



the **GOSPELPROJECT**
FOR STUDENTS

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS
DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

VOLUME 8

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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
EXODUS 14:19-31

Can you imagine how the Israelites felt as they came up on the body of water? The situation wasn't too desperate: the Egyptians hadn't blocked them, the water in front of them, and nowhere to go. Can you picture walking on the beach through the middle of the sea, knowing that just a few minutes earlier, there was no way out? They had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years before God used Moses to rescue them, so we can understand why confusion they had when God powerfully parted the waters. Not long after this miraculous moment, the people started complaining about hunger, accusing God of leading them into the wilderness to die. An overcast looking to, we get frustrated with the Israelites and are shocked that they were to go back to Egyptian slavery. But imagine if they were reading a story about you: the sea had God had wanted to rescue you, would they also get frustrated over how quickly you forget and turn to worldly concerns to satisfy your desires on the sea?

Why do we so easily forget? Our words, bodies, and minds are broken. Sin easily distracts us with a promise of temporary pleasure, but God is more wonderful than those fleeting moments. By sending Jesus to save the penitent for your sins, he has done more for you than anything the world can offer you. When you call on the Lord for salvation, you become the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, who works to transform your heart and mind. The next time you find yourself in a desperate situation, remember that the same power that parted the Red Sea is the same power that saves you.

— people in each reader character and thought. If you just list characteristics of these institutions in each setting in their faith.

— were faced circumstances happen, but they look. They had unenvying look all things for them.

— the children because in God with your eyes, but help with your client trust Him, you can look for person like a mother.

DO YOU ONLY TRUST GOD WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN HIS WORK?
WHAT ABOUT WHEN HE FEELS BLENT?

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING BECAUSE YOU FEAR GOD CAN'T OR WON'T FOREVER YOU COMES THEM TO GOD TODAY.

WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGING SITUATION, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU TURN TO AS A WAY OF ESCAPE? WHY?

RECALL A RED SEA MOMENT—WHEN YOU THOUGHT THAT A GOOD OUTCOME WAS IMPOSSIBLE. HOW DID GOD MAKE A WAY AND WORK IT OUT?

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR ALL THE WAYS YOU HAVE RESCUED ME. IF ALL YOU EVER DID WAS SAVE ME FROM MY SINS, THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH. HELP ME TO ALWAYS REMEMBER THE SIGNS AND WONDERS YOU HAVE USED TO RESCUE ME.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNWAVERING FAITHFULNESS TO LOVE AND TAKE CARE OF ME. I TRUST THAT YOU ARE WORKING ALL THINGS FOR MY GOOD, EVEN WHEN I CAN'T SEE IT. HELP ME TO WALK CONFIDENTLY INTO THE UNKNOWN BECAUSE YOU ARE THERE.

DAY THREE
JOHN 4:39-45

Have you ever been in a painful place in your faith? An interesting thing happens as the address on the field goes up and all to the inside as adults, people often still see them in who they were when they were children.

Today's reading is the perfect example of this phenomenon. Jesus met with a Samaritan woman and was flanked with other Samaritans, who were eager to meet Him. The Jews were often known people from which Jesus descended, and they despised the Samaritans. But Jesus gave them the time and attention anyway. As Jesus left for Galilee, He said that a man, whom he knew better in his hometown, if Jesus was to go to the festival, he would follow. The people would struggle to see Him as anyone other than the boy they watched grow up there. They didn't give Jesus the honor he deserved when he arrived in Galilee, some recognized him only because they had seen His works in Jerusalem. The Samaritans believed without seeing, but the Jews needed to see before they believed.

Jesus' mission was to save both the Jews and the Gentiles. Anyone lost in this can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Though the Jews ultimately rejected Jesus, He became a sacrifice for their sins. His sacrifice was for every person and group, including you.

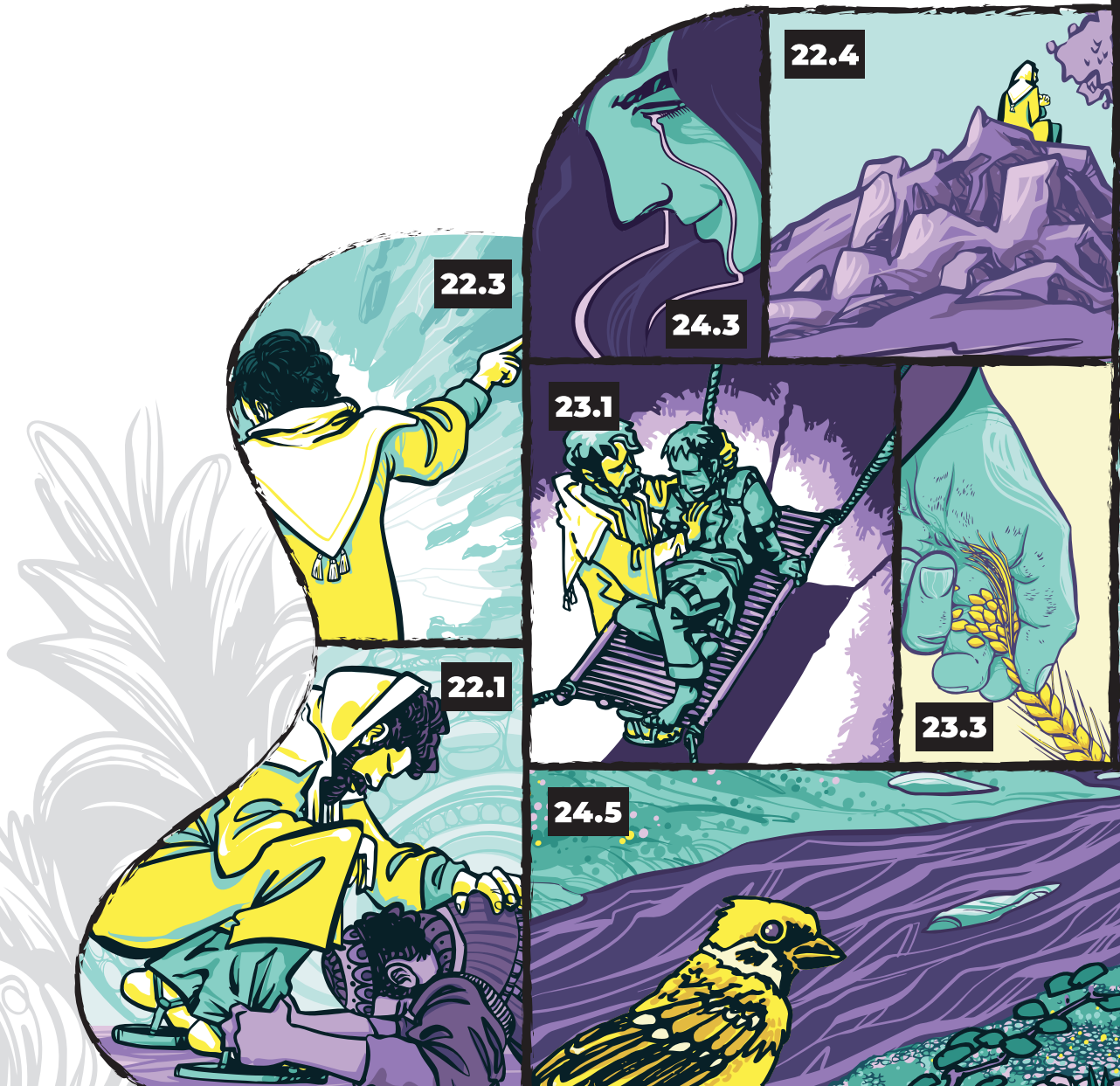
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WHAT ABOUT WHEN HE FEELS BLENT?

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PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR JESUS'S SACRIFICE FOR MY SINS. THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING ALL PEOPLE TO BLESS WITH YOUR MERCY AND GRACE. HELP ME SHOW THIS LOVE TO EVERYONE TODAY.

THE SON HAS AUTHORITY



22.1 "SIGNS AND WONDERS"

23.3 "THE LORD OF THE SABBATH"

22.2 "IS NOT THIS JOSEPH'S SON?"

23.4 "KINGDOM OF GOD"

22.3 NOT AS THE SCRIBES

24.1 "THE ONE"

22.4 DESOLATE PLACES

24.2 "GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE!"

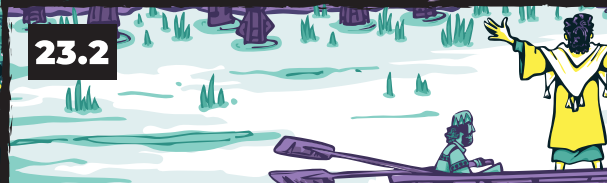
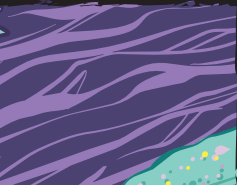
23.1 "YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN"

24.3 "THE LARGER DEBT"

23.2 SEND THEM OUT

24.4 "TEACH US TO PRAY"

24.5 HOW THE LILIES GROW



"SIGNS AND WONDERS"

unit 22 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus responded to those who came to Him in faith for physical healing. In a greater way, all who come to Jesus in faith for salvation from sin are forgiven and restored with God.

BELIEVING BEFORE SEEING

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

DESPERATION LEADS US TO JESUS

JOHN 4:46-48

46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. 48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

BELIEF LEADS TO HEALING

JOHN 4:49-54

49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. 51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

MAIN POINT.

Faith is believing Jesus's words before seeing His works.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Justification refers to the moment when a person is declared righteous before God based on the righteousness of Jesus's atoning death (Rom. 8:33-34). This act of declaration takes place through faith in Jesus and not as a result of human works or effort (Eph. 2:8-9). Through justification, a person is made to be in right standing before God, changing what was once a strained and hostile relationship to one of adoption into the family of God.

DISCUSSION

DESPERATION LEADS US TO JESUS

JOHN 4:46-48

- What is the difference between needing something and being desperate for something? When have you felt desperate?
- 📖 • How are we all in the same desperate situation before God? Why can't we fix it?
- ✝️ • When we're desperate, why do we often run to other things or people instead of Jesus? How does everything else fail us?

BELIEF LEADS TO HEALING

JOHN 4:49-54

- 🧠 • How would you define genuine belief in Jesus?
- ♥️ • Why do you think we sometimes struggle to take Jesus at His word or to trust His promises?
- What does Jesus's ability and willingness to heal people like the royal official's son reveal about Him?



IN WHAT SITUATION IS JESUS ASKING YOU TO TRUST HIM BEFORE SEEING THE RESULTS? WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO HAVE FAITH BEFORE SEEING THE OUTCOME?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever wrestled with why God heals some people and not others? Christians aren't immune to the effects of living in a fallen, broken world. Jesus often healed people's sicknesses and diseases, and Scripture encourages us to pray for healing when we are sick (James 5:14,16). Sometimes God heals, but sometimes He chooses not to heal on this side of eternity. If you've walked through a situation where God didn't answer a prayer for healing, you aren't alone in feeling disappointed, hurt, or confused. We don't have to hide our hurt or disappointment from God. Instead, we go to Him; we hold on to the truth that He is our good, loving Father, who uses everything—even what's painful—to draw us close and make us more like Jesus (Rom. 8:28). We can invite Jesus into our suffering, knowing He sympathizes with our weaknesses and struggles because He also suffered here (Heb. 4:15). God always heals those who seek Him for spiritual healing. All who confess Jesus as Lord are saved (Rom. 10:9), and we have hope that no matter what happens on earth, we will spend eternity in heaven with no more pain, sickness, or disease.



DAY ONE

EXODUS 14:19-31



Can you imagine how the Israelites felt as they came up on the body of water? The situation must've felt desperate: the Egyptians behind them, the water in front of them, and nowhere to go. Can you picture walking on dry land through the walls of the sea, knowing that just a few minutes earlier, there was no way out? They had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years before God sent Moses to rescue them, so we can understand any confusion they had when God powerfully parted the waters. Not long after this miraculous moment, the people started complaining about hunger, accusing God of leading them into the wilderness to die. As outsiders looking in, we get frustrated with the Israelites and are shocked that they want to go back to Egypt—to slavery. But imagine if they were reading a story about your life and how God has worked to rescue you; would they also get frustrated over how quickly you forget and turn to worldly comforts to satisfy your desires or to fit in?

Why do we so easily forget? Our world, bodies, and minds are broken. Sin easily distracts us with a promise of temporary pleasure, but God is more wonderful than those fleeting moments. By sending Jesus to take the punishment for your sins, He has done more for you than anything the world can offer you. When you call on the Lord for salvation, you become the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, who works to transform your heart and mind. The next time you find yourself in a desperate situation, remember that the same power that parted the Red Sea is the same power living inside of you.

- **WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGING SITUATION, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU TURN TO AS A WAY OF ESCAPE? WHY?**
- **RECALL A RED SEA MOMENT—WHEN YOU THOUGHT THAT A GOOD OUTCOME WAS IMPOSSIBLE. HOW DID GOD MAKE A WAY AND WORK IT OUT?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR ALL THE WAYS YOU HAVE RESCUED ME. IF ALL YOU EVER DID WAS SAVE ME FROM MY SINS, THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH. HELP ME TO ALWAYS REMEMBER THE SIGNS AND WONDERS YOU HAVE USED TO RESCUE ME.



DAY TWO

HEBREWS 11:1-3

Most of us don't immediately trust people we've just met. Trusting new people is much easier when another trusted friend has already tested and approved of their character and integrity. In a way, the Bible does this for us. Scripture is full of people who lived lives just like us—who faced moments requiring great faith in God to have their back. Because of these testimonies in Scripture, when you surrender your life to Christ through faith, you aren't acting in blind faith. God has proven over and over again that He takes care of His people.

Hebrews 11 is known as the "Hall of Faith" because the people listed there faced circumstances beyond their control. Many times, they didn't know what was going to happen, but they took the next step in faith because they trusted the One guiding their steps. They had unwavering faith in God because they witnessed His unwavering commitment to work all things for their good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

God is for us; He is committed to us. We can move confidently through the unknown because we know God's character through the stories in His Word. You can't see God with your eyes, but your relationship with Him is as real as it gets, as real as your relationship with your closest friend. If you are waiting for a clear sign from God to know if you can trust Him, you can look in His Word. You can confidently move in faith because God has already proven He is faithful to take care of you.

- **IS IT EASY FOR YOU TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD EVEN THOUGH YOU CANNOT SEE HIM? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU FACED A SITUATION THAT WAS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL? IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD TAKE CARE OF YOU?**

PRAY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNWAVERING FAITHFULNESS TO LOVE AND TAKE CARE OF ME. I TRUST THAT YOU ARE WORKING ALL THINGS FOR MY GOOD, EVEN WHEN I CAN'T SEE IT. HELP ME TO WALK CONFIDENTLY INTO THE UNKNOWN BECAUSE YOU ARE THERE.



DAY THREE

JOHN 4:39-45

Have you ever been to a football game in your hometown? An interesting thing happens as the athletes on the field grow up and sit in the stands as adults. People often still see them as who they were when they were students.

Today's reading is the perfect example of this phenomenon. Jesus met with a Samaritan woman and was flooded with other Samaritans, who were eager to meet Him. The Jews were God's chosen people from which Jesus descended, and they despised the Samaritans. But Jesus gave them His time and attention anyway. As Jesus left for Galilee, He said that a man does not have honor in his hometown. If Jesus was to sit in the football stands in Galilee, the people would struggle to see Him as anyone other than the boy they watched grow up there. They didn't give Jesus the honor He deserved. When He arrived in Galilee, some accepted Him only because they had seen His works in Jerusalem. The Samaritans believed without seeing, but the Jews needed to see before they believed.

Jesus's mission was to save both the Jews and the Gentiles. Anyone lost in sin can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Though the Jews ultimately rejected Jesus, He became a sacrifice for their sins. His sacrifice was for every person and group, including you.

- **DO YOU ONLY TRUST GOD WHEN YOU HAVE SEEN HIM WORK? WHAT ABOUT WHEN HE FEELS SILENT?**
- **WHAT SINS ARE YOU HIDING BECAUSE YOU FEAR GOD CAN'T OR WON'T FORGIVE YOU? CONFESS THEM TO GOD TODAY.**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR JESUS'S SACRIFICE FOR MY SINS. THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING ALL PEOPLE TO BLESS WITH YOUR MERCY AND GRACE. HELP ME SHOW THIS LOVE TO EVERYONE TODAY.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

What is your definition of the word “anything”? As it is used in this Scripture, it encompasses everything; nothing is left out. Think back to this week’s lesson. The father was desperate for his son’s healing. When Jesus told him that his son was healed, the man believed, even though he hadn’t seen his son yet.

When you read, “Do not be anxious about anything,” your mind may go to a situation that is the exception. You may feel like your situation is beyond help, even from God. You may believe that God can work things out for other people, but your case is different, too difficult.

What Scripture says is true: No situation in your life is too far out of God’s reach for Him to take care of. Everything means everything. The Scripture goes on to say that you only need to turn over everything to God through prayer. He cares. He wants to meet you where you are. He wants to take the burden you are carrying and replace your anxiety with peace. When you let go of control and give it over to God, the peace that surpasses all understanding will cover your mind and dissolve the worry. Because of Jesus and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have access to peace. You can’t do anything to earn it; instead, the God of all creation sees you, cares about you, and takes care of you. He sent Jesus to create a way for you to experience His peace. You must simply believe.

- **RECALL A TIME WHEN YOU FELT DESPERATE FOR GOD’S PEACE IN A SITUATION. DID YOU GIVE IT OVER TO HIM THROUGH PRAYER? HOW DID HE PROVIDE PEACE?**
- **DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU AND WANTS TO TAKE CARE OF YOU IN EVERY SITUATION? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU SEE ME, YOU KNOW ME, AND YOU CARE ABOUT ME. AND I’M GRATEFUL. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PEACE IN ALL SITUATIONS—EVEN THE ONES THAT CAUSE ANXIETY TO RISE IN MY MIND. I GIVE IT ALL TO YOU. THANK YOU FOR TAKING IT FROM ME.





DAY FIVE

JOHN 4:51-53

What is the most painful situation or season you have ever been in? Was finding meaning in it easy or difficult? Your hardest, most desperate situations can be used for good and for God's glory. Saying we believe this is easy, but actually believing it is more difficult when you're in the middle of desperate times. Those times test whether or not we believe what we claim. In today's passage, the father learns that his son was healed in the same moment Jesus said he was healed. This moment could have easily been overlooked or missed. In today's culture, we tend to believe that miracles like this don't happen. How often do we miss the opportunity to point others to Jesus because we do not see Jesus's work happening right in front of us?

This father didn't miss it; he knew Jesus had healed his son. The most painful moment of his life was redeemed by Jesus, and he told everyone about it. We can use this story as a model for us to imitate: The father invited Jesus into a very desperate situation because he knew Jesus was the only One who could fix it. Then, he invited everyone else into the story so that they could see that Jesus could help them too.

What about you? What painful situation are you in right now, and how have you looked to Jesus to redeem it? Friend, Jesus redeeming the hardest seasons of your life is just as possible for you as it was for this young boy and his father. The next step for you is simple: Invite Jesus to fix it, and then tell anyone who will listen about His goodness.

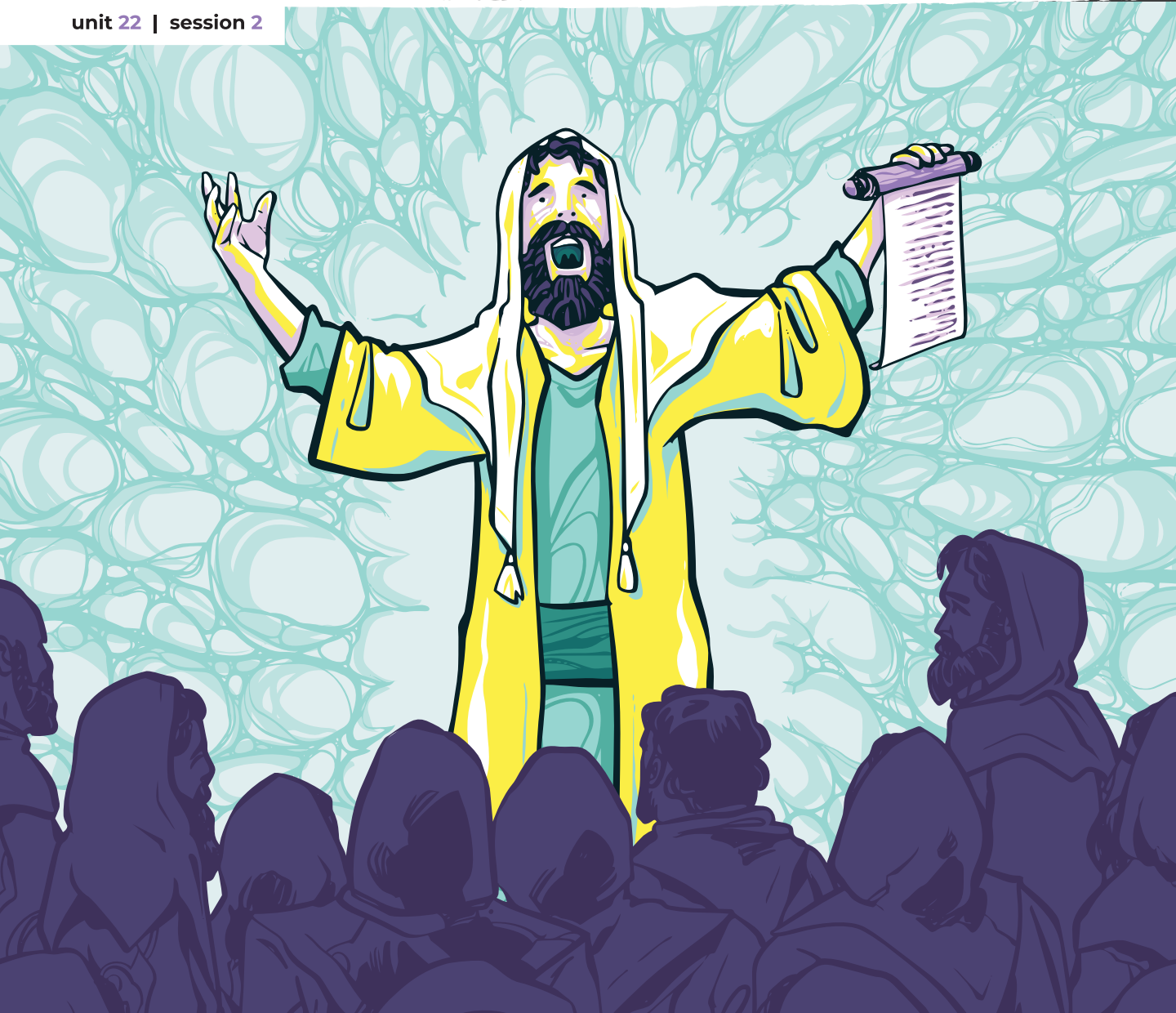
- **DO YOU STRUGGLE TO ALLOW GOD TO USE YOUR DIFFICULT SEASONS FOR YOUR GOOD AND HIS GLORY? EXPLAIN.**
- **RECALL A TIME WHEN YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW WENT THROUGH A PAINFUL TIME BUT WERE ABLE TO USE IT TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL. WHAT DOES THIS SHOW YOU ABOUT OUR PAIN?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR WORKING ALL THINGS FOR MY GOOD AND YOUR GLORY. YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN REDEEM MY PAIN. PLEASE GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO USE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN MY LIFE TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF YOUR GOODNESS AND GRACE.

