



the **GOSPEL** PROJECT

FOR STUDENTS

THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS LEADER GUIDE

VOLUME 9

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- ## BEFORE YOU TEACH

- **Biblical Commentary:** This content is compiled to help leaders understand how the passage connects to today's culture.
- **Theology Connection:** Each session contains a biblical doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material.

We believe Scripture should be studied within the context in which it was written. This section breaks down where the passage fits in the grand narrative of God's Word. At the beginning of each book, we highlight the author, time period, original audience, and purpose. This section also features important historical facts to help leaders and students understand the message.

- **Kickstarter:** This is the shortest option for groups which may not have time for longer activities. They rotate between “Did You Know?” facts, short polls, and Heart Checks, which refer to the previous lesson as a form of accountability.
- **Activity:** This activity is mostly discussion-based. It’s designed to take up minimal time with few or no supplies.
- **Cultural Connection:** This feature helps connect the week’s content to the students’ culture. It will hit on real-life questions and difficult topics. It’s designed to encourage deep discussion between students and leaders.

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DISCUSSION SECTION

The **Discussion** section is designed to show how God's story connects with our own stories today. Here we will see how the biblical storyline for each session challenges the way we think, feel, and live each day.

While this certainly happens on an individual level, we do want to stress to students that all Christians share this calling and mission to live differently. Leaders will also find suggested answers with sentences in bold as a guide for more reluctant groups.



This icon indicates questions that look at how the content connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture points to Him.



This icon indicates questions that directly relate to the doctrine for the week. We want to encourage discussion about these doctrines to expand students' biblical worldview.



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



LEADER PACK

The **Leader Pack** provides additional ways to make the session interactive with One Sheets, PowerPoint templates, posters, and other resources to support both leader preparation and group time.



STUDENT DEVOTIONS

Students remember thirty percent of what they hear and seventy percent of what they say and write. To get students more involved in the biblical storyline of Scripture and in their personal discipleship, we have included five days of devotions following each session in the **Daily Discipleship Guide**. As a leader, emphasize weekly how important it is for students to read these devotions and develop the spiritual discipline of being in the Word of God. These devotions will provide simple techniques for studying the Bible as illustrated by the **Seven Arrows**. The pages are perforated so that students can tear them out and take them home.



SEVEN ARROWS



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?

VOLUME 9 | ESV

THE SON HAS TRUTH



25.2

27.3

27.2

26.1

25.4

26.2

26.3

25.1 SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

26.3 THE CHILDREN'S CRUMBS

25.2 THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

26.4 RESURRECTION AND LIFE

25.3 THE WIND AND THE SEA OBEY

27.1 NOW I CAN SEE

25.4 YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU

27.2 TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST

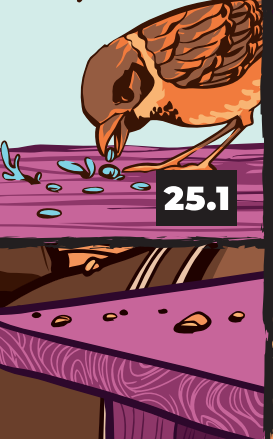
26.1 FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

27.3 THE STONES WOULD CRY OUT

26.2 WALKING ON THE SEA

27.4 THE TIME IS COMING

27.5 SURELY NOT I?





PUBLISHING TEAM LEAD

ALECIA BRYANT

Welcome to Volume 9! Jesus ushered the kingdom of God to earth—a kingdom so utterly unlike ours. As believers, we now live between clashing kingdoms: the temporary kingdom of this world and the coming kingdom of God, of which we're already citizens. To help us understand the way of God's kingdom, Jesus taught parables. Suddenly, our hearts become well-worn paths, rocky ground, weed-ridden earth—or fertile soil, a home where the seed of God's Word takes root and flourishes. Suddenly, God's kingdom becomes a tiny mustard seed; it's a treasure, a pearl of great price, worth everything we have to obtain it. In God's kingdom here and now, peace is reality—even in a small boat tossed around a raging sea. Healing is possible—even for the outcast, even for the despised, even for the hopeless. Invitation is open—even to lost sheep and to the ones outside the fold. To us.

A time is coming when God's kingdom will be revealed fully. Because we know our King—and because we are known and loved by Him—we can walk in hope until He returns. We can endure persecution because our King endured the worst of it. We can face physical pain and sickness because our King will heal us, if not here, there. We can face death and sorrow because our King entered into our suffering, wept over sin's effects, and redeemed us from the grave by lying in one made of stone. Our King offered Himself as broken bread and poured out wine, instituting a new covenant, where the Word is written on our hearts and the Holy Spirit seals us for eternity. Until then, we live with open eyes, alert and ready for Jesus's return. And when the world asks the reason for our hope, we can tell our story: "I was blind, now I see!" (John 9:25).

Alecia Bryant



**"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND
THE LIFE. WHOEVER BELIEVES
IN ME, THOUGH HE DIE, YET
SHALL HE LIVE."**

JOHN 11:25

SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus used parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom on earth. Word of the kingdom is spread widely but received differently based on the condition of one's heart. For those with hearts of fertile soil, the Word produces extraordinary fruitfulness, causing the kingdom to grow into all of the world. When Jesus returns, we will experience the fullness of God's kingdom.



PLANTING THE WORD

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

Luke 8

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

LUKE 8:4-10

4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, 10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

LUKE 8:11-15

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. 14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.

Leaders: As you teach this week, emphasize that we can't produce fruit on our own, even if we check all of the spiritual boxes. Help students see the Holy Spirit as the One who empowers them to be more like Jesus!

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

LUKE 8:8

"You often hear Jesus say, 'Let anyone who has ears to hear listen.' You might ask yourself the question, Who does not have ears? Nearly everyone does. But the saying suggests a person can have ears and not listen. . . . That's the thing about God's Word: You must work to hear it. You have to tune your ear to God's Word. You must train your appetite for it. There must be concentration in order to understand it. So Jesus calls His hearers to listen if they have ears. In other words, the Lord calls us to understand and obey—not merely register the sound of words."¹

LUKE 8:9-10

"These parables, while revealing spiritual truth to the sensitive and openhearted, also served to veil or conceal truth from others. This strange, paradoxical situation had been anticipated in the Scriptures, and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah were truly illuminating: 'When they look, they won't really see. When they hear, they won't understand' (8:10, quoting Isa. 6:9; Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12). The parables, while offering insight and enlightenment to genuine inquirers, often served to confirm many people in their spiritual blindness."²

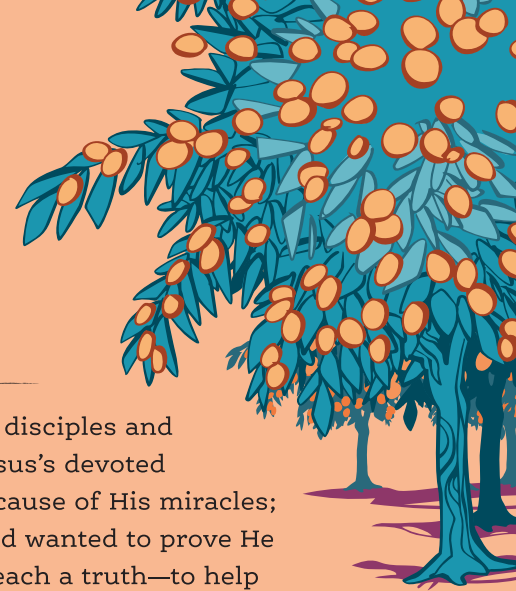
GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

LUKE 8:11-15

"These first three soils remind us of the Christians' three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. They all oppose God's Word. . . . A heart made of good soil provides the only antidote to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Verse 15 describes such hearts. We win the spiritual war of hearing when we hold on to the Word like a soldier trained never to lose or surrender his weapon. We do that if our hearts are honest and good; in other words, if we receive the Word of God for what it truly is—the very Word of God. We don't receive it to justify ourselves. We don't cut out the difficult parts. We don't pick and choose what we will believe. We receive it all with a good heart—with an intention to do good and to believe what is taught. We win the war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (James 1:2-4). We're not trying to rush into maturity or skip the things that produce growth. We just steadily read, believe, and apply the Bible, and let patience have its perfect work in our lives."³

CONTEXT

At this point in the book of Luke, Jesus was traveling with His disciples and teaching the crowds. Some of the people in the crowd were Jesus's devoted followers; some of them only followed Him out of curiosity because of His miracles; and some followed Him because they were skeptical of Him and wanted to prove He was a fraud. Jesus used parables—relatable stories that help teach a truth—to help communicate with the people who were following Him and to teach them about the kingdom of God. The people following Jesus and listening to His teachings would have understood most of the imagery He used in these parables, forming a clear picture in their minds of the situations Jesus described. Many of Jesus's followers were farmers or understood farming, so they would've connected deeply with this parable's message about planting seeds. They had likely worked with each of the four types of soil Jesus described.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

The Gospel

The Bible teaches that the gospel is both an event and a story. First, it is an event that took place at a specific point in history: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:21). Second, the gospel is the story of redemption that God planned since “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), running through Scripture and culminating in a restored and redeemed creation—a new heaven and new earth where sin, death, and suffering will never again plague humanity and where God’s people will live with Him forever (Isa. 25:8; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21). The event and story do not exist apart from or in conflict with one another but together inspire us to a life of devotion and mission.

LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, THANK YOU FOR REVEALING YOUR TRUTH TO US IN WAYS THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND. HELP US TO SEEK TO KNOW YOU MORE AND TO UNDERSTAND YOUR WORD IN A WAY THAT HELPS US TO LOVE YOU AND THOSE AROUND US.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know the average American takes in about **100,000 words per day**? That's a huge amount of information for our brains to process! We should be intentional with what we take in, ultimately focusing on God's Word to feed our hearts and minds.⁴

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

REMEMBERING THE LESSON

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU LEARN EVERY DAY DO YOU THINK YOU REMEMBER? IS IT EASY FOR YOU TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU LEARNED THAT COMPLETELY CHANGED THE WAY YOU ACT OR THINK?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU APPLY THE THINGS YOU LEARN IN SCHOOL TO YOUR LIFE?**

A lot of information goes into our brains every day from what we learn in school, what we hear people say, or what we see on the internet. When we read God's Word, applying what we read can be difficult because we're reading more than just information. Scripture is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). It doesn't just fill our brains with facts about God; it grows our relationship with Jesus and transforms our hearts as we apply it to our lives.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Do you ever feel like you struggle to understand or apply the Bible? You aren't alone. But many of us use these struggles as excuses and never try to understand Scripture. We'll make strong efforts to improve in sports or hobbies, but we give up easily in the struggle to know and understand the Bible. Isn't this what the enemy would want, though—to deter us from even trying? Maybe you understand the Word but struggle to allow God's commands to affect the small and big pieces of your life. God's Word is like a seed; it takes root in our hearts and completely transforms us. But we have to nurture it. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us because He wants us to understand His Word! The Lord promised not to leave us unfinished; He continues to sanctify us, making us more like Jesus until we are with Him in eternity (Phil. 1:6). You can find hope in the truth that God will continue to help you grow. As you seek to obey God faithfully and make efforts to know His Word, the Holy Spirit will strengthen you from the inside out, helping you understand and transforming you in the process.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We are changed when we allow the Word to take root in our heart.

GOD'S WORD IS A SEED

READ LUKE 8:4-10

WHAT DOES A SEED NEED TO GROW? HOW IS GOD'S WORD LIKE A SEED? WHY DON'T WE ALWAYS SEE GROWTH?

Seeds need good soil, water, light. The environment either helps or prevents the seed from producing fruit. God's Word is a seed planted within believers as we read and study. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict us of sin, to help us grow spiritually, to show us God's character, and to give us wisdom. But this "seed" needs good soil—a receptive heart. If we don't see spiritual fruit—like patience, holiness, love for our enemies—then we must test the soil of our hearts. Can growth happen there? **God is faithful to produce fruit and make us more like Jesus when we receive His Word with receptive hearts.**



WHAT DO YOU NOTICE ABOUT WHERE THE SOWER SCATTERS SEEDS? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT THE WORD?

The seed fell on all types of soil, not just fertile ground. God desires for all people to hear and respond to the gospel. He graciously gives us His Word, reveals Himself through creation, and uses believers to share the gospel. **Though some will deny the truth, seeds of the Word and of the gospel are scattered in even the darkest, most hopeless places.** Every seed is capable of producing fruit. The gospel is the good news that all people can be saved from sin and experience new life because of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.



WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES? WHAT DOES THIS HELP YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER?

Parables teach complex truths through relatable stories. Jesus often used parables to convey difficult truths about God's kingdom—truths that sometimes contradicted the people's expectations. This parable reflects the big story of Scripture. God has always desired to redeem His people, but most Jews believed this redemption was for them only. They misunderstood that salvation wasn't from Roman oppression but from sin. The Old Testament pointed to Jesus living, dying, and resurrecting to offer salvation to all who believe and put their trust in Him. In this parable, the sower scattered seeds everywhere, giving every opportunity for them to grow and bear fruit if they landed in the good soil. Standing in front of these crowds, Jesus knew that some wouldn't believe in Him and be saved, but He desired for each person to know Him. The gospel was difficult for Jesus's listeners to understand. The message was radical, and Jesus wasn't what they expected from the Messiah. **Rather than leaving them (and us) to figure it out on their own, Jesus taught in parables to make God's truth accessible. Even now, God shares His Spirit with believers to help us understand His Word and His heart.**

GOD'S WORD GROWS IN GOOD SOIL

READ LUKE 8:11-15



UNDERLINE THE FOUR TYPES OF SOIL. WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE RESPOND SO DIFFERENTLY TO THE WORD? WHICH SOILS DO YOU RELATE TO MOST?

Jesus pointed to soil to symbolize people's responses to the Word of God. The trampled path is the well-worn path of this world; these people hear the Word but never seek the Lord because Satan distracts them from truth. The rocky soil represents those who initially accept the Word with excitement but later turn away when life gets tough; they never move beyond emotional response, and their faith never takes root. The thorny soil symbolizes ones who hear the Word but are choked out by worries and riches and are not fruitful; they remain so embedded in the cares of this world that they cannot grow. But the good soil describes those who cling to the Word and produce fruit. **This imagery helps us consider the soil in our hearts—if we can absorb the goodness of God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).**



WHAT "THORNS" KEEP OUR HEARTS FROM BEING GOOD SOIL?

Some of our "thorns" are external, like TV shows, social media, or music that distracts our minds from God. Other "thorns" can be internal—jealousy, lust, pride, or obsession with success. **Though the "thorns" that make our hearts hostile to God's Word may be different, the problem is the same: Living for this world chokes out spiritual growth.** The cares of the world—popularity, possessions, money, appearance—suffocate the seed of God's Word and keep us from growing spiritually.

WHY IS HAVING A HEART OF "GOOD SOIL" DIFFICULT? WHAT DOES "GOOD SOIL" LOOK LIKE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE?

We can't create good soil. The Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and makes them "good." But we can take steps to cultivate the good ground God creates in us. **Like seeds need light, water, and nutrients to grow, we promote spiritual growth by positioning ourselves in the light and walking away from sinful behavior; we nurture the seed of God's Word by walking with others who seek Him, making godly choices in our entertainment, practicing gratitude, and confessing sin.** Most of these spiritual disciplines go against our sinful nature, but as God's Word roots deeply in your heart, the fruit of the Spirit grows, making you more like Jesus. Though spiritual growth takes effort, God has promised to sanctify us and has given us all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-8).

session 1 | Secrets of the Kingdom

WRAP-UP



WHAT HABITS CAN YOU BEGIN SO THAT YOUR HEART IS A PLACE FOR GOD'S WORD TO GROW AND PRODUCE FRUIT?

The truth about good soil is that it needs cultivating. If neglected, good soil can be overrun by weeds or ruined by poor soil from its surrounding environment. The most important truth is that all growth comes from the Lord! He sanctifies us and produces spiritual fruit in our lives. The first step you can take is asking God to reveal your heart's soil. Ask Him to help you cultivate good soil. What's your part? Spend intentional time reading God's Word every day. The Holy Spirit works through His Word, and reading it consistently helps us to know and love God more. **God does the transforming, but we must spend time with Him and allow Him to change us.** Consider choosing a verse to memorize; meditate on it each day and think about how you can apply it while you're at school, with your friends and family, or at events and extracurricular activities. Take a look at your entertainment; consider swapping to worship music to help center your heart and mind on Jesus. When you take steps to root God's Word in your heart, *He* will be faithful to grow the fruit!

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

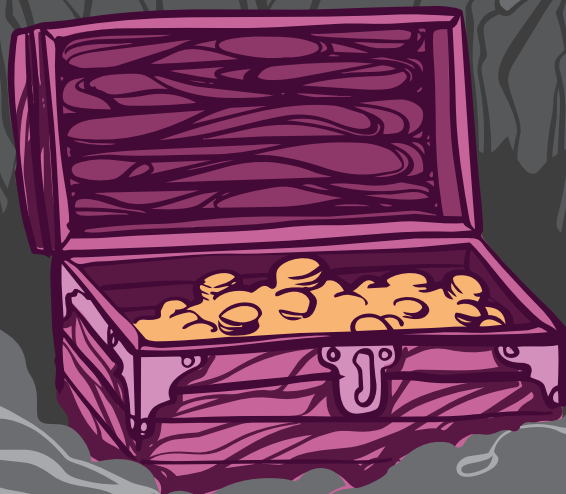
MAIN POINT.

Nothing has more worth than God's kingdom.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus told parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom on earth. No earthly kingdom is like God's kingdom, a kingdom of exceeding value. When Jesus returns, we will experience the fullness of God's kingdom.



PRICELESS TREASURE

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

Matthew 13

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING

MATTHEW 13:31-33

31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." 33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

THE KINGDOM IS PRICELESS

MATTHEW 13:44-46

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Nothing has more worth than God's kingdom.

Leaders: Your students will notice the joy you exude as a citizen of God's kingdom. Consider how you speak and act: Are you reflecting that God's kingdom is your joy and your greatest treasure?

