KNOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES WITHIN YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU LIVE EACH DAY?**

PRAY

LORD, THE FACT THAT YOU PUT ON FLESH AND CHOOSE TO LIVE IN US IS MIND-BLOWING! HELP MY LIFE TO REFLECT THAT YOU LIVE WITHIN ME! I DO NOT WANT TO TAKE THAT FOR GRANTED.



DAY FIVE

JOHN 4:27-30

Think about some of the greatest news you've ever received. It could be about an unexpected, excellent grade you got on a test. Maybe you found out school was dismissing early for the year. The feeling that we get after receiving good news is hard to beat. It lifts our spirits and brightens our day. When you receive great news, it's really hard to keep it to yourself. You want to celebrate it with someone and really take in the moment!

The conversation in John 4 between Jesus and the Samaritan woman ended on an exciting note. The woman started off alone at a water well, fetching her daily supply of water. When Jesus showed up, everything changed. There's no way she could have realized how the course of her life was about to shift, but that's exactly what happened. One conversation over a well changed the course of the woman's life and gave her hope. After talking with Jesus, she dropped her water jug, ran into town, and openly shared about her experience, describing Jesus as the Messiah. We can almost sense her excitement and joy!

Once you experience the love of God, you cannot be the same. Because He offers abundant life, we cannot help but speak about it to others. We love sharing great news with people, but shouldn't we desire to share the news about Jesus even more? We must wrestle with our tendency to care too much about what others think. As believers, we know the best news. We're called to share it!

- **COMPARE HOW YOU TALK ABOUT THINGS YOU ARE EXCITED ABOUT WITH HOW YOU TALK ABOUT JESUS. WHAT'S THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?**
- **IF JESUS OFFERS ABUNDANT LIFE, HOW SHOULD THAT CHANGE THE WAY THAT YOU TALK ABOUT HIM TO OTHERS?**

PRAY

**LORD, SO MANY DISTRACTIONS PULL ME AWAY
FROM SPEAKING ABOUT THE HOPE I HAVE IN YOU.
DECREASE THOSE DISTRACTIONS, AND INCREASE MY
EXCITEMENT FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL!**



PUBLISHING TEAM LEAD

ALECIA BRYANT

We all struggle with loneliness. Sometimes, the feeling is overwhelming. We wonder if anyone understands us, if anyone sees us, if anyone cares. Jesus understands; He sees; He cares. While these truths sound nice, we often struggle to embrace them fully—that the Savior of the world and King of kings gets us. But He does. Jesus was born in the lowliest of circumstances—in a cave or room for animals to escape the weather. He felt hunger and thirst. He was tormented by Satan with every temptation you could imagine. He experienced loss and grief. He was betrayed by friends, left alone in moments when He needed community. He endured excruciating pain on the cross, feeling every bit of it. Why? Because Jesus came to save us—to save you. He wouldn't be able to take our place unless He became like us—unless He experienced fully what we experience, yet without sinning. So, Jesus did just that and proved the Father's great love for us (John 3:16). You're never alone. You're never unseen. You're never uncared for. You're deeply and perfectly loved.

Alecia Bryant



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Brandon Dirmann is a local church pastor who has spent the last seventeen years walking alongside kids and youth. He's passionate about helping young people discover who Jesus is and grow in a real and life-changing relationship with Him. Brandon loves equipping the next generation to live out their faith with confidence and purpose.

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Corinne Allen is a follower of Jesus, wife, mom, sister, daughter, and friend who is wildly in love with Jesus and passionate about the whole gospel. Corinne loves serving the local church and getting to encourage and equip girls of all ages to rest in God's love and to walk with confidence in the abundant life He has for them. Corinne is the cohost of the podcast His Glory, Her Good, a podcast for women in student ministry, and coauthor of This Is Friendship, a Bible study for teen girls. She and her husband Grant are currently serving in student ministry at Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, TN.

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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal orange lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.