“IS NOT THIS JOSEPH’S SON?”

unit 22 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote of God’s plan to send someone to bring good news and redeem His captive people. Jesus proclaimed that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy—the promised Messiah. Jesus was rejected by the people, but it was through that very rejection—the cross—that He provided redemption from sin.

REJECTING THE SAVIOR

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

JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY

LUKE 4:16-23

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."

JESUS WAS REJECTED

LUKE 4:24-30

24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away.

MAIN POINT.

We can expect rejection for following Jesus.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

THE WORLD OPPOSED TO GOD

Sometimes in Scripture the term “world” refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan’s control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

DISCUSSION

JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY

LUKE 4:16-23

- How did the people in Jesus’s hometown look at Him? Why did they ask if He was Joseph’s son?
- Jesus claimed to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy for the Messiah. How did Jesus display this in His ministry?
- Many people had doubts about Jesus. When are you most tempted to doubt who Jesus says He is?

JESUS WAS REJECTED

LUKE 4:24-30

- What was Jesus’s message to the people of Nazareth? Why were they offended?
- Why do people you know continue to reject Jesus’s message today?
- How did God use Jesus’s rejection to bring salvation to the world? What can this show us about our own rejection?



WHERE IS THE FEAR OF REJECTION KEEPING YOU FROM OBEYING GOD? HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS FACED REJECTION GIVE YOU STRENGTH?

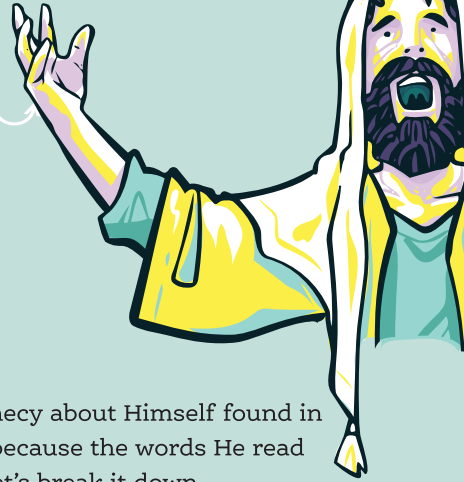
CULTURAL CONNECTION

We are surrounded by voices that tell us how we should act, dress, speak, and think if we want people to accept us. We may feel pressure from our family, friends, classmates, or social media to conform to what’s popular to fit in. We want to be well-liked, so much that we compromise our beliefs to avoid rejection. Maybe you go along with the majority opinion, even if it means agreeing with something sinful. Maybe you participate in behavior you know is wrong because you’re more concerned with fitting in than obeying God. We worry that taking a godly stance will cause others to tease us, accuse us of ruining the fun, or label us intolerant or hateful. However, avoiding rejection robs us of living obediently to God’s Word. As Christians, we certainly shouldn’t go out of our way to offend people or cause chaos. We can disagree with others and still show love and respect (Rom. 12:18), even if the world opposes our biblical values. Though we may face rejection, we must be open to talking with people about our Christian convictions in the hope that they will come to know the Lord.



DAY ONE

ISAIAH 61:1-3



In this week's lesson, we discussed Luke 4:16-30. Jesus read a prophecy about Himself found in Isaiah 61:1-3. This scandalous moment was vital to Jesus's mission because the words He read were very specific to the sacrifice that He made for our salvation. Let's break it down.

When Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me," He declared that He was the One sent by God as a sacrifice for our sins. When Jesus said that He was sent to "proclaim good news to the poor," "to proclaim liberty to the captives," and to "[recover] sight to the blind," He revealed that He had been sent to set people free from their sins, as well as give sight spiritually and physically. We read about these things in John 9, when Jesus gave sight to a blind man by mixing His spit with dirt to create mud as a healing balm for his eyes. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus fulfill Old Testament prophecy, like the one in today's passage. Why does this matter? If God fulfilled His promise to send a Savior and did, if Jesus did what He said He would do (and He did), then we can absolutely trust God's promises to us. We can believe the truth of His Word and rest in His faithfulness.

Certainly, Jesus fulfilled God's promise to the Israelites to send someone who would set them free from the consequences of their sin. The better news is that Jesus not only came for the Israelites but for everyone, including you today. Jesus came as a fulfillment of God's grace to save us all from the destruction of our sins, to liberate us, to give us spiritual sight.

- **WHAT ARE THE AREAS IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU STRUGGLE WITH BEING SPIRITUALLY BLIND—UNAWARE OF YOUR SIN?**
- **HOW CAN YOU TRUST GOD ON A DAILY BASIS, KNOWING THAT HE IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR INCLUDING ME AS A RECIPIENT OF YOUR GRACE. IF I HAVE ANY SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS TODAY, PLEASE REVEAL IT TO ME SO THAT I CAN WALK CONFIDENTLY INTO WHAT YOU HAVE FOR ME TO DO.



DAY TWO

1 KINGS 17:8-24

Let's set the stage for today's Scripture. The widow lived in a place called Zarephath. At first glance, this does not seem significant, but the reality is that Zarephath was a region deeply rooted in worshipping false gods. God's work wasn't always evident there, but He wasn't absent. Now, if you were to read the Scripture again with that knowledge, the significance changes a bit, right? The widow, a worshiper of a false god, fed Elijah, a follower of God, in a time of famine, when food was hard to obtain. Though she didn't follow Yahweh, she took a big step of faith to feed Elijah the last of her bread. God rewarded her by ensuring that the jar of ingredients to make bread for her son didn't run out until the drought and famine were over. Something more amazing? When her son later got sick and stopped breathing, Elijah begged for God to restore his life. And God did! As a result, the woman knew God's words were true.

In our main passage this week, Jesus used this story from 1 Kings to show the Jewish listeners that God accepts and takes care of everyone who surrenders to Him, even the ones they despised—the Gentiles. If God called this widow in Zarephath to faith and raised her son from death, then He cares for all people. As outsiders looking in, we can easily judge the Jews for not accepting Gentiles. If you examine your own thoughts and actions about other people, you might find that you also have a hard time accepting someone who is different from you. Have you ever had classmates that you do not like visit your church? How did you react to them being there? Did you invite them to sit with you, or did you give them the cold shoulder? Today's Scripture shows us that if God can forgive and accept outsiders and the worst of sinners, then we must do the same.

- **IS IT HARD FOR YOU TO ACCEPT PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHAT PART OF TODAY'S SCRIPTURE CAN YOU USE AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOVE AND WELCOME EVERYONE INTO GOD'S FAMILY?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR FORGIVING AND ACCEPTING PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. AS SOMEONE WHO IS ALSO UNWORTHY OF YOUR GRACE AND LOVE, I AM SO GRATEFUL THAT YOU GIVE IT FREELY.



DAY THREE

2 KINGS 5:1-14

Today's passage is another story that Jesus referenced in the main lesson this week. When the people heard this story, they were angry—similar to the way we get mad when something good happens to someone we don't like. Maybe this person used to be mean as a kid, but now he or she is one of the most-liked people at school. Or maybe teachers praise someone else's work and overlook your hard work. What does it reveal about your heart when you feel anger toward someone in this situation? Well, in most cases we feel jealousy, and though we don't like admitting it, jealousy is a sin. When you're jealous of what someone else has, you think you're missing out on getting it for yourself. The truth is that God has enough love and grace for everyone. When He heals or blesses someone else, He doesn't take from you to bless them. Jesus used the example in today's passage to reveal to the people of Galilee that their hearts were rooted in prideful sin. If you were there listening to Jesus, would you agree with the crowd's feelings?

Romans 2:11 reminds us that God does not choose favorites. We are all made in His image (Gen. 1:27), and He desires to take care of us. He works all things for our good and His glory when we turn to Him (Rom. 8:28). You can rest in your situation today, fully trusting that God is taking care of you in the same way that He is taking care of those around you. If you struggle with jealousy, repent and ask God to help you be excited for the ways God blesses, accepts, and transforms others for His glory.

- **WHAT MAKES YOU JEALOUS OF OTHER PEOPLE?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU PRAY FOR THE GOOD OF SOMEONE YOU STRUGGLE TO ACCEPT?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, THAT YOUR GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR EVERYONE AND YOU DO NOT CHOOSE FAVORITES. PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THE TIMES THAT I AM JEALOUS OF OTHERS. HELP ME FEEL JOY WHEN YOU BLESS OTHERS.



DAY FOUR

JOHN 15:18-21

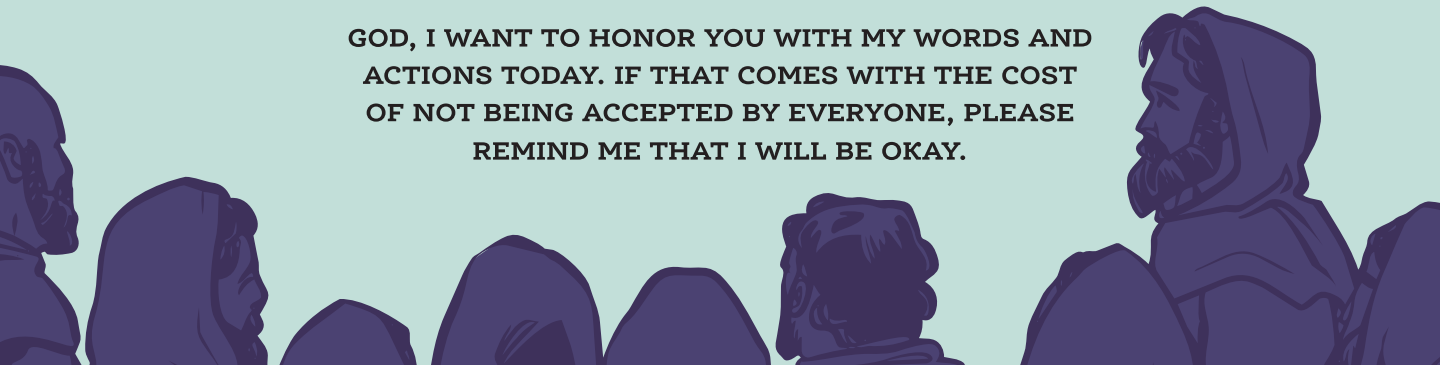
Jesus's words in today's passage are a difficult reminder: The darkness of the world is at war with the Light inside of you—with Jesus. The world rejected Jesus when He was on earth. As Christians, we are the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit of God, so we know the world will sometimes reject us too. The good news is that you will be okay—more than okay. In a world full of social media presence and acceptance, that statement feels countercultural. Your feeds are filled with “influencers” telling you what to buy, what style to mimic or filters to use, with a promise of guaranteed acceptance and praise from your peers. This promise of acceptance is difficult to ignore; most of us desire acceptance from the people we are around every day. We're easily discouraged when we don't fit in.

The reality for Christians is that we are called to be in the world but not a part of the world. God wants us to be present and to make an impact, but He doesn't want us to become wrapped up in what matters to the world. The good news is that God is on our side. He accepts us and loves us! If you look back at John 15:16, Jesus explained that though we didn't naturally choose Him, He chose us. He made this statement right before saying His followers would be rejected by the world. Jesus wanted His followers to know that we are chosen by the One who matters the most. Let this be an encouragement to you today, as you go into the world and live for God. People won't always like or agree with your choices. The Light within you may offend those living in darkness, but go—shine in the dark world. You're already loved and accepted by God.

- **HOW HAVE YOU RECENTLY BEEN LIVING FOR GOD INSTEAD OF THE WORLD?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU LOOKED FOR ACCEPTANCE FROM THE WORLD INSTEAD OF SEEKING TO PLEASE GOD? WHAT WAS THE RESULT?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO HONOR YOU WITH MY WORDS AND ACTIONS TODAY. IF THAT COMES WITH THE COST OF NOT BEING ACCEPTED BY EVERYONE, PLEASE REMIND ME THAT I WILL BE OKAY.





DAY FIVE

ISAIAH 53:1-3

Isaiah prophesied that the world would despise and reject Jesus. Jesus came to earth fully aware of what He would endure, yet He came for us anyway. Jesus had no beauty that we should desire Him, and He was born into a poor family. The question is not if we would be in the crowd of those who rejected Jesus, but how many times have we been in the crowd protesting against Him?

Judging other people for rejecting Jesus is easy—forgetting that we sometimes reject Him as well with our lifestyle, our words, our actions, our priorities. Sin looks fun, so you give in just one time. Your parents don't seem to understand your life, so you lash out at them in disrespect. A friend makes an inappropriate joke, and because you want to fit in, you laugh when you should stay quiet or walk away. We rebel against God and give in to temptations that don't honor Him. Paul urged Timothy to “flee from youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Make a commitment to be aware of your thoughts and actions so that you can turn—so that you can flee—from temptations instead of getting as close to the line as possible. Before Jesus left earth, He said that He was sending a Helper for all who follow Him. That helper is the Holy Spirit, who dwells within everyone who believes and calls on the Lord for salvation. You are not alone in your decision to walk away from the crowd; the Holy Spirit goes with you when you face rejection from the world.

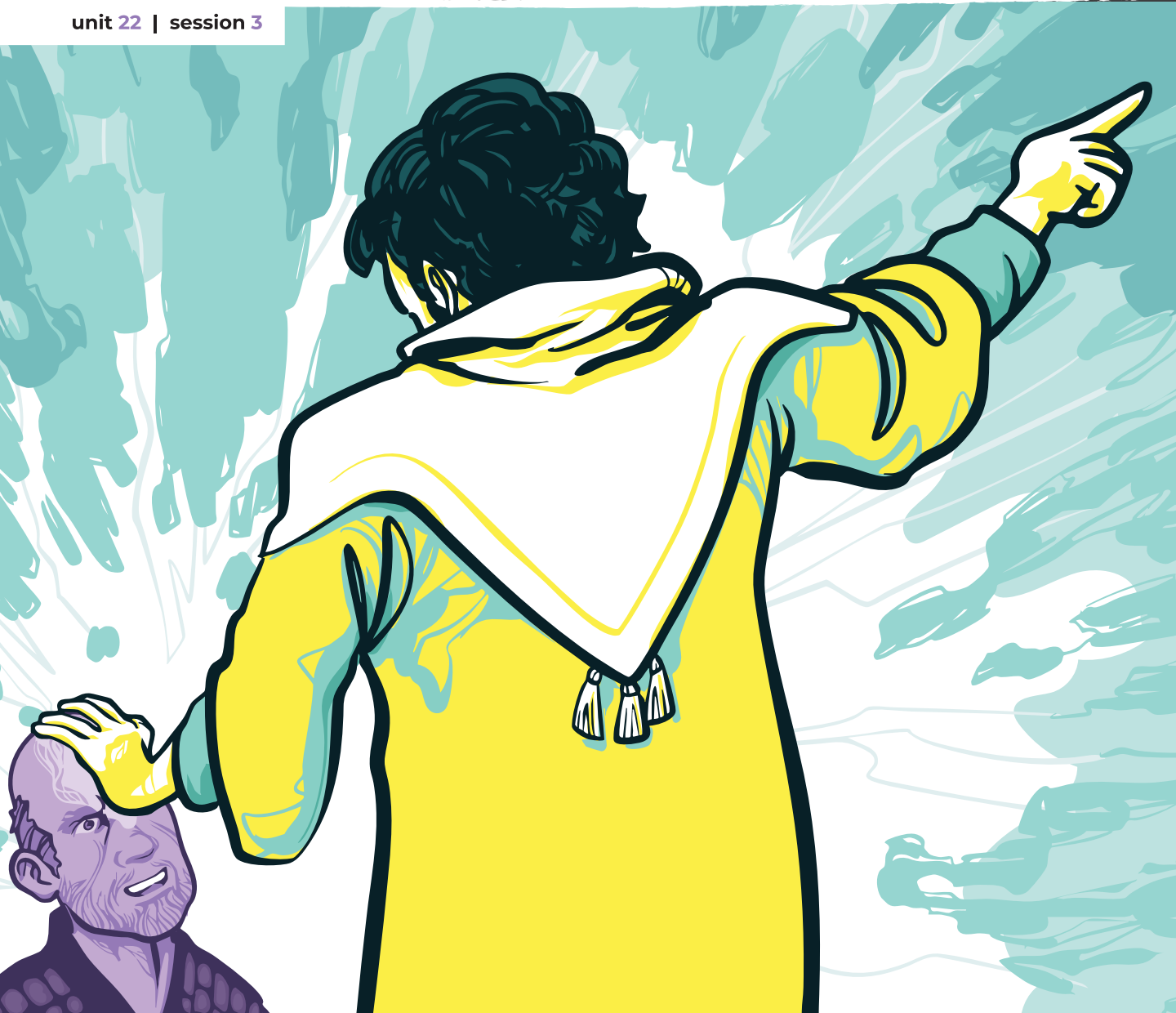
- **WHAT SIN DO YOU HOLD ON TO SO THAT YOU STAY PART OF THE CROWD AND AVOID REJECTION? WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO TURN FROM IT?**
- **SCRIPTURE SAYS TO FLEE FROM SIN. WHAT DO YOU DO TO KEEP FROM FALLING INTO SIN? IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU TRYING TO GET CLOSE TO SIN INSTEAD OF RUNNING FROM IT?**

PRAY

FATHER, PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR ALL THE TIMES I HAVE BEEN A PART OF THE CROWD THAT REJECTED YOUR SON. THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND YOUR GRACE. HELP ME HONOR YOU WITH MY WORDS AND ACTIONS.

NOT AS *THE SCRIBES*

unit 22 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus approached the man who was possessed by demons, even the demons recognized His authority. Jesus would later demonstrate His authority over sin and evil in a greater way through His crucifixion and resurrection. Sin no longer has power over those who trust in Jesus.

LIGHT AND AUTHORITY

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.

Mark 1

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER EVIL

MARK 1:21-28

21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. 22 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. 23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER SICKNESS

MARK 1:29-34

29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. 32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

MAIN POINT.

We can trust the One who has all authority.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

DEMONS

Demons are angelic beings who sinned against God and continually do evil work in the world today (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1; Luke 10:18). Demons oppose God and seek to destroy His work, as seen in the Bible's description of Satan, the head of demons, who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. Though demons have power, they are limited by God's control and can only act within the constraints of what God permits. In the end, all of the demons will be cast into the lake of fire, for which it was originally created.

DISCUSSION

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER EVIL

MARK 1:21-28

- How did the people react when Jesus cast out the unclean spirit? Why did they respond this way?
- 📖 • What does the unclean spirit know about Jesus? What does this show us about knowing versus following?
- ♥ • What kind of spiritual battles or spiritual darkness do we face? How can knowing that Jesus has all authority over the powers of darkness help us fight?

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER SICKNESS

MARK 1:29-34

- ✝ • What stands out to you about the way Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law?
- 🧠 • Why do you think Jesus told the demons to keep silent about Him?
- How did Jesus's ability to heal the sick and cast out demons foreshadow what He would accomplish on the cross?



WHAT DID SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW DO IMMEDIATELY AFTER JESUS HEALED HER? WHY DON'T WE ALWAYS RESPOND IN THIS WAY?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Culture is fascinated by the spiritual realm, often manifesting as a dangerous interest in darkness and evil. Movies, shows, and books with demonic themes top the charts. You may wonder if taking part in darkness is a big deal for believers. What if it's just for fun? Where is the line? First, we can't let the world define this line. We must confront the idea of believers turning to content with demonic forces for entertainment—media that profits off real powers of evil, whose goal is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Even more dangerous, consuming dark content can open doors to demonic attack in the life of a Christian. Scripture forbids us from engaging with Ouija boards, tarot cards, psychics or mediums, or participating in attempts to contact the dead (Deut. 18:10-11; Acts 16:16)—even in the name of “fun” or “pretending.” We shouldn't open any doors to darkness. Why would we even want to associate with the powers of evil, who are completely at odds with God's work and who seek to destroy His work in us?



DAY ONE

JAMES 2:18-19



Can you name your favorite influencer or celebrity? How well would you say that you know them? The truth is that you don't actually know this person; you only know facts about them. You're not actually friends with them, right? You knowing about someone does not mean you know them. Contrast that with what you know about your best friend. You actually know them because you have a friendship with them. You have head knowledge about your favorite influencer; you have heart knowledge of your best friend.

Today's passage points out that head knowledge of God (like the demons who know about God and shudder) isn't enough. The demons believe God is real, but they aren't surrendered to Him. Heart knowledge comes from surrendering to the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us. How do we know the difference? Well, it's the difference between works only (without faith) and works that flow from faith. Head knowledge looks like showing up to church on Sunday but telling dirty jokes at school on Monday. Heart knowledge looks like showing up to church on Sunday and then intentionally not telling a lie because you want to honor God with your words and actions. Heart knowledge is being convicted when you do slip up and repenting of your sin. The motivation to honor God is not rooted in a desire to be a "good Christian" but in knowing your heavenly Father is grieved when you sin. And you don't want to grieve Him. When you know God, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit will work within you to produce spiritual fruit in your life (Gal. 5:22-23)—proof of heart transformation instead of head knowledge, faith plus works. A relationship with Jesus—knowing Him—changes us from the inside out.