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING

MATTHEW 13:31-33

"The Old Testament has revealed the earthly reign of Christ on the throne of David. But Matthew 13 introduces a different form of the kingdom—the spiritual reign of the King over His own servants while He is physically absent before His second coming. That is the secret—how His kingdom program will unfold in the period between His two advents. That is the subject of Matthew 13. . . . Jesus's followers must have lost more and more sleep as the hostility of the powerful Jewish religious establishment grew. Jesus's mustard seed parable encouraged them to keep up hope in the power of God to work through these humble instruments and small beginnings."⁵

MATTHEW 13:31-33

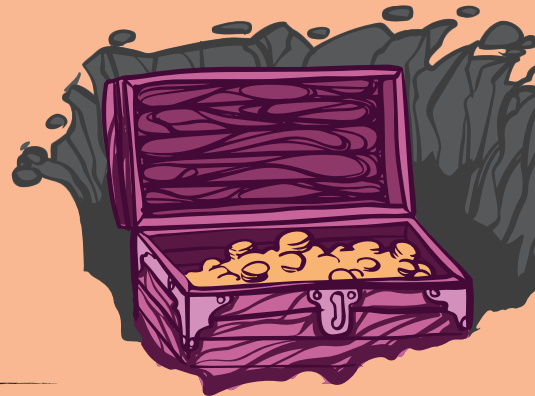
"The change brought about by the King's coming was not the military, political takeover that most Jews expected. Instead, the change the King caused was one that happened within the inner, unseen person. Jesus's kingdom took spiritual territory away from the unseen enemy. Jesus rescued souls; He did not capture land or seats of civil power. Nevertheless, the message of the kingdom would pervade the entire world."⁶

THE KINGDOM IS PRICELESS

MATTHEW 13:44-46

"Because the kingdom of heaven is something worth losing everything for, we joyfully let go of all things in order to passionately take hold of one thing. Jesus is speaking to disciples who, like the merchant seeking for pearls, would lose much for following Christ; in fact, most of them would lose their lives. But they were following a King who promised, 'And everyone who has left houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or fields because of My name will receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life' (Matt. 19:29). We come to Christ because He offers great reward; He is great reward."⁷

CONTEXT



The people originally listening to Jesus's parables had been waiting for generations for the promised Messiah and King. In the Old Testament, God promised to send a king to build His kingdom and restore His people. By the time Jesus arrived, the people had come to believe that this king would establish a physical kingdom on earth for the people of Israel and defeat their worldly enemies through power and might. The Jews lived under Roman rule and looked for a Messiah to overthrow their oppressors and give them power over their own land again. However, Jesus came as a baby in a manger and built God's kingdom through teaching, healing, and sharing the gospel; He called people to live sacrificially and to love one other. But the Roman government remained in power. When Jesus told the parables in today's passage, the people listening would have had a clear idea of what they thought the kingdom of God would be like, but Jesus presented a completely different idea. The kingdom would grow through His people—but not the physical, powerful land they had been expecting. The expectations the people had for a Messiah and for God's kingdom impacted the way they understood these parables, reminding us that we often need to put our own preconceived ideas aside to see God's kingdom clearly.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Church and Kingdom

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to God's reign in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the fullness of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to share about God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Jesus and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON TO DIE FOR OUR SINS SO THAT WE CAN BE A PART OF YOUR KINGDOM. HELP US TO LOVE YOU AND YOUR KINGDOM ABOVE ALL ELSE. HELP OUR LIVES TO REFLECT YOUR HEART AND YOUR KINGDOM HERE AND NOW.



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

How easily do you decide what to prioritize in your life (1=I know what matters; 10=I struggle to choose)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

VALUE

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE POSSESSION? WHY?**
- **IS IT ALSO THE MOST EXPENSIVE THING YOU OWN? WHY IS THE MOST EXPENSIVE THING NOT ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING?**
- **WHAT MAKES SOMETHING VALUABLE TO YOU?**

Most of us have a favorite or most prized possession, even if it's something inexpensive or seemingly unimportant to others. What is most important in our lives is rarely determined by how expensive it is but by what it means to us. The kingdom of God is not a physical place we can point to in this life, but it is of greater value than anything else we can own or treasure.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What do you treasure—really treasure? Here's how to know: Look at how you live; look at what consumes your time, your attention, your devotion; look at what you protect. We may say that we treasure our relationship with God because it *feels* like the right thing to say. But our lives reveal our greatest treasure. Do they show that we love Jesus? For believers, treasuring the Lord will conflict with what the world says is important. Our identity first comes from belonging to God's kingdom, not worldly ones. We can easily lose sight of this and think the best treasures in life are the teams we are on, the clubs or friend groups we are a part of, or the possessions we own; however, we can do nothing more significant with our lives than faithfully living as citizens of God's kingdom, growing in our relationship with the Lord, and pointing others to Him. If the Lord is our greatest treasure, then our love for Him will show up in every part of our lives.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Nothing has more worth than God's kingdom.

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING

READ MATTHEW 13:31-33



WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS USED THE IMAGE OF A SEED TO DESCRIBE THE KINGDOM OF GOD? WHAT DOES IT HELP US KNOW ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM?

Frequently in Scripture, plants are used to describe the people of God or a person's walk with the Lord, so this would not have been out of place for the people listening. Jesus described the kingdom as a seed because it is growing but doesn't exist fully yet. God's kingdom is always growing and will continue to grow until He returns!

The kingdom may have looked small at the time Jesus taught this parable, but through using believers, God would continue to grow His kingdom. We get to help build the only kingdom that lasts!



HOW IS GOD'S KINGDOM UNLIKE EARTHLY KINGDOMS? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT TODAY?

Unlike the nation of Israel, the kingdom of God is not a place we can point to on a map—not yet. The Jews expected a physical place, but when Jesus taught about the kingdom of God, He pointed to His reign over creation. Scripture is clear that a time will come when Jesus returns and every person will bow to Him; until that time, we are to follow Him in obedience, live in relationship with God, be a part of the church, and share the gospel with everyone around us. **The kingdom of God, though not a physical place, exists in us; it is both “not yet” and “here and now.”**

HOW CAN WE HELP GROW THE KINGDOM OF GOD? WHAT HOLDS US BACK FROM DOING THIS?

God calls us to share the gospel. Our role is really that simple! Ultimately, the Holy Spirit changes people's hearts and draws them to Himself, but the Lord graciously allows us to be a part of the work He does on earth. We have the privilege of growing in our relationship with Jesus, of being His people, and of reflecting Him in the world! Sharing the gospel takes both our words and actions to reach others. Most importantly, we should pray for the Holy Spirit to change people's hearts and ask Him for opportunities to share truth with our friends at school, our teammates, or our family members. This is not always easy. We hold back because we fear what people think; we get distracted by popularity, relationships, activities, or stress. We lose sight of our purpose—loving God and loving others (Matt. 22:37-40)—and get wrapped up in what's temporary. And we miss out on the joy that comes with helping God's kingdom grow. **When we step into our calling to share the gospel—even when we're afraid or nervous—we are part of something much more significant than anything we could build here.**

THE KINGDOM IS PRICELESS

READ MATTHEW 13:44-46



WHAT MAKES SOMETHING PRICELESS? WHY IS GOD'S KINGDOM A PRICELESS TREASURE?

Jesus used strong imagery to make clear the value of God's kingdom. God's kingdom is eternal, more valuable than the world's greatest treasures. But sometimes, we struggle with feeling like worldly comforts are the greatest treasures. We can see them and feel them now. Jesus taught His listeners that the kingdom of God is worth losing everything. In this life, we get to be a part of the kingdom through our relationship with Jesus and through the church, but when Jesus returns, we will experience the fullness of God's kingdom in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1)! **No matter what we may experience in this life—no matter what we must sacrifice to follow Jesus—our future with Him will be infinitely better than anything we could experience here.**



WHY SHOULD OUR LIVES REFLECT THAT GOD'S KINGDOM IS PRICELESS TO US? WHERE DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH THIS?

We love Jesus, but we struggle to make sure He is first in our lives. Taking time to evaluate how we live and if we glorify God is important. **Not everything that distracts us from the kingdom is necessarily sinful. School, friends, and family are gifts from the Lord, but if they take priority over Jesus, we must choose to elevate Him as the only King in our heart.** When we seek His kingdom first, He promises to give us what we need (Matt. 6:33).

WHY SHOULD THE KINGDOM OF GOD GIVE YOU JOY, LIKE THE MEN IN THE PARABLE FELT FOR THEIR TREASURES?

Walking with Jesus is the greatest gift but not always easy. Jesus never promised we will feel happy all of the time or that our lives will be comfortable. In fact, He promised that we will face trials in this life (John 16:33). But the joy the men felt for their treasure was in knowing they had found something greater than anything they had before. **Even more than joy over great earthly treasure, we get the priceless gift of salvation and will spend eternity with the Lord. Believers can have joy even on tough days and in difficult situations because we know we will see the fullness of the kingdom of God when Jesus returns!**

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU PRIORITIZE GOD'S KINGDOM OVER WORLDLY KINGDOMS IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT FOLLOWING JESUS IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Right now, we are waiting to see God's kingdom in its fullness. Seeing it in eternity will be better than anything we can imagine. **However, we get to take part in the kingdom each day as we grow in our relationship with the Lord, share the gospel, and walk with other believers. And everything else we do should be for the glory of God, coming after our devotion to God.**

This may look like devoting a specific time and place each day to read the Bible and sit with the Lord in prayer. Maybe it looks like intentionally praying for your friends' salvation and finding ways to share the gospel with them. Maybe it means going on a mission trip or meeting needs in your community. Maybe it means stepping away from what tempts you to care more about worldly comforts, such as social media or toxic relationships and conversations. We can prioritize the kingdom of God in many ways! Sit with the reality that you're a citizen of God's kingdom! Take time to praise the Lord for your salvation, asking Him to help you share the good news with others.

THE WIND AND THE SEA OBEY

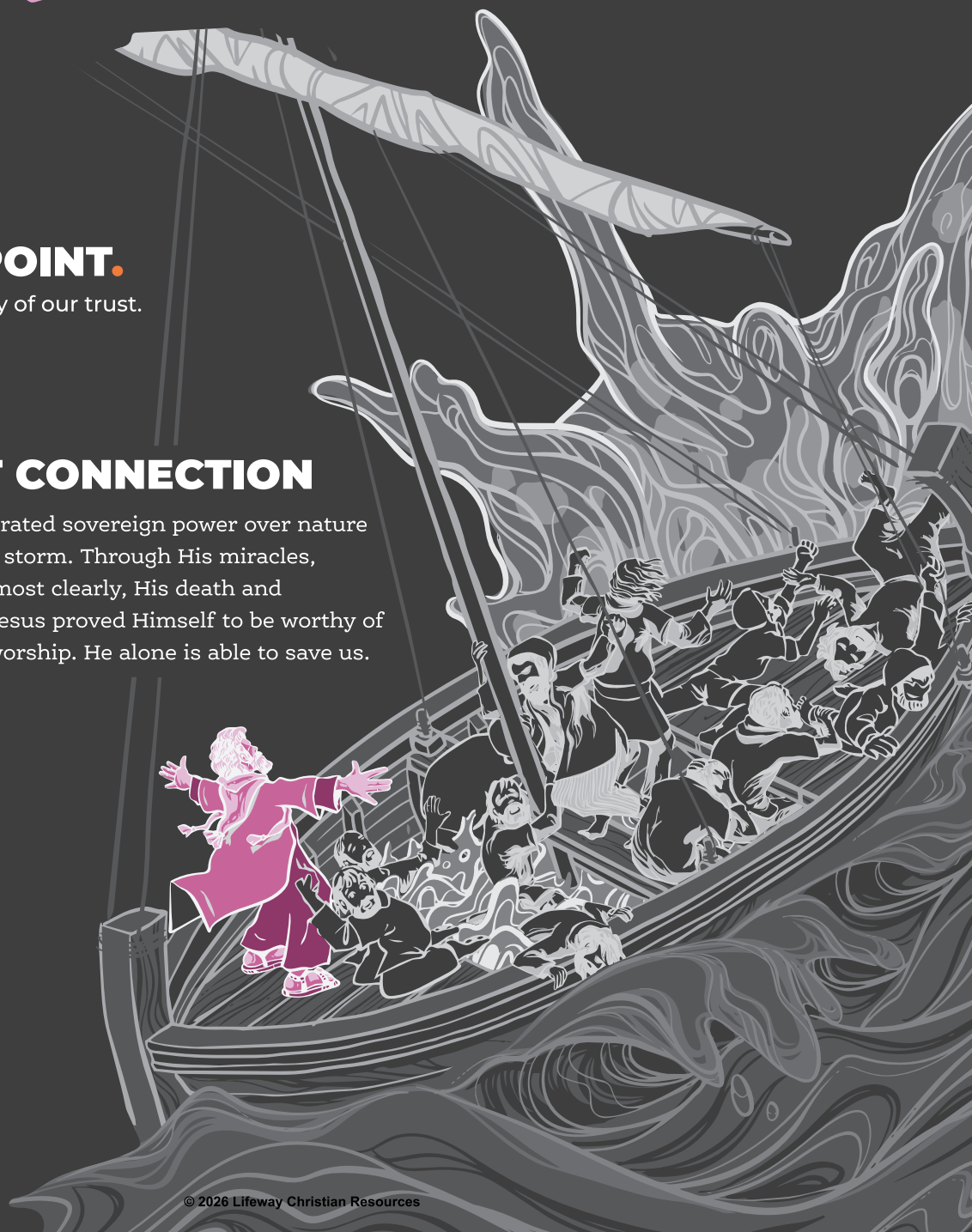
MAIN POINT.

Jesus is worthy of our trust.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus demonstrated sovereign power over nature by calming the storm. Through His miracles, teaching, and most clearly, His death and resurrection, Jesus proved Himself to be worthy of our faith and worship. He alone is able to save us.



***PRESENCE* AND POWER**

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

Mark 4

STORMS ARE NOT GOD'S ABSENCE

MARK 4:35-38

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."
36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

STORMS REVEAL GOD'S AUTHORITY

MARK 4:39-41

39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus is worthy of our trust.

Leaders: You exemplify how to trust in God's care and provision. Even when the enemy wants you to forget God's faithfulness, cling to the truth that He is sovereign and good, showing students He is worthy of their trust too.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

STORMS ARE NOT GOD'S ABSENCE

MARK 4:37

"The squalls that fall upon Lake Galilee are often sudden and severe. On the east shore the mountains rise quickly to a height two thousand feet above the lake's surface. When the wind is channeled through ravines that descend through those heights, the danger to an overloaded little fishing boat becomes fearsome indeed. When this happened to the disciples, they must have exercised all their skill and bailed as fast as they could, but still the high waves and wind brought them to the brink of disaster."⁸

STORMS REVEAL GOD'S AUTHORITY

MARK 4:40

"Certainly Mark understood the meaning to be faith in the saving power of God as revealed in the action of Jesus. Mark likely intended to indicate that faith is more than intellectual assent, that it is trust in a Person. This kind of faith Jesus's original disciples should have had and all subsequent disciples should have."⁹

MARK 4:40

"Faith does not end when we accept Christ. We also need faith to continue to grow in sanctification. How does a search for evidence help here? We search to find what kind of God we are serving. If my investigation leads me to a God who does not care, does not show compassion, does not take care of the birds and the lilies of the field, then perhaps this God is not trustworthy. However, in Scripture we find a God who cared so much that He sent Christ. We find a God who heals outcasts. We find a God who weeps over the unrepentant. We find a God who feeds the hungry with a few pieces of bread and fish. If this is the kind of God we serve, we can trust Him to calm the storms or go through them with us."¹⁰



CONTEXT

One major theme of Mark's Gospel was that Jesus has full authority over the world because He is the Son of God. Mark displayed Jesus's authority over nature, demons, and death, all impossible for humans to control. Mark included events that would help people believe in Jesus and in His authority as the Messiah. We must also remember that the event in today's passage is one part of a larger narrative about Jesus's authority. Mark aimed to prove that all of creation ultimately bows to the Lord, and we should as well. Many scholars believe that Mark wrote his Gospel by gathering stories from Peter about his time with Jesus. Peter was in the boat during the storm and could've accurately conveyed the fear the men felt. This storm was more than light rain or a little wind; it was a dangerous and monstrous event. These men, who had fished on the Sea of Galilee all their lives, were scared they would not survive. In their fear, they modeled how we can respond to our fears: running to the Lord of all creation, who is present and in control at all times.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Jesus's Deity

The person of Jesus Christ has two natures—the divine and the human. Scripture teaches He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that only God possesses, how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5).



LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, WE BELIEVE YOU ARE IN CONTROL. WHEN WE FACE DIFFICULTIES OR STORMS IN LIFE, HELP US TO BRING OUR FEARS TO YOU AND TO TRUST THAT YOU WILL PROVIDE IN A WAY THAT GLORIFIES YOU AND IS GOOD FOR YOUR PEOPLE.



KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Last week we talked about the **kingdom of God** being the most important thing in our lives and how to make it our priority. How did you prioritize the **kingdom of God** last week? When did you struggle with focusing more on our worldly kingdom?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

STORMS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT IS THE SCARIEST NATURAL DISASTER? WHY ARE STORMS SO SCARY TO US?**
- **WHO ARE THE PEOPLE YOU TURN TO IN A STORM, EITHER IN A REAL STORM OR A STORM IN YOUR LIFE?**
- **WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN LIFE FEELS OUT OF CONTROL? HOW DO OTHER PEOPLE AROUND YOU TEND TO RESPOND?**

A major reason we fear storms is because we have no control over them. Storms in our lives work the same way. We know that many situations are bigger than us, and even with the best people around us, we just can't control some parts of life. As we'll see today, Jesus has control over every storm, and He never leaves us alone in our fear and uncertainty.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

We don't enjoy difficult situations; usually, we do anything we can to avoid them. Regardless, bad things do happen. Sometimes, we want to blame God or ask why He wasn't there when we needed Him. We naturally question why God allows pain. Satan may even attempt to use our pain as twisted evidence that God isn't real or that He doesn't care. Storms do come—but not because God is uncaring or absent. Storms come because we live in a broken world. Sin entered the world in Eden and touched every part of humanity. Even nature experiences the effects of sin. While this may be difficult for us to see in our moments of pain, God hates our pain more than we do. He sent Jesus to make right what sin destroyed. The Lord is present with us in our pain. He walks with us through difficult times. He has ultimate authority over the world! God doesn't keep His children from experiencing struggles, but He sustains us as we depend on Him, and through Jesus, we have assurance of an eternity free from pain and sorrow.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus is worthy of our trust.

STORMS ARE NOT GOD'S ABSENCE

READ MARK 4:35-38



WHAT WAS THE DISCIPLES' MAIN FEAR? WHAT DID THEY NOT REMEMBER?

Storms on the Sea of Galilee come quickly and powerfully. The men were confused and upset that Jesus slept while they were in danger. How could He ignore their circumstances? **The disciples questioned Jesus because they didn't fully understand His identity and His authority: God's Son, Lord of all creation.** At the core of their fear was the idea that though Jesus knew, He didn't care. Like them, we experience moments when, though we know Jesus, we ask, "Don't you see? Don't you care?" We forget He is for us and with us. But our lack of trust doesn't change the truth that Jesus is sovereign over everything.



DO YOU THINK THAT THE STORM WAS A *SURPRISE* TO JESUS? WHY WOULD HE SLEEP IF HE KNEW A STORM WAS COMING?

The storm wasn't a surprise to Jesus. In fact, crossing the sea at that exact time was His idea. He knew what was to come. Jesus was fully man, which means He needed to eat, drink, and sleep just like anyone else. However, Jesus was not only man; He is also fully God. Since He is fully man and fully God, Jesus knew the boat would be battered by waves; He knew the disciples would fear for their lives. But Jesus rules over the wind and waves; they shift at His command. He never lost control and knew His disciples wouldn't be harmed that day, even though it appeared that way to the men in His care. What does this mean for us? **Because Jesus was fully man, He understands what we go through. He can empathize with us because He lowered Himself and took on human flesh. Jesus being fully God means that all things come under His authority. These truths should help us remember that Jesus is compassionate and trustworthy. He is sovereign over all things, and we can rest in His care.**

WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO FEEL GOD'S PRESENCE DURING A STORM IN YOUR LIFE?

Though Jesus doesn't walk with us like He did with the disciples, He is with us in every moment and in every storm. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living within us to guide, comfort, and encourage us. Maybe you struggled to feel God's presence with you in a hospital room or when you lost a loved one, when your parents divorced or when you battled loneliness. You may not see Him with your eyes, but the Lord never leaves you. **He isn't unaware of your storms. He promises to use them for His glory and for your good (Rom. 8:28)—the good of knowing Jesus and being made more like Him.**

STORMS REVEAL GOD'S AUTHORITY

READ MARK 4:39-41



WHY IS THE WAY JESUS CALMED THE SEA SIGNIFICANT?