- **DOES YOUR LIFE SHOW EVIDENCE THAT YOU HAVE HEART KNOWLEDGE OF GOD? HOW?**
- **READ GALATIANS 5:22-23. WHICH CHARACTERISTIC IS THE HARDEST FOR YOU TO SHOW IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR YOUR TRANSFORMING POWER
IN MY LIFE. PLEASE HELP ME TO GET TO KNOW YOU
IN A DEEPER WAY TODAY.**



DAY TWO

MARK 1:21-27

The demon quickly submitted to Jesus and obeyed. Read that again. The presence of evil knew who Jesus was and obeyed Him. Think about it: A demon submitted to Jesus's authority, yet as followers, we often resist obeying Him! How quickly do you obey Jesus? When you feel the Holy Spirit urging you to sit with someone who has no friends at lunch, do you obey? When your parents tell you to stay home for the night, how do you respond? If you have a hidden sin, are you holding it close because you enjoy it?

As followers of Jesus, we must quickly follow His commands. Proverbs 4:23 encourages us to guard our hearts because everything we do flows from the heart. This means that when sin creeps in, you repent and turn from it before you get comfortable with it—because that's what happens, right? The first time we give in to temptation, we feel uncomfortable. But the more we give in, the more accepting we become of our sin—the more we justify the sin as not being a "big deal." When you feel the prompting to talk with someone outside of your circle, you obey. When your parents give you a directive that you don't appreciate, react out of respect because it honors God and them. We can't be slow to obey God. Paul reminds us that we should not continue to sin just because we know God is gracious and asks, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2). Think about it: Why would you overcome sin and then invite it back into your life? Jesus's power is greater than the darkness around us, so don't join it; instead, quickly surrender to His commands and live in the power and peace that He gives.

- **DO YOU QUICKLY OBEY GOD? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU GUARDING YOUR HEART? IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU LEAVING IT OPEN TO ATTACK?**

PRAY

GOD, PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THE TIMES THAT I AM SLOW TO OBEY YOU. HELP ME TO OBEY YOU AND HONOR YOU WITH MY THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.



DAY THREE

1 PETER 4:10-11

When your student pastor announces a mission trip out of state, what are your first thoughts? Do you feel excited to get great pictures for your social media account or a joy that you get to serve the Lord and tell others about Him? If you've served God only for praise, for an aesthetic picture, or for your own benefit, then you've missed out on a much greater blessing.

In this week's lesson, we read about Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law; she then quickly got up to serve others. Why did she start serving with so much urgency? Because she was a child of God! She had experienced His kindness, and in a lost world, she used the gifts God had given her for His glory and to point others to Him. She got up to serve and used what was most natural for her.

What gifts has God given you to serve the church? What do you naturally love or do well? Maybe you love blending the melody of individual voices into one unified voice; serve on the technology team at your church. Do you love children? Sign up to serve in the children's department. Are you an extrovert who loves to make small talk with others? Ask about being a door greeter on Sunday mornings; look for people who seem nervous to walk through the door and speak to them.

Service to the church doesn't earn you a spot in heaven, but it does glorify God and build the church. If your motivation for serving is selfish, then take a step back, repent of that sin, and begin again. Jesus sacrificed everything so that you can live eternally with Him. Let that be your motivation for using your gifts to serve quickly.

- **WHAT GIFTS HAS GOD GIVEN YOU TO SERVE IN THE CHURCH AND OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH?**
- **HOW CAN YOU SERVE IN A NEW WAY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE GIFTS YOU HAVE GIVEN ME FOR YOUR GLORY. PLEASE GIVE ME THE BOLDNESS TO SERVE YOU IN NEW WAYS.



DAY FOUR

PSALM 103:11-14

When your coach or teacher orders you around but never sees you or treats you as a real person, how do you feel? Contrast that with someone who has taken time to get to know you and care about you as a person. When they give you an order, are you more likely to obey? The difference between these two reactions? Compassion. Trusting that others have your best interest in their heart is more difficult when they haven't taken time to know you, to love you, to show you compassion. Someone who has taken time to get to know us has proven that they care about our heart and the outcome of their request. We follow them more easily.

Today's passage is a reminder that God is compassionate, even though we sin against Him daily. How much love and compassion does He have for you? Verse 12 says that He has thrown out your sins as far as the east is from the west; in other words, He has thrown them out completely. God doesn't want to simply tell you what you can and cannot do. He cares deeply for you and loves you with a love greater than any earthly father. Did you catch the really cool fact in verse 14? God knows what we're made of: dust. He remembers we are frail, weak, and vulnerable. He remembers that we are human. And yet, He is compassionate. Let this truth be a reminder to you today that God is more than a list of rules. He is a loving Father, who wants to have a relationship with you and to take care of you. God has proven His love and compassion for you time and time again, but especially in sending His Son for your salvation.

- **IS IT EASY FOR YOU TO REMEMBER GOD'S LOVE AND COMPASSION TOWARD YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **YOU ARE DUST, BUT GOD LOVES YOU ANYWAY. WHAT DOES THAT TELL YOU ABOUT HIS CHARACTER?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE SO GOOD AND KIND. THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME COMPASSION, AND BY YOUR AUTHORITY, FORGIVING MY SINS.





DAY FIVE

MATTHEW 28:18-20

Have you ever heard someone say, “I made it through the day and never used math once”? The message they are saying is that they learned a skill that was not useful to them and wasted their time in the process. That might be true for some classes you’re required to take in your school career, but that is not true for the message of the gospel. The good news of Jesus is not only a story you can tell but a command for all Christians to share as they go through life. We learned this week that God’s authority comes with compassion, and the gifts He has given you are to be used for His glory. Jesus tells us in Matthew how Christians should spread the good news: As you go in your town, your country, and the world, tell people about Jesus. Everywhere you go is a place where people need the message and hope of the gospel.

Why is it important that you share the gospel? The world needs to understand the authority and compassion of God. They need to hear the hope of salvation from sin and eternal separation from God. They need to hear truth. How can the world hear and understand the gospel? According to Jesus, through you. He commands you to tell them. Because you are under the authority of Jesus, the pressure of a perfect delivery of the gospel is off; you only need to be obedient. You only need to go. The Holy Spirit will go with you and equip you. He will open the doors and give you the words to say. Try this today: As you visit a coffee shop or stand in a checkout line, find the people on the fringes who need to hear good news. Sit down with them. Be a friend. Tell them about Jesus and the difference He has made in your life.

- **IS SHARING THE GOSPEL EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO DO? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING THAT JESUS’S AUTHORITY HELPS YOU SHARE THE GOSPEL TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF?**

PRAY

THANK YOU FOR THE GOSPEL. HELP ME TO SHARE WITH THE PERSON WHO NEEDS TO HEAR IT TODAY.

DESOLATE PLACES

unit 22 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus came to preach the good news to the world—the news that salvation was for everyone. Unlike the false gods of ancient cultures, Jesus walked among us. He showed people compassion and reached out to touch the untouchable. Because of God's great love for us, He sent Jesus to heal us from sin.

RADICAL COMPASSION

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.

Mark 1; Luke 4-5

JESUS CAME TO BRING GOOD NEWS

MARK 1:35-38

35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

JESUS IS WILLING TO COME CLOSE TO US

MARK 1:39-45

39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. 40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." 42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." 45 But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus meets us with compassion and willingly restores us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION




GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful: There is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

DISCUSSION


JESUS CAME TO BRING GOOD NEWS

MARK 1:35-38

-  Jesus retreated to spend time alone in prayer. Why do we need time to be alone with the Lord?
-  What message did Jesus come to preach (v. 38)? Why wasn't it always accepted?
-  What should motivate us to share the good news with people? What holds us back?

JESUS IS WILLING TO COME CLOSE TO US

MARK 1:39-45

- How did the man with leprosy approach Jesus? What do Jesus's actions show us about His heart?
-  Why wasn't Jesus made unclean when He touched the man with leprosy?
- Jesus instructed the man to follow the law to be made ritually clean. How should we respond to Jesus after He heals our sin?



WHAT ARE PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN SHOW CHRISTLIKE COMPASSION TO THOSE AROUND YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe you've felt this way at school, with your family, or even at church. Feeling like you don't belong is a painful experience when you desire to fit somewhere. Sometimes, we allow our shame to isolate us. When we mess up, we fear what others will think of us, so we keep them from getting too close. We fear being rejected if we show someone our brokenness. If you long to be seen, loved, and accepted—if you want someone to see past your mess and see the hurting person underneath—know this: Jesus sees you right where you are and loves you deeply. No one is too dirty or too far gone for His grace. He longs to show you compassion, just like He did for so many sick and struggling people in the Gospels. Maybe you need to hear this: You don't have to clean yourself up to come to Jesus; you can bring Him your brokenness and know that He has done all the necessary work to save you. He desires to make you clean and whole—all you have to do is surrender to Him.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 6:5-8

Have you ever just needed to be alone? Maybe you were with a group of people for several hours or days and needed some time to be still and quiet, time to think. In this week's lesson, Jesus slipped away from the massive crowds following Him to be alone with the Father. Not only did He model the importance of prayer, but Jesus taught His followers how to pray. The parameters are surprisingly easy: Don't pray with the motivation of people seeing you and thinking you are super holy, and don't pray a lot of fancy words, thinking they'll be more persuasive to God. Jesus also added that God knows what we need before we ask. So, why pray? Prayer is important because you are inviting God into the situation, trusting Him with it, and building your relationship with Him. The good news is that God knows what you need, and He doesn't want to withhold good things from you (Matt. 7:11). Sometimes the good thing we receive is godly character that develops through perseverance (Rom. 5:3-4).

Start today by praying a simple prayer of surrender to God, inviting Him into every part of your life. Begin the prayer with praise to God because He is the Holy One, the Creator of the universe, and worthy of your praise. Then, tell Him about the details of your life, and ask Him to meet you there and to work on your behalf. You can surrender control to Him because He is on your side and will fight for you. End your prayer with thanksgiving for God's goodness and grace in your life. The God of the universe wants to meet with you in prayer! He isn't afraid of the hard, messy parts of your life. Take advantage of the opportunity to fight the darkness with the only One whose light is everlasting.

- **DEFINE PRAYER IN YOUR OWN WORDS. WHY DOES GOD WANT YOU TO PRAY TO HIM?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU PRAY? DOES PRAYER COME EASY FOR YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR DESIRING TO MEET THROUGH PRAYER. HELP ME TO GET MORE COMFORTABLE IN THIS CONVERSATION WITH YOU.



DAY TWO

PSALM 63:1-8

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, when suddenly the conversation died, and you were left in the awkward silence? What is your first response in a moment like this? Because of the awkwardness of silence, most people avoid it at all costs. Some people leave because they don't know how to move past the awkwardness of the moment. The truth is that our world does not value sitting in silence. In a world full of potential viral moments and instant fame, we may feel that sitting in silence is a waste of time. Will you try it today? Right now, take thirty seconds to sit and be still.

What happened in your mind after ten seconds? Try this again tomorrow and the day after that. This simple practice will help you develop a spiritual discipline of sitting still with the Lord. When you learn to drown out the noise and distractions around you, you'll connect with the words David wrote in Psalm 63. Your soul will crave time alone with God in stillness and prayer. When you do not feed it the things of the world, you make room for the Holy Spirit to speak and be heard. This stirring of the Holy Spirit will satisfy every desire that you have and inform every decision that you make, which leads to a deeper dependence on God and an authentic relationship with Him. Don't allow the world to tell you that silence or stillness is awkward and that you're missing out if you clear your calendar for an hour every day. The truth is that you can't afford not to spend time with God.

- **WHAT DO YOU DO IN SILENT MOMENTS? WHAT NEXT STEP CAN YOU TAKE TO DEVELOP THIS SKILL?**
- **DO YOU DESIRE A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? IF SO, THEN WHAT CHANGES DO YOU NEED TO MAKE?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR SATISFYING MY DEEPEST
DESIRES. PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR FEEDING MY
DESIRES WITH ANYTHING OR ANYONE OTHER THAN
YOUR PRESENCE.**



DAY THREE

1 KINGS 19:11-14

We live in a world that constantly seeks aesthetic moments and over-the-top elements to gain more likes and views on social media. This perspective teaches that only the biggest and brightest moments are the best moments. Simple or average days are often forgotten. Rest days seem forbidden in a culture that says to post new content every day. When we live this way, we miss out on God's quiet whispers; closeness with Him is replaced with distance.

The events that happened right before today's passage were wild. Elijah, a prophet, went toe-to-toe with worshipers of the false god, Baal. God showed up by sending fire down from heaven to destroy Baal's altar, proving the Lord was the one true God. This spectacular event didn't turn the people's hearts toward God, and Elijah was discouraged. In fact, the king's wife wanted him dead, so he ran for his life and hid inside of a cave. In today's passage, God called Elijah out of the cave to meet with Him. The ground shook, the wind blew, and fire appeared, but God wasn't in any of those elements, like we'd probably expect. Instead, God spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper. What does this moment tell you about God and the relationship He desires with His children? When we face a battle with the darkness of the world, God can and will show up to fight our battles with whatever force necessary. When He wants to speak with His children, He often seeks them through soft, quiet moments. Knowing this should change the way you look for Him to meet with you. Have you been quiet and still enough so that you can hear His voice? Or do you fill the silence with reels and ask God to speak over the noise?

- **HOW HAS GOD SPOKEN TO YOU IN THE PAST? DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH CREATING SPACE FOR SILENCE? WHY?**
- **WHAT ARE THE DISTRACTIONS YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO CLEAR BUT HAVEN'T? WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM MAKING ROOM AND SILENCING NOISE?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR THE QUIET MOMENTS. HELP ME TO HEAR YOUR WHISPER OVER THE NOISE. HELP ME TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT CLEARING THE NOISE.



DAY FOUR

PSALM 62:5-8

Have you ever had a conversation with a person you hardly knew? There's a good chance that the conversation wasn't a very fruitful one with deep trust, right? Friendship between two people grows as time goes on. You experience life together, have deeper conversations, and make deeper connections. The end result? You build trust because you both realize you can count on one another.

In this psalm, David proclaimed his absolute trust in God as his salvation, refuge, and strength to carry him through every season of life. David was able to make this proclamation because he experienced God's goodness in the darkest moments and in the best moments of his life. When he was lonely, overlooked, victorious, and pursued by enemies, David continued to be a man after God's own heart. When David was deep in sin, he experienced God's grace, mercy, and love for him. These experiences strengthened David's relationship with God. The same relationship and level of trust are available to you.

When you find yourself alone in the cafeteria, when other students are mean to you, when you ace the test, or when you drift into worldly behaviors, you can experience a deeper relationship with God if you seek Him—when you keep your mind and heart fixed on Him in every situation. David depended on God like a strong rock (v. 7), or a strong foundation on which he could stand. Try memorizing this verse! When you feel the pull of the world stealing your affection from God, you can quickly remind yourself that God is faithful, kind, and powerful. As you continue to look to God, you will trust Him more and more because His very character is to be faithful (2 Tim. 2:13).

- **HOW STRONG IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TODAY?**
- **HOW HAVE GOOD AND BAD SEASONS HELPED YOU TRUST GOD MORE?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE MY REFUGE AND STRENGTH. THANK YOU FOR BEING MY HEAVENLY FATHER.





DAY FIVE

MARK 6:30-32

You may need to hear this bold truth: If you are too busy to have time with God, then you are too busy. Stings a little, doesn't it? But it's true for all of us. Even with the best intentions of filling our time with service in our local church or group, we so easily forget the most important thing: a personal relationship with God. Sure, we know the things of this world distract us. But even good things can become distractions. You can serve on your student ministry team, attend a different Bible study every night of the week, and volunteer at the local homeless shelter once a month and still miss what God has for you. We read in today's passage that Jesus told the disciples to get away and rest with Him because their work for the kingdom was consuming their time. Our culture often teaches us to hustle and that slowing down is for the weak. But Jesus commanded rest because He knows we have limits and that we get tired. He is sufficient to refill us. Rest with Jesus is a precious gift. God's Word calls this type of rest *Sabbath*. Mark 2:27 says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This means that you do not need to earn your rest; Jesus has done the work and accomplished your freedom to rest.

Need some practical ways to rest with Jesus? Wake up a little early to spend time in the Word before you get into the world. Commit to one Bible study per week so that you can build solid community and have time in your schedule for extracurriculars and rest. Dedicate daily time to put away your phone and electronics, and reconnect with your family at home. Make room for rest, even when the world tells you to keep pushing. Rest is the way of Jesus, and you honor Him when you follow His example.

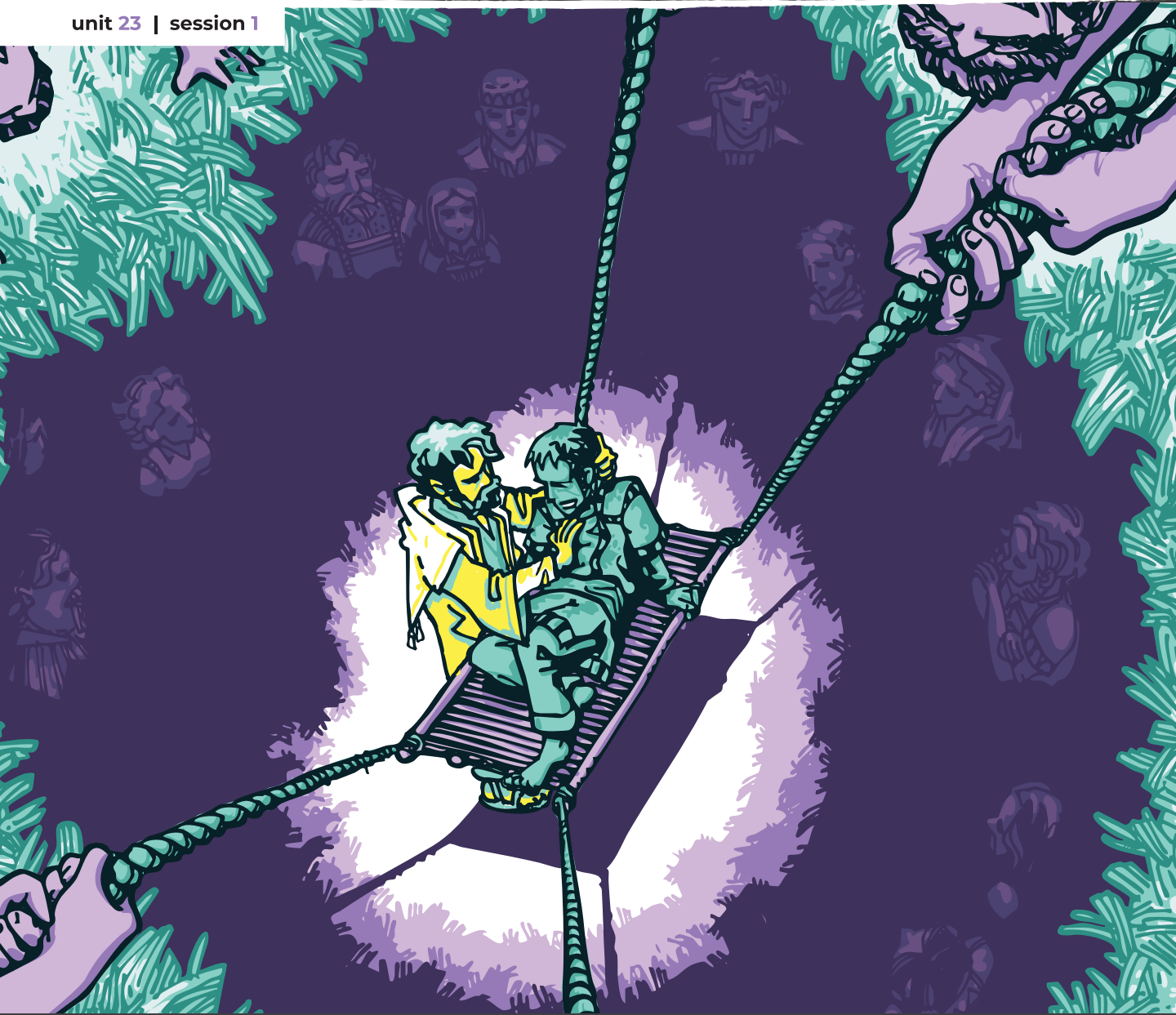
- **WHAT IS CURRENTLY FILLING YOUR SCHEDULE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN INCORPORATE SABBATH INTO YOUR WEEKLY RHYTHM?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR THE GIFT OF REST. HELP ME
TO REST IN YOUR STRENGTH TODAY INSTEAD OF
STRIVING TO DO MORE.**

“YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN”

unit 23 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus's claim to have the authority to forgive sins was supported by His miraculous healings. Jesus would later suffer and die to provide forgiveness of sin and would miraculously be raised from the dead on the third day.

WALKING EVIDENCE

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.

Mark 2

ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN

MARK 2:1-7

1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

MARK 2:8-12

8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

MAIN POINT.

Our obedience shows Jesus's power to forgive sin and transform hearts.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN'S EFFECTS IN THE WORLD

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason that creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

DISCUSSION

ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN

MARK 2:1-7

- What did the paralytic's friends believe? How did this belief motivate their actions?
- Why did Jesus forgive the paralytic's sin instead of healing his body?
- What did the scribes doubt about Jesus? Who did they believe could forgive sins?

OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

MARK 2:8-12

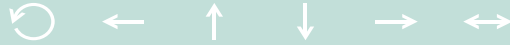
- How easily can you hide what's in your heart? How does knowing God sees your heart impact you?
- Why did Jesus tell the man to rise, pick up his bed, and go home?
- Why was the man's obedience critical in this moment? Why is our obedience important?