Mark's Gospel centers on the theme that Jesus has authority over creation. Many people posed as possible messiahs, but Jesus was the promised One—the Word who created the universe (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16)! **We get to be in relationship with the One who created the storms and the oceans; He wants us to know Him, to walk with Him, and to be like Him!** If Jesus has control over nature, sickness, and death and commands creation with only a word, then we can trust Him with every part of our lives.



WHY DO WE STRUGGLE TO TRUST GOD WHEN STORMS COME? HOW CAN STORMS EITHER HELP OR HURT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S CHARACTER?

Sometimes, you may feel like your life is falling apart. You may wrestle with unimaginable pain, fear, or loss. And trusting the Lord may be difficult because you can't see any way out. The storm in this passage was one of those moments for the disciples. They couldn't imagine Jesus calming the waters. Even worse, they couldn't understand why Jesus didn't seem to care about their safety. Here's the tough truth: Jesus can calm every storm, but often, He allows them to continue. **He chooses to reveal more of Himself by letting us experience wind and waves. Storms often open our eyes to a greater understanding of God's love and care, reminding us of how desperately we need Him near us at all times.**

WHY DO YOU THINK THE DISCIPLES RESPONDED THE WAY THEY DID TO JESUS CALMING THE STORM?

The disciples begged for help but were terrified when they witnessed Jesus's incredible power and authority. This moment would help them confidently know that Jesus truly is the Son of God. Consider this: **The severity of the storm is what helped them so confidently trust in Jesus that they later risked their lives to carry the gospel to the world. They believed so deeply in who Jesus is because they saw with their own eyes.** You may not have a moment quite like this storm, but if you reflect on all the Lord has done to sustain you, you might be astounded too. Ask Him to open your eyes. Seeing Jesus's authority can help you follow Him in confidence because you trust He sees, He knows, and He cares.

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU PAUSE TO REFLECT ON GOD'S SOVEREIGN CARE IN YOUR LIFE? HOW CAN YOU LIVE IN GRATITUDE TO HIM THIS WEEK?

We live busy, distracted lives, so we can easily lose sight of all the Lord has done for us. When life is painful or uncertain, we have a difficult time remembering how God has been with us in the past. And isn't that what the enemy wants—for us to forget God's faithfulness so we'll be bound by fear and doubt? **Taking intentional time to remember how God has been with you in the past helps dispel the lie that He isn't with you now.** Set aside time this week to reflect on the past, on moments that felt impossible to face; remember how the Lord was with you then and how He cared for you through other people. Write down what you remember. As you reflect on those moments, thank the Lord for His presence! **When you spend time reflecting on the Lord's faithfulness in your life, you'll trust Him to be faithful again. This doesn't mean you won't struggle or face difficulty, but the knowledge that God is walking with you will change everything about the storm's purpose and outcome.**

YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU

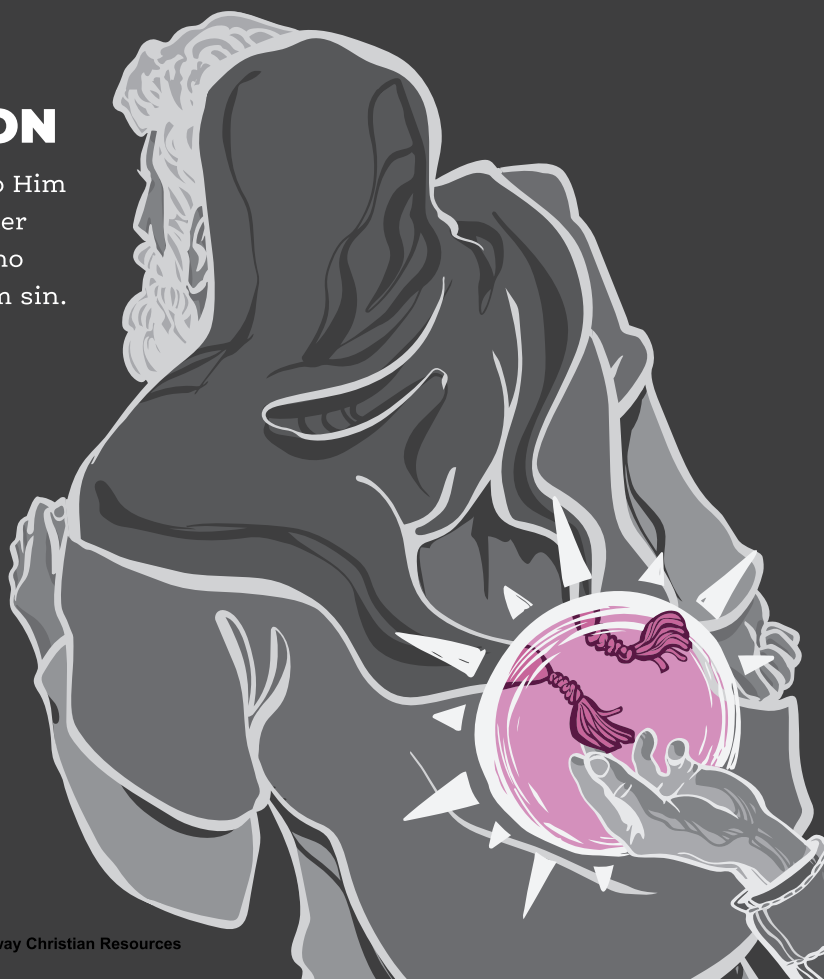
MAIN POINT.

Jesus doesn't turn us away when we go to Him in faith.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus responded to those who came to Him in faith for physical healing. In a greater way, Jesus forgives and restores all who come to Him in faith for salvation from sin.





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

Luke 8

WE CAN TAKE OUR DESPERATION TO JESUS

LUKE 8:40-45

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. 41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. 43 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. 44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. 45 And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!"

OUR FAITH SAVES US

LUKE 8:46-56

46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." 47 And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. 48 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." 49 While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." 50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." 51 And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. 52 And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." 53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. 56 And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus doesn't turn us away when we go to Him in faith.

Leaders: The Lord doesn't push us away when we run to Him in desperation—with our sin, with our shame, with our struggles. More than ever, students need to hear this truth. Show them how to run to Jesus.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

WE CAN TAKE OUR DESPERATION TO JESUS

LUKE 8:43

“The malady itself must have been distressing and it had social consequences as well as physical. Because this complaint made her ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:25), the sufferer was not permitted to take any part in temple worship or the like. Her uncleanness was readily communicable to other people (a touch was all that was needed, Lev. 15:27). She would accordingly have been avoided lest others contract from her an uncleanness which, though temporary, was troublesome.”¹¹

LUKE 8:40-42

“Jesus returned, apparently across the sea to Capernaum, to the crowds He normally faced (see vv. 4,19). These crowds were eager to see Him, view His miracles, and find healing for their sick family and friends. Ironically, the first to meet Him as He returned from pig and demon country was a synagogue ruler. He was responsible for arranging the synagogue for meetings and probably leading the council of elders in the synagogue. Jairus had no time to see if all was kosher. Jesus's state of purity was not a priority with him. Only one thing mattered: his dying daughter. Falling at Jesus's feet in humility, respect, and reverence, Jairus was transformed from a respected leader to a desperate beggar.”¹²

OUR FAITH SAVES US

LUKE 8:48

“‘Healed you’ is literally saved you. It was not simply the woman's touching of Jesus's garment that healed her, for others pressed against Jesus as well; it was the faith that caused her to touch Jesus that brought healing. Yet something more happened than the cessation of her bleeding. She experienced physical healing but even more. If Jesus's concern for her involved physical healing only, what occurred in Luke 8:45-48 could have been omitted. Luke reported that Jesus sought out the woman because something greater than physical healing was taking place. Through faith the woman also received spiritual healing.”¹³

CONTEXT



In today's passage, we find a common thread of faith woven through the stories of two very different people: one, a religious leader named Jairus; the other, an unnamed woman, ostracized and "unclean." Jairus was a leader in the synagogue, likely known by Jews in the area. Jairus falling at Jesus's feet and pleading for Him to heal his daughter was a significant declaration of belief in Jesus's power. Jairus exhibited brave faith in a time when groups like the Pharisees so openly opposed and threatened Jesus. His desperation was a catalyst for faith and healing. Likewise, the woman was desperate for healing; her problem with bleeding was more than just a medical issue. According to the law, the bleeding she experienced made her ceremonially unclean, unable to participate in worship with her people. Anyone who touched her would've been unclean as well. The woman had been separated from society and unable to worship at the temple for twelve years with no hope in sight. By law, her touching Jesus's robe would've rendered Him unclean as well; instead, Jesus cleansed and restored her because of her faith!

Leaders: Approach your discussion about the woman suffering from bleeding with sensitivity and maturity. Some students may find the medical nature of the story uncomfortable; root the discussion in her prolonged physical suffering and the social isolation she endured.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Faith

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Jesus 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 Jesus 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 Jesus.

LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GREAT LOVE FOR US. THANK YOU FOR THE REMINDER THAT WE CAN COME TO YOU WITH OUR DESPERATION. YOU HEAL US FROM OUR SIN, AND WE LIVE IN GRATEFUL WORSHIP.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Not only did Luke write a Gospel account, but he was also a doctor. Because he understood on a deeper level the illnesses and ailments healed by Jesus, he also understood the power of Jesus!¹⁴

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

COMPLETE TRUST

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW DOES IT FEEL WHEN YOU HAVE TO RELY ON SOMEONE ELSE TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU? ARE THERE PEOPLE YOU'D TRUST MORE THAN OTHERS?**
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE FAITH IN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE?**
- **WHY IS HAVING FAITH IN JESUS TO DO WHAT HE PROMISED SOMETIMES HARD?**

Trusting others to do things for us is hard, especially when it matters greatly. Sometimes, trusting God will be faithful to us is hard, too, especially when our lives feel uncertain or when we're walking in tough seasons. Today, we'll look at two people who came to Jesus with desperate faith that He could and would help them.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever prayed for something and been disappointed that God didn't answer the way you hoped He would? Jesus has all power and authority to heal every sickness, but as you probably know, He doesn't always heal people physically. You may wonder why the Lord didn't heal someone you begged for Him to heal, someone you loved deeply. You've seen Him heal others, so you may feel hurt—like He didn't hear your prayers or He simply didn't care. God loves us more than we could ever imagine, and He is going to do what is best for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28). In fact, Jesus willingly experienced suffering and death to free us from both forever. In the moment, Jesus's death couldn't have looked like glory; it couldn't have looked like what was best for His followers. But what God does is always best for His kingdom and for His people. We'll experience disappointment, grief, and pain, but we can trust the Lord is faithful even then. Because of Jesus, believers have hope that is greater than the disappointment, grief, and pain we experience now. God hears you; He sees you; He cares for you.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus doesn't turn us away when we go to Him in faith.

WE CAN TAKE OUR DESPERATION TO JESUS

READ LUKE 8:40-45



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DESPERATE? WHERE DO YOU TURN WHEN YOU FEEL DESPERATE FOR HELP?

Desperation is a feeling of hopelessness that can drive us to drastic actions. Both Jairus and the woman were desperate: Jairus wanted to save his daughter, and the woman suffered from a long, seemingly incurable disease. They had heard about Jesus's miracles and went to Him for help. **When we're desperate, we often run to what's powerless for help. We turn to sports or social media; we turn to harmful substances or to worldly comforts. They may make us feel better or numb our pain, but they're powerless to save us.** Instead, we can run to the Lord. He alone is powerful and faithful to save.

WHY DID JESUS STOP TO ASK WHO TOUCHED HIS ROBE?

Leaders: Share Context. When the Son of God asked this question, He wasn't confused or needing clarification. Jesus asked who touched Him because He wanted to talk with the woman who had been healed. He wanted to teach an important truth to those watching and listening. **Jesus didn't shame or reprimand her for touching Him (as the law would've encouraged); He commended her faith! He called her "daughter"—this woman who suffered in isolation for so long.** Jesus healed her physically, but more importantly, her faith in Jesus led to her spiritual healing and freed her to "go in peace."



WHAT DOES JESUS STOPPING FOR BOTH A SHUNNED WOMAN AND A JEWISH LEADER HELP US UNDERSTAND ABOUT HIM?

Jesus was en route to see Jairus's daughter when a woman interrupted His plans. **Jesus stopped for her.** According to the law, situations like blood exposure and touching a corpse made people "unclean" and unable to take part in community. In this text, we see Jesus stop for both a religious leader, a man of importance, and an "unclean" woman. Most people avoided interaction with the "unclean"—like this woman—because they feared being made unclean themselves. But Jesus cared more about loving people and drawing them to Himself for salvation than cultural or religious rules. Jesus was able to heal the woman and make her clean, unlike any doctor she had seen. Twelve years of pain ended because Jesus stopped for her. **The Lord desires to save all people—no matter our cultural status or backgrounds, no matter how unclean our sin has made us. He doesn't push us away. He stops for us. He draws us in. And when we come in faith, He heals us and saves us from our greatest sickness: our sin.**

OUR FAITH SAVES US

READ LUKE 8:46-56



JESUS SAID THE WOMAN WAS SAVED BY HER FAITH. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE THIS TYPE OF FAITH?

Having faith in Jesus is more than just believing He existed as a person. When Jesus pointed to the woman's faith, He meant that she believed Jesus was who He claimed to be and able to do what He promised. Today, we may not get to witness Jesus healing people, but Scripture shows us who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He will do. Having faith is believing that Jesus is the Son of God, that He came to live, to die on the cross, and to be raised from the dead so that we can be saved from our sin and spend eternity with Him. **Placing faith in Jesus is confessing Him as Lord, as the only One who can save (Rom. 10:9-13), and results in a relationship with Him that continues to transform you from the inside out.**

WHAT DO YOU THINK HELPED JAIRUS HAVE FAITH, EVEN AFTER THE NEWS OF HIS DAUGHTER'S DEATH? HOW DO YOU CONTINUE TO HAVE FAITH IN DIFFICULT TIMES?

Jairus had faith despite hearing reports that screamed, "Give up!" If you haven't yet, you'll likely experience a time when faith feels pointless because of your circumstances. **Notice what Jesus did just before Jairus received the news: He healed the bleeding woman. If He could do this, could He not also raise Jairus's daughter? Wasn't He capable?** We need these examples in Scripture. Why? Because we will come to a similar crossroads: Will we believe when our circumstances shout fear and doubt? Will we recall God's faithfulness in the past to sustain us in the present? And even when healing doesn't come here and now, will we remember that our salvation from sin is enough?



DO YOU EVER STRUGGLE TO BE OPEN WITH GOD ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS OR FEARS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

The woman tried to go unnoticed and trembled when Jesus asked who touched Him. Sometimes, we're afraid to bring certain struggles to the Lord. **We let our shame silence truth: God doesn't push us away but draws near to us when we go to Him (James 4:8).** This passage shows us how Jesus responds when we bring Him our honest struggles: love and grace. When you feel discouraged or ashamed, remember God's incredible kindness toward you. **He won't turn you away. He isn't against you; He is for you and for your freedom from sin and shame.** The Lord welcomes you when you turn to Him in faith.

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU PRACTICE RELYING ON JESUS IN BOTH BIG AND SMALL MOMENTS? HOW COULD THIS HELP SOMEONE ELSE'S FAITH TO GROW?

Like in other relationships, learning to trust Jesus doesn't happen by accident but must be practiced and cultivated. **Trusting Him more comes through knowing Him more deeply—through His Word, through prayer, through experiencing His presence.** More often than not, we remember to talk to Jesus about the huge moments in life, but we forget to talk to Him about the small moments. If we develop a habit of talking to the Lord about everything, we will more quickly turn to Him in times of desperation. **And when we trust Jesus, others notice our faith and are encouraged to trust the Lord with their own struggles, pain, and shame.** You don't have to bow your head and close your eyes to stay in communication with the Lord. You can speak to Him all day! Talking with Him about small decisions will help you to trust Him more.

FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

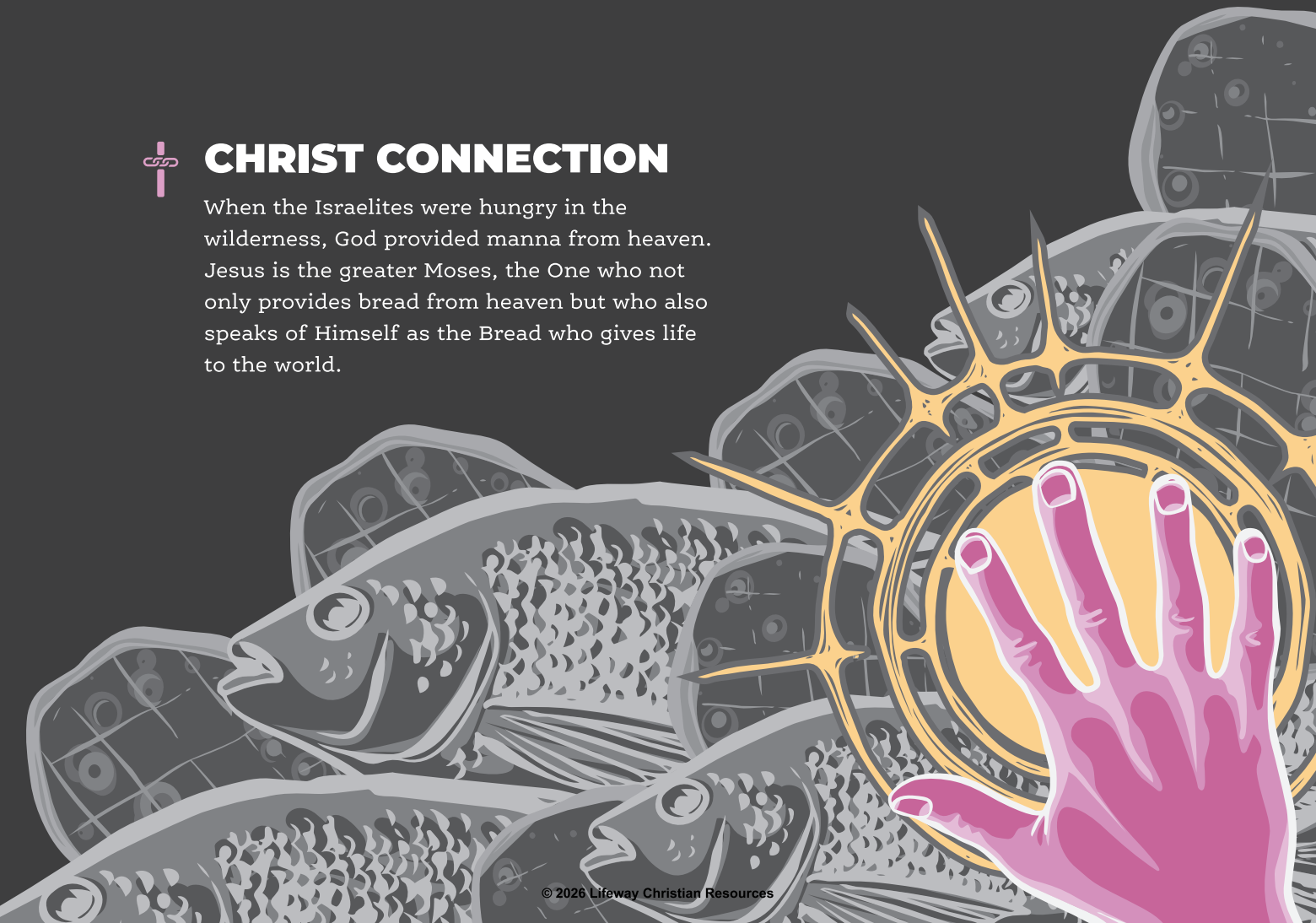
MAIN POINT.

Because of Jesus's authority, we can trust Him to meet all our needs.



CHRIST CONNECTION

When the Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, God provided manna from heaven. Jesus is the greater Moses, the One who not only provides bread from heaven but who also speaks of Himself as the Bread who gives life to the world.





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

Matthew 14

JESUS CARES ABOUT OUR NEEDS

MATTHEW 14:13-16

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

JESUS HAS THE POWER TO MEET OUR NEEDS

MATTHEW 14:17-21

17 They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Because of Jesus's authority, we can trust Him to meet all our needs.

Leaders: Consider the moments when what you saw or held in your hands didn't feel like enough, yet God provided. Recall and share with students how God has cared for you.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS CARES ABOUT OUR NEEDS

MATTHEW 14:13-14

"Notice what Jesus didn't do at this point: He didn't order the crowd to go home and come back the next day. Instead, Matthew tells us that Jesus was (once again) moved with compassion for them (v. 14), even for those who were superficially attached to Him. These individuals were like the second type of soil in the parable of the Sower, people who received Jesus gladly one moment, and then rejected Him completely the next (13:20-21). Even in the face of such shallowness, Jesus was compassionate."¹

JESUS HAS THE POWER TO MEET OUR NEEDS

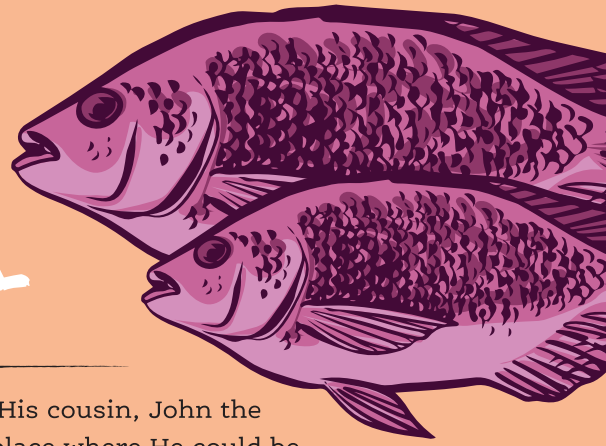
MATTHEW 14:17-21

"The disciples' suggestion of v. 15 offered a realistic alternative. Rather, feeding the five thousand—providing bread for Israel in the wilderness—almost certainly was meant to call to people's minds God's supernatural feeding of the Israelites with manna in their wilderness wanderings in Moses's day. Jewish tradition had come to believe that the Messiah would repeat this miracle of abundant provision of food on an even grander scale. The promise of Psalm 132:15 and the somewhat similar miracles of 1 Kings 17:9-16 and 2 Kings 4:42-44 also provide important background. The collection of twelve baskets (one per apostle?) may well have been intended to call to mind the twelve tribes of Israel. Again we see evidence that Jesus is creating a new Israel out of those who will follow Him and foreshadowing the messianic banquet (as also in 22:1-13; 26:29). He must therefore be the Messiah."²

MATTHEW 14:19

"Jesus may have intended this event to be, above all else, a training opportunity for His disciples. Notice how He challenged their faith by saying, 'You give them something to eat' (14:16), before proceeding with the miracle. He also saw to it that the disciples distributed the bread to the thousands. It must have left an impression. His preparation of His disciples was a task of great importance. On them rested the future of the kingdom."³

CONTEXT



Prior to today's passage, Jesus heard that Herod killed His cousin, John the Baptist. In response to this news, Jesus withdrew to a place where He could be alone. However, He was met with a crowd that had followed Him there. Instead of being angry and upset that He didn't have time to mourn His cousin's death, Jesus showed compassion for those who followed Him and began to heal the sick. Passover, one of the most important Jewish holidays, was the backdrop for this scene. Matthew's readers would have recognized the important connection between the feeding of the five thousand (not counting women and children) and God feeding His people manna from heaven in the wilderness. This proved to those watching and reading that Jesus wasn't just another prophet God sent to speak on His behalf; Jesus was the One who came to meet the physical needs of His people and, more importantly, the spiritual need of His people: salvation from sin.

Ex nihilo: Latin for "something out of nothing"; all things were created ex nihilo through Jesus, the Word (John 1:1-3).

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



God Is Immanent

When we say that God is immanent, we mean that God is personable and relatable to those made in His image, while remaining completely distinct and unique from all of His creation. It means that God is not a distant deity who only sits on His heavenly throne with no interaction; instead, God created people in His image for personal relationship with Him.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, LET US SEE YOUR LOVE FOR US IN HOW YOU MEET OUR NEEDS. SHOW US THAT YOU MEET ALL OF OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, OUR SPIRITUAL NEED FOR SALVATION FROM SIN. HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOU MEET EVERY OTHER NEED!



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

How would you rate this lunch: bread and cold fish from a boy's lunch box (1=No thanks; 10=Delish!)?



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

ALL NEEDS MET

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT YOU NEEDED WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER BUT NOW REALIZE WASN'T NECESSARY?**
- **WHAT IS THE NICEST THING A STRANGER HAS DONE FOR YOU?**
- **IF YOU KNEW THAT YOU WOULD NEVER NEED ANYTHING ELSE IN YOUR LIFE, HOW WOULD THAT CHANGE THE WAY THAT YOU LIVE NOW?**

At some point, we've all needed something we didn't have. Maybe we needed a friend; perhaps we needed food or clothes; or maybe our needs weren't as serious but were still serious to us. We all have one desperate need in common, a need only Jesus can meet—forgiveness of sin.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Seeing God meet other people's needs may give you joy. But sometimes we feel something else: jealousy. We watch as God takes care of other people's needs, but we don't feel like He is meeting our needs. We begin to ask the question, "Does God really care about me?" Like Adam and Eve in the garden, instead of trusting God and taking Him at His Word, we believe the lies of the enemy: "If God really loved you, He would give you ____." We question if He is withholding good things from us. We allow the thought to settle down into our hearts. And then, we usually progress into taking matters into our own hands, attempting to meet our needs apart from Jesus. What we must realize is that when we look to anything or anyone but Jesus to meet our needs, we'll come up empty. He has met our deepest need for salvation, and He cares for and sees our other needs as well.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Because of Jesus's authority, we can trust Him to meet all our needs.

JESUS CARES ABOUT OUR NEEDS

READ MATTHEW 14:13-16



EVEN WHILE MOURNING, HOW DID JESUS RESPOND TO THE CROWD? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW YOU ABOUT HOW HE RESPONDS TO US?

Jesus had such a heart for people that, even as He mourned John the Baptist's death, He didn't ignore their needs. **Jesus cared more about the crowd's needs than His own very real, very human needs.** They had come to Him hungry for hope, and He looked at them with compassion, choosing to address their physical hunger too. Jesus is never too busy for us. **Both our spiritual and physical needs matter to Him because He cares about us as a whole—body, mind, and spirit.** This is the Savior we can fully trust.



HOW DID THE DISCIPLES VIEW THE PEOPLE (VV. 15-16)? HOW CAN WE BE MORE LIKE JESUS?

Jesus's response wasn't what the disciples expected. He intended to care for the people—hungry and tired men, women, and children—while the disciples saw the people's hunger as a problem for them to handle themselves. We often fail to see people's needs or view them as inconveniences. To be like Jesus, we must see people, even when their needs are difficult and call us to sacrifice our comfort. **When we care for the needs of others, we show that we have more than head knowledge of what Jesus has done for us—that we've allowed Him to transform our hearts to mirror His heart.**

WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS TOLD THE DISCIPLES TO *FEED* THE LARGE CROWD?

Jesus enlisted the disciples in feeding the large crowd because He wanted them to see how much He cared for others' needs and to teach His followers how to care for people as well. Jesus didn't need the disciples to feed the crowd; He could've simply spoken a word and provided an extravagant meal for every person present. But Jesus chose to use the disciples—He chose to use a young boy's seemingly insufficient meal (John 6:9)—so that they would see the miracle of His provision. **They'd understand that when they place their possessions, their time, their gifts in the Lord's hands, He multiplies them to reach farther and wider.** In sharing the gospel, Jesus doesn't need us; He chooses us. God makes Himself known to people through creation (Rom. 1:18-20), yet He gives us the honor of sharing the gospel. **Jesus enlisted the disciples because He wanted them—and us—to see that following Him means living open-handed, obeying Him and trusting Him with the results.**

JESUS HAS THE POWER TO MEET OUR NEEDS

READ MATTHEW 14:17-21



HOW DO THE DISCIPLES VIEW JESUS'S POWER (V. 17)? HOW DO WE LIMIT HIS POWER TOO?

Unfortunately, we can be just like the disciples. Some people call this “seeing the glass half empty.” We only account for what we can see, not considering that Jesus turned water into wine, healed the blind, drove out demons, and cleansed lepers. He created all we see, bringing something out of nothing—*ex nihilo*. When Jesus speaks to us and asks us to obey Him, we have no reason to question Him because we’ve seen His faithfulness. We know His authority is all authority (Matt. 28:18-20). **So, when Jesus asks something of us, we can act in faith and trust Him completely, even when what we see or what we can offer doesn’t seem to be enough.**



WHY WOULD JESUS BLESS THE FOOD BEFORE SERVING IT?

Jesus is fully God and fully man. In every way, He modeled for us what relationship with and obedience to God the Father looks like. Jesus blessed the loaves and the fish to set an example and to remind His disciples—and us—that everything comes from God. **The meal wasn’t simply an act of human generosity but divine generosity and provision—the God of the universe providing for thousands of people. Jesus modeled a life posture of gratitude to the Father because every good and perfect gift comes from Him (James 1:17).**

THE PEOPLE ATE AND WERE “SATISFIED” (V. 20). WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE SATISFIED IN JESUS? WHY DO WE STRUGGLE TO BE SATISFIED IN HIM?

To be satisfied in Jesus is to look to no one and nothing else for contentment and fulfillment—to know that any need we may ever have is already met in Him. **This type of living frees us from the weights of comparison and jealousy and from disappointment in the things of this world; it frees us from chasing contentment in things that can never make us whole.** The people were satisfied with the fish and the bread, but a few days later, they were hungry again (Matt. 15:32-39). Jesus, the “bread of life” (John 6:35), completely satisfies our spiritual hunger for salvation and forgiveness. **We struggle to be satisfied in Jesus because we fall for the lie that the things of this world will make us happy. We worry that we’ll miss out, that we need Jesus plus something else.** Satisfaction in Jesus is better than the short-lived happiness of this world.

WRAP-UP



WHAT NEEDS DO YOU NEED TO BRING TO JESUS, TRUSTING HE WILL DO WHAT’S BEST FOR YOU?

When we fully trust Jesus to meet our need of salvation, He does so immediately! However, when we begin to trust Him with our other needs, we may feel like He isn’t listening or like those needs aren’t as important to Him. We may struggle to even bring our needs to Him at all. We see throughout all of Scripture that God is sovereign, or in control, and knows all things. God is like a good father who gives good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:11) and works all things together for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28). Sometimes, our circumstances make these truths *feel* untrue or difficult to believe, but they aren’t any less true. When we bring all our needs to Jesus’s feet, we’re saying, “Jesus, I don’t know how You are going to take care of this, but I trust that because You have shown Your love for me in saving me, You will take care of this need as well.” **We leave our needs there at His feet, remove them from our hands and our control, and let God provide for us in ways we can’t even begin to imagine. He is good, and He does what is good for us.**

WALKING ON THE SEA

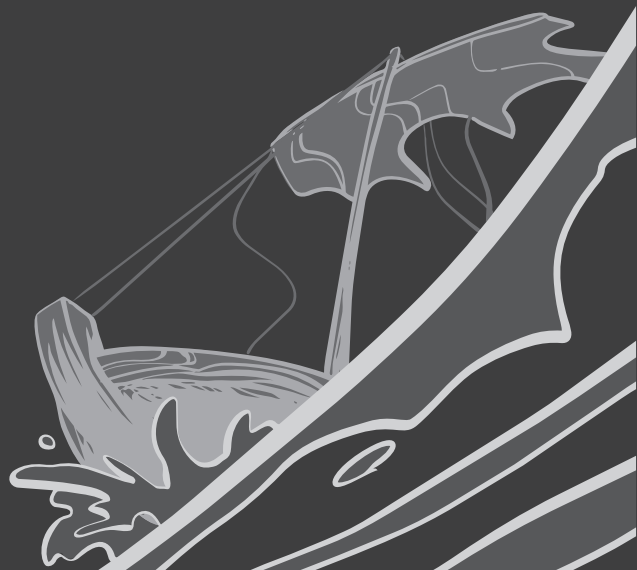
MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus is with us, we can take bold steps of faith.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus showed that He cared for His disciples by calming the storm that threatened their lives. He then called on them to have faith in Him. Jesus would later demonstrate God's love in a greater way by laying down His life to provide salvation from sin and death. All who have faith in Him have eternal life.



BY FAITH

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

Matthew 14

JESUS MOVES FIRST

MATTHEW 14:22-26

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.

JESUS CALLS US TO WALK BOLDLY

MATTHEW 14:27-33

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus is with us, we can take bold steps of faith.

Leaders: Your students may struggle with serious fear and anxiety. This week, point them to the One who calms all fear with His presence.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS MOVES FIRST

MATTHEW 14:25-26

“The disciples had no reason to expect [Jesus] to come across the water. In fact, they had no reason to believe such a thing could be done (except to extrapolate from the power they saw in Jesus’s other miracles, an unlikely prospect given their immaturity). So, naturally they were terrified (from a verb meaning ‘to stir up, trouble’) and gave voice to their fear in two ways. They gave each other the only explanation that made sense in light of their prior experience: ‘It’s a ghost!’ They could not imagine anyone or anything with physical form walking across water. And they ‘cried out in fear.’ They had been through a long, busy day and an even longer, torturous night on the stormy water. Fatigue, combined with superstition and lack of faith-filled insight, set them up for a response of pure terror when they saw Jesus.”⁴

JESUS CALLS US TO WALK BOLDLY

MATTHEW 14:27

“‘It is I’ reads, more literally, I am. This is not bad grammar but a conscious echo of the divine name of Yahweh, as in Exodus 3:14. Though still somewhat veiled, this is perhaps Jesus’s clearest self-revelation of His divinity to date.”⁵

MATTHEW 14:30-31

“What Peter could see with his physical eyes (the violent, stormy sea) became larger in his mind than what can be seen only through the ‘eyes’ of a faith-filled heart. There is a healthy, respectful fear we need to have before the Lord (Prov. 1:7), but the fear we feel toward anything that seems bigger than the Lord is a sign of small faith. Peter’s underdeveloped faith feared the storm more than the Lord, so the Lord allowed him to sink into a dark, angry sea. Jesus was always teaching His disciples. Every moment, every conversation, and every demonstration were intended to develop His church’s foundational leaders.”⁶

CONTEXT

Jesus paused grieving for His cousin (John the Baptist) to teach, heal, and feed the masses. Then, He went up a mountain to pray and sent His disciples by boat across the Sea of Galilee. We aren't told what Jesus prayed for, but we see His habit of getting alone in prayer throughout the Gospels. Sudden storms are common on the Sea of Galilee, caused by the cold mountain air colliding with the warm air of the sea's surface. Many of the disciples had experienced these storms before, but they were terrified, even though they'd also watched Jesus calm the wind and waves (Mark 4:35-41). Here, they thought that they saw a ghost walking toward them on the water. This passage, though short, uniquely points to Jesus's divinity three times: (1) Jesus walking on water proclaims He is God (Job 9:8); (2) Jesus replying, "It is I," translates to "I AM"—God's name that He shared with Moses (Ex. 3:14); (3) The disciples proclaiming Jesus as "the Son of God." This moment was fundamental in helping Jesus's closest followers come to the realization that He is "God with us"—Immanuel, Savior, Lord.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

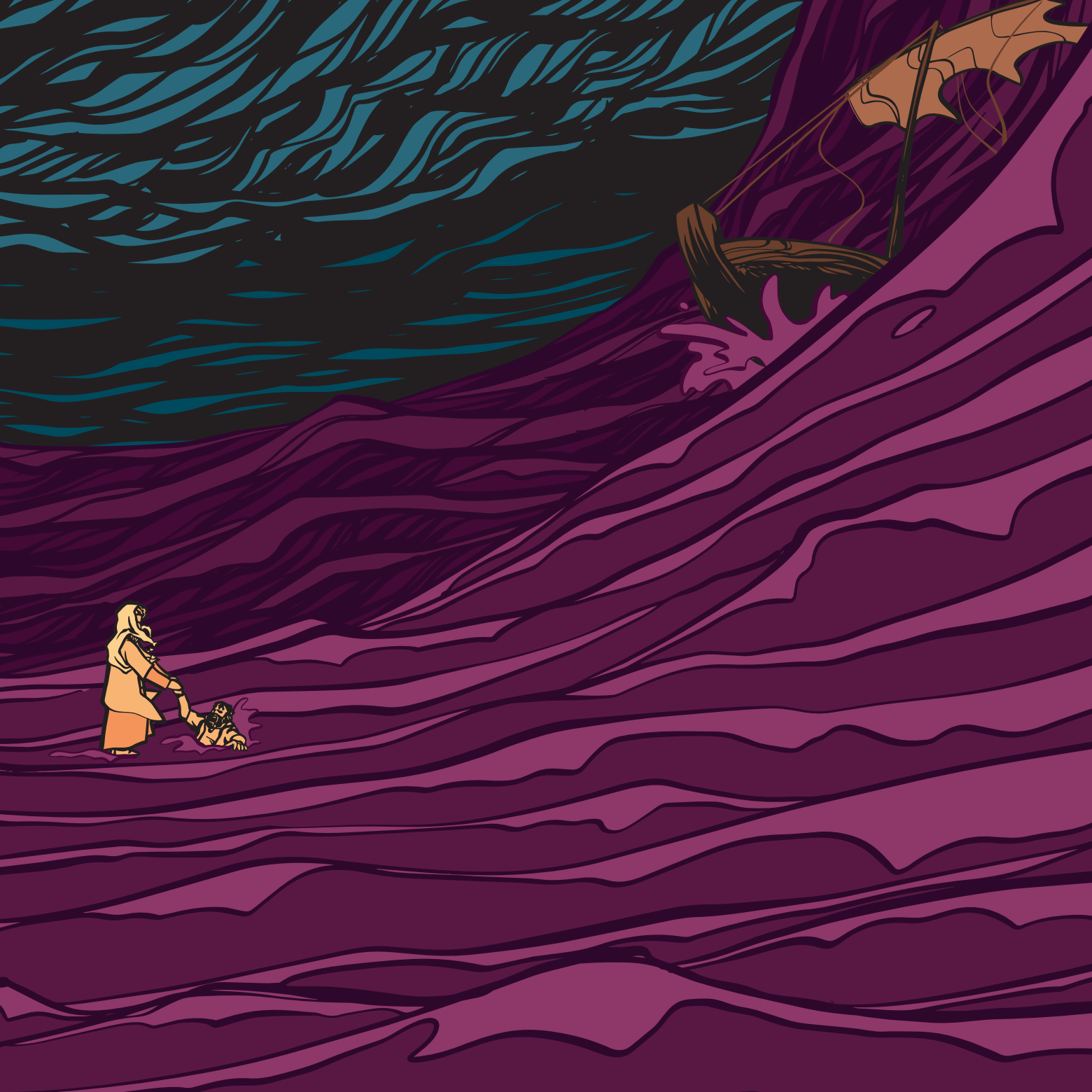


God Is Omnipotent

God is all-powerful: There is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or moral 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.