HOW DO YOUR CHOICES CONTRADICT JESUS'S POWER TO FORGIVE SIN? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT OTHERS SEE JESUS'S WORK IN YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Is it ever okay not to forgive someone? If we're honest, we probably have an invisible line that, once others cross, we determine not to forgive them. Maybe a friend repeats the same offense over and over again, and you don't want to deal with it anymore. Or maybe someone hurts you so deeply that you can't imagine moving past the pain. Forgiveness isn't always easy, but the radical call of the gospel is to forgive others as Jesus forgave us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Even Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone—a question we wrestle with too! Jesus taught that we are to forgive others as He forgives us (Matt. 18:23-35)—endlessly. Now, forgiveness doesn't excuse harmful behavior or mean that we stay in a toxic situation; forgiveness is more about our own heart. Our ability to forgive doesn't come from our maturity or our strength but from experiencing God's grace; we forgive because we are forgiven. We loosen our grip on judgment because we are free from condemnation. If we consider the depth of our own forgiveness, then we'll more willingly forgive others.



DAY ONE

ROMANS 8:31-39

Sometimes, we can feel as if God is far from us. We certainly experience feeling distance between us and other people, often making us feel sad, hopeless, or disappointed. God tells us an amazing truth in the Scripture for today: Nothing can separate Christians from the love of God. How can this be true? Because of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus took the punishment for our sins. Because of Jesus's sacrifice, we enjoy relationship with Him and the Father by the Holy Spirit. Because He saved us, we are now God's children! We are united to Christ! He gives us the strength to face all kinds of pain and difficult seasons. He gives us the strength to face each and every day with courage. Most importantly, because of what Jesus has done, we can be sure that sin doesn't have a hold on us any longer. If you have repented and put your faith in Jesus, then your sins are washed clean. Consider this: Jesus can never be separated from God. He is God! So, if you are in Christ, you cannot be separated from God either. No matter what comes your way, no matter if the whole world seems to be against you, God is for you. You may still experience hard days and very real suffering. You may walk through periods of depression, anxiety, or loneliness. But you are never, ever alone. God is for you! Nothing can separate you from His love because of the wonderful grace you have received in Jesus Christ our Lord.

- **HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE GOD WAS FAR FROM YOU? HOW CAN THE TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE COMFORT YOU WHEN YOU FEEL THIS WAY?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN HELP YOU WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TO FIND JOY?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE WORK OF JESUS. HELP ME BELIEVE YOUR WORD AND LIVE IN THE TRUTH THAT YOU ARE FOR ME. THANK YOU FOR FORGIVING MY SINS AND PROMISING THAT NOTHING CAN SEPARATE ME FROM YOUR LOVE.



DAY TWO

PSALM 34:18

Physical pain has a way of making time feel different. When you're in pain, time seems to pass more slowly. Maybe we feel this way because we just want the suffering to end. The paralytic man in this week's lesson had suffered for a long time. He likely felt like there was no one who could help him. He had at least a couple of good friends but likely felt very sad and lonely in his condition. Thankfully, his friends brought him to Jesus, who healed him both from his disease and, more amazingly, from his sins. The story of the paralytic and our verse today show us the caring heart of our God—the compassion God has for those who are heartbroken. Jesus cares when we are crushed inside. He is not a God who is far away from us but a God who is always near. As Christians, we can be sure that our Lord does not hide from us or our emotions. Jesus became human for us, which means He experienced every emotion we experience. Jesus felt brokenhearted and crushed in spirit. Not only is Jesus near to us during our pain, but He also knows what it's like to *feel* pain. Our Lord loves us so much that He left His throne in heaven to come to earth for our salvation and to carry our sorrow and grief caused by sin (Isa. 53:4).

God is near. God cares. God sees our pain. Though we may not experience physical healing from paralysis, we are healed from within from our sin. If we repent and follow Jesus, He gives us a new heart; we enjoy a relationship with God. This relationship will never be broken and will carry us through times of joy as well as suffering. What a God we serve, who is near to us in our brokenness and pain!

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT SAD OR BROKENHEARTED? HOW CAN YOU LEAN ON JESUS IN THOSE MOMENTS?**
- **HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT OUR GOD CARES FOR US WHEN WE ARE HURTING? HOW DOES THE GOSPEL SPEAK TO OUR SUFFERING?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CARING FOR US. THANK YOU FOR LOVING US SO MUCH THAT YOU CARRIED OUR SORROWS TO THE CROSS. HELP US TO RELY ON YOU WHEN WE FEEL CRUSHED INSIDE. STRENGTHEN US AND HELP US TO LEAN ON JESUS.



DAY THREE

EXODUS 2:23-25; 3:7-8

Louis Zamperini was an American soldier in World War II. He survived a plane crash in the Pacific Ocean, where the Japanese rescued him only to beat, starve, and mistreat him in a prisoner of war camp. Louis often wondered if his suffering would ever end. Ultimately, not only did his physical suffering end, but Louis became a Christian and received forgiveness from his sin. The Israelites suffered as slaves in Egypt for much longer than Louis—about 400 years! They cried out to God to save them, but His answer was not immediate. Surely, they wondered if God heard them and cared about them. Surely, God seemed far from them. But God is never far from His people. God heard Israel and sent Moses to bring them out of bondage in Egypt. Moses didn't do this by his own power, but God used him for His purposes. God, through Moses, brought His people out of Egypt and would ultimately lead them into the promised land, which He had promised to Abraham long before.

This story of God leading Israel out of suffering in Egypt shows us that God is near. He cares deeply about the pain of His people. In fact, He cares so much about the pain of His people that He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. The Son of God became a man—so near to us that He suffered in our place to save us from our sins. And now, His Spirit lives within us, walking with us until we reach our eternal home, which God promised to those who call on Him for salvation. Praise God that He is near and hears the cries of His people! He hears and cares for His people today as much as He cared for those He brought out of Egypt long ago. Even greater than the rescue from Egyptian slavery is our rescue from sin and death. Be encouraged: God is never far from the cries of His people.

- **HOW CAN YOU REMIND YOURSELF THAT GOD CARES DEEPLY FOR YOU WHEN YOU'RE WALKING THROUGH PAIN?**
- **HOW DO YOU HANDLE DIFFICULT SEASONS? DO YOU TURN TO GOD OR AWAY FROM HIM? HOW CAN YOU TURN TO HIM?**

PRAY

FATHER, WE PRAISE YOU AND ARE GRATEFUL THAT YOU ARE A GOD WHO IS NEAR. PLEASE HELP US TO REMEMBER THAT YOU HEAR US WHEN WE CRY OUT TO YOU AND TO ALWAYS TURN TO YOU FIRST WHEN LIFE HURTS.



DAY FOUR

MARK 2:11-12

Have you ever been sick? Maybe you had a cold or the flu and felt like it would never end. The man Jesus healed had been sick for years. His body didn't work how it was supposed to. Jesus healed him of this physical sickness and gave him freedom from his disease. But Jesus didn't stop there because the truth is that Jesus cares more for our spiritual sickness. Even more serious than the man's physical need was his spiritual need. Jesus forgave the man's sin. When He did this, the man then used his new ability to walk to glorify God and to tell everyone about what Jesus had done for him. This man's entire purpose in life changed the moment Jesus healed him. He saw nothing better or more fitting to do with his new ability to walk than to give glory to God!

We may not be paralyzed, but we share a common sickness with the paralytic and with each other: We are all sinners. Jesus offers us forgiveness of our sins and renewed relationship with God through Himself. And when He forgives us, we gain new purpose! Our lives change in that moment. We are free to live as we were meant to before sin messed everything up. We can live to glorify God in all that we do and tell others about the hope we have in Jesus. The paralyzed man was not only free to walk but to walk in a way that glorified God. When Jesus saves us, we are freed from sin, but we are also empowered to glorify God and tell others about our Lord. May we do this always.

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GIVE GLORY TO GOD? HOW CAN WE DO THIS WELL?**
- **HOW HAVE YOU SEEN GOD MEET NEEDS IN YOUR LIFE?**

PRAY

FATHER, WE THANK YOU THAT YOU ARE A GOD WHO HEALS. WE KNOW THAT WE CAN TRUST YOU WITH OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS BECAUSE YOU HAVE ALREADY MET OUR GREATEST NEED—HEALING US FROM OUR SIN.





DAY FIVE

1 JOHN 1:9

Imagine you have done something against your parents' rules. You apologize, but your actions hurt them, and they're disappointed in your behavior. Although they forgive you, you might struggle at first to feel forgiven.

We can sometimes feel this way in our relationship with God as well. Remember, Jesus did heal the paralyzed man, but more importantly, Jesus forgave his sin. In Christ, we can have our sins completely forgiven. When God tells us that our sins are cast as far as the east is from the west, He means that they are gone forever, never to return (Ps. 103:12). We will still sin and make mistakes, but we can rest assured that because of Jesus's work, we can repent and receive perfect forgiveness. The truth though? We may struggle to *feel* forgiven because we know we don't deserve it. And this is true! We haven't done anything to deserve the forgiveness God offers us. Be encouraged! Jesus lived a perfect life (because we couldn't) and died the death we deserved; He bought our forgiveness with His blood. We get grace, a free gift from God—a gift we didn't earn. We can never mess up so much or too badly that we can't come to Jesus. Instead of running in shame when we sin, we can run to God. He is ready, willing, and able to forgive all who come to Him. So, when you struggle to believe that God can forgive you, remember that forgiveness is rooted in what Jesus did for you. Your sins are removed and washed away by the blood, and God's love for you is faithful and great. Praise God for these wonderful truths!

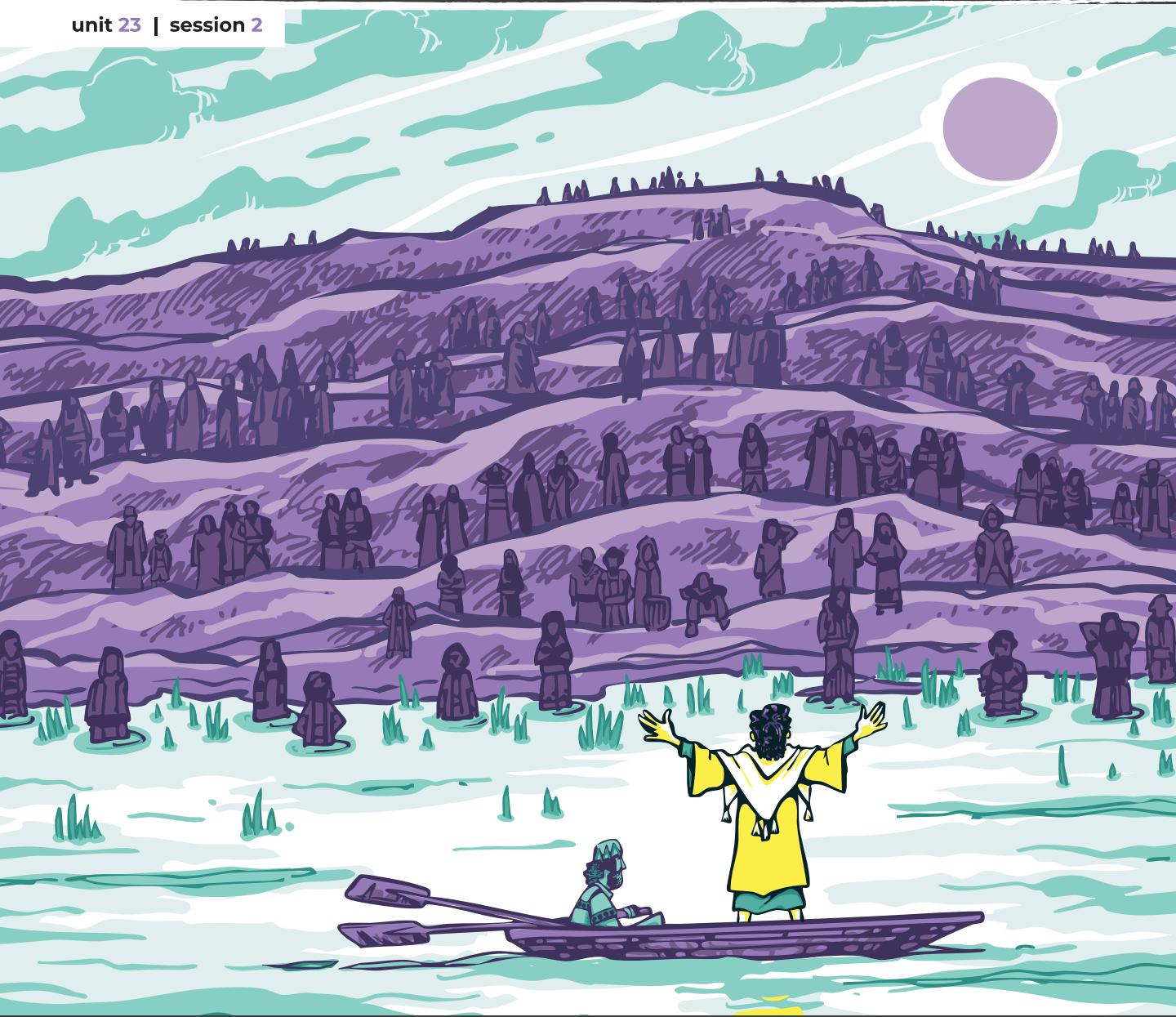
- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO FEEL FORGIVEN? HOW CAN YOU REMIND YOURSELF THAT IN CHRIST, YOUR SINS ARE TRULY AND COMPLETELY FORGIVEN?**
- **HOW CAN YOU BALANCE ASKING GOD TO HELP YOU WITH PHYSICAL NEEDS WHILE ALSO REALIZING YOUR GREATER NEED IS HELP WITH TURNING FROM SIN?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR JESUS. THANK YOU FOR SENDING HIM TO CARRY OUR SINS AND PROVIDE FORGIVENESS FOR US. HELP US TO LIVE IN THE FREEDOM CHRIST HAS GIVEN US.

SEND THEM OUT

unit 23 | session 2



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.

INVITED AND WELCOMED

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.

Mark 2-3

JESUS CALLS THE LOWEST

MARK 2:13-17

13 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. 15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

JESUS SENDS US

MARK 3:7-19

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. 9 And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. 13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons. 16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus invites us to serve Him.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION



CALLING

The calling of God to salvation happens in two ways: externally through the proclamation of the gospel and internally through the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the person who hears. Both of these callings are essential, and both work together to bring someone to faith in Christ (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

DISCUSSION



JESUS CALLS THE LOWEST

MARK 2:13-17

-  • How did religious leaders feel about Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners? How did Jesus answer them (v. 17)?
- How did Levi respond to Jesus's invitation? Why do you think he responded this way?
-  • How was Levi different from the earlier disciples and their callings? What does that teach us about Jesus?

JESUS SENDS US

MARK 3:7-19

- Why did such a large crowd come to Jesus?
-  • Why did Jesus call the twelve disciples to Him? What were they sent out to do? What about us?
-  • How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus called them? What fears could they have felt? How does this encourage you?



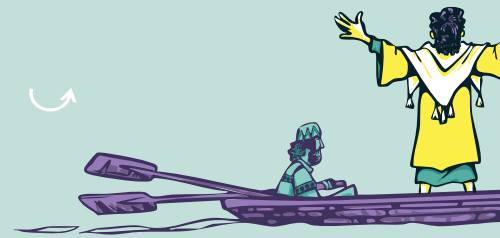
WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE GOD COULDN'T USE YOU?
WHY DOES GOD USE ORDINARY, SINFUL PEOPLE?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Comparing ourselves to others has never been easier than it is now. We measure our worth against others, but in our culture of edited photos, filters, and highlight reels, insecurity runs rampant. We may ask, "I'll never be as good as them, so why even try?" This insecurity comes from what some call "the comparison trap," and when left unchecked by the truth of the gospel, comparison leads to envy, lust, and even self-hatred. This distorted view of our value and worth infects our view of God's calling on our lives; insecurity convinces us that though we are saved, we still aren't worthy enough to participate in God's mission. But when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He invited them to join Him in reaching others (Mark 1:17; Matt. 10:5-8). When we fall into the comparison trap, we discredit the power of God to transform us! The gospel calls us out of comparison and into security because of who Jesus is and what He has done. God values us so much that He sent His Son for our salvation. And He chooses to use us for His glory, regardless of where He found us.



DAY ONE



1 CORINTHIANS 1:20-25

Well-meaning adults often say things like, “If you want something in life, you better earn it.” Sure, the world works this way to some degree. Nothing is free, and most success and rewards require our effort. But what about when it comes to our relationship with God? Remember, in this week’s lesson, Levi didn’t do anything that would make him deserving of Jesus calling him. In fact, Levi had done quite the opposite, proving he did not earn the right to follow Jesus. God calling or using us has nothing to do with how good we are or how deserving we are. The difficult truth is that none of us are good enough or deserving enough because we’ve all fallen short of God’s holy standards (Rom. 3:23). The gospel, instead, is the good news that Jesus is good enough for us and in our place. To cleanse us of our sins, He took the punishment He didn’t deserve so that He might give us the reward we don’t deserve. He died our death so that we may have life.

The gospel is upside down from how the world works! Paul reminds us that the gospel is foolishness to the world, but to Christians, it is the very power and wisdom of God. We are worthy only because Jesus is worthy. So, let us not be anxious or feel unqualified to be called by God. Your qualification never rested on your shoulders but on Jesus. Take joy in the fact that He is worthy enough; celebrate the truth that He is good enough. And because of Him, we are welcomed by God into His kingdom.

- **WHY SHOULD WE REGULARLY REMIND OURSELVES THAT WE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS BUT BY GRACE ALONE?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU DEPENDED ON BEING “GOOD” TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD? WHY DOESN’T THIS WORK?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR NOT MAKING US WORK TO EARN YOUR LOVE. HELP US TO RELY ON YOU AND TO REMEMBER THAT YOU USE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE. NONE OF US ARE TOO SINFUL FOR THE BLOOD OF JESUS TO WASH CLEAN.



DAY TWO

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

Pastor Alistair Begg once said that the only thing we could say if we were asked how we got into heaven is this: “The Man on the middle cross said I could come.” Often, we emphasize that no one is too sinful to come to Jesus. Praise God for that truth. We should also remind ourselves that no one is good enough to deserve coming to Jesus. There is no good thing in us that the Lord looks at and decides we make the team. In fact, God doesn’t show favoritism (Rom. 2:11). We have nothing in us to boast about and instead find our worth only in the fact that God created us and values us. He has called us because of grace and love.

When Paul wrote that we should boast only in Christ, he reminded his readers that worldly significance and importance don’t matter in God’s kingdom. Wealth and knowledge mean nothing. Paul wrote to very normal people—people who, like us, had done nothing special or deserving of God’s goodness toward them. God called them purely out of love and grace. Because Jesus came and lived the perfect life we could not live and died the death we deserved, we are able, based on His work alone, to be called children of God (1 John 3:1). So, let us realize that we have nothing to boast in other than Christ, and we have everything to boast in because of Christ! We have worth because Jesus shares His inheritance with us. We must guard our hearts against pride—against believing we worked our way to God. The truth is that Jesus accomplished the work for us. The cross reminds us that our sins nailed Jesus there, while Jesus’s love and obedience to the Father held Him there. Though we are unworthy, Jesus gives us unshakable worth through His sacrifice.

- **WHY IS IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO SEE OURSELVES AS UNWORTHY ON OUR OWN? HOW CAN WE FIGHT AGAINST PRIDE?**
- **HOW CAN WE BALANCE UNDERSTANDING THAT WE HAVE TREMENDOUS WORTH IN CHRIST YET ALSO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE UNWORTHY APART FROM HIM?**

PRAY

FATHER, HELP US WHEN WE ARE PRIDEFUL. HELP US WHEN WE THINK THAT WE DESERVE WHAT YOU HAVE GIVEN US. THANK YOU FOR WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE AND FOR THE WORTH WE HAVE IN HIM.



DAY THREE

ROMANS 5:6-11

When you start looking for a future job one day, you will probably have to fill out an application or turn in a resume. Your resume will hopefully convince your future boss that you are the right person for the job and worth hiring. You may also have to answer questions related to whether or not you have ever committed a crime. Basically, when you want a job, you have to prove that you are the right person with the right skills and a good reputation.

Sometimes, we can be tempted to see our relationship with God in this way. We think we must prove ourselves to God and show Him that we are good enough before coming to Him. We generate a list in our heads of all the good things we've done, the ways we've helped others, the good decisions we've made. Thankfully, the Lord doesn't require this from us. Jesus spent time with sinners and offered forgiveness to them even while they were still a mess. He did this so often that the religious leaders often despised Him for it. Today's passage says that while we were sinners living in rebellion against God, even then, Christ died for us. We don't have to prove our worth to God. He sent Christ out of His love and His desire to restore sinners, so that in Christ, they may be counted worthy! Our sin creates our need for a Savior; Jesus came for this reason. We don't need to clean ourselves up before coming to Jesus. He is enough. His love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). Jesus came for sinners, not righteous people (Luke 5:32); there is no righteousness apart from Him! Christ sees poor and needy sinners and lovingly and mercifully comes for them, giving His life to reconcile them to God and make them new. And as we walk with Him, He works in us—cleaning up our mess, showing us our sin, and helping us live differently.

- **HAVE YOU EVER FELT UNWORTHY TO COME TO JESUS? DID YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEEDED TO CLEAN UP YOUR LIFE BEFORE BECOMING A CHRISTIAN? HOW DOES THE GOSPEL RESPOND TO THOSE FEARS?**
- **HOW CAN WE IMITATE JESUS'S EXAMPLE OF COMING TO THE LOST IN OUR DAILY LIVES—AT SCHOOL, ON OUR TEAM, IN OUR FAMILY?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR COMING TO US WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS. HELP US TO REMEMBER CHRIST'S SACRIFICE FOR US AND TO IMITATE HIS SACRIFICIAL LOVE FOR SINNERS.



DAY FOUR

LUKE 15:1-7

What is your best friend's heart like? Your parents' hearts? When we ask what someone's heart is like, we are asking who this person is at the core—their truest self. What is Jesus's heart like? Maybe this question seems odd, but it is actually important that we seek to understand His heart. Jesus's heart reveals how He sees the poor, the sick, the ones ignored by society, lost sinners; His heart also reveals the lengths He was willing to go to save us.