LEADERS' PRAYER

JESUS, HELP US SEE THAT EVEN WHEN THE WORLD AROUND US FEELS UNCERTAIN, YOU ARE STEADY. WE CAN TRUST YOU ARE WITH US, EVEN WHEN THE WATERS THREATEN TO OVERWHELM US. WE KNOW YOUR HAND SUSTAINS US IN EVERY SITUATION.



KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Let's check in on how you're doing spiritually. Last week, we saw that because **Jesus has all authority**, we can trust Him with **all our needs**. How did you do in trusting Jesus more than yourself to meet a need last week? How did He provide for you? How will you stay faithful if you're still waiting for God to meet your need?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

WHAT WE FEEL

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT WAS SCARY OR OVERWHELMING FOR YOU BUT TOTALLY WORTH IT IN THE END (RIDING A ROLLER COASTER, SINGING ON STAGE, ETC.)?**
- **WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE AFRAID OR UNCERTAIN? HOW DO YOU WORK THROUGH FEAR OR UNCERTAINTY? WHO HELPS YOU?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SO DISTRACTED THAT YOU MISSED THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF A SHOW, A MOVIE, OR A CONVERSATION? EXPLAIN.**

We have all been scared, afraid, overwhelmed, uncertain, or distracted. These feelings can keep us from living fully and, more importantly, from living faithfully in our relationship with God. Instead of focusing on how life feels, we can focus on the One who is in control of all things.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Fear comes in a lot of forms, not always contained to darkness, heights, or dark water. In fact, many of us fear being embarrassed, standing out too much, not standing out enough, being found out, or the unknown. Phones and social media heighten these fears because our failures and embarrassing moments can be shared with the world. If we mess up, people will know; people will see. So, we live in a worried state of asking, "What if I fail and everyone sees?" "What if I don't do this right and everyone knows?" "What if I don't measure up to their expectations?" We set a goal to look like what the world says we should look like, at least on our socials—a goal of meeting the world's standards. Want to know the truth? We'll never reach that goal. When we live from this place of fear, we miss out on how God created us to live. He designed us to know Him, and when we know Him, we can confidently live in our identity as His children. Instead of striving for acceptance, we can rest because our Creator accepts us through Jesus's blood. We can walk away from fearing what others think or what may happen because our future is certain.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus is with us, we can take bold steps of faith.

JESUS MOVES FIRST

READ MATTHEW 14:22-26



WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS SENT THE DISCIPLES AHEAD OF HIM?

Leaders: Remind students that Jesus calmed the raging sea in our lesson a few weeks ago. Jesus had calmed a storm before, and these men were there (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus wasn't afraid of the storm because He had authority to command it. Nothing in nature or in our lives—nothing at all—can happen without Him knowing. Jesus didn't send the disciples ahead of Him without purpose: He was going to reveal more of Himself to them in this storm. God doesn't direct us without purpose either. **When we are tempted to focus on chaos and fear, we can fix our gaze on Jesus and look for how He is revealing more of Himself to us, even in a storm.**



JESUS MOVED TOWARD THE FEARFUL DISCIPLES BEFORE THEY SAW HIM. WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT DETAIL?

Jesus saw the disciples being tossed by the waves before they ever saw Him. The disciples may have felt like they were alone or abandoned, but Jesus was close, moving toward them before they even called for help. Catch that: Jesus moved first. Jesus moved first toward us too. Before we could call out for salvation, Jesus accomplished and sealed it with His death and resurrection (Rom. 5:6-8). **We are never, ever unseen by the One who loved us enough to sacrifice Himself for our forgiveness. And He is near—so near, through the presence of the Holy Spirit.**



HOW CAN FEAR AFFECT THE WAY WE VIEW A SITUATION? HOW DOES OUR FEAR KEEP US FROM SEEING JESUS?

The disciples were distracted by their fear of the storm. Their fears determined what they saw and distorted truth. When Jesus called out to them, they assumed the worst because fear had already consumed them. They believed they were about to die and that they were seeing a ghost! But their beliefs couldn't have been more wrong. When we go through a fearful situation like this—when we are anxious, scared, or hurting—we can react just like the disciples and jump to the worst-case scenario. We quickly forget who we belong to and who we follow—the Lord of all creation. **We allow our fear, anxiety, and stress to speak louder than what we know is true: God is with us, He loves us, He cares for us.** When we lose sight of what's true, we struggle to see Jesus's work in our lives; we struggle to sense Him near us. **This passage reminds us of a few anchors: Truth silences fear; Jesus is never far away; and Jesus is steady and faithful. We can cling to these truths instead of letting fear determine what we believe.**

JESUS CALLS US TO WALK BOLDLY

READ MATTHEW 14:27-33



WHY DID JESUS ASK PETER TO COME TO HIM *BEFORE* SETTLING THE STORM? WHEN HAVE YOU HAD TO DO SOMETHING SIMILAR?

This was a test of Peter's faith but not in a pass/fail sense. Peter needed to see where his faith lacked. Peter asked Jesus to prove His identity by calling him onto the water, and Jesus did. Peter responded immediately by jumping out of the boat, boldly displaying his faith in Jesus. Then Peter began to sink, not because Jesus wasn't faithful to hold Peter up, but because Peter didn't continually place his faith in Jesus. **Like Peter, we may step out in bold faith but flounder once it becomes more difficult or unpopular or causes us to sacrifice. In these moments, God doesn't ask us to try harder. He calls for our continual faith, for us to fix our eyes on Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2)—the One who went before us and showed us how to live!**

WHY DO YOU THINK THE MEN WORSHIPED IN THE BOAT?

The men didn't worship out of relief only. They worshiped because they realized that only the God of the universe could have done what Jesus did. As they watched Peter and Jesus, they likely recalled teachings from their childhood: God alone treads on the waves of the sea (Job 9:8); God controls and silences storms that terrify sailors (Ps. 107:23-30). **They worshiped Jesus because they were beginning to understand that He was more than a profound teacher, prophet, and healer; Jesus was the Promised One, the Savior who came for their (and our) salvation and redemption! Worship was the only right response for them and for us.**

WHAT DOES BOLDLY LIVING FOR JESUS EVEN LOOK LIKE TODAY? WHAT KEEPS US FROM LIVING THIS WAY?

Following Jesus may not look like stepping out onto literal water but likely will lead you to take steps that feel unsteady, unpopular, and uncomfortable. Our world is full of false saviors—false gods, like money, possessions, and appearances. They can't keep their promises of security and happiness. **The truth is that boldly living for Jesus is not only walking away from these false gods of our culture but toward godliness.** Bold faith may lead us to speak boldly, to break away from certain groups, to choose uplifting relationships over popularity and humility over pride, to honor God with our bodies instead of living according to our desires. Every bold step is worth the cost.

session 2 | Walking on the Sea

WRAP-UP



HOW IS JESUS CALLING YOU TO LIVE MORE BOLDLY? HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

The answer to this question may be different for each of us, but normally, the answer draws us closer to Jesus—to take steps that increase our dependence on Him. For some, this bold step is trusting Jesus with your whole life; for some, it's confessing a sin or apologizing to someone you hurt; for others, the step is sharing the gospel with a friend who doesn't know Jesus; for many, the step is rearranging your schedule to prioritize time in the Word and in prayer. Maybe God has pressed on your heart to invite someone to church. Maybe He is asking you to trust Him with a situation that you've been trying to fix on your own for far too long. The step may be as simple as saying, "Jesus, I trust you more than my fears." The truth is that God invites all of us to take these steps and more.

Whatever the step of faith is for you, take it. Boldly trust Jesus. Take steps that may feel uncertain or uncomfortable because Jesus is faithful to go with you.

THE CHILDREN'S CRUMBS

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus accepts and heals us, we can accept and love others.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus showed His authority over the demonic spirit that tormented the Gentile girl, but this miracle only pointed to the truth that all evil will one day be defeated with Jesus's second coming at the end of the age. Believers can walk in hope, trusting by faith that this victory will come.



OUTSIDERS NO MORE

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

Mark 7

JESUS BRINGS US OUT OF DARKNESS

MARK 7:24-30

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

JESUS HEALS US

MARK 7:31-37

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus accepts and heals us, we can accept and love others.

Leaders: Many students wrestle with being accepted by God because they don't feel accepted by believers. Look for ways to extend God's heart to them. See them as Jesus does and love them deeply.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS BRINGS US OUT OF DARKNESS

MARK 7:24

"This had been the home of Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-32). Both Ezekiel (ch. 26) and Zechariah (ch. 9) prophesied against her. James Edwards says, 'Tyre probably represented the most extreme expression of paganism, both actually and symbolically, that a Jew could expect to encounter.' Yet Jesus goes there and graciously expands the scope and reach of the Messiah beyond what Israel expected. Unfortunately, like Jonah, too many Jews of that day could not imagine that God would extend His salvation beyond the borders of Israel. 'From a socioreligious perspective, Jesus's visit to Tyre universalizes the concept of Messiah in terms of geography, ethnicity, gender and religion in a way entirely unprecedented in Judaism.' This Savior is not for just one nation. He is for all nations, and we should be as well."⁷

MARK 7:24-30

"Whether Jesus went into Phoenicia immediately after the preceding event(s) is unimportant, but Mark's placing the account immediately after 7:1-23 is most significant. If the proper inference from the teaching of Jesus in 7:1-23 is that all foods are clean (v. 19), the lesson to be learned from 7:24-30 is that all people are clean! For Mark the excursion of Jesus into 'unclean' Gentile territory exemplified His disregard for the concept of ritual defilement. He saw in the ministry to the woman a preview of the Gentile mission and in the response of the woman a preview of the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles. Mark's Gentile readers/hearers no doubt found in the account reassurance that they were part of the true people of God."⁸

JESUS HEALS US

MARK 7:33-35

"Jesus takes the man aside. His attention is personal and compassionate. Entering the man's world, our Lord uses 'sign language.' 'The man could not hear Jesus and he was also incapable of verbal communication. So Jesus "spoke" to him in the language he could understand—sign language. The fingers placed in his ears and then removed meant, "I am going to remove the blockage in your hearing." The spitting and the touching of the man's tongue meant, "I am going to remove the blockage in your mouth." The glance up to heaven meant, "It is God alone who is able to do this for you." Jesus wanted the man to understand that it was not magic but God's grace that healed him."⁹

CONTEXT



Many of us have read Isaiah's prophecy about a virgin giving birth to a son named Immanuel (Isa. 7:14). A thread connects this prophecy to today's passage. Jesus left Jewish territory for the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. Hostility between Jews and Gentiles ran deep, reaching back to the Syro-Ephraimite War around 735 BC. God's kingdom had been split: Israel (north) and Judah (south). The kings of Syria and Israel (also called Ephraim) tried to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria, a powerful threat to the entire region (Assyria did conquer/deport Israel by 722 BC). The prophet Isaiah met with King Ahaz of Judah, warning him to have faith in God and not to align with the other nations, including Assyria. When Syria and Israel attacked Judah, killing 120,000 troops and taking 200,000 captives (2 Chron. 28:6-8), Ahaz didn't trust the Lord; he called to Assyria for help. Because of Ahaz's unfaithfulness, God later used Babylon as an instrument of judgment; they leveled Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and carried the people into exile. The long, messy conflict raised a question both during the battle and the exile period: Would God really keep His promise to the house of David (2 Sam. 7:16) or was hope lost?¹⁰ Today, we meet a Gentile woman from the very region (Phoenician Syria) which threatened David's line all those years ago. And we see the Living Answer to the question, the fruition of Isaiah's prophecy that God was sending a good King, a Son named Immanuel: Jesus is the fulfilled promise.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



New Identity of the Believer

When we place faith in Jesus, we go through a change of identity—from being enemies under God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to members of God's family as beloved children (Eph. 2:19). Believers are declared righteous on account of Jesus's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer are believers slaves to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. Believers are delivered from the realm of darkness and belong to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Jesus is a "new creation"; the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive, becoming more and more like Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

LEADERS' PRAYER

LORD, WE THANK YOU FOR MAKING SALVATION POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, NOT JUST A SELECT FEW. WE HAVE DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE YOUR GRACE, AND YET YOU POUR IT OUT ON US. THANK YOU FOR COMING TO SAVE US.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Wealthy Greek and Roman families would keep small dogs as pets, which were often fed scraps or crumbs under the table. Readers of Mark's Gospel would have known exactly what to picture when the woman used this example.¹¹

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

NEVER UNSEEN

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE YOU DIDN'T REALLY BELONG IN A ROOM, WITH A GROUP, OR AT AN EVENT?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO ASK MORE THAN ONCE FOR HELP DOING SOMETHING? HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?**
- **WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL SEEN OR UNDERSTOOD?**

Feeling like we don't belong or like no one sees or understands us is a feeling many of us probably experience more than we want to admit. Statistics say even though our world is more connected than it has ever been with phones, social media, and technology, it is also wrecked by loneliness. As we look at this lesson, we see that Jesus came for the outcast, the lonely, and the forgotten.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Labels are everywhere: labels that situate each of us into certain groups; labels that say we belong in some places but not others; labels of approval and disapproval. Most of us are just struggling to fit somewhere. We don't want to stand out, but we don't want to blend in either. At the heart of this struggle is a surprising truth: God created us with a desire to belong. The very fact that we are created beings means we belong to someone, right? We try so hard to find acceptance here. The issue though? We weren't created to root our sense of belonging in anyone but God. Do you ever wonder, "Does Jesus actually see me, and if He does, am I actually welcome?" And the loudest, most incredible answer is "Yes!" Sure, God desires each of us to have community here with people to encourage us and walk with us. But the labels, the striving to belong, the disappointment when we don't—we can let all of that go. The only label that will ever matter is that you're God's child, deeply loved and wholly accepted.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus accepts and heals us, we can accept and love others.

JESUS BRINGS US OUT OF DARKNESS

READ MARK 7:24-30



HOW DO YOU THINK THE WOMAN FELT AS SHE APPROACHED JESUS? WHAT STOPS US FROM GOING TO HIM LIKE THIS?

This Gentile mother was desperate to see the One who could help her daughter. She risked being rejected, humiliated, and punished for her child's healing. But we often hesitate to bring our needs to Jesus. **We remain outside the room because we forget He loves us, we think we can handle our problems, we lack faith in His ability to help us, we fear what others will say. Maybe we asked for His help before but felt like He didn't answer.** So, we stopped going to Him. This woman went to Jesus because she trusted His authority. She knew He was the One to bring her daughter out of the darkness. He can bring us out of darkness too.



HOW DO JESUS'S WORDS MAKE YOU FEEL (V. 27)? WHY DID HE RESPOND LIKE THIS?

Leaders: Share Context for deeper understanding. We must wrestle with Jesus's words within context. His response to a woman begging for help in faith doesn't feel like Jesus, right? But His words are weighty with purpose. Jews believed the Messiah was for them only; the Gentile woman had faith Jesus cared for her too. Jesus responded like most Jews would've—maybe even how some of His disciples wanted to respond. His words seem to sting with elitism and prejudice, but they point to a misunderstanding in this time period. God chose Israel to bring about His Son's birth; the gospel began with His people (Rom. 1:16). **But here, Jesus taught His watching disciples that superiority doesn't reflect God's heart, preparing them to understand that He is the Savior of all.**



WHO ARE THE OUTSIDERS IN OUR CULTURE? IN YOUR LIFE? AS BELIEVERS, WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN HELPING THEM LEAVE DARKNESS?

Culture conditions us from an early age to develop a mentality of "us versus them." We more easily see what makes people different from us rather than all the ways we are similar. Then, we begin drawing boxes to keep outsiders out and insiders in. We feel safer that way. Who are these outsiders? They are the people we don't like, don't get along with, don't agree with or understand, and don't want to be around. They don't fit inside our boxes. But let's go back to one of the first truths in Scripture: Humans are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). They are made in His image. **We may want to ignore, avoid, judge, and tolerate them from a distance. But in the Gospels, we see Jesus come close.** He treats outsiders with love, honor, care, and respect. He heals them. Our role is to treat others as Jesus treats them, welcoming them in instead of pushing them out. Our role is to love them as Jesus loves them. **Our role is to share the truth of the gospel with them, which is this: God loves them so much that He gave His Son to welcome them in as sons and daughters. We don't have to agree with everyone, but who are we to decide that some must remain outside in darkness when Jesus has opened the door and invited all people into light?**

JESUS HEALS US

READ MARK 7:31-37



WHAT STANDS OUT ABOUT HOW JESUS HEALED THE DEAF MAN? HOW SHOULD THIS SHAPE OUR HEART FOR OTHERS?

Jesus is God; He could have healed the man however He wanted. But we see Jesus's heart for people in the way He chose to heal this man. Jesus took him to the side, away from the crowd. A man the religious leaders would've considered flawed or sinful—Jesus held him, touched him, and restored him. In this culture, many people would have avoided this man, but Jesus treated him like he mattered. Because he did. **Jesus doesn't treat us like projects. He sees us, cares for us as individuals, and meets our needs with compassion, care, and presence.** Our hearts don't always work this way. We can pray to have eyes like Jesus's eyes and ask God to give us a heart that cares for the hurting, the lost, and the broken.

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE GIVE US HOPE WHEN SO MUCH BROKENNESS SURROUNDS US?

With one word Jesus healed this man. He didn't need to go to the doctor the next day or see a specialist. The man's healing came through faith and wasn't dependent on any other step. Jesus's work was enough. Jesus didn't just heal a man's hearing; He made right what never should have been wrong in the first place, reversing the effects of sin! **Jesus's healings give us glimpses of God's desire for us, glimpses of what eternity will look like, when everything that's wrong here is made right and made new.** We have incredible hope because Jesus's work on the cross was enough. Faith in Him is enough.

WHAT ARE WAYS YOU NEED JESUS'S HEALING TODAY?

This question may be tough for you to answer. Maybe you're scared to vocalize the things you desperately want or need. We still need healing today. Our world is sick with physical, mental, and emotional ailments. **But the Gospels teach us this: We can go to Jesus. He invites us.** His sacrifice has healed our sin and restored us to God. But the Lord cares about every part of our lives because we're His children. He cares about what hurts us, and He cares about what brings us joy. When sin entered the world, sickness, pain, and brokenness came with it. **Jesus came to heal us from our sin, but we can ask Him and trust Him to heal us from everything else sin has broken.**

WRAP-UP



WHAT NEED OR STRUGGLE HAVE YOU BEEN AFRAID TO BRING TO JESUS? HOW CAN YOU TAKE STEPS TO SURRENDER IT?

We all struggle to surrender everything to Jesus. Sanctification is the process of being made more like Jesus over time. **Jesus lived His life surrendered to the Father at all times. He held nothing back. The only way we do the same is by continually examining our life and handing everything we'd rather cling to over to Him.** As believers, we will never reach a point on this side of eternity when we're done surrendering to Him all that needs healed or brought out of darkness. Trying to handle struggles on our own to keep from being disappointed isn't the answer; surrendering to Jesus and trusting His authority is. Maybe you are afraid of the future, and anxiety consumes your thoughts. God is your good Father, and He cares. Maybe you've been hiding something from your parents and are afraid to confess because you worry they won't look at you the same. Jesus already knows and already loves you. Confess your sin to the Lord, and ask Him to help you confess it to others. **Take your needs to the Lord. He has promised it is safe to do so (Matt. 11:28).**

RESURRECTION AND LIFE

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus has authority over life and death, we can trust Him entirely.



CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus raised Lazarus 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.



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

John 11

DEATH STINGS NOW

JOHN 11:17-37

17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." 28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

DEATH HAS LOST

JOHN 11:38-44

38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus has authority over life and death, we can trust Him entirely.

Leaders: The Lord of lords entered our suffering to abolish it forever. What hope we have to share!

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

DEATH STINGS NOW

JOHN 11:17-21

“You need to learn to ask, no matter the situation, ‘How can I glorify God in this?’ Our normal response is to ask, ‘What’s the fastest way out of this situation?’ Christian maturity is learning to look at a situation and knowing that, whatever you face, you face it so God can be glorified through you. Does that make it feel like your life is insignificant and you’re a pawn in God’s global chess game? On the contrary, this passage shows that the glory of God and the love of God are not at odds. Jesus stayed for two reasons: the glory of God (v. 4), and His love for the family (v. 5). God’s glory and His love for you are not enemies. Reject the temptation to pit the two against each other. God’s glory is displayed chiefly in His bottomless love for His people. Was it unloving for Jesus to stay two extra days? If you were Mary and found out Jesus delayed, would it have felt unloving? It would have felt like betrayal. But your feelings are fallible. They are pathological liars. Your feelings say, ‘Jesus doesn’t love you. See? He won’t come. He won’t act.’ Don’t trust your feelings. Let the truth shape your emotions, not your emotions the truth.”¹²

JOHN 11:25-26

“Death is not a natural extension of life, though many psychologists and thanatologists argue that point today. Death is an enemy, created as a result of sin, and ultimately to be destroyed by God.”¹³

JOHN 11:35

“Oh, to be more like Jesus. Oh, to willingly enter others’ suffering. The most remarkable part is that Jesus is going to do something that takes their suffering away, but before He fixes their problem, He joins their pain. He enters their grief before He exiles it.”¹⁴

DEATH HAS LOST

JOHN 11:39

“It appears to the casual reader that Martha had climbed on board theologically and would no longer have any question about what Jesus could do. Yet a few minutes later she heard Jesus call for the removal of the stone and objected, ‘But, Lord . . . by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days’ (v. 39). So again Martha reminds us of ourselves—a willingness to verbally proclaim biblical truth without applying it in our lives.”¹⁵

CONTEXT

Ancient Near Eastern Jews believed that one's soul lingered around the body for three days after death. Because Lazarus had been dead four days, his loved ones had lost hope; they believed Jesus was too late. Today's passage contains a short verse: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Scholars debate why Jesus wept, and though the text doesn't say, we can consider several causes: (1) Jesus wept because He was human and felt sorrow over death, in a general sense and in a personal sense, with the loss of His friend; He felt compassion for Lazarus's loved ones; (2) Jesus wept over sin's effects on humanity—both physical and spiritual death; (3) Jesus wept over the people still not understanding His identity and authority. Even after observing Jesus heal diseases and cast out demons, His closest friends didn't have faith that, though He didn't arrive within their three-day timeframe of hope, He was capable of restoring life. Jesus had not failed them. For the people to understand His authority, Jesus performed His most astounding miracle: He raised Lazarus from death. Whether or not Jesus wept in grief or over the people's lack of faith and understanding, one thing is clear: He displayed His power over death.

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 Jesus from the dead, and it will take place at His return in the future. Because Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in Jesus's death and resurrection.

LEADERS' PRAYER

**LORD, BECAUSE YOU HAVE ALL AUTHORITY, WE HAVE
HOPE IN DEATH. WE MAY EXPERIENCE SORROW AND
GRIEF NOW, BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR DEATH ON THE CROSS
AND YOUR RESURRECTION FROM THE GRAVE, WE TRUST
THAT DEATH HAS BEEN DEFEATED FOREVER.**





KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

How well do you handle plans changing or falling through (1=Hate it; 10=Roll with it)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

CHANGE IN PLANS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT KIND OF PROBLEM SOLVER ARE YOU: DO YOU ACT QUICKLY OR DO YOU NEED MORE TIME TO THINK?**
- **WHAT IS YOUR TYPICAL RESPONSE WHEN SOMETHING DOESN'T GO AS PLANNED?**
- **DO YOU NORMALLY BELIEVE THINGS WILL WORK OUT OR DO YOU TEND TO BRACE FOR DISAPPOINTMENT?**

We all deal with and handle problems differently. Maybe you like to fix issues as soon as you see a problem; maybe you need time to process your answer before you actually answer. Life can serve us a lot of unexpected situations, but we can trust the Lord's purpose when our plans fail.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Our world moves quickly. We order fast food and within minutes, the meal is ready. We live fast-paced lives. How has this affected us? Well, many of us aren't good at waiting. Moving slowly or patiently isn't our preference. But our desire for instant gratification harms us when it comes to our relationship with God. We wrestle with praying to and trusting in a God who may not give us what we ask for immediately—or at all. We especially struggle when God's answer results in discomfort, pain, loss, or disappointment. We may question if God is good and if He can be trusted. But we must remember that God is eternal in His nature and understanding. When His timing or His answer doesn't meet our expectations, we can actually breathe a sigh of relief. Why? Because God sees what we don't see and knows what we don't know. More importantly, God does what is good because He is good (Ps. 119:68). When our circumstances don't feel good in the moment, we can know that our good God will do only what is good and what brings Him glory.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Because Jesus has authority over life and death, we can trust Him entirely.

DEATH STINGS NOW

READ JOHN 11:17-37



HOW DID MARY AND MARTHA REACT TO JESUS'S DELAY? HOW DID THEY FEEL?

Leaders: Share Context about Ancient Near Eastern beliefs. Martha's response included one significant phrase: "even now." She felt death's sting, though she knew Jesus, as God's Son, was able to do all things—despite what she saw and felt. Mary responded without an "even now." Sure, she may have believed like Martha. **But maybe Mary struggled in this moment with why—why Jesus let her brother die, why He came too late. Jesus didn't scold her; He was moved by her pain.** Some of us more easily lean on God's sovereignty when what we see or feel doesn't make sense. Some of us feel overwhelmed with sorrow, anger, and doubt. But we can know that even now Jesus sees and cares, and He came to defeat death forever.

READ VERSE 37. WHEN HAVE YOU WRESTLED WITH THOUGHTS LIKE THESE—THAT GOD COULD'VE PREVENTED SUFFERING BUT DIDN'T? WHY DOESN'T HE?

People at Lazarus's home questioned Jesus: If Jesus was really God, then why didn't He save Lazarus? Why didn't He prevent his death? They saw Jesus perform miracles, so their expectations clashed with disappointment when Jesus didn't do what they expected Him to do. When we suffer or when someone we love suffers or passes away, we wrestle with why God doesn't answer our prayers or prevent our suffering—especially the suffering of good people who love Him. God invites us to bring these questions to Him. We can keep a few truths in mind: (1) God created a good world, but we are only "good" because of Jesus. We're all guilty of sin (Rom. 3:10) and actually deserve death—the wages for sin (Rom. 6:23); (2) God often reveals more of Himself to us in suffering, as He does in this passage (see also Job 42:5). **Suffering reminds us of what sin has broken and points us to our deep need for a Savior, for One to give us hope. We suffer because humanity chose rebellion (Gen. 3:6-7). But God redeems our suffering, never wasting it and using it to mold us, to show us He is near, and to reveal the futility of choosing sin. Jesus stepped into our suffering, sacrificing His body in exchange for our eternal peace.**



WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS WEPT (V. 35)?

Jesus is fully God; He intended to raise Lazarus from death, yet He wept. Jesus wept because, as God the Son, He hurt over sin's effects on His creation. He wept over His friends' lack of faith. Jesus wept because He was also fully human. Like us, Jesus experienced the sorrow of death and wept because the people He loved felt the effects of sin—the effects of the fall. He wept because they still didn't understand who He was and why He came. **The Lord of creation wept because He cares deeply for His creation, for human pain and suffering, though He knows believers' stories end in victorious resurrection.**

DEATH HAS LOST

READ JOHN 11:38-44



WHAT DOES MARTHA'S COMMENT ABOUT THE ODOR REVEAL ABOUT HER THOUGHTS (V. 39)?

Martha had expressed belief that the Father would give Jesus whatever He asked (v. 22). She had incredible faith, but faith and reality sometimes oppose one another. Martha believed in and trusted Jesus, but at the tomb, she smelled the stench of death; experience told her that they were too late to help Lazarus. **Human logic opposes faith and trust in the eternal God. If Martha struggled though Jesus stood right in front of her, then we can expect our human understanding to oppose faith in the Lord at times as well.**



WHAT DOES JESUS CALLING LAZARUS OUT OF THE TOMB REVEAL ABOUT HIS AUTHORITY OVER DEATH?

Jesus calling out Lazarus proclaimed He has complete authority over death. When Jesus called out Lazarus, He didn't ask that He come out. He didn't hope for Lazarus to come out. He commanded Lazarus to come out, and Lazarus did so immediately. Jesus, the Creator of life, has control of life, even after death. This passage proves that Jesus is fully God because only God has control over life and death. **If Jesus has all authority over death, then this means death has lost its sting. How much more should we rejoice in this reality!**

HOW SHOULD BELIEVING JESUS DEFEATED DEATH CHANGE THE WAY WE LIVE NOW?

When we say that death has lost its sting, we mean that death has no power, no authority, no effect! Death lost its sting because Jesus defeated it when He rose from the grave. Shouldn't believers look at and respond to death differently than the rest of the world? While unbelievers may fear death, we live in victory! We have hope because of Jesus; we get security because of Jesus; we can live without fear because of Jesus. While we shouldn't live recklessly but wisely, and the deaths of our loved ones will cause us pain—remember, even Jesus wept over death—we know death isn't final. Instead, death is a doorway to eternal life and rest for those who believe. **We have confidence that Jesus has already won the battle over the grave, and this hope doesn't waver. We can live life to the fullest, completely devoted to Jesus, because we have assurance. We can handle disappointment here, knowing it isn't final.**

WRAP-UP



HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE LOOK DIFFERENT IF YOU LEANED ON FAITH INSTEAD OF HUMAN LOGIC? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH?

Most of us say that we believe Jesus has all authority, but the real question is: Do we live like it? If so, our lives will look completely different from those without hope when we face pain, suffering, disappointment, and death. If we believe Jesus has all authority, we'll choose to trust Him instead of trying to control our circumstances when life feels uncertain. When situations don't go our way, we'll trust that Jesus still has good purpose instead of panicking. If we believe Jesus has all authority, we'll obey Him, even when it feels uncomfortable or is unpopular. We'll follow Jesus even when it costs us something—even when it costs everything. If we believe Jesus has all authority, we'll forgive others, even when they're undeserving. **When we really believe Jesus has all authority, we'll surrender our lives into His hands—our fears, our future, even our death—because it's the safest place.**

NOW I CAN SEE

MAIN POINT.

We're incapable of seeing the truth about Jesus without His help.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Satan has blinded the eyes of the world to the truth of God, offering false hope in the things of the world while also opposing God through its powers and influences. Jesus came so that the eyes of the blind might be opened to the truth. All who trust in Him find true hope in God's kingdom.



OF DARKNESS

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

John 9

WE ARE SPIRITUALLY BLIND

JOHN 9:1-7,13-16,24-34

1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. . . . 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. . . . 24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" 28 And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

JESUS GIVES US SIGHT

JOHN 9:35-41

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." 38 He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We're incapable of seeing the truth about Jesus without His help.

Leaders: Many students live in darkness, numb to their need for Jesus. May the way you live lead them to the Light of the world (John 9:5).

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

WE ARE SPIRITUALLY BLIND

JOHN 9:2-4

“The disciples look at this man born blind and conclude that he or his parents had sinned, because if they had not done something wicked, then God would be forced to respond with blessing. That’s textbook legalism. Jesus has no sympathy for legalism. This man’s blindness had nothing to do with his sin (though birth defects and disease are indicators of the world’s fallen state due to sin in general). His blindness had a far greater purpose. This man was born blind so Jesus could teach the profound truth of spiritual blindness and reveal Himself as the light of the world. That puts a different perspective on trials we face.”¹

JOHN 9:6-7

“That Jesus sent the blind man to the Pool of Siloam and that healing was either effected or revealed at that point calls to mind the healing of Naaman in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:10,13-14). The implication in both stories seems to be that the healer demanded the man in need to obey the healer’s instructions. As such the reader should not miss the close connection between obedience or effectual believing and experiencing the powerful work of God.”²

JESUS GIVES US SIGHT

JOHN 9:35-38

“The question that Jesus asked him concerning his believing in the Son of Man probed him to the very core of his being. Here believing did not mean the mere acceptance of signs (2:23-25) but the active commitment of himself to the Son of Man, who brought God’s hope and forgiveness to the world. The man had already proven himself to be faithful in spite of his never having seen Jesus. As such he was a preresurrection example of the believers who were to come (20:29), and he also faced persecution as the Christians would experience it in the postresurrection era (15:18–16:4; also Matt. 10:17-18).”³

JOHN 9:40-41

“One of the great promises God made to His people was that He would send a Savior to help those who were desperate—a promise that would be fulfilled by Jesus (Isa. 42:6-7). God’s people were in the darkness of sin and unbelief, and the Messiah came to bring them light. But the religious leaders missed Him because they could not perceive their own blindness. Charles Spurgeon wrote, ‘It is not our littleness that hinders Christ; but our bigness. It is not our weakness that hinders Christ; it is our strength. It is not our darkness that hinders Christ; it is our supposed light that holds back His hand.’”⁴



CONTEXT

In John 9, we read about a man who was born blind. He didn't lose his sight; he never had it. He never knew colors or light, and faces were a mystery to him. When the man met Jesus, he went from seeing absolutely nothing to everything, all at once. Only God is capable of creating *ex nihilo*, a Latin term meaning "something out of nothing." No doctor can make this happen because creation from nothing is beyond human ability. Jesus chose to meet this man right where he was looking for healing and gladly gave it to him. One commentator writes, "This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him. And if we know or apprehend anything of Christ, it is because we were first known of Him."⁵ Jesus sees us at our point of need and meets us there. Does He always heal? No. Does He always see us? Yes. In this passage, as with several other instances, the Pharisees were more concerned with rules than with people's needs—with Jesus working on the Sabbath than with the miracle. Jesus gave a man the ability to see! But the Pharisees were blinded by their religious traditions and rules. Jewish law prohibited any work on the Sabbath, and Jesus was very aware that His actions broke their rules.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Work of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins in the work of salvation in bringing a person to faith in Jesus and is continued through the work of sanctification in helping the Christian to become progressively more like Jesus throughout the course of his or her life. He also empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for the service of God's kingdom. He is the Comforter to the believer and aids us in properly interpreting the Bible.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, WE MAY NOT BE BLIND PHYSICALLY, BUT WE CAN BE BLIND TO TRUTH. HELP US TO LIVE WITH OUR EYES FULLY OPENED TO JESUS AND TO THE GOSPEL SO WE CAN LIVE IT OUT IN EVERY PLACE YOU HAVE PUT OUR FEET TO MINISTER. HELP US TO LOVE THOSE WHO ARE STILL SPIRITUALLY BLIND SO THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW YOU.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that **1 in 12 men** is colorblind? Being colorblind is much more common in men than in women, but it's passed down through the mom's side of the family.⁶

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

7

CLEAR VISION

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT DAILY TASKS DO YOU THINK ARE MOST DIFFICULT FOR A BLIND PERSON?**
- **ARE ANY OF YOU COLORBLIND OR DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS? WHAT DO YOU/ THEY HAVE TROUBLE SEEING CORRECTLY?**
- **WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING TO SEE WITH YOUR EYES?**

Many of us have to see to believe. We depend on our sense of sight more than we realize. If you've ever had trouble seeing or have been blindfolded for a game, you may have experienced a real fear of danger or being pranked. Jesus gives us more than just physical eyes to see—He gives us spiritual eyes to see Him.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever struggled to believe something because you couldn't see it with your own eyes? Whether or not you realize it, you already believe in many things you can't see. You can't see gravity or wind with your eyes, but you see and feel their effects. Sometimes, our spiritual sight—our ability to see and know the Lord—is limited because we don't position ourselves to see. Are the friends you've surrounded yourself with helping you to see and believe in God, or are they encouraging you to walk in darkness? Does the content you watch and listen to help open your eyes to truth, or does it feed you worldly ideas instead? Jesus desires for us to know Him. He desires for us to live with clear vision. When you draw closer to the Lord and position yourself to see Him, He opens your eyes; He helps you see the world and other people the way He sees them. Here's the truth: You can choose spiritual blindness. You can position yourself to stay in the dark. But if you draw near to Jesus, He promises to come close and help you see.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We're incapable of seeing the truth about Jesus without His help.

WE ARE SPIRITUALLY BLIND

READ JOHN 9:1-7,13-16,24-34



WHY DIDN'T THE PHARISEES REJOICE OVER THE MIRACLE? WHAT MATTERED MORE TO THEM? HOW DO WE FALL INTO THIS MINDSET TOO?

Let's be honest—the Pharisees aimed to accuse Jesus. Rather than rejoicing over the blind man's sight, they attacked Jesus about when He healed the man. These leaders were so blinded by their rules that they missed an amazing miracle. In fact, their hearts were so hardened that they missed God's heart for the blind man. **We can miss God's work—and His heart for others—because we limit how we think He will work or who He will use.** Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind—to heal physical and spiritual blindness—but the Pharisees refused to see and believe.

IF YOU WERE THE MAN JESUS HEALED FROM BLINDNESS, WOULD IT MATTER TO YOU HOW OR WHEN IT HAPPENED? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Most of us probably wouldn't care at all how or when we were healed. Receiving sight when we couldn't see before would be a great gift! For this man, it didn't matter that Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, that Jesus used dirt and spit to make mud, or that religious leaders questioned him about his healing. He received sight after living every day of his life in darkness, and that's all that mattered. He was on the receiving end of a life-changing miracle! He would no longer depend on others to do simple, daily tasks for him, to lead him, to prepare his meals. The blind man would no longer live with that name; he would no longer be defined by his condition. He was, in many ways, physically free. Isn't this a beautiful picture of what Jesus does for us? **We needed salvation from sin. We needed freedom. And when we ask Jesus to save us, He gladly does. We're no longer defined by our sin. We're given a new identity as God's children. We're new creations—spiritually freed from the burden of depending on our own goodness!**



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SPIRITUALLY BLIND? HOW DO WE GET SPIRITUAL SIGHT?

People who are spiritually blind don't know God or have a relationship with Him. They are blind to truth and can't understand God's ways. We receive spiritual sight only through the Holy Spirit, who draws us into relationship with Jesus. Think of the difference between listening to a football game on the radio and watching the same game on an 85" HD full color TV—the difference is radical! If you've only heard about football but never seen it with your eyes, you'd struggle to even imagine what's happening. **Similarly, we can hear about God, but until we meet Him, until He opens our eyes, we can't begin to imagine what He is like.**

JESUS GIVES US SIGHT

READ JOHN 9:35-41



WHAT WOULD YOUR RESPONSE BE IF YOU REALIZED YOU WERE STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF JESUS? HOW DID THE BLIND MAN RESPOND?