Before Jesus called him, Levi was certainly a lost sheep, like the one in today's passage. In fact, all of us were once that one lost sheep that Jesus left the ninety-nine for to come and save us. The heart of our Lord is the heart of a loving shepherd, who will go to great lengths to save his lost sheep. Even more than a shepherd who leaves his flock, Jesus left heaven to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He emptied Himself and became human so that He could die for us and save us from our sins (Phil. 2:7). He came not just for those who were already serving God but also for those who were hopelessly lost and wandering without Him. Knowing that our Savior is humble, a Shepherd who lowered Himself to save the lost, should move us to live humbly as well. We can pray for God to give us a heart for the lost, a heart that cares deeply for the salvation of all people. We can easily say that we care, but we must also show that we care for the lost as much as Jesus cares for them. We must look for ways to serve others and lead them to our Shepherd. Do you care for others this way? Today, ask for God to break your heart for lost sheep. Then, look for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

- **SPEND SOME TIME REMEMBERING WHEN JESUS SAVED YOU. HOW DID YOUR LIFE CHANGE?**
- **ARE YOU DEEPLY CONCERNED FOR THE LOST? WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT OUR HEARTS WHEN WE AREN'T BROKEN FOR THE LOST?**

PRAY

FATHER, WE ARE HUMBLLED BY YOUR HUMILITY—THAT YOU WOULD LEAVE THE NINETY-NINE TO SEEK OUT ONE LOST SHEEP. GIVE US HEARTS THAT BREAK FOR THE LOST AND FEET THAT MOVE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.





DAY FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9

When missionaries leave for countries that are hostile to Christians, they often write letters to their families in case they never return. Following Jesus is worth more than life to them. Levi likely had a comfortable life collecting taxes for the Romans, but when Jesus called him, he left everything and became poor to follow Jesus.

In today's passage, Paul explained that nothing is worth more than knowing Jesus. In fact, compared to knowing Christ, everything else is like worthless garbage, or dung! Yep, you read that correctly! Coming from Paul, a man with great worldly and religious achievements, this says a lot! Many of us are fortunate enough to live in a place where Christianity is legal and, to some degree, even accepted by our culture. Many of us will never experience persecution for our faith. But for early Christians, and for Paul, persecution and death were very real threats. Still, they recognized that Jesus was worth any sacrifice they paid. Our biggest threats? Being left out. Being made fun of. Being misunderstood and labeled. And because living for Jesus is relatively easy for many of us, we take the honor for granted. We fall into spiritual laziness. We follow Christ half-heartedly, not wholly. We struggle with the idea of leaving behind friends, family, or our material possessions to follow Jesus. Following Jesus requires us to lay down our lives at the His feet. Following Jesus means that we deny ourselves—our selfish and sinful desires—take up our cross, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). We can trust in Jesus alone for our righteousness, our contentment, and our joy. Nothing on earth can provide these things for us. So, let us pray that the Spirit helps us to love Christ so much that the things of this world become far less important to us. May we love Jesus so much that we count everything else as loss compared to knowing Him.

- **WHAT HAVE YOU LEFT BEHIND TO FOLLOW JESUS?**
- **WHAT DO YOU STRUGGLE TO LEAVE BEHIND OR GIVE UP TO FOLLOW JESUS?**

PRAY

FATHER, HELP US TO SEE YOUR SON AS WORTH FAR MORE THAN ANYTHING THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER. HELP US TO FOLLOW YOU WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

“THE LORD OF *THE SABBATH*”

unit 23 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

God's mercy allowed His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for humanity's sin. We have always missed the mark of God's holy standards of the law. But through Christ, we are rescued from the penalty of death because of His love and goodness.

COMPASSIONATE AUTHORITY

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 12

MERCY IS GREATER THAN SACRIFICE

MATTHEW 12:1-8

1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." 3 He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? 6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. 7 And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

LOVING OTHERS FULFILLS GOD'S LAW

MATTHEW 12:9-14

9 He went on from there and entered their synagogue. 10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

MAIN POINT.

God desires mercy and goodness over rituals and laws.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS MERCIFUL

Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God's withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

DISCUSSION

MERCY IS GREATER THAN SACRIFICE

MATTHEW 12:1-8

- How do you rest? What mattered most about Sabbath to Pharisees?
- ✝ • Read Hosea 6:6. What do you think it means that God desires "steadfast love" (or mercy), not sacrifice?
- 📖 • What does Jesus mean by claiming He is "Lord of the Sabbath"? Should Christians observe the Sabbath today?

LOVING OTHERS FULFILLS GOD'S LAW

MATTHEW 12:9-14

- 🧠 • What point did Jesus make in the example of a sheep falling into a pit on the Sabbath?
- Why did the Pharisees plot Jesus's death?
- ♥ • Why do we struggle to love others the way Jesus did? How are we sometimes more like Pharisees?



HOW CAN YOU SHOW MERCY TO SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE WHO DOESN'T DESERVE IT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Does our culture celebrate getting revenge or showing mercy? The world is slow to praise mercy and quick to reward harsh online comments, stories of revenge, and people getting what they deserve. This mentality can shape how we respond to offense, but this is not the way of the gospel. We've all made mistakes; we've all sinned and fallen short of God's standard (Rom. 3:23). But in the face of all our failures, God shows us mercy—forgiveness instead of the punishment we deserve. The core of the gospel message is that sinners are not given what they deserve (death) but are given what they could never earn (salvation; Eph. 2:4-5). When you believe in this gospel, you're no longer conformed to culture but transformed in your mind (Rom. 12:2). The more we dwell on the mercy that has been given to us through Jesus Christ, the more we grow in our ability to show mercy to others. Mercy transforms our minds and hearts so that we carry mercy to others in an effort to reveal Jesus to the world.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 12:1-14



Have you ever had to follow a rule that you just didn't understand or agree with? Immediately obeying rules is often the right response and shows a humble heart. But sometimes, not understanding the reason for a rule can eventually lead to confusion; because we don't understand the point of the rule, we become bitter about following it.

The Pharisees, or religious leaders, became confused about the Sabbath and began to add their own restrictions to God's command; even more, they didn't understand God's heart behind the command for the Sabbath. God gave the Sabbath command to Moses and the Israelites as a good gift. They were to set aside a day to rest in God and worship Him, instead of going about their normal work. The Pharisees warped the Sabbath day into a burden by adding extra restrictions to it. They focused so much on what they were doing and whether or not they were breaking a command that they lost focus on God. Jesus explained that the Sabbath was never meant to be a burden but a day of worshipful rest. The Sabbath is still God's good gift for us! In taking a day from our busy schedules to focus on God, we imitate God's rest from creation. We are recharged and refocused—more equipped to live out the Christian life. Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, reminds us that the Sabbath was for us, not to focus only on ourselves, but on Christ and what He has done to accomplish our eternal rest. It is a day of physical rest that points to our spiritual rest. Regardless of what cultures says, Sabbath is still a holy day.

- **DO YOU HAVE A SET DAY OR TIME DURING THE WEEK TO REST AND FOCUS ON THE LORD? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO FREE UP MORE TIME FOR HOLY, INTENTIONAL REST?**
- **WHY IS THE SABBATH A GOOD GIFT FOR US? HOW DOES IT REFLECT GOD'S WORK AND REST?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR REST. WE WERE MADE TO FIND OUR GREATEST JOY AND PEACE IN YOU AND NOT IN OURSELVES OR IN OUR WORK. HELP US TO REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AND TO RESIST THE LIE THAT WE'RE TOO BUSY TO SPEND TIME WITH YOU.



DAY TWO

MARK 3:1-6

The odds are high that someone has sinned against you. This may have made you upset or angry. When this happens, we often feel justified in our anger. Surely God feels anger over sin and injustice. Christians should feel anger over sin as well because it causes harm (Ps. 5:5-6). However, sin should also make us sorrowful because Jesus gave His life for it. God's wrath and anger toward sin is righteous and holy, but it mingles with His own grief toward sin as well (Gen. 6:6; Matt. 23:37-39). In today's passage, Christ grieved because the religious leaders' hearts were so hardened that they couldn't see someone in need of mercy and healing. The Lord desires the salvation of all people, and though He is rightly angry with sin, He is also sorrowful over how sin has infected His good creation, especially human beings who bear His image (2 Pet. 3:9). God's response to sin, therefore, should form our response to sin. God feels anger and sorrow over sin, but ultimately, He shows us mercy when we call on Him for salvation. Though sin can make us angry at times, our frustration must point toward the real enemy—Satan. We should feel sorrow for the sinner, which leads to mercy and the desire for all sinners to repent. We must boldly approach the lost with the truth of the gospel. We must call sin exactly what it is! When we skip this step, we cheapen the gospel. We cheapen Jesus's sacrifice. But we must also share the love of Christ from a heart that desires for others to be saved. When we see sin in the world, may we remember who we were before Christ found us. May we compassionately approach the lost world with the transforming truth of the gospel. Our love for lost people and our desire for them to share in our hope should triumph over our anger at their sin. God's love for us triumphed over sin when He sent Christ to take our punishment. May we follow His example as we help others know the way to freedom and forgiveness.

- **WHY DO WE OFTEN ACT MORE LIKE THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THIS PASSAGE THAN LIKE JESUS?**
- **HOW CAN WE SEEK TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS IN OUR FEELINGS AND ACTIONS TOWARD THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW HIM?**

PRAY

FATHER, EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE RIGHTLY ANGRY WITH OUR SIN, YOU SHOW US MERCY AND LOVE. HELP US TO LOVE LOST PEOPLE AND TO SPEAK THE GOSPEL WITH BOLDNESS.



DAY THREE

HOSEA 6:6

A lot of life seems to depend on how well we can perform. If you play sports, you are judged on how well you can play, how fast you can run, or how accurately you can throw. In school, you earn grades based on your skill in certain subjects. This performance-driven mindset can easily creep into how we view our relationship with God. Our relationship with God and the efforts we make to grow can unintentionally become just another thing we do in our busy lives. Prayer, Bible reading, and going to church become boxes that we check off to make us feel like we are being “good Christians.” But is this how God wants us to live our lives? Thankfully, no.

God wants our love and devotion before He wants our good works. In fact, our good works are like filthy rags when they don’t flow from a heart redeemed by Christ (Isa. 64:6). We do good works, not to make God love us more, but in response to the fact that He has already loved us. How often are we like the Israelites, who thought their burnt offerings and sacrifices would satisfy God, even though their hearts did not love Him? Or the religious leaders, who put their own rules above God’s intention for the law and accused Jesus’s disciples of sinning when they picked grain on the Sabbath? If we’re honest, we are often tempted to see our works or “goodness” as a way of earning God’s love—as a way of showing others how “good” we are. The truth is that no one is good or righteous (Rom. 3:10-12), and our good works don’t make us deserving of God’s love or make Him love us more. He already loved us before we could choose to love Him in return. God first desires our love, not our works. Only when we love Him deeply can we then serve Him rightly.

- **HAVE YOU EVER DONE GOOD WORKS TO EARN PRAISE OR TO IMPRESS PEOPLE? WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?**
- **HOW CAN THE GOSPEL FREE US TO DO GOOD WORKS WITHOUT FEELING LIKE WE MUST WORK TO EARN GOD’S LOVE?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR GRACE. WE COULD NEVER EARN OR DESERVE YOUR LOVE. HELP US TO REMEMBER THE GOSPEL AND TO LOVE YOU IN RETURN—WITH OUR WHOLE HEARTS, HOPING ONLY IN CHRIST AND NOT OUR WORKS.



DAY FOUR

MATTHEW 5:17

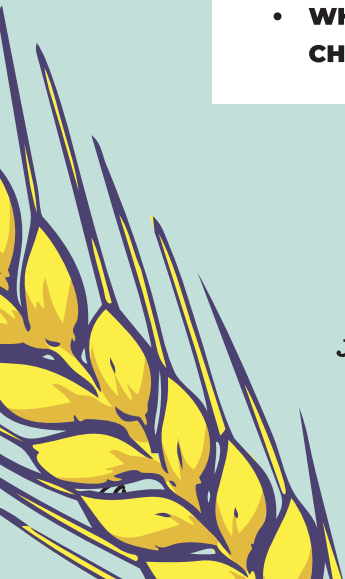
When Jesus healed a person on the Sabbath, many religious leaders accused Him of breaking the command not to work on the Sabbath. By the time Jesus came to earth, the religious leaders had added extra rules to God's law. Perhaps they thought they were being obedient, ensuring that the law would not be broken by giving very specific rules to follow. However, they ended up missing God's point entirely. The religious leaders had forgotten that God gave them the law, not only as a guide for right living, but also as a means for revealing His character to all people. We can't do away with the law, but we shouldn't add to it or see it simply as a list of rules to follow. And if we're honest, many of us have viewed God's commands this way and failed to see that His commands are like a gift, guiding us to know Him and to live for Him.

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, He didn't violate the command to rest on the Sabbath. Instead, He fulfilled the command for the Sabbath to be a holy day, set apart to worship God and rest. His healing on the Sabbath reflected the purpose of the law itself—to allow us to see who God is and to help us be more like Him. Jesus is the only One who followed the law perfectly. He didn't bend the rules; He showed us God's heart for His commands. He fulfilled the law. Jesus showed us what following and living out God's commands looks like. The religious leaders didn't understand the law because they missed God's heart revealed in the law. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, lovingly showed us the intention of the law. He showed us both the heart of God in the law and the way to apply it in real life.

- **WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT GOD'S COMMANDS, SPECIFICALLY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, DO YOU SEE THEM AS SIMPLY A LIST OF RULES OR AS SOMETHING ELSE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN SEE MORE OF GOD'S CHARACTER IN HIS COMMANDS TO US?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR SHOWING US WHO YOU ARE IN YOUR COMMANDS TO US. THANK YOU THAT JESUS FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US SO THAT WE CAN SEE YOUR HEART AND FOLLOW YOUR COMMANDS BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.





DAY FIVE

MATTHEW 11:28-30

Rules, rules, and more rules. Our days can feel weighted down with rules at school, rules at home, rules in our groups and activities. If we're honest, we can feel like following Jesus is a list of rules too. Want to hear some good news? The Bible never supports this mentality. Following the Lord is so much more than following rules.

Jesus never taught that His disciples should be burdened by His commands. Just before the passage in this week's lesson, Jesus taught that anyone with a heavy burden should come to Him and receive rest. Jesus offers us rest because He fulfilled the law for us and is able to forgive our sins. The heavy burden of the law was placed on His shoulders, the only One sinless and worthy enough to carry it. Because Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly, He then could offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all who could not keep the law perfectly—for all of us. Therefore, if we place our faith in Jesus, then we receive rest from the unbearable weight of having to follow the law to be in right standing with God. Instead, because we are in Christ, we receive His righteousness and are saved and accepted by God, only by grace through faith. We are freed from the burden of the law, and instead, we are able to rest in the fact that Christ's sacrifice is enough to save us when we call on Him in faith. This doesn't mean we do away with the law and not seek to obey it. Actually, we are gifted with the Holy Spirit, who frees us and empowers us to obey! We seek to imitate Jesus in all that we do, while also realizing that if and when we fail to do it perfectly, we can repent and find forgiveness in Him who alone is perfect.

- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT FOLLOWING JESUS FEELS LIKE A BURDEN OR A LIST OF RULES TO YOU?**
- **HOW DOES THE TRUTH THAT JESUS HAS FULFILLED THE LAW PERFECTLY EMPOWER US TO FOLLOW HIM JOYFULLY AND WITHOUT FEELING WEIGHED DOWN?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU THAT CHRIST HAS FULFILLED THE LAW. HELP ME TO COME TO JESUS FOR ALL OF MY NEEDS AND TO FOLLOW HIM WITH MY WHOLE HEART, NOT WITH ANXIETY BUT BECAUSE OF THE FREEDOM I HAVE IN HIM.

“KINGDOM OF GOD”

unit 23 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers what it looked like to live as citizens of His kingdom. Just as Jesus came into the world to do the Father’s will, we too are to live for Him and represent His kingdom here on earth.

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 6

OUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN

LUKE 6:20-26

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

OUR WAY IS COUNTERCULTURAL

LUKE 6:27-36

27 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. 32 "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

MAIN POINT.

The way of Jesus calls us to live counterculturally.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN AS SELFISHNESS

When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mindset that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God. Because sin is revealed in our tendency to be “curved inward” toward self, it is the opposite of love. Love looks outwardly to place others before oneself, operating from the mindset that others are more important (Phil. 2:3). Where sin selfishly seeks personal gratification and happiness, love works for the joy of others in the hopes of making others happy in God.

DISCUSSION

OUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN

LUKE 6:20-26

- The disciples would face trials and persecution. How do these verses help prepare them? And us?
- ♥ • What distracts us from valuing eternal rewards more than earthly rewards?
- How is God’s kingdom opposite from the world? What part of this passage challenges you most? Why?

OUR WAY IS COUNTERCULTURAL

LUKE 6:27-36

- 🧠 • What does it look like to “love your enemies”? Why is this so difficult?
- ✝ • How are we “sons of the Most High” if we love our enemies? What if we don’t love our enemies?
- 📖 • Can love and selfishness coexist? Explain.



**HOW DO WE LOVE OUR ENEMIES IN OUR DAILY LIVES?
HOW DO WE BALANCE THIS WITH STANDING UP
FOR OURSELVES?**

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever heard the advice, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”? This advice is another way of saying that we should have a backup plan or have other options. But when it comes to following Jesus, this advice isn’t helpful. Jesus warned that we can never serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). When we place our faith in Jesus and begin following Him, we commit to serving Jesus only—not Jesus plus something else. We will battle the temptation to serve lesser “gods”—idols of this world, like sports, social media, popularity, self-image—rather than worshiping and serving our Creator. We search for peace and joy in these things, when Jesus taught that we can find peace and joy only in a relationship with Him. Money falsely promises security and invites us to give our lives to accumulate more. Material possessions give us temporary happiness. Food promises satisfaction and invites us to enjoy more of it. Our hearts may long for lesser “gods,” but Jesus reminds us that nothing worldly can go with us into eternity. He calls us to deny ourselves and to find true satisfaction in Him—peace and joy worldly circumstances can’t diminish.



DAY ONE

LUKE 6:20

“Blessed are you. . .” This is an important phrase to understand for this week’s lessons. “Blessed” in the context of our passage means to experience a deep joy because God looks at you favorably—with grace, love, and mercy. Jesus explained that the poor are blessed, for the kingdom of God is theirs. Matthew’s account adds, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3). So, Jesus may have meant that those who are poor financially, as well as those who are poor in spirit, are blessed by God. If you’ve experienced financial struggles in your family, then you know how difficult this is. The idea that blessing and poverty can work together feels radical and difficult to grasp. But Jesus reminds us that we can’t hope in money for our satisfaction or our comfort; instead, we hope only in Him. We can have worldly riches yet be utterly poor if we don’t have a relationship with Jesus. He reminds us that we have something greater than this world: His kingdom! What a tremendous reward waiting for those who hope in Jesus instead of the things of the world!

Financial struggles are real and difficult, but our struggle with sin runs more deeply, oppressing us and robbing us of the abundant life Jesus promised for believers. Being poor in spirit is the humble recognition that we are completely bankrupt without Jesus—completely unable to enter God’s kingdom. When we admit that we are poor in this way—that we desperately need Jesus to free us from sin—then we are richly blessed because He welcomes us into His family and shares His eternal inheritance with us. The beauty of this beatitude is that while we may be poor in a worldly sense, we are rich because we know Jesus (Phil. 3:7-9). A relationship with Him gives us all we need to be content (Phil. 4:12-13).

- **WHY MUST WE ALL RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE “POOR IN SPIRIT”? WHAT MAKES US RICH?**
- **WHY IS IT HARD TO REMEMBER WE’RE BLESSED WHEN LIFE IS DIFFICULT? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SHIFT YOUR MIND TO THE HOPE OF HEAVEN INSTEAD OF WORLDLY COMFORT?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CARING ABOUT ME WHEN
LIFE IS DIFFICULT. HELP ME REST IN THE PEACE
AND JOY OF KNOWING THAT I’M A CITIZEN OF
YOUR KINGDOM.**



DAY TWO

LUKE 6:21a

Think back to a time when you were very hungry. Maybe it was before Thanksgiving dinner because you hadn't eaten anything all day. Your stomach felt empty, and even smelling the delicious food made your stomach growl. Hunger is the topic of today's verse and a topic most of us can understand.

Jesus explained that those who are hungry now are blessed because they will be filled. Jesus likely meant two things: First, those who lack physical food on earth are not forgotten by their heavenly Father. He doesn't delight in our suffering and feels compassion for those in need. One day, those who are hungry will never be hungry again. What a blessing! Our God is not so far away from us that He doesn't see and deeply care for our needs. Additionally, Jesus pointed to spiritual hunger; in Matthew's account of this beatitude, Jesus explained that those who hunger or thirst for righteousness will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). Hunger for righteousness is a good kind of hunger—a hunger that God satisfies here and now. When Jesus saves us, He gives us His righteousness as our own (Phil. 3:9). Even more, by the Spirit, He begins a process called sanctification, through which we are made more like Him every day (2 Cor. 3:18). Ultimately, we will be made perfectly righteous when Jesus returns one day. Until then and while we wait, we can hunger for righteousness and allow God to fill us. We can rest in knowing that our good Father cares for our physical needs too. If you struggle to hunger and thirst for God, you may be too consumed by worldly comforts. Ask God to help you hunger and thirst for Him instead, and He promises to fill you—now in part and one day, fully.

- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR GOD?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE THIS WEEK TO GROW IN DESIRING GOD?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR BEING NEAR AND FOR
CARING ABOUT MY NEEDS. HELP MY HUNGER FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS TO INCREASE DAILY SO THAT I CAN
BE MORE LIKE YOUR SON.**



DAY THREE

LUKE 6:21b

Can you remember the last time you cried? Maybe you cried tears of joy, but more often, our tears come from a place of sadness. The world can be so cruel sometimes, and the very nature of life involves pain. As followers of Jesus, we can know that our sadness won't last forever. And even now, the Holy Spirit comforts us and reminds us of eternity, when tears and sorrow will cease (Rev. 21:4). Jesus explained that even though we will certainly experience pain on earth, we have joy that comes from knowing Him—from knowing we will one day be with Him forever in everlasting joy.