The healed man's response of belief in Jesus was "the overflowing expression of gratitude and faith."⁷ He was beyond grateful for his sight and immediately put his faith in Jesus, falling at His feet in worship. The physical change led to a spiritual change. We may not experience a physical healing that leads to belief, but Jesus came to heal us spiritually. **If we were to stand before Him, how could we not believe after knowing what He has done to save us? How could we not fall on our knees in worship? It is our only response.**

HOW CAN HAVING EVERYTHING WE WANT OR NEED MAKE IT HARD FOR US TO SEE HOW MUCH WE NEED JESUS? HOW CAN BEING IN NEED BE A GIFT?

The Pharisees couldn't see a tangible need for Jesus. They were wealthy, well-respected, influential men, and they lived by a system that falsely assured them of righteousness. Seeing that anything needed to change when everything was working was almost impossible for the Pharisees. They didn't have the same kind of need for Jesus as the blind man; they weren't desperate for help. **Sometimes, we can be so content, we can have so much "stuff" and be surrounded by so many people, we can experience so much wealth and health, that we don't realize our spiritual poverty. Like the Pharisees, we can lack the ability to see what isn't working and try to live independently of Jesus.** But we desperately need Him. Thankfully, God works even through our blindness to show us our need.



READ VERSE 41. WHAT DOES JESUS'S RESPONSE SHOW US ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN IT COMES TO SIN?

Here's the deal: Confessing faith in Jesus doesn't mean you'll never sin. But your heart experiences a change when you begin a relationship with Jesus, and you begin to recognize sin and experience conviction. **In other words, once the Lord opens your eyes, you can't pretend to be blind. You can't continue to walk the way you did before, when you lived in darkness.** Instead of getting as close to sin as possible without crossing a line, you try to avoid it because you're growing in Christ and learning what God's Word says about how you should live. This inside-out transformation is powerful, just like the transformation of the man born blind. Jesus changes everything, including your desire for sin.

WRAP-UP



WHO IN YOUR LIFE IS SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND NEEDS JESUS? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP THEM SEE JESUS?

Your life and your actions matter. **Your words speak volumes to those around you, but people will often see Jesus in your consistency before they see Him in what you say.** They want to know that something is different in you and that it's not an act or a temporary phase. If you say one thing and consistently do another, you will surely become disassociated with Jesus. Knowing Jesus and following Him should change everything in your life, and you should have a burning passion to share Him with people who don't yet know Him. **Walk out your faith with humility and boldness, sharing Jesus whenever you feel prompted by the Holy Spirit. You have nothing to lose, and they have everything to gain by seeing Jesus through the way you live.** We sometimes forget that many people don't really know about Jesus. They may have heard His name, but they need to see the Christian life walked out in faithfulness.

TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST

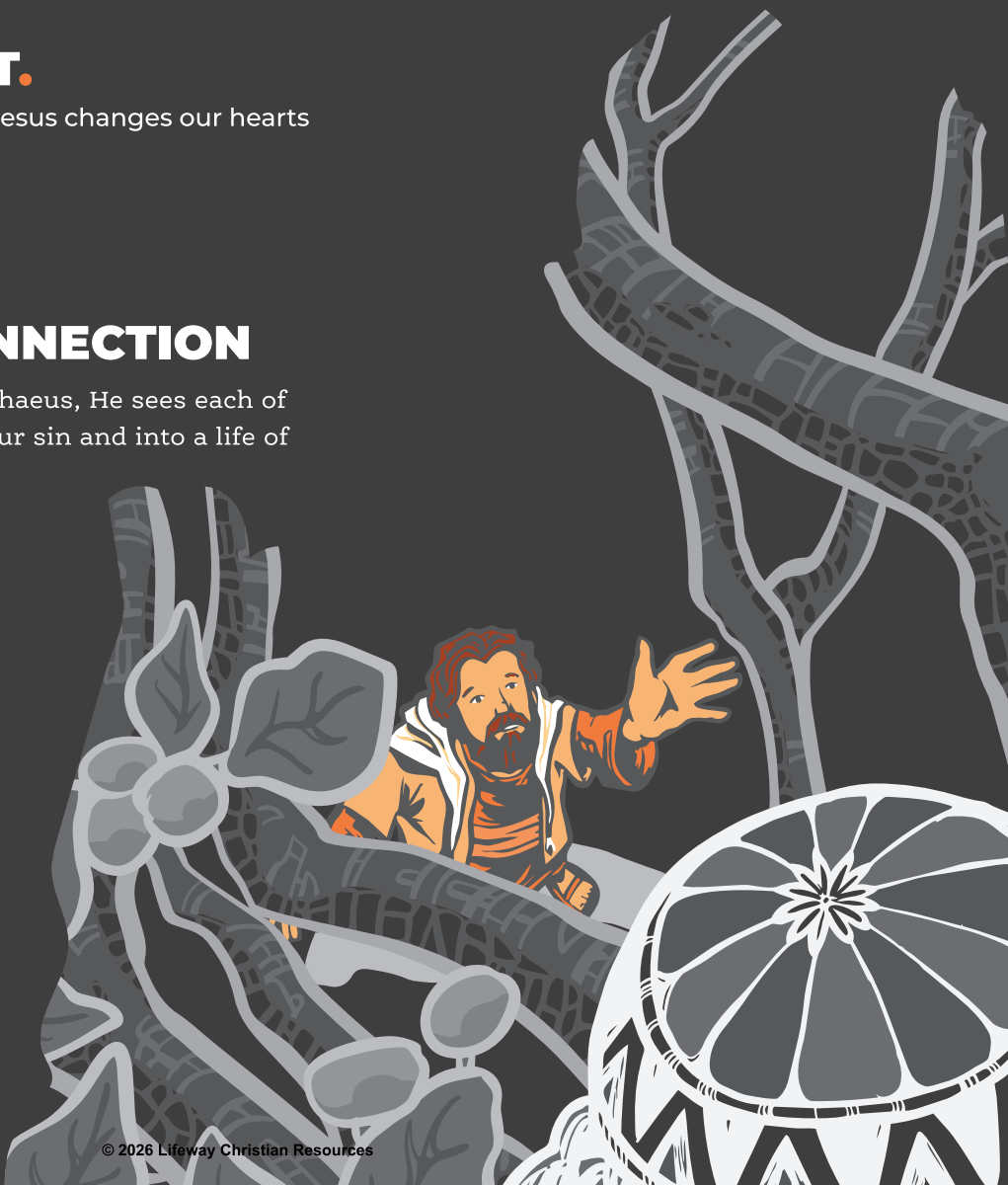
MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Just as Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He sees each of us. He calls us out of our sin and into a life of faithful obedience.



***CALLED* BY NAME**

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

Luke 19

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

LUKE 19:1-5

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

LUKE 19:6-10

6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.

Leaders: You may have many students who identify with Zacchaeus on a deeply painful level; they struggle with being the outcast or with being labeled unworthy. What a beautiful moment to show them how much Jesus cares for them—how He invites them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

LUKE 19:2

“Regular tax collectors were hated in Israel because they worked for the Roman government that oppressed the Jewish people. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. In all likelihood he did not receive that position by working hard. He probably rose to that rank by being more crooked than other tax collectors, who often cheated people out of their earnings.”⁸

MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

LUKE 19:6-10

“Zacchaeus provides us a marvelous picture of repentance. He also provides us a marvelous picture of Luke 18:27. Here God demonstrates the ‘possible’ salvation in a rich man’s life. God can call people from all their idols, a lifetime of sin, and the habit of abusing privilege, position, and others, and turn such persons to Himself, making them new.”⁹

LUKE 19:9-10

“Despite the protests of Pharisees (5:30; 7:39; 15:2-3) or Pharisaic types (19:7), salvation came to the outcasts, who responded in repentance and faith (or who by their actions [19:8] revealed their repentance and faith). Luke never tired of this theme of the great reversal. With each example he sought to reassure his readers that salvation had come to them even though they were outcasts, i.e., Gentiles. The Son of Man did not come for the righteous but for lost people, like them. It is for sinners that Jesus has come, and there is no other way of salvation than the way of Zacchaeus, the prodigal son, and other sinners. Apart from the prayer of the tax collector (‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner,’ 18:13), there can be no salvation. If this offends the self-righteous, so be it. There is no other gospel, for ‘the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost’ (19:10).”¹⁰



CONTEXT

This passage, though familiar, is one of the clearest reflections of God's heart for the lost—for all people. Jesus made a radical move when He interacted with a man labeled by fellow Jews as an unworthy traitor. Zacchaeus was a Jewish tax collector—a chief tax collector (v. 2). This position set him apart from most Jews because it meant working for the enemy, for Rome. In exchange for a more lavish lifestyle and financial benefits, Zacchaeus collected taxes from the Jews, inflating them further for his own profit. In essence, Zacchaeus stole from his own people, adding oppression on top of oppression. Because Zacchaeus was one of them, the betrayal cut more deeply. Of all people to seek out Jesus, Zacchaeus was the one who ran and climbed a tree, breaking all the social norms of the day. Both Jesus and Zacchaeus faced opposition from the watching crowd, and their conversation had serious implications for both of them. The moment Zacchaeus's path intersected with Jesus's path, he faced a decision: Would he surrender or would he walk "away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:22), like the rich young ruler who gripped tightly to earthly possessions, missing heavenly treasure?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Guilt and Shame

Guilt refers to the objective status of someone being found guilty for a wrong committed, as well as the incurring of punishment that comes with it (Matt. 5:21-22; James 2:10). Shame is the emotional pain that comes from sinful actions. Scripture teaches that humans are guilty before God and often experience deep feelings of shame.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US TO SEEK JESUS. HELP US TO SEE YOU CLEARLY AND MOVE US TO ACTION SO THAT WE CAN POINT OTHERS TO YOU. LET OUR LIVES BE COMPLETELY CHANGED BY THE TRUTH OF WHO YOU ARE AND BY THE FACT THAT YOU INVITE US, SINNERS, TO FOLLOW YOU.



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

What's more important—a lot of money or a lot of friends (1=Rich but lonely; 10=Friends but broke)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

DRASTIC LENGTHS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAS YOUR HEIGHT EITHER HELPED YOU OR KEPT YOU FROM DOING SOMETHING?**
- **IF YOUR FAVORITE CELEBRITY, SINGER, OR ATHLETE WAS GOING TO BE IN TOWN, WHAT LENGTH WOULD YOU GO TO MEET HIM OR HER?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME CRAZY LENGTHS PEOPLE HAVE GONE TO SO THEY COULD BE NEAR SOMEONE THEY LOOKED UP TO?**

Some of us would go to drastic lengths to get close to people we admire, even if others think we're crazy. But imagine this person looking you in the eye and calling you by name! Today, we'll see that Jesus did so much more for Zacchaeus than he ever could have imagined. He called him by name and wanted to spend time with him, despite his life choices and career.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

First impressions really do matter. Think of someone you didn't have a great first impression of: Has that carried over into how you view that person now? Once we put labels on people, removing them is difficult, even if we misunderstood their character. The label leaves a sticky residue that takes a lot of time and effort to remove. If someone we've labeled has something amazing happen, we may struggle to feel he or she deserves it. We tend to have a hard time forgetting first impressions, even when we're wrong and the labels are unfair. See if you can turn this situation around and put yourself in their shoes. Would you hope others would remove an inaccurate label much sooner if circumstances had changed in your life? If you changed? Sure. So, when we realize that our first impression of someone was wrong, or when we realize the person has changed, let's remove those labels and choose to see others the way God sees them. Let's take it one step further and resist placing labels at all.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

READ LUKE 19:1-5



WHY DO YOU THINK LUKE INCLUDED ZACCHAEUS'S JOB AND SOCIAL STATUS?

Leaders: Share Context about tax collectors. Jesus ministered to all kinds of people, but the Gospel writers didn't always mention their backgrounds. Luke noted that Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector. These men were despised by fellow Jews, viewed as traitors and lumped together with "sinners." Luke communicated that Jesus calls everyone. Zacchaeus—and the people watching—needed to know that following Jesus came at a cost. **Zacchaeus couldn't keep functioning as he did before, especially since most of his wealth was stolen from others. His stained reputation would take time to change, but encountering Jesus changed his heart quickly.**

WHAT KEEPS US FROM MAKING AN EFFORT TO GET TO JESUS—TO SEE HIM AND KNOW HIM?

Zacchaeus's height kept him from seeing Jesus, so he took drastic steps to get a better view. Men of his social status wouldn't run or climb trees for any reason, but societal rules didn't stop Zacchaeus. Jesus had changed people's lives; if everything Zacchaeus heard was true and Jesus was who he thought He was, then maybe Zacchaeus had hope for himself. **We often care too much about what others think to make this kind of effort to be closer to Jesus. We let shame tell us that Jesus won't respond to us because we don't deserve His attention. But Jesus sees us and invites us closer.**



WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CALLING ZACCHAEUS BY NAME?

Jesus knew Zacchaeus, even though they had never met. Jesus knows you by name. He knows your story (even the parts you don't want Him to know) and still seeks you out for relationship with Him. Maybe you've always had this idea that Jesus was standoffish or disappointed in you—that if He was standing in front of you, He might look past you at people who better fit a religious mold. But the Gospels show us that Jesus isn't like this at all. **We see Jesus step into people's stories right where He's needed—in their mess, in their pain, before they've had a chance to clean up their lives.** The people watching must have wondered how, of all people, Jesus knew Zacchaeus—a tax collector who made his wealth off of working for Rome, the great enemy. They must've wondered why Jesus wanted to stay at his house, but Jesus wasn't worried about their opinions. He had business with Zacchaeus and called him out by name. He does the same for us. **No matter our backgrounds, the sins we've committed, the messy family situations we're in, Jesus sees us, knows us, and calls us by name.**

MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

READ LUKE 19:6-10



HOW DID THE PEOPLE IN THE CROWD VIEW ZACCHAEUS?

The crowd labeled Zacchaeus a sinful man. Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a thief. In their eyes, he could produce nothing good. The idea that Jesus wanted to spend time with him was insane in the eyes of those watching. Zacchaeus wasn't the kind of person they expected Jesus to surround Himself with. **The crowd complained about Zacchaeus, even though they couldn't possibly know his whole story; they couldn't possibly know Zacchaeus's heart, his insecurities, his doubts and fears.** Zacchaeus's heart was open and ready for change—he intentionally looked for Jesus and did everything he could to get near Him. He was willing to let Jesus change everything about him.

WHY WAS ZACCHAEUS WILLING TO GIVE AWAY HIS MONEY SO FREELY? HOW IS HE AN EXAMPLE FOR US?

For Zacchaeus, knowing and following Jesus was worth losing wealth. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus was willing to see him as someone other than a “tax collector,” so his earthly possessions lost their significance. The burden of his theft weighed heavily on him, and he wanted to make things right with people he had wronged. A relationship with Jesus mattered more than his pride and his riches. Zacchaeus could no longer keep doing what he had always done and was willing to make a change. **If we're honest, the weight of our sin is heavy. Carrying the weight of people's expectations, the weight of their judgment, or the weight of feeling like we can't change is exhausting. Jesus really does invite us to lay it all down to follow Him. As He did with Zacchaeus, Jesus really can transform us and free us from who we've always been.**



WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS MEETING JESUS MADE FOR YOU?

Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus. His heart searched for Jesus, and Jesus set everything else aside to speak with a man no one else wanted anything to do with. Jesus was on mission to “seek and save the lost,” and Zacchaeus was ready to be found, no matter the cost. **Here's the truth: We see no evidence in Scripture that we can follow Jesus and remain the same. In every case, those who follow Jesus are changed by Him. Those who choose not to follow Him remain the same. Knowing Jesus must make a difference in our hearts, and that difference flows into every area of our lives as evidence for others to see.**

WRAP-UP



WHEN HAVE YOU FELT STUCK BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T WANT TO LET JESUS CHANGE A PART OF YOUR LIFE? WHAT WOULD SURRENDERING IT LOOK LIKE?

The beautiful truth about the Lord is that He doesn't desire forced obedience. He desires our willing surrender. Many of us struggle to surrender certain parts of ourselves. We cling to certain pieces of our lives because we don't want those pieces to change. We're scared of what that change might bring. But knowing and following Jesus is worth changing everything in our lives. He is worth obeying because anything He calls us away from is a lesser love. Sacrificing what is valuable in the world pales in comparison to the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian who was imprisoned and killed for resisting the Nazi regime in WWII, explained it this way: “What has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.”¹¹ Following Jesus *is* costly, but it is worth the cost. Zacchaeus saw this with his own eyes and knew he needed Jesus more than anything money could buy. **We may not see the full reward of following Jesus on this side of heaven, but we will in eternity. And we will never regret giving Him everything we have.**

THE STONES WOULD CRY OUT

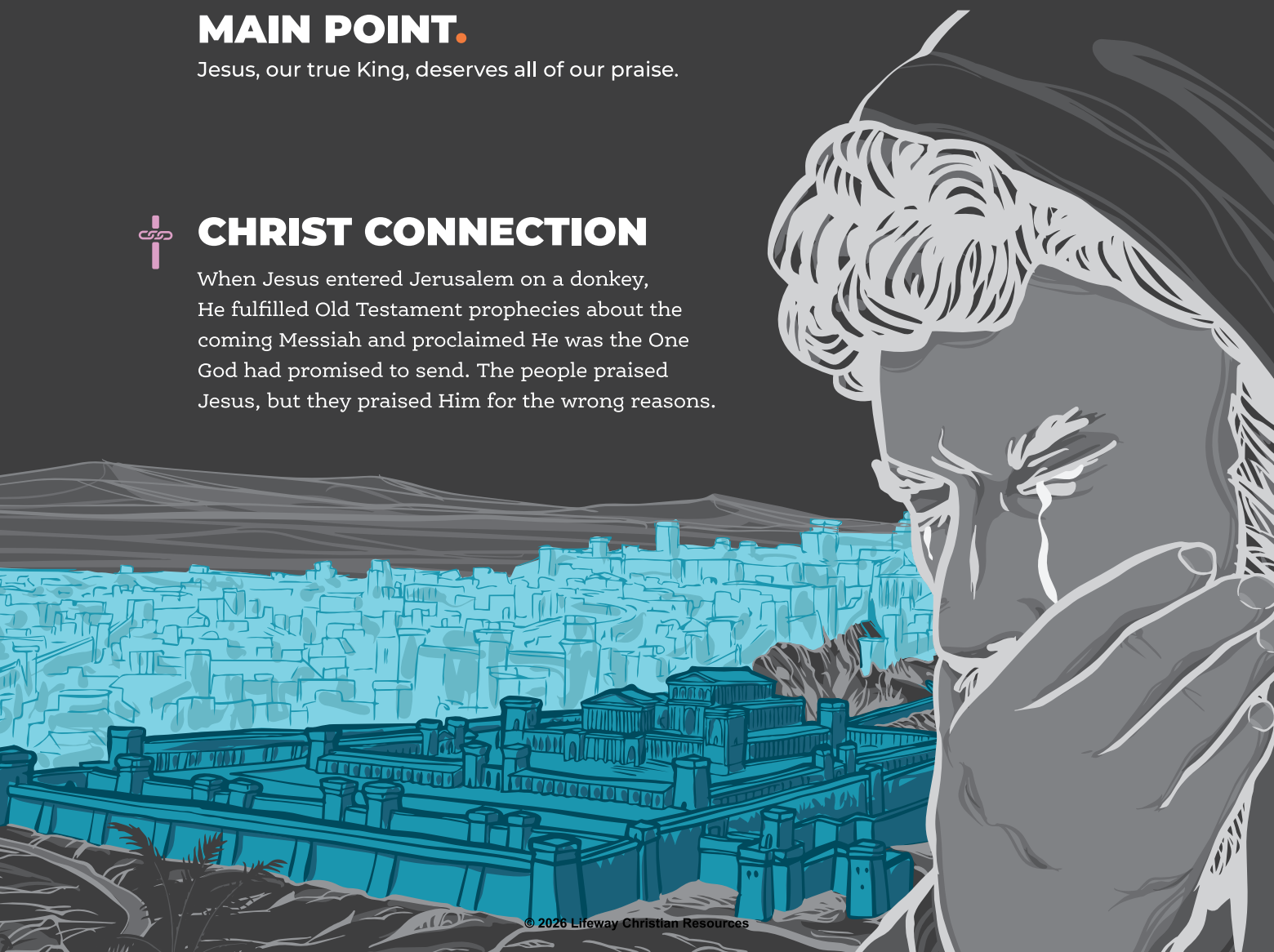
MAIN POINT.

Jesus, our true King, deserves all of our praise.



CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah and proclaimed He was the One God had promised to send. The people praised Jesus, but they praised Him for the wrong reasons.



KINDNESS OF A KING

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

Luke 19

JESUS IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

LUKE 19:28-40

28 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" 32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of it." 35 And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

JESUS LONGS FOR US TO KNOW HIM

LUKE 19:41-44

41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus, our true King, deserves all of our praise.

Leaders: Jesus longs to save every student—every person. Lead with that truth, letting students know that Jesus doesn't respond angrily when they resist Him. He weeps.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

LUKE 19:28

"Jesus has established Himself as the King in the preceding narrative, but a King who had to go into the far country before returning in power. He has shown the nature of His kingdom—a kingdom different from that expected by the religious establishment. He had shown who would participate in the kingdom—those faithful to Him, who had given up everything to follow Him rather than those who had the religious system locked up in their own hands. . . . Approaching Jerusalem, Jesus passed through two small villages east of the holy city on the Mount of Olives, which looked down on the city and the Kidron Valley. The Mount of Olives, the central of three peaks rising east of Jerusalem, stands 2,660 feet above sea level. Standing on it, a person faced the temple. Zechariah 14:4-5 situates the final battle on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1). The King stood with the holy city at His feet."¹²

LUKE 19:35-36

"Outer garments are laid over the animal to make a saddle, and Jesus is placed on it. The language used to describe Jesus's riding the animal recalls 1 Kings 1:33 and David's selecting of Solomon, while the mention of the colt alludes to Zechariah 9:9. The imagery is regal and even messianic, though it is a humble Messiah who makes the ride."¹³

JESUS LONGS FOR US TO KNOW HIM

LUKE 19:41-44

"All that Jesus prophesies in verse 43 comes to pass. In AD 70 the Romans occupied and destroyed Jerusalem along with the temple. No stone was left on another. What had been known of that great city was obliterated. Our Lord effectively says, 'It would have been different for you if you had known I had come to visit you.' . . . Christ has fulfilled God's law by sacrificing Himself on the cross. His act of self-giving made peace—peace between men, peace within, and peace with God. When Christ died on the cross for our sins He ended the strife so characteristic of a fallen world. So whether we are Jews or Gentiles, by the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected, we have peace. By faith in the Son of God we receive reconciliation with God. We stop trying to earn God's approval by our good works. We stop trying to please men. Instead, we begin to live to please God who accepts us in His Son."¹⁴

CONTEXT

This week brings us near to the culmination of Jesus's earthly ministry, to the last week of His life, which included a profound series of events. Jesus riding on a donkey was deeply significant, a cultural example of bringing peace to the people and to the city and the way royalty typically rode. A general or military figure would have come in on a horse, but not Jesus.¹⁵ Jesus asking for a colt "on which no one has ever yet sat" (Luke 19:30) was meaningful too. Jesus is unlike anyone else, and "the seat of authority is for Jesus and Jesus alone."¹⁶ Jesus could have made a grander entrance into Jerusalem, but the King of kings chose to come in a manner that was eye level with people He loved so deeply—humbly and lowly. The crowd welcomed Jesus with joy and excitement, but days later, they'd call for His crucifixion. Our human minds struggle to reason with the events that unfolded during Jesus's last week, but God was incredibly intentional with every moment. Jesus's heart broke over His people, and He wept as He entered the city. Jesus knew what was coming: Jerusalem would be destroyed, many would choose not to believe in Him, and He would sacrifice Himself for them anyway. The depth of His grief grew deeper with every step.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Worship

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship are God, giving Him the praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian's life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

LEADERS' PRAYER

JESUS, HELP US TO SEE THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE. HELP OUR EYES TO BE OPEN TO THE TRUTH AND THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS STORY. GIVE US WISDOM AS WE FOLLOW JESUS TO THE WEEK OF HIS DEATH. BE GLORIFIED IN OUR CONVERSATION TODAY.





KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Let's check in on how you're doing spiritually. How did you seek Jesus last week, as we saw Zacchaeus do? Where did you struggle to **seek Jesus on a daily basis**? What got in your way?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

GRAND ENTRANCE

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **IF YOU COULD RIDE INTO SCHOOL ON AN ANIMAL, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE? WHY?**
- **WHAT WOULD YOUR WALKOUT SONG BE?**
- **WHAT DO THESE THINGS SAY ABOUT YOU?**

Students will either take this seriously and give an intentional answer, or their answers will be silly—either is fine! The song is the more intentional question, so don't miss their answers. They can give you insight into what matters to them or reveal something they're struggling with. The songs we connect with often reveal feelings we struggle to express. We'll see today that Jesus's ride into Jerusalem revealed truths that most people missed.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever thought about what you would do if you knew you only had a little bit of time left to live? We often feel a sense of urgency when we know an end is coming, changing the way we function and think. What would be different? What would stay the same? Would you put your phone down and quit doomscrolling? Who would you spend time with? What conversations would you need to have? The decisions you'd make would say a lot about who you are and what's most important to you. Some of us might spend time with our family and our friends. We might ditch school and work to take a trip somewhere we've always wanted to see. We might eat all of our favorite foods and watch all of our favorite movies. Some of us might have important conversations with people we love, expressing forgiveness or offering an apology. Here's the truth: Our lives here are brief in light of eternity, and living like eternity is close will help us live wisely.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus, our true King, deserves all of our praise.

JESUS IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

READ LUKE 19:28-40



WHAT IS WORSHIP, AND WHY IS IT AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR LIVES?

A dictionary definition of worship is “to honor or show reverence for as a divine being or supernatural power; to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion.”¹⁷ **Whether or not we worship isn’t in question because God created us to worship; whether or not we worship God only is the question.** We worship lesser “gods”—social media, money, possessions, and friends become objects of our worship. Worship is more than singing songs—it’s where our heart’s attention and affection are aimed, a lifestyle instead of a playlist. **True worship is laying down anything that steals our devotion from the One who deserves it all.**



WHAT MADE JESUS WORTHY OF THE PEOPLE’S PRAISE? OF OUR PRAISE?

Jesus was sinless. He performed miracles, freed captives, preached, taught, healed, comforted, and rebuked. **But even if Jesus had not done any of this, He was and is worthy of praise because He is the King of kings, the Son of God.** The crowd honored Jesus in the best ways they knew how—by waving palm leaves, laying their clothes on the road, and shouting praises. Those who encountered Jesus and experienced life change realized His way is better. **When we encounter Jesus, we should overflow with worship in every way we know how, with every part of our lives. He is absolutely worthy.**



JESUS SAID IF THOSE PRAISING HIM FELL SILENT, “THE VERY STONES WOULD CRY OUT” (V. 40). WHAT WAS HE TRYING TO GET THE PHARISEES TO UNDERSTAND?

God will get the glory He deserves. If humans don’t give it, creation will—always pointing praise to God because He is Creator. Think about it: Trees, flowers, and every blade of grass grows upward, constantly pointing to the One who formed them. Mountains reach to the heavens. The sunset displays God’s beauty. **We—God’s best creation—are the only part of God’s creation capable of withholding from Him the worship He so rightfully deserves.** Jesus wasn’t stepping into His last few days lightly, and God was about to be glorified and glorify His Son in a way no one had ever experienced. But if the people refused to praise Jesus—and they would—creation would testify. **Jesus wanted the Pharisees to understand that their refusal to acknowledge His identity and to worship Him didn’t change the truth: He is God’s Son.** Worship isn’t just singing but how we live our lives. Knowing we often refuse to worship God with our words, our hearts, and our actions should shake us. **He is the Author and Creator of all life, and His creation will testify forever. Let’s join them every minute we have breath.**

JESUS LONGS FOR US TO KNOW HIM

READ LUKE 19:41-44



WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS FROM HIS WEeping OVER JERUSALEM? DIG DEEP: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Jesus felt deeply, just like we do—more deeply than we do. He felt pain, loss, and heartache, and He wept. Jesus saw what the people around Him couldn't see, and His desire was for their eyes to be opened to the truth. For some, no miracle, no healing, no sign was enough to see Jesus for who He is. And Jesus wasn't angry; He wasn't disappointed. He was heartbroken for the destruction that was coming and for the separation between them and the Father. **Jesus didn't desire to cast unbelievers from His presence; He longed to draw them in, to protect them, to save them. But they had to surrender to His lordship. Knowing Jesus's heart aches like ours does, and more importantly, that He aches for us, reveals the depth of His love for us. He is our kind, loving, compassionate Savior.**

WHY COULDN'T THE PHARISEES SEE WHO JESUS WAS? HOW CAN WE AVOID MAKING THE SAME MISTAKE?

The Pharisees were blind to Jesus—to the miraculous work He did and to the prophecies He fulfilled right in front of their eyes. They missed Jesus because they were looking for a different kind of king—one who sat on a throne and came with great power. But Jesus came in humility, born in poverty and dirt. He represented God's kingdom, a kingdom utterly different than the one the Pharisees expected. Jesus seemed to push back on all their religious rules, calling them out, holding them accountable, and bringing light to Scripture. **We must look for Jesus as Scripture presents Him, not the Jesus we've created with our own expectations. We must accept Jesus—His kingdom, His call to accountability when we sin, His example for how to live according to God's Word.**

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR PEOPLE TO SEE JESUS?

A relationship with Jesus changes everything, but we can't get there on our own. We actually need the Lord to reveal Himself to us through the Holy Spirit. He convicts us and draws us in. **The Pharisees followed their rules so well that they missed Jesus; they couldn't see their need for Him.** They couldn't see the Messiah, even when He spoke directly to Him. **Sometimes, we see Jesus only once we've reached the end of ourselves—once we're exhausted by our failed attempts at being "good." Sometimes, we see Him only once we've walked through tragedy and despair.** Seeing Jesus, seeing our need for Him, is the greatest gift!

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU KEEP YOUR EYES FIXED ON JESUS AND HIS MISSION, EVEN WHEN DOING SO ISN'T EASY?

Look around your group. These are the people God gave you. What can you do to help each other? If you're connected at school, what could you do there that will help you keep your eyes on Jesus? If you're in a text group or will see each other again at church this week, how can you encourage one another? We read in Ecclesiastes 4:9 that, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil." **As believers, we're never alone! We have resources, accountability, and community to lean on when following Jesus feels difficult and comes at a cost.** As a group, brainstorm specific ways you can follow Jesus together. In what area do you need help? Where does faith get difficult—at home, school, work, or with friends? Support each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Christian life wasn't meant to be lived alone.

THE TIME IS COMING

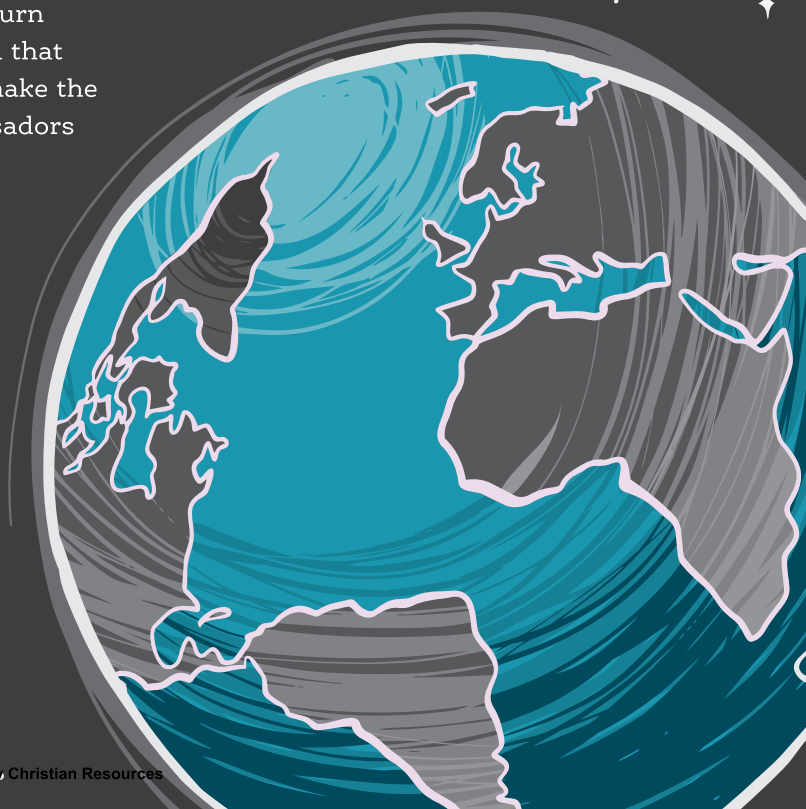
MAIN POINT.

We must be rooted in God's Word and ready for Jesus's return.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus promised that one day He will return and fully establish God's kingdom. Until that day, Jesus instructed His followers to make the most of their time, living as His ambassadors and telling others how to be part of the coming kingdom.



IN EXPECTATION

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

Mark 13

WE CAN EXPECT PERSECUTION

MARK 13:5-13

5 And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 7 And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

WE CAN EXPECT JESUS'S RETURN

MARK 13:21-27,32-33

21 "And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand. 24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. . . . 32 But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We must be rooted in God's Word and ready for Jesus's return.

Leaders: We want to help students be ready for eternity and to encourage them to live in a way that anticipates Jesus's return; we don't want them to fear the end. For believers, the end is good.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

WE CAN EXPECT PERSECUTION

MARK 13:9-13

"Church tradition informs us that all the apostles, with the possible exception of John, died as martyrs. Some have estimated that more than 70 million Christians have given their lives for their witness to Jesus, 45 million in the twentieth century alone. In the last decade 'there were on average, 270 new Christian martyrs every 24 hours,' or approximately one million in the last 10 years."¹⁸

WE CAN EXPECT JESUS'S RETURN

MARK 13:21-27,32-33

"The location of the discourse in Mark's Gospel is significant. It is presented as the last and one of the more important elements in Jesus's teaching. It immediately precedes the passion account and has various points of contact with it. The implication is that in order to understand who He really is, the disciples must look beyond Jesus's death to His glorious return. The Son of Man had to suffer and die, but after that He would be vindicated and glorified. A similar idea is found in the transfiguration account (9:2-10). Inasmuch as He said so little about the resurrection of Jesus, Mark seems to have made Jesus's return the more important ground for Christian confidence."¹⁹

MARK 13:32-33

"Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (13:2) which prompted the disciples to inquire about the timing of 'these things' (v. 4). Apparently they associated the destruction of the temple with the end of the Age (Matt. 24:3). In reply Jesus skillfully wove together into a unified discourse a prophetic scene involving two perspectives: (a) the near event, the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70); and (b) the far event, the coming of the Son of Man in clouds with power and glory. The former local event was a forerunner of the latter universal event. In this way Jesus followed the precedent of Old Testament prophets by predicting a far future event in terms of a near future event whose fulfillment at least some of His hearers would see (Mark 9:1,12-13)."²⁰

CONTEXT

This passage wasn't from a public sermon by Jesus but a private conversation with four of His disciples—Peter, James, John, and Andrew. He kindly sat down with them to answer questions that had been troubling them. Jesus, in a way that only He could, “does not so much satisfy their curiosity as direct their consciences.”²¹ He didn't give them clear, direct answers but helped them think through their questions and concerns. Jesus's aim wasn't to scare them but to shed light on what was to come so that they were compelled to do the work He called them to do. Many messages and people in the world today sound like Jesus and seem to agree with the Bible, but if we examine them closely, they're inaccurate. Even being one degree off from truth means that it's untrue, and to know what truth is, we must know what the Bible says. Rather than spending our time trying to learn about what's false (because it's a lot), we can invest in learning what's true. God has given us everything we need for “life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). More than anything, our job is to keep our eyes open, pray, and take advantage of every opportunity to share the gospel with a lost world. If Jesus returns in our lifetime, will He find us scrolling our phones or meeting a lost friend over coffee? We have no time to waste when it comes to sharing the truth about Jesus with those who don't yet know Him.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Jesus will judge all people in righteousness. The unrighteous will be condemned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever with the Lord.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, GIVE US A PASSION TO KNOW YOUR WORD SO WE CAN BE PREPARED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THE PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES. HELP US GROW IN OUR FAITH AND CONFIDENCE AS WE BOLDLY PROCLAIM YOUR TRUTH.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Have you ever been catfished? Catfishing is defined as “a person who sets up a false personal profile on a social networking site for fraudulent or deceptive purposes.”²² In 2024, a survey of six thousand teenagers around the world showed that over $\frac{2}{3}$ of them had a friend who was targeted by catfishers or hackers.²³

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

A SEA OF RUMORS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW CAN YOU TELL WHEN SOMETHING IS A RUMOR VERSUS TRUTH?**
- **WHY DO PEOPLE START RUMORS?**
- **WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE SEEN THAT WAS CREATED BY AI BUT LOOKED REAL? HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE?**

It can be really hard to know if something is a rumor. Artificial intelligence has made this even more challenging. To know the truth, we have to go back to the source and verify the information. Jesus explains that we have to know Him and His Word to know the truth, especially when the world's messages are full of confusion.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Has someone ever lied about you? Not only is being lied about hurtful, but it's hard to recover from and can damage our reputation beyond repair. Many people lied about Jesus and His ministry and they still do today. As Christians, we should expect persecution, but that's hard to wrap our minds around in today's culture. Jesus prepared His disciples for rumors, persecution, difficulty, challenges, and pain. He never promised that we would live easy, peaceful lives, but He has given us reason to believe and trust in His goodness and faithfulness, no matter the circumstance. If you've been lied about, mistreated, misquoted, or anything else along those lines, you're not alone. Jesus experienced all of those things and never wavered as an example for us today. You may not expect certain struggles, but Jesus will be with you through them all. Instead of asking, "Why me?" ask, "How can God use this?" to shift your perspective.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We must be rooted in God's Word and ready for Jesus's return.

WE CAN EXPECT PERSECUTION

READ MARK 13:5-13



HOW CAN YOU TELL IF WHAT SOMEONE TEACHES ABOUT JESUS IS TRUE? WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF IT ISN'T?

God's Word, without fail, is our measure for truth. So, we have to know it. Humans are flawed and sinful, so no teacher or preacher is always right. If we sense untruth, we can respectfully ask questions and stay curious. **Committing to being a lifelong learner of the Bible will both radically change your life and prepare you to recognize false teaching when it comes your way.** Jesus was always respectfully direct as He discussed difficult issues, especially with those who opposed Him. He was often found at the home or table of someone who disagreed with Him. We can follow His example.

WHAT DOES PERSECUTION LOOK LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?

In the Gospels, Jesus warned His followers to be ready for persecution. Persecution today may look different from what we see in the Bible because of our cultural context. But even so, people all over the world are put to death for their faith. Many of us will never face that type of persecution; **in fact, the worst persecution many of us face is not fitting in