Your heavenly Father cares about your tears and your pain, so much that He sent His Son for you. Jesus experienced tremendous pain during His time on earth. He felt the same feelings we often feel. In fact, the prophet Isaiah called Him a man of suffering (Isa. 53:3). Our Savior not only cares for our pain, but He has felt our pain. He is a Savior to whom we can run for comfort when we hurt. Jesus told His disciples that in this world, they would have all kinds of trouble but to remember that He had overcome the world (John 16:33). What does this mean for us? Following Jesus doesn't secure us an easy or comfortable life, free from sadness or pain. However, following Jesus will be worth it; one day, we will be with Him in a place where sadness and pain are no more. One day, all that hurts and is wrong here will be made right. Praise God!

- **WHEN LIFE IS HARD, DO YOU RUN TO THE LORD FIRST OR TO OTHER THINGS? WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC WAYS YOU CAN RELY ON THE LORD WHEN LIFE IS PAINFUL?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING THAT JESUS FELT SADNESS AND PAIN HELP US WHEN WE SUFFER?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CARING WHEN I FEEL
SORROW. HELP ME RUN TO YOU WHEN LIFE IS FULL
OF SADNESS. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU FULLY.**



DAY FOUR

LUKE 6:22

Think back to a time when someone made fun of you or when you were left out of something others were doing. You likely felt let down, discouraged, or embarrassed. You probably didn't feel joy, right?

When Jesus says that we are blessed for being hated, excluded, or insulted because of our devotion to Him, we probably struggle to agree. It seems so upside down compared to what we feel. Responding to insults with joy and gratitude isn't natural. However, Jesus tells us that the prophets before Him were hated because of their faithfulness. Jesus Himself was crucified because of His faithfulness to obey the Father. So, when we are excluded or hated because we faithfully follow Jesus, then we follow in the footsteps of the prophets and Jesus Himself. And this can produce joy because we are sharing in Jesus's suffering (1 Pet. 4:13). We imitate Jesus in a real way when we lift up His name, despite being hated or misunderstood. Is this easy? No, it's truly not. Is it always worth it? Yes, absolutely! If we follow Jesus and seek to live according to His commands, we will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). So, being hated or excluded because of Jesus is great evidence that we are truly seeking to follow Him. Sometimes, our suffering can be evidence of our faithfulness, helping us to take joy in all circumstances. The joy that comes from following and knowing Jesus doesn't depend on circumstances. And even when the world rejects us because we live differently, we can rejoice in knowing that we're reflecting Jesus by living as a light in darkness.

- **HAS ANYONE EVER MADE FUN OF YOU FOR FOLLOWING JESUS? HOW DID YOU RESPOND?**
- **HOW CAN YOU GUARD AGAINST SADNESS OR ENVY WHEN YOU ARE EXCLUDED FROM THINGS BECAUSE YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN? HOW CAN YOU BE JOYFUL IN THESE MOMENTS?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING EXCLUDED FOR FOLLOWING YOU. HELP ME IN THESE MOMENTS TO RESPOND WELL AND TO JOYFULLY FOLLOW JESUS, EVEN WHEN I'M EXCLUDED FOR DOING SO. YOU'RE WORTH THE COST.





DAY FIVE

LUKE 6:24-26

We naturally desire comfort and praise. You may think that if only you had more money, more food, more achievements, or more recognition, then you would finally be happy. We try to fill the God-shaped holes in our lives with material possessions, worldly pleasures, and even relationships. But these things will never satisfy us because God designed us to need more—to need Him.

Jesus flipped the script. Instead of pronouncing that blessings flow from worldly comforts or status, He pronounced woes, or the opposite of blessing! Being rich, being full, and receiving the praise of other people won't fulfill us. Now, if we're honest, this concept seems strange. Certainly, having money, being well fed, or receiving praise isn't sinful. However, if we place our hope in any of these things, we have gone terribly wrong. The beatitudes show us that our eternal hope is not found in this world but in Jesus alone. Our satisfaction can't be found in material things because God created us to be satisfied in Him alone. Think of it this way: If what gives you peace or joy can be taken away, then you're depending on something earthly for what only God can provide. Anything and anyone besides Him will come up short. Jesus very clearly showed us that while being rich isn't sinful, if being rich tempts us to put our hope in money, then we're better off being poor. If being full moves us to seek our highest good in food, we are better off hungry. If being praised by others causes us to think too highly of ourselves, then we are better off being excluded and rejected. C.S. Lewis once said, "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."² Praise God! Our hope is in Jesus, and our citizenship is in His kingdom—a kingdom that can never be shaken!

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PLACE YOUR HOPE IN SOMETHING? WHEN HAVE YOU PLACED YOUR HOPE IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN JESUS?**
- **HOW CAN WE ENJOY EARTHLY BLESSINGS IN A WAY THAT GLORIFIES GOD?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU THAT MY ONLY HOPE IS JESUS CHRIST. HELP ME TO RELY SOLELY ON HIM FOR MY SATISFACTION AND TO ENJOY EARTHLY THINGS RIGHTLY. I WANT TO GLORIFY YOU WITH ALL I HAVE INSTEAD OF SEEKING MY OWN COMFORT.

"THE ONE"

unit 24 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus answered John the Baptist's question, He pointed to miracles only the Messiah would have authority to do. Jesus would later demonstrate His authority over sin and evil in a greater way through His crucifixion and resurrection. While many continue to reject Him, one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess He is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).

EVIDENCE FOR FAITH

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 11

JESUS GAVE US EVIDENCE

MATTHEW 11:1-10

1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'"

JESUS CALLS US TO FAITH

MATTHEW 11:11-19

11 "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear. 16 But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, 17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

MAIN POINT.

We can look to Jesus's works to settle our doubts.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION



ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE

Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through the process of illumination. When it comes to applying the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not rely ultimately on human reason in the process of interpretation, nor do we rely solely on an institution or body of scholars. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is on the work of the Holy Spirit who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (John 14:15-18; 16:7-15).

DISCUSSION



JESUS GAVE US EVIDENCE

MATTHEW 11:1-10

- John prophesied about Jesus as the One who would take away sin, so what do you think made him doubt?
-  • What evidence did Jesus give John to prove He is who He claims to be?
-  • When is it difficult to battle doubt? How does it comfort you to know Jesus meets us where we are, even when we doubt?

JESUS CALLS US TO FAITH

MATTHEW 11:11-19

- What advantages do we have now to strengthen our faith that John didn't have?
-  • What does it mean that Jesus was "a friend of . . . sinners" (v. 19)? How does that compare to the way people think of Jesus today?
-  • What's the difference in John's doubt and the Jews' unbelief Jesus called out in verses 16-17?



JESUS IS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. HOW CAN WE IMITATE HIM WHILE ALSO KEEPING OURSELVES FROM FALLING INTO SIN?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Where do you go with your doubts? When we scroll social media, we can find influencers for almost anything. If we aren't careful, reels and stories can convince us that these people have all the answers we could ever need. Sometimes, other people do have answers we need and can help us make wise choices. But unless we truly know the people behind the accounts, it's impossible to trust completely that they are exactly who they appear to be. That's not to say we can't be inspired by something they say or learn something new from them—we definitely can! However, when it comes to doubts about our faith, about Jesus, we need to make sure we're taking our questions to the right places and holding up the answers against the truth of God's Word. While going to godly, trustworthy people with our doubts or questions isn't wrong, Jesus should always be our starting point—just like He was for John the Baptist.



DAY ONE

GENESIS 3:1-7



Have you ever heard something that sounded mostly good and right but just slightly off? We shrug off our doubt because we're busy, rushed, or pressured to go along with what the rest of our family or friends decide or to trust the person who's advising us. Doubt can be good for you, though: It's that little catch in your breath, stumbling step, glance over your shoulder, or check in your spirit that makes you pause and wonder if you're going the right way. Doubt makes us pause and ask, "Is what I'm feeling or experiencing actually real or true?"

The enemy would like nothing more than to make you doubt what God has said and to turn away from His Word toward something that sounds good and justifies your ideas or desires. We like to think that Satan's tactics are obvious, but it's not so simple. In fact, sin entered the world because the enemy is smart and sneaky and twists God's words so that we begin to wonder if we heard Him correctly. Whether his question to us is as plainly stated as it was to Eve, the enemy can tempt us to wonder, "Did God actually say . . . ?" (v. 1; emphasis added).

Faced with the serpent's question, Eve chose to allow doubt to drive a wedge between her and God. We easily do the same when our desires—or culture's opinions—don't line up with what God has actually said. But when we're faced with influencers' messages, friends' opinions, or even teachers' lessons that cause us to wonder what God has really said, we can let our questions be invitations to press deeper into our relationship with Jesus, asking the Holy Spirit for guidance as we look to God's Word to see what's true. Then, we walk toward that truth instead of falling for the enemy's same old schemes.

- **GOD WILL NEVER ASK YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T LINE UP WITH HIS WORD. HOW CAN THIS HELP YOU TELL WHAT'S TRUE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BUILD SPIRITUAL DEFENSES NOW SO YOU CAN STAND AGAINST THE ENEMY'S LIES WHEN THEY COME?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, SOMETIMES I STRUGGLE TO KNOW WHAT'S FROM YOU AND WHAT'S FROM THE WORLD AND JUST SOUNDS RIGHT. HELP ME TO LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND REMEMBER YOUR WORD SO I CAN KNOW YOUR WAY IN ALL THINGS.



DAY TWO

ISAIAH 55:8-9

Maybe you've heard of "The Five Ws" (and One H) of writing. They break down like this: "Who" points to the people involved. "What" tells us about the plot or events. "When" alerts us to the time. "Where" indicates location. "Why" explains the reason behind an action. "How" describes the process. Asking all of these questions gives us a clear picture, a full story. They help us learn and discover, and they can also help us settle our doubts.

In faith, like in writing, we start with the first question to help us settle our doubts: *who*. God ultimately holds all the answers. When we ask *what* we know about Him, we can answer that He is holy, righteous, good, loving, just, and merciful—just to name a few of His attributes. When *and where* tell us that He always has been and always will be everywhere across all times and with all people. But the *hows* and *whys* of faith are far more mysterious to us. We can only know what God decides to reveal when He decides to reveal it because the way He thinks and works in the world is so far beyond our ability to understand.

This is why faith, trusting what we can't see or understand, is necessary in our relationship with God. When we don't understand, we can trust God does. When we have doubts, we can trust that He is sure and steady. When we have questions, we can trust that He has answers, even if they aren't what we hoped for. Though God never promises that we will understand everything He does or the reasons behind those actions, He promises that when we search for Him, we will find Him (Jer. 29:13). And ultimately, He is the answer we need.

- **WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND? WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR GOD?**
- **HOW DO YOU THINK GOING TO GOD WITH YOUR QUESTIONS COULD STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH?**

PRAY

GOD, HELP ME TO TRUST YOU EVEN THOUGH I WON'T ALWAYS BE ABLE TO SEE OR UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE DOING OR WHY YOU ALLOW CERTAIN THINGS TO HAPPEN. GUIDE ME TO ASK QUESTIONS THAT GROW MY FAITH, NOT INCREASE MY DOUBT.



DAY THREE

MARK 9:17-27

We all have friends or people in our lives who are our “go-tos” for certain things. Maybe your artsy friend helps you decorate for another friend’s birthday party. Maybe you ask your mom for help with homework because she’s really good at math. Maybe your older brother plays guitar, so you ask him to help you write and perform a song. Beyond your everyday needs, though, you probably trust specific people to help you meet specialized needs, like a dentist who helps you with a toothache or a tutor who helps you prepare for the SAT. We all need help sometimes, and who we turn to matters.

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus is the go-to for people in need. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and even raised the dead. His work had caught the attention of a desperate father who wanted help for his demon-possessed son. This man sought Jesus with confidence, but doubt crept in when the disciples failed to help. When Jesus arrived and said He could help if the man believed, the man cried out with a desperate plea many of us can identify with: “I believe; help my unbelief” (v. 24).

It’s like saying, “Jesus, I trust you, and deep down, I know you can help. But nothing else has worked, and everyone else failed, so I’m also struggling with doubt. Help me to trust you completely.” When you do this, you’re not saying you don’t believe in Jesus’s power to heal or help you; you’re admitting that you’re human, flawed, and in need of your perfect Savior to remind you once again that He is faithful to do what He has promised. So, when you’re struggling with doubt, ask Jesus for help.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT THE TENSION OF KNOWING YOU CAN TRUST JESUS AND EXPERIENCING DOUBT BECAUSE YOUR SITUATION SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE?**
- **HOW CAN JESUS DOING WHAT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE IN THE PAST GIVE YOU CONFIDENCE THAT HE CAN DO THE IMPOSSIBLE NOW?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR HEARING ME AND HELPING ME, EVEN WHEN MY FAITH IS SMALL. I BELIEVE YOU CAN HELP ME AND WILL DO ALL YOU’VE PROMISED. EVEN WHEN I DOUBT, GIVE ME STRENGTH TO TRUST YOU FULLY.



DAY FOUR

JOSHUA 4:1-9

Despite living in the age of social media and phones with amazing cameras, most of us have probably had that moment when we realized we should've taken more pictures. Not just any pictures though—not the aesthetic latte art, the beautiful sunset, or the new car. No, the moments we want to hold on to most are milestone events and the people who make our lives so amazing. But pictures aren't the only way we remember. We remember through stories, souvenirs, and monuments too. Remembering is an important part of life. Memories help us learn new information, organize ideas, and even make plans for the future. Basically, looking back helps us look forward.

God encouraged His people toward specific ways of remembering because they were forgetful. So, they celebrated through feasts and festivals, gifts and sacrifices, songs and Scripture readings—and even through stones. When God's people finally crossed the Jordan River before entering the promised land, the priests carried the ark of the covenant to the middle of the river as God had commanded, and God held back the waters so the people could cross. Here, God instructed Joshua to choose one man from each tribe to gather stones from the riverbed. Then, Joshua commanded the men to carry the stones and to set them down where they spent the night. These stones were meant to serve as a memorial to God's faithfulness (v. 7).

Like the Israelites, we need to remember—and keep remembering—how God has been faithful to us. In our moments of doubt, these memorials can settle our hearts. When we remember the works God has done, we can rest, knowing He will do everything He said He would do. We can look back at God's faithfulness to look ahead in faith.

- **WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS YOU REMEMBER IMPORTANT MOMENTS OR PEOPLE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU? HOW CAN YOU CREATE YOUR OWN STONES OF REMEMBRANCE?**

PRAY

HEAVENLY FATHER, I KNOW I'M FORGETFUL. BRING TO MIND THE TIMES YOU'VE SHOWN ME WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU LOVE ME. TEACH ME HOW TO CREATE MY OWN MEMORIALS OF YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO KEEP ME FROM FORGETTING.





DAY FIVE

EPHESIANS 2:1-10; HEBREWS 11:1-2,32-40

Think about the most unbelievable story you've ever heard or the most unbelievable story you've lived through. No matter the teller, the more unbelievable the story, the more likely those listening will want proof. Sometimes, we can easily see a photo or a scar, pull up a news story, or ask family members or friends to act as witnesses to the truth of their tales. Sometimes, we see evidence in the way people's thoughts, words, and behaviors change. Other times, we have to believe what they say is true because we know and trust their character.

Before Jesus came, people like Abraham, Moses, and King David had faith that God would one day send the King He had promised and establish His eternal kingdom, but they died without seeing that promise fulfilled. They were approved by this belief, this complete trust, in what God would do, despite not seeing the total fulfillment of the promise (Heb. 11:2,39). They believed because they saw God work miraculously in and through His people—including themselves—to conquer kingdoms, build temples, stand firm in their faith despite persecution, wander the wilderness, see the dead raised to life (Heb. 11:35), and countless other acts throughout their history.

Unlike these heroes of the faith, we know Jesus came and have the privilege of looking back at God's promises fulfilled. Believers are assured of this reality through Scripture and the presence of the Holy Spirit living within us as a holy, eternal promise. And yet, when we struggle with doubt, like those heroes of the faith, we can also see the way God has worked in the lives of others—and worked within us—as evidence that He is who He says He is and will do what He has promised.

- **WHOSE LIFE SHOWS EVIDENCE THAT GOD HAS CHANGED HIM OR HER? WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU SEE?**
- **DOES YOUR LIFE GIVE ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR PEOPLE AROUND YOU TO BELIEVE JESUS IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS? EXPLAIN.**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, I WANT TO LIVE LIFE YOUR WAY SO THAT PEOPLE SEE EVIDENCE OF YOUR PRESENCE IN MY WORDS AND ACTIONS. HELP ME TO VIEW GOOD WORKS AS EVIDENCE TO HELP OTHERS KNOW YOU, NOT AS ACTS TO MAKE MYSELF LOOK GOOD.

“GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE!”

unit 24 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead, He showed that He has power over death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we have full assurance that Jesus will one day defeat death forever and resurrect us from the dead.

POWER OVER SIN AND DEATH

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 7

DEATH IS THE EFFECT OF SIN

LUKE 7:11-13

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. 12 As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER DEATH

LUKE 7:14-17

14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" 17 And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

MAIN POINT.

When we face the reality of physical death, we can cling to the hope of eternal life.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

RESURRECTION

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was resurrected, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives believers confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

DISCUSSION

DEATH IS THE EFFECT OF SIN

LUKE 7:11-13

- What details does Luke give us about the woman in Nain (v. 12)? How do they help us see the effects of sin on the world?
- ✝ • Which title did Luke use to refer to Jesus in verse 13? Why do you think he chose that title here?
- ♥ • How does Jesus show us we can hold on to hope, even when we grieve?

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER DEATH

LUKE 7:14-17

- 🧠 • What did Jesus do to bring the widow's son back to life? How would you have responded if you saw this miracle?
- 📖 • What did Jesus's power over death do for the people watching? What does it do for us?
- What do we learn about Jesus from His meeting this woman's need (and ours) before she knew His identity?



WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THIS PASSAGE TEACHES US TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE WHO ARE GRIEVING? HOW CAN YOU HELP THEM KNOW JESUS SEES AND CARES?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

None of us fully understand why bad things happen. We ask, "If God is good, why does evil exist? Why hasn't Jesus come back already? Why do people die—'good' people, young people, and those who still have so much to give to the world?" Knowing the answers wouldn't take our pain away, but we struggle with these questions anyway because we want a reason for the pain. Ultimately, we want to know God's heart. While God's mind and plans are so far above anything we can understand (Isa. 55:8-9), we can trust a few general truths about God: God is good. Since God is good, He allows us free will, and sometimes we choose sin and evil. Since God is good, His timing seems slow because He wants more people to experience His grace, mercy, and forgiveness (2 Pet. 3:9). Since God is good, He invites us to trust Jesus for salvation and promises that we'll spend eternity with Him—and all other believers who have died before us. He is good. And one day, all that is wrong and evil will come undone because of His goodness.



DAY ONE

GENESIS 3:8-13,19,22-24



What do you do when you mess up? We can easily fix or hide our mistakes with the help of an eraser, the delete key, or a filter. Mistakes in life aren't so easy to handle, and many leave us wishing we had an undo button for reality, too.

No one knew that feeling better than Adam and Eve. God had given them a specific command: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). The enemy slithered in and caused them to question God's goodness and God's very words. Adam and Eve chose their desire to eat from that tree over God's plan for them, and they gained knowledge they were never meant to have: awareness of their inadequacy, shame over their nakedness, and fear of God. Without any way to erase their sin, Adam and Eve hid.

Though we may not physically hide from God, we hide when we're caught in sin too: We lie; we try to cover up our mistakes without coming clean; and we run from God, putting distance between us and Him. Here's the thing: None of us can hide from the penalty of sin (death), and none of us can hide from the Giver of life (God). So, we might think God's question, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9) is a little odd. But God didn't ask this question because He lacked knowledge; God asked because He was establishing a pattern of coming to us, of taking the first step, of calling us out to face our sin and see our need for forgiveness. God always sees us; He always seeks us; and He always finds us. And when He does, because of Jesus, believers receive grace and experience the joy of eternal life with God instead of eternal judgment and suffering. What a gift to know that when we sin, we don't have to hide in the shadows of our shame. We can respond to the Holy Spirit, whose voice draws us out of our sin and into the light.

- **WHAT CONSEQUENCES DID GOD GIVE ADAM AND EVE FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE (VV. 16-19)?**
- **WHEN CONFRONTED WITH HIS SIN, ADAM TRIED TO BLAME EVE, THEN GOD. WHERE DO YOU PLACE THE BLAME WHEN YOU SIN?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME FIRST AND COMING TO FIND ME WHEN I WAS LOST IN MY SIN. WITHOUT YOU, I KNOW I'D BE HOPELESS. THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF JESUS AND THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE.



DAY TWO

GENESIS 3:14-19; LUKE 19:10

Everyone has different opinions on how to treat wounds and sicknesses. Some might say a deep cut needs stitches, while others might claim duct tape will do the trick (we don't recommend this). Some believe the best way to get rid of a cold is by taking over-the-counter medicine to reduce symptoms while others consider rest, hydration, and sunlight the best cure. Truthfully, however varied their opinions, only health professionals have the qualifications and knowledge to treat our wounds and illnesses accurately. Our best work is mostly guesswork. The same is true of our sin sickness.

In Genesis 3:16-19, God pronounced sin's consequences: Adam and Eve worked before the fall to steward God's good creation, but now they (and all humans) would experience grueling, back-breaking labor and wrestle with the earth to meet their needs; they would endure pain, relational separation from God, and one day, death. However, just before those consequences were pronounced, God gave Adam and Eve a glimpse of hope in what's considered the first mention of the gospel: One day, Eve's offspring would strike down the serpent (Satan; see Gen. 3:15). That offspring is Jesus; He is the cure we need (Mark 2:17).

Like Adam and Eve, we can do nothing to save ourselves. No one throughout history has been powerful enough to do that but Jesus, who chose not to save Himself but to die to save us. Jesus explained that the purpose of His presence on earth was to find and save the lost—all of us (Luke 19:10). He accomplished that through His life and ministry on earth, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. Because of Jesus, we have hope that sin and death are not the end. In Him, we have life and have it fully (John 10:10).

- **WHAT HAVE YOU TRIED TO DO IN THE PAST TO STOP A SPECIFIC SIN? WHY ARE OUR EFFORTS NOT ENOUGH?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS COULD'VE SAVED HIMSELF FROM PHYSICAL DEATH BUT CHOSE NOT TO SO WE COULD HAVE ETERNAL LIFE CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON SIN AND LIVING FOR GOD?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR ME, FOR WHAT YOU'RE STILL DOING FOR ME. HELP ME TO BE MORE CONSISTENT IN SHOWING YOU GRATITUDE AND IN LIVING FOR YOU INSTEAD OF GOING MY OWN WAY.



DAY THREE

JOHN 14:26; ROMANS 8:26-27

Looking away or walking away from chaos and drama takes effort. Maybe you're trying to see why traffic is backed up on the way home from school, watching helplessly as a fight breaks out in the hallway, or seeing someone being attacked on social media. Maybe you wonder, "Isn't someone going to do something about this?" Or you glance around for the flashing blue lights of a police car, the commanding presence of a coach or teacher, or the rescuing comment to stop the online drama. We want someone to do something about the pain we see and experience.

Life is full of pain. You could be reeling from the death of a loved one, the absence of a parent, the gossip and backstabbing from a good friend, the loss of a dream, or the pressure to excel in school or sports. Sometimes, we don't even have the words to describe the stress and pain we're feeling. Trying to ask for the help we need can feel overwhelming and intimidating when we're hurting.

Thankfully, Jesus has seen our pain and has done something about it—whether our pain comes from sin we committed, sin committed against us, or the effects of sin on the world and people around us. Not only did He offer us a way to one day be free from the pain of sin and death, but He also sent us His Spirit as a guarantee of this promise and as our Helper and Comforter. Though Jesus Himself isn't physically walking with us right now, He has given us His presence through the Holy Spirit who lives within us, teaching us, helping us remember what we've learned, and praying for us when we don't have the words.

- **WHERE DO YOU NEED THE REMINDER THAT JESUS HAS SEEN YOUR PAIN AND HAS DONE SOMETHING ABOUT IT?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO LEAN INTO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PRESENCE AND COMFORT IN YOUR CURRENT SITUATION?**

PRAY

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR DOING SOMETHING ABOUT MY PAIN AND THE PAIN I SEE IN THE WORLD. REMIND ME WHEN I'M HURTING THAT I HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVING WITHIN ME, ALWAYS READY TO HELP ME AND PRAY FOR ME.



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 12:15; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-5

If you've ever been on a roller coaster and quickly figured out that you are not a roller coaster person, you know how endless those loops, heights, drops, and upside-down moments can feel. You know what it's like to feel trapped until the ride is over and the attendant tells you it's safe to unfasten the restraints or release the lap bar. Maybe you stumble toward the platform and promise yourself and anyone else who will listen that you will never ride a roller coaster again.

Life can sometimes make us feel like we're on a roller coaster of struggles and wins, grief and rejoicing. But these heights and drops in life, just like those on a roller coaster, aren't endless, even if we imagine them that way. God promises that one day, He will wipe our tears and take away death, grief, and pain because the way of our fallen world will pass away (Rev. 21:4). Jesus promised we'd suffer and struggle, but He also promised us hope because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). And that hope is our endless anchor that steadies us when life hurts (Heb. 6:19).

While we hold on to that "one day" hope, God calls us to help others hold on to it too. We might feel like we have nothing to give when we're struggling, but that's not true. God calls us to give empathy, compassion, and hope—out of the empathy, compassion, and hope He has filled us with through salvation in Jesus and the presence of His Spirit. Out of His endless supply, we can pour into others, drawing their attention to Jesus and His comfort even through our own struggle and pain.

- **WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER THAT OUR GRIEF ISN'T ENDLESS?**
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK IT ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE TO "WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP" (ROM. 12:15)? DOES SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE NEED YOU TO DO THIS FOR THEM?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU THAT THE STRUGGLES OF LIFE AREN'T ENDLESS. THANK YOU FOR THE HOPE YOU'VE GIVEN ME FOR THE FUTURE IN JESUS. PLEASE SHOW ME HOW TO COMFORT OTHERS WITH THE COMFORT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME.





DAY FIVE

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22,50-58

Stopping by a welcome center when you enter a state or national park is always a good idea. Rangers stay up to date on weather conditions, road closures, wildlife sightings, fire risks, and trail maintenance. They can help you choose a trail that fits your experience level or your desired outcome—whether you want a physically challenging hike or a relaxing one. They’ll give you a map and some advice and send you on your way. Park rangers can do all this for you because they’ve gone where you’re going; someone else went ahead of them to show them the way, and someone before that mapped out the best paths to take.

Having someone to follow into the unknown is helpful, and death might be the biggest unknown we face. Death comes to all of us, unless Jesus returns before we die. So, death is a “common” experience, yet it can feel so intimidating. We can learn the truth about death and what it means for followers of Jesus, but we don’t know the specifics of what we’ll see and where we’ll be in the moments after we die. But we do know that death for believers isn’t final and that when we’re “away from the body,” we’re “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

We can be confident in all of this because Jesus is the “firstfruits” of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). The firstfruits are the first and best of the group. He has gone before us in life, in death, and in resurrection. When Jesus tells us He is the only way to have eternal life with God, we can trust Him because He has been there, He has made a way, and He will lead us safely home.

- **WHO WOULD YOU FOLLOW ANYWHERE, NO MATTER WHAT? WHY?**
- **HOW DOES JESUS’S GOING BEFORE US IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION GIVE YOU HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?**

PRAY

FATHER, HELP ME TO TRUST THAT YOU MEAN WHAT YOU SAY. THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME VICTORY OVER DEATH THROUGH JESUS. SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE LIKE I BELIEVE MY HOME IS ULTIMATELY WITH YOU.

“THE LARGER DEBT”

unit 24 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Our sin created debt, a payment so extreme that we could never repay it with our own good works or sacrifice. Instead, Jesus willingly surrendered Himself as the sacrifice for our sin. He paid our debt with His blood and covered us permanently.

FORGIVENESS AND GRATITUDE

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 7

JESUS IS WILLING TO FORGIVE US

LUKE 7:36-39

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."

FORGIVENESS PRODUCES GRATITUDE

LUKE 7:40-50

40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

MAIN POINT.

Jesus forgives us when we humbly come to Him in faith.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

FAITH

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

DISCUSSION

JESUS IS WILLING TO FORGIVE US

LUKE 7:36-39

- Describe the woman in the passage. What do her actions reveal about her heart?
- ♥ • What does our view of people living in sin reveal about our hearts? How does Jesus teach us a different way?
- 📖 • Why do the thoughts and motives behind our actions matter? Can we trust Jesus to really see us? Explain.

FORGIVENESS PRODUCES GRATITUDE

LUKE 7:40-50

- 🧠 • How did Jesus confront Simon's thoughts? How does He confront us about our thoughts today?
- ✝️ • Why does Jesus deserve our gratitude, regardless of our past or how great or small our sin seems?
- Why do we need to understand the depth of our sin and how it hurts our relationship with God? How does this understanding make Jesus even better?



WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN OTHERS AS TOO SINFUL TO BE WORTH YOUR TIME? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO SEE THEM AS JESUS DOES?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

When people hurt us—even people we don't know—letting go of the hurt isn't easy. We might vent to our friends or even share a post on social media. Our temptation is to hold nothing back, to give up every detail. Maybe our goal is to shame the other person or to justify our feelings or responses; maybe we're just looking for sympathy on a bad day. Over time, maybe we cool down and offer forgiveness. Or, maybe we double down, and bitterness grows into a grudge. But here's the whole, tough truth: We have no right to hold grudges or withhold forgiveness. If anyone had a right to hold a grudge, Jesus did. But He did the opposite; He withheld nothing from us, giving His very life to bring life to us when we were dead in our sin (Eph. 2:1). Certainly, we might need to set boundaries for physical and emotional safety, but forgiveness can exist within those boundaries. Forgiveness heals our hearts and sets us free; unforgiveness holds us captive. Just as Jesus forgave us and set us free, so we must be willing to forgive others.



DAY ONE

ACTS 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-22



Have you ever taken a personality test? You can find one to suit any personality—from the incredibly detailed Myers-Briggs to the fun quiz you took online to tell you which character you’re most like from your favorite book or TV show. While personality tests can help you see yourself in new ways, they don’t actually tell you who you are or what type of person you are. Because the truth is that you are far more than any personality test could imagine or define, no matter how thorough the questions seem.

We often get caught up in personality types, and our brains naturally categorize people as those who are like us and those who aren’t, people who are “good” or “bad,” and even people who are worth our time and people who aren’t. But Jesus isn’t like us. If He looked at us the way we looked at each other, all of us would be doomed. Instead, He sees us with His Father’s eyes, knowing we’re only human but capable of being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus didn’t care “what sort of woman” washed His feet with her tears (Luke 7:39) and why He used a man (Paul, formerly Saul) who once persecuted His people to play a major role in establishing the early church. Maybe you struggle to see how God could love you or forgive you because of what you’ve done in the past, but all that gets washed away with the blood of Jesus (Eph. 2:13). He died for you. Period. No stipulations or fine print can change that. Through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, you can be forgiven, free, and made new—no matter who you are, what you’ve done, or how others see you.

- **WHAT ARE YOU TEMPTED TO BELIEVE DISQUALIFIES YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE FROM BECOMING A BELIEVER OR PART OF YOUR CHURCH OR SMALL GROUP?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU WONDERED HOW GOD COULD LOVE YOU BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU’VE DONE? HOW DOES JESUS’S LOVE CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE?**

PRAY

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR LOOKING ON ME WITH EYES OF LOVE. GIVE ME YOUR EYES TO SEE OTHERS AND YOUR HEART TO LOVE THEM WELL. HELP ME TO SEE MYSELF AS LOVED, FORGIVEN, AND FREE.



DAY TWO

LUKE 7:44-50; EPHESIANS 2:8-9

We've all had moments when a sinking feeling settled deep in our gut and we wondered, "How am I going to get out of this?" Maybe it was a failing grade, an awkward social situation, an injury or illness that caused you to need help doing everyday tasks. Or maybe you faced a more serious, life-or-death type situation, like being lost in a national park and needing someone to find you. All these scenarios require us to ask others for help—and hope that they respond by coming to our rescue. Some things we just can't do on our own.

The truth is, no matter the situation you find yourself in now, we all need a Savior. Because of our humanity and our sin, we are completely powerless to save ourselves. Nothing in us and nothing we do could ever make us good enough to stand before God. Only Jesus can do that. Jesus pointed out this truth to Simon, a Pharisee who imagined himself as "all good" before God because his religious community viewed him as righteous. Simon believed only the woman—the "sinner"—needed saving; she *did* need salvation, but she wasn't the only one. The woman expressed faith in Jesus by humbly kneeling before Him and grieving her sin, helpless to save herself but recognizing His goodness. And Jesus forgave her.

Jesus doesn't owe us anything, but He freely gives salvation to those who come before Him with humble repentance and faith—just like the woman in Luke 7. Jesus has done all the work to save us; our only part in our salvation story is to humble ourselves, repent of our sin, and accept the greatest gift we could ever receive.

- **WHICH IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO ACCEPT: THAT YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO SAVE YOURSELF FROM SIN AND DEATH OR THAT YOU MUST RELY ON SOMEONE ELSE (JESUS) FOR SALVATION?**
- **HOW DOES VIEWING SALVATION AS A GIFT AFFECT THE WAY YOU SEE JESUS?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, OPEN MY EYES TO SEE YOU CLEARLY AS MY ONLY SAVIOR AND GIVER OF THE GREATEST GIFT. SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE MY LIFE IN HUMBLE GRATITUDE FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME.



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 22:36-39; ROMANS 12:1

Have you ever been in that awkward situation where someone got you a gift, but you didn't get anything for them? Maybe you were supposed to show up at a party with a gift but missed the memo. Or maybe someone ahead of you at the coffee shop paid for your order, and you didn't get to say thank you or didn't pass it on the person behind you. In these situations, you might've felt embarrassed, upset, or even guilty. When people do nice things for us, we want to do nice things for them, or we are inspired to do nice things for others.

Somehow, this doesn't always translate to our relationship with Jesus. He has given us a gift better than anything we could imagine: salvation from our sin and the hope of eternal life with Him. As believers, we easily become desensitized to this truth because we hear it so often, but that doesn't make it any less powerful. We might struggle to understand the right response to such a great gift, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't respond.

Knowing what Jesus has done for us should change us. When we trust in Jesus for salvation, we receive a completely new identity as children of God (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 5:17)—and children of God live differently, as lights in a dark world. The apostle Paul puts it this way: Our entire lives are to be lived in worship of and in service to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). While Jesus gives tons of instructions for what our new identity should look like and what it means to worship Him with that new identity, He also summed up all God's commands like this: Love God and love others. This is our right response to all Jesus has done for us.

- **HOW HAVE YOU RESPONDED TO THE NEWS OF JESUS'S GREAT GIFT TO YOU?**
- **WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO THE IDEA OF LIVING YOUR ENTIRE LIFE ALWAYS FOR JESUS—TO BE A LIVING SACRIFICE? WHY?**

PRAY

JESUS, I CONFESS THAT I OFTEN FORGET JUST HOW GREAT A GIFT MY SALVATION IS. FORGIVE ME FOR THE MOMENTS WHEN I FOCUS ON THE WRONG THINGS, AND GIVE ME THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO LIVE OUT MY NEW IDENTITY IN YOU.



DAY FOUR

2 CORINTHIANS 7:9-10

Shame and guilt are not the same, even if we sometimes believe they are because of the way our culture treats people who mess up. Shame means feeling like something you've done makes you unworthy of connection, blessing, or love; guilt means recognizing what you did was wrong and accepting the consequences of your actions.

Here's the thing: All of us, on our own, are unworthy of God's love and acceptance and belonging to His family. But God loves us because of who He is—because He is love (1 John 4:8). So, He sent Jesus to deal with our shame. Scripture says Jesus went to the cross “despising the shame” of it because of the joy He knew would come through His death (Heb. 12:2). The crucifixion was Jesus's declaration that shame had no power over Him, and through Him, no power over us either.

Shame over past sin and failure has no place in the life of a believer because that debt has already been paid for and forgiven. But guilt is another story. Guilt, or godly sorrow, comes from conviction, and conviction comes from the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). Conviction isn't condemnation (telling us we're doomed because of what we've done); conviction is the Holy Spirit revealing our sin to us, feeling grief over it, and turning toward God in repentance. In other words, conviction is a good thing, even when the process hurts! When we mess up, shame tells us to beat ourselves up, but guilt tells us to give up our sins by confessing them to God and trusting Him to forgive us as He has promised (1 John 1:9).

- **REVIEW LUKE 7:40. WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYING TO YOU RIGHT NOW? WHAT SIN COULD HE BE CALLING OUT?**
- **WHERE DO YOU NEED TO SET ASIDE SHAME OVER YOUR PAST AND TRUST THAT JESUS DIED TO FREE YOU FROM ALL YOUR SIN—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE?**

PRAY

GOD, HELP ME TO RELEASE ANY SHAME I FEEL OVER MY PAST AND CLING TO YOUR GRACE AND TO THE PROMISE THAT I AM MADE NEW. CONVICT ME OF SIN AND HELP ME TO ACCEPT YOUR FORGIVENESS.





DAY FIVE

LUKE 7:44a; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-20

If you've pulled an all-nighter to finish a school project or stayed up way too late hanging out with your family or friends, and then seen something odd, you probably know what it's like to question your vision. Maybe you blink or rub the sleep from your eyes and try to refocus. Or, if someone is with you, you might even ask, "Did you see that?" We don't always take in all the details at first glance. Truly seeing what's in front of us means we must choose to look and set our focus on whatever or whoever it is.

After witnessing Simon's judgment of the woman who washed His feet with her hair, Jesus turned toward the woman and asked Simon, "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44a). The truth is, Simon didn't see her; he only saw her sin and her past. And he judged her harshly for it. But Jesus saw the woman. He saw through her sinful past and into her heart, which was humbled before Him in genuine repentance.

Jesus's eyes constantly settled on those who needed Him, and they were often those others ignored. He teaches us a different way of seeing people, which the apostle Paul describes this way: "We regard no one according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16). When we become new creations in Christ, He gives us new eyes and a fresh perspective to see ourselves and others the way He does. Jesus reminds us that we too were sinners who needed His salvation and are now new creations in Him. With this new heart and new perspective, He helps us see beyond others' sin and their pasts and into their hearts, which He makes completely new.

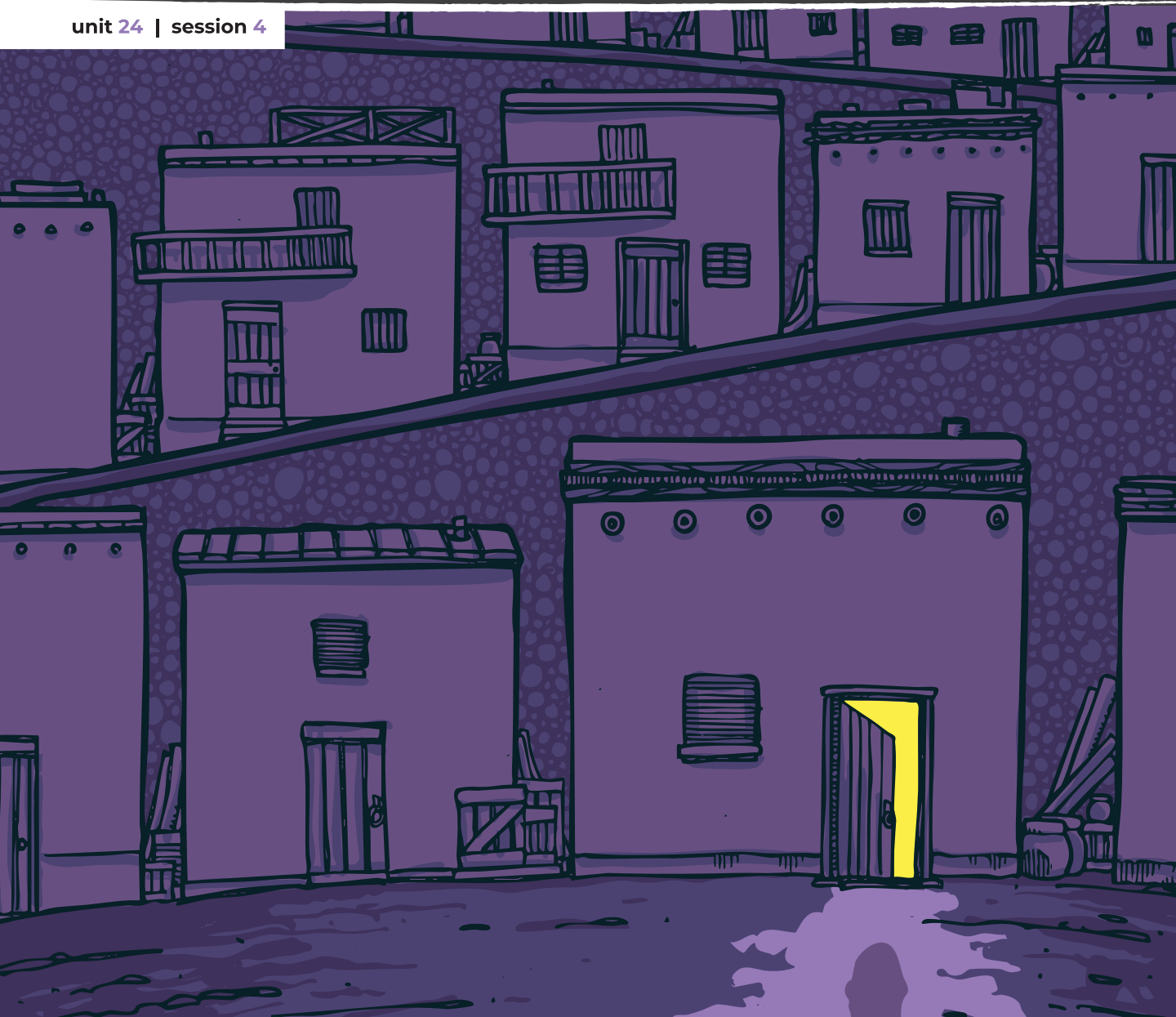
- **WHAT TYPES OF PEOPLE DO YOU STRUGGLE TO SEE WITH THE NEW EYES JESUS GAVE YOU AS A BELIEVER?**
- **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SEE OURSELVES RIGHTLY IN RELATION TO JESUS BEFORE WE CAN SEE OTHERS RIGHTLY?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, HEAL MY VISION, HELPING ME TO SEE MYSELF RIGHTLY AND TO SEE OTHERS WITH YOUR HEART AND PURPOSES IN MIND.

“TEACH US TO PRAY”

unit 24 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus taught us to pray with dependence on God, recognizing our physical and spiritual needs, which only He can supply; faith in God, knowing He is our good and loving Father; and with persistence, remembering He is righteous. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have access to the Father so that we can pray in faith.

LEARNING TO PRAY

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 11

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

LUKE 11:1-4

1 Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." 2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

LUKE 11:5-13

5 And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. 9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

MAIN POINT.

We can imitate Jesus and pray honestly and faithfully, fully depending on God.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God knows the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that “prayer changes things,” and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

DISCUSSION

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

LUKE 11:1-4

- Why do you think the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray? When have you struggled with knowing how to pray or if you’re doing it right?
- Where does Jesus teach us to focus our prayers? Is it okay to ask for our wants or needs? Why or why not?
- Why does the way we address God matter when we pray?

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

LUKE 11:5-13

- When have you served or given out of expectation? How is the way God gives to us different?
- Have you ever asked for something over and over? What do you think asking for something with “impudence” means (v. 8)?
- Why do we struggle to trust God listens to our prayers and that His answers are sufficient?



WHAT HAVE YOU PRAYED FOR HALFHEARTEDLY INSTEAD OF WITH “IMPUDENCE”? HOW CAN YOU PRAY HONESTLY INSTEAD?

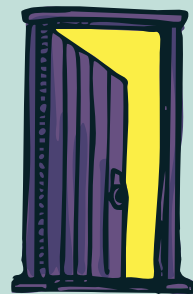
CULTURAL CONNECTION

Sometimes, our most honest prayers are questions. Yet, some of us hesitate to come to God with our questions and requests. Isn’t it wrong to question God? Yes, but questioning God and asking God questions are two totally different things. Questioning God’s character or motives implies we think we know better or could do better; questioning His character stems from unbelief. Asking a question implies we want to know and understand God better. So, don’t be afraid to ask God hard questions—He can handle them. He even encourages us to come to Him with our biggest hurts and doubts. He is the source of all things, including knowledge and comfort. But here’s the key: Praying honestly doesn’t mean praying irreverently, or disrespectfully. Even when we’re hurting or confused, we need to remember who we’re talking to: our good, holy, and sovereign (in control of all things and all people) God. He deserves our humility, respect, and trust—no matter what.



DAY ONE

JEREMIAH 29:12-14a



Puzzles are meant to be, well, puzzling. Shapes and colors grow more complex as the piece count rises. Depending on what type of puzzler you are, maybe you decide to put together little sections of the puzzle off to the side; maybe you start with all the edge pieces and fill in the inside later; or maybe you work from the top to the bottom. Regardless, you'll likely come to a point where your eyes hyperfocus on that one piece you haven't been able to place yet, and you don't give up until you find it, ignoring all the other pieces still waiting to be placed.

If we focus on the wrong things, this kind of commitment can be detrimental. But faith and godliness require our wholehearted focus—being all in, in every area of our lives. God called His people to this kind of pursuit when they were in exile. He invited them not to fix their attention on their circumstances and struggles but on Him, on His faithfulness, and on His promise to bring them home and reestablish their kingdom. Even though their situation seemed bleak and they might've wondered where God was in all of it, He promised, "I'm still your good and perfect God. I'm still here, and I see you."

No matter where we find ourselves—in seasons of joy or struggle—we can find great comfort in these words. When we go looking for God and set our hearts on building a deeper relationship with Him, we will find everything we need. So, it's not just that we can come before God with our needs but that He invites us to do so and promises to listen to us when we do.

- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME BEFORE GOD WITH YOUR HONEST PRAYERS?**
- **WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO PURSUE GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART WHEREVER YOU ARE RIGHT NOW?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO SEEK YOU WITH MY HEART AND MY WORDS. COMFORT ME WITH THE REMINDER THAT YOU WANT ME TO FIND YOU, AND IN DOING SO, FIND THE COMFORT AND HOPE I DESPERATELY NEED.



DAY TWO

EPHESIANS 2:13-22

A theory called “six degrees of separation” suggests a chain of only six social connections separates any two people in the world. In other words, a famous person could be a friend of your best friend’s older brother’s neighbor’s sister’s dog walker. Not complicated at all, right?

Originally, only one degree of separation existed between God and people; Adam and Eve walked with Him in the garden of Eden! But after sin entered the world, God chose specific people to be mediators—those who go between two parties—between Himself and His people. These mediators were people like Moses, King David, and the prophet Elijah. After the Exodus, God also set up the office of priest. Priests were set apart by God to do God’s work. They interceded for God’s people, made offerings for them, and made sacrifices for their sins. The only access God’s people had to Him came through other imperfect humans.

Then, Jesus came. Jesus has always been God’s plan to restore our relationship with Him. Jesus is our perfect High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), who erases the need for any other go-betweens. Through His blood on the cross, the Bible says believers were “brought near” to God (Eph. 2:13). Put simply, our direct access to God has been restored through Jesus’s blood and the presence of the Holy Spirit—the very Spirit of God—within us. Nothing separates us from Jesus (Rom. 8:31-39), so we can pray with boldness, expecting to receive the mercy and grace we need (Heb. 4:16).

- **IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD?**
- **WHY DO WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD? HOW SHOULD THAT INFLUENCE OUR PRAYERS?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, THANK YOU FOR RESTORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH YOUR PERFECT SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS. SHOW ME HOW TO PRAY WITH BOLDNESS, KNOWING I HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO GOD THROUGH YOU.



DAY THREE

PHILIPPIANS 4:5b; JAMES 4:8-10

Whether you're an athlete, performer, or volunteer, you've probably heard the phrase: "Alright everybody, circle up." This phrase calls the team to gather around the leader, close enough to hear any last-minute instructions or encouraging words that person has before sending the team out to play the game, perform, or start the event. Closeness allows us to hear better and be heard more clearly, and this is just as true in our relationships as it is in these team meetings.

Closeness with God is vital to our faith. Although God is always near to us, sometimes unconfessed sin gets in the way. That's not to say our sin can separate us from God once we're saved—nothing can separate believers from God. Once we're in Christ, we're covered fully and finally by His blood and righteousness (Rom. 5:9). Instead, think of this sin like sand caught up in your shoes after a day at the beach: It doesn't keep you from walking, but it sure makes walking a lot less comfortable. Similarly, our sin affects our closeness with God, creating a distance in our relationship with Him.

So, when Scripture tells us to draw near to God, part of drawing near means confessing any sin that might be keeping us from having—or even wanting—that close relationship with Him. Drawing near to God also means spending regular time in His Word and in prayer. When we humble ourselves before God in this way, honestly confessing our sins and depending on Him to meet our every need, He meets us right then and there with His presence and provision.

- **EXAMINE YOUR HEART. WHAT SIN IS HINDERING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD RIGHT NOW?**
- **HOW WILL YOU DRAW NEAR TO GOD THIS WEEK? WHY IS IT GOOD TO REMEMBER THAT HE IS ALWAYS NEAR AND MEETS YOU WHERE YOU ARE?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE GOOD, COMPASSIONATE, AND HOLY. I WANT TO REMEMBER ALL THAT YOU ARE WHEN I COME TO YOU. I CONFESS THAT I (DESCRIBE A SPECIFIC SIN) AND RECEIVE YOUR FORGIVENESS. THANK YOU FOR BEING NEAR TO ME, ALWAYS.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

If you're upset, frustrated, anxious, or sad, the last thing you likely want to hear is the advice to just "calm down." When people say this, you may not only feel like they're dismissing your feelings or not caring about what you're going through, but you're also left with more questions—"How do I calm down?" or "Should I not care about what I'm experiencing?" The reality is that telling someone to calm down—even yourself—isn't the best way to ease worry or anxiety. Doing so places all the power in our hands. Although the responsibility to choose our thoughts and actions lies with us, the power to change does not.

When you read the first command in Philippians 4:6, you might feel a little like you're being told to calm down. Far from being dismissive or uncaring, though, Paul's instruction not to worry is followed up with support. He gives us the best how-to for getting rid of anxiety: prayer and gratitude. When we pray, we don't stop caring about what happens and give up (for example, you'd still apologize to the friend you hurt but trust God with healing the relationship), but we stop worrying because we know the outcome rests in the hands of the One who created us, knows every one of our days, loves us more than we could ever imagine, and wants what's best for us. To pray "with thanksgiving" (v. 6), then, means to pray with the confidence of someone who lives as if God has already answered. Even if He doesn't answer our specific petitions or requests in the way we hope or expect, we can always trust Him to answer with what's best and to give us a peace beyond our understanding. Through His presence, we can live boldly and confidently—no matter what.

- **WHAT STEPS DOES PAUL SAY TO TAKE IN VERSE 6?**
- **HOW DO THESE VERSES ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME TO GOD FIRST WHEN YOU'RE ANXIOUS AND KNOW HE WILL HELP?**

PRAY

GOD, FORGIVE ME FOR WORRYING AND NOT TRUSTING YOU TO PROVIDE FOR ME IN EVERY WAY. COMFORT MY ANXIOUS HEART AND SHOW ME THAT COMING TO YOU WITH MY FEARS AND WORRIES IS ALWAYS BETTER.





DAY FIVE

ROMANS 8:26-27

Have you ever faced a situation where you didn't know what to say? Maybe you studied for an English test on grammar, but then the test was on a book you were supposed to read over the weekend. Or you were giving a presentation in an after-school club, and someone asked a question you didn't know how to answer. More seriously, maybe a friend confronted you about something you did but didn't realize was hurtful. Or a friend experienced tragedy or loss and you were afraid of saying the wrong thing, so you said nothing at all. All of us have days when we can't find the right words, when we're completely speechless.

Here's the good thing: God is prepared for this (because God is prepared for everything). God knows that we won't always know how to ask Him for help. He knows we'll have days that leave us speechless before Him, whether we've messed up or experienced something really messed up. Thankfully, one of the Holy Spirit's roles is to pray for us when we don't have the words. Interestingly, Scripture doesn't say the Holy Spirit prays with normal words like we do but with "groanings too deep for words" (v. 26). The Spirit intercedes for us (goes before God on our behalf), expressing to God our needs in a language deeper than words. And God understands these groanings because He knows the Spirit's mind.

Praying doesn't mean you have all the right words or even realize everything that you need, but it's an acknowledgment that, above all, you need God and trust Him to understand what you can't even say. He knows our hearts and hears our prayers—even the ones we can't bring ourselves to speak.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO KNOW WHAT TO PRAY? WHAT HAPPENED?**
- **HOW ARE YOU COMFORTED TO KNOW THAT THE HELPER GOD HAS GIVEN US (THE HOLY SPIRIT) PRAYS FOR YOU?**

PRAY

HEAVENLY FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN I DON'T HAVE WORDS TO PRAY, COMFORT ME WITH THE TRUTH THAT HE PRAYS FOR ME, AND YOU ALWAYS HEAR.

HOW THE LILIES GROW

unit 24 | session 5



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is the great Provider. He takes care of all our needs, especially our need to be rescued from sin, guilt, and death. Through His sacrifice on the cross, we are forgiven and have new life in Him.

TREASURE OF YOUR HEART

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 12

WORLDLY WEALTH CAN'T GIVE US PEACE

LUKE 12:13-21

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 16 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' 18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM GIVES US PEACE

LUKE 12:22-34

22 And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. 30 For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32 Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

MAIN POINT.

The cure for our worry and anxiety is faith in God's ability to care for us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION



ADOPTION

Adoption into God's family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we freed from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God (John 1:12; Gal. 4:5). Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a coheir with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

DISCUSSION



WORLDLY WEALTH CAN'T GIVE US PEACE

LUKE 12:13-21

- Would people today say the rich man was holding on to things that didn't matter or living the good life? What do you think?
-  • What do we turn to for security or comfort? Where did Jesus say we will and won't find security?
-  • Why do we struggle with greed, envy, or worry? How can knowing that everything we have comes from God help us?

SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM GIVES US PEACE

LUKE 12:22-34

- Jesus said worry isn't good for us, so why do we stress about the details of our everyday lives?
-  • What would be different if we viewed every moment of stress and worry as an invitation to trust God instead?
-  • What did Jesus say would happen when we seek God's kingdom? What did He mean?



WHERE ARE YOU CLINGING TO TIME, RESOURCES, POSSESSIONS, OR PEOPLE BECAUSE OF FEAR OR WORRY? HOW CAN YOU TRUST GOD IN THOSE AREAS?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What do you do, who do you look for, and where do you go when you want a moment of peace? Some of us might try deep breathing, venting to or crying with a close friend or family member, or spending time in nature. None of those things are wrong, but they simply aren't enough. At times, the world around us seems to spin out of control. Because we can't do anything to stop it, we stress, worry, and let anxiety steal our peace. No matter what we're facing in the moment, we can't solve anything with stress or worry. Or, as Jesus asks, can you really make your life any better by worrying (Luke 12:25)? Of course, the answer is "no." Our worry can't give us anything and can only steal from us—our peace, joy, self-discipline, and even our sense of security. But worry's biggest flaw? It takes our eyes off Jesus. When our eyes move away from our compassionate Savior, through whom God has provided for our greatest need, we sink. Thankfully, Jesus is always ready to catch us and keep us from drowning (Matt. 14:28-31). When we trust Him, we have everything we need.



DAY ONE

GALATIANS 3:27-4:7



Some teams and clubs are exclusive. Everyone is welcome to join but must meet certain qualifications to get in and stay in. Academic clubs require certain grades. Service clubs ask you to commit to a minimum number of volunteer hours each semester. Band requires that you have and learn to play an instrument. Drama clubs select actors who best fit the parts for their production, and choirs choose only a few vocalists to perform solos. The soccer team requires athleticism and, at the very least, the potential to become a skilled soccer player. No matter what club or team we try to join, we all want to be chosen, to find our place on the team, and to remain there throughout our school years.

While being a Christian, being part of God's family, might sound exclusive, here's the cool thing: Jesus met every qualification for us. God sent Him for this very reason: to live perfectly according to His law; to die in our place as the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for sin; and to rise from the grave and offer us eternal life with Him. The only qualification to become children of God is faith—believing that Jesus is who He claims to be and trusting Him as our Savior.

In His death and resurrection, Jesus not only offers us the hope of salvation, but He also offers us a place to belong as God's sons and daughters. No matter what our family looks like here on earth, we have a perfect heavenly Father who loves us and chose to send His own Son to die in our place so that we could be part of His family, along with all other believers—our brothers and sisters in Christ.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU WORRIED THAT YOU DIDN'T MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR FOLLOWING GOD? HOW DOES IT HELP TO KNOW JESUS MET ALL THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR YOU?**
- **WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO LIVE LIKE A SON OR DAUGHTER OF GOD? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS SO DIFFICULT?**

PRAY

**HEAVENLY FATHER, THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON
SO WE COULD BECOME YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS.
SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE OUT OF THAT IDENTITY AND
LOVE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.**



DAY TWO

ROMANS 8:14-17; EPHESIANS 1:11-14

Have you ever received a discount, gift, or even special privileges because of someone you were with? Like getting an employee discount on your coffee because your best friend is the barista. Or being allowed backstage at a concert for your favorite artist because your brother works at the concert venue. Or maybe your last name kept you from getting into trouble for being in the teacher's lounge after school because your mom is a teacher at your school. Perks of knowing the right people at the right time can allow us more freedom.

Being "in Christ"—trusting Jesus for salvation and living in the new life He offers us—provides the ultimate perks. Think about it: When we're with the right people here on earth, we often receive extra benefits, and these things can be cool or good for us, but they're temporary and not always necessary. But God doesn't just provide for our daily needs; He provided for our biggest need by sending His Son. We can experience freedom from sin and receive eternal life through Jesus.

Although believers are children of God and in Christ, this doesn't mean we're equal with Jesus. He has always been God's Son by nature; we are God's children through adoption. However, because we are in Christ when we trust Him for salvation, we are Christ's coheirs (Rom. 8:17). Far greater than any discount or special privileges, as coheirs with Christ, children of God receive an inheritance of salvation, eternal life, and the kingdom of God (Eph. 1:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:3-4). We don't do anything to deserve this inheritance, and we could never earn it; God gives it to us freely through Jesus because of His work on the cross. And no person or passing of time can ever take it away from us.

- **WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF INHERITANCE? HOW IS OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST BETTER?**
- **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE COHEIRS WITH CHRIST BUT NOT EQUALS?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE A GOOD FATHER. YOU HAVE PROVIDED FOR ME BEYOND WHAT I CAN IMAGINE, FULFILLING MY GREATEST NEED IN JESUS, YOUR SON. THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE GIVEN ME NOW AND FOR MY FUTURE INHERITANCE.



DAY THREE

PSALM 16:8-11; PROVERBS 3:5-6

We all know what it's like to feel stuck—whether it's a fallen log that makes a trail impassable, a problem on a math test that seems unsolvable, or a defensive line you worry you can't break through. In these moments, we look around for another path, another solution, or a weakness in the defense so we can make our way forward and move toward the goal. Life finds us in lots of places where we feel worn down or even hopeless because we can't see a way forward, but God promises to make our path clear when we trust in Him.

Here's the thing: God makes a way through what seems impossible to us because nothing is impossible to Him. All of us were once stuck in our sin and needed His rescue (Rom. 3:23), so He sent Jesus to redeem us, to free us from our sin. Jesus plainly says He is the only way for us to be saved from our sin and have a restored relationship with God. This is a clear answer to our greatest question, but God is good and kind and doesn't leave us to figure out life in Christ on our own.

Through His Word and His Spirit, God is our ever-present Protector and Guide who doesn't abandon us even when life feels uncertain but shows us “the path of life” and “fullness of joy” in Him (Ps. 16:11). He promises that when we trust Him and put His will and Word above our own, He will show us clearly which way to go (Prov. 3:5-6). No matter how overwhelming life feels right now, God is right there, walking with you through your stress and pain. Trust Him to guide you; know that He will hold you securely all the way through (Ps. 16:8; John 10:28-30).

- **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT IT MEANS TO TRUST GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART? ARE YOU DOING THAT? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHERE DO YOU NEED GOD TO SHOW YOU THE WAY FORWARD RIGHT NOW? WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO ASK HIM FOR HELP?**

PRAY

GOD, RIGHT NOW I FEEL STUCK, AND I NEED YOU TO SHOW ME THE WAY FORWARD. HELP ME TO REST SECURELY IN YOU AND YOUR WISDOM AS YOU GUIDE ME FORWARD ON THE BEST PATH.



DAY FOUR

JOHN 1:4-5; ROMANS 5:3-5

Think about how much less intimidating darkness feels once someone flips the light switch. Or how much less you stumble over your feet on a trail or sidewalk once someone turns on the flashlight. Or even how much clearer photos turn out if enough light filters through the lens. Light makes a difference in the way we see everything—in what we see.

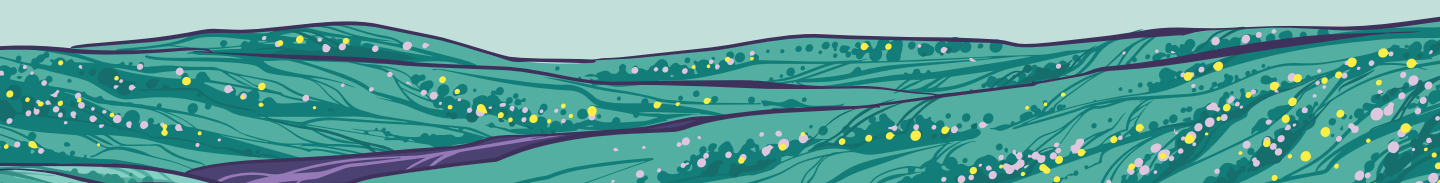
Let's be real: Sin and evil in the world around us and in our own lives can sometimes make life seem really dark. And the darker life gets, the more we struggle to cling to hope. We begin to wonder if things will ever change or why God hasn't changed them already. Truly, God made us for a world full of light, full of hope, full of Him, so it's no surprise that we feel uncomfortable in the darkness. But because of sin, we're here. So, how do we live as "children of light" (John 12:36; 1 Thess. 5:5)? How do we hold on to hope, even during the darkest days? We turn our eyes to Jesus—the Light of the world (John 8:12).

Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness and can't be overcome (John 1:4-5); His light is life. He is our hope and steadying anchor when the rest of life seems hopeless and chaotic (Heb. 6:19). And this hope will never fail because it is secured in the blood of Jesus Himself and sealed with the presence of the Holy Spirit within us (Rom. 5:5). Although these dark days may seem pointless to us, God uses them to refine us and produce godly character in us. No matter how crushed, persecuted, or weighed down we might feel, we are never without hope—because we are never without Him (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

- **WHERE HAS THE LIGHT OF JESUS MADE THE MOST DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE LATELY?**
- **HOW DO YOU NEED JESUS'S LIGHT TO BRING HOPE TO THE DARK PLACES IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW?**

PRAY

LORD JESUS, YOU ARE MY LIGHT WHEN THE WORLD AROUND ME SEEMS DARK. HELP ME TO CLING TO THE HOPE I HAVE IN YOU, KEEPING MY EYES FIXED ON YOU AND THE HOPE OF SALVATION.





DAY FIVE

MATTHEW 6:25-34

Today, we often struggle to determine what we want versus what we need. We might say we need things like new clothes or shoes when our old ones fit but aren't in style; a smartphone; social media; a new car when our car's paint is peeling, but it runs well; or a favorite soda instead of water. However, when we get down to the basics, our needs are pretty straightforward: food, water, a place to live, clothing, sleep and rest, and connection with others.

Jesus sums up our needs in three questions we ask ourselves: What will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear? These three questions are sandwiched between a command—"do not be anxious" (Matt. 6:31)—and the keys to not worrying about our needs being met. Those keys are: (1) Trust that God knows we need "all these things" (v. 32). (2) Seek God's kingdom, meaning we love God above all, and we love others the same way and amount we love ourselves. We don't do this with a bad attitude but with willing hearts, letting love lead the way in our thoughts, words, and actions (Matt. 22:36-40). (3) Remember that, when you trust God and seek His kingdom, "all these things will be added to you" (v. 33).

The cause of our doubt and uncertainty about how our needs will be met is ultimately a lack of faith in who God is—a good and loving Father, who wants to provide for His children. While God knows we will struggle and suffer in this life, He promises to care for us through it all. So, we don't worry about what's ahead; we don't have to let anxiety overtake our faith. Instead, we trust that God means what He says and that He will take care of us because He is faithful.

- **WHAT ARE SOME WANTS YOU TEND TO VIEW AS NEEDS? WHY IS KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE IMPORTANT?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO TRUST GOD TO MEET YOUR NEEDS? HOW COULD THAT BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR BEING MY PROVIDER. FORGIVE ME FOR THE MOMENTS WHEN I WONDER IF YOU'LL TAKE CARE OF ME, AND REMIND ME OF HOW YOU'VE TAKEN CARE OF ME IN THE PAST.



PUBLISHING TEAM LEAD

ALECIA BRYANT

We know Jesus is the Son of God—our Messiah, our Savior. We read about His miracles and His teachings on the kingdom of God. We realize that He is so unlike us: perfect, holy, righteous. But what we sometimes forget is that somehow, miraculously, Jesus is like us. He was human. He felt what we feel. Instead of distancing Himself from sinners, outcasts, and those who were called “unclean,” Jesus bent low. He sat at their tables. He reached out to touch them when others recoiled, afraid of and disgusted by their diseases and their sin. But this was precisely why Jesus came. He descended from heaven, exchanging a throne for our dirt and poverty, to save us. He came to heal us from a sickness far worse than any physical sickness—our sin. Jesus purchased our freedom and showed us a better way to live, as citizens of heaven and counter to our culture. And though living this way will set us apart, we can follow Jesus’s lead. We can lean on our Father to care for us. And we can rejoice in the knowledge that He has already taken care of our deepest need.

Alecia Bryant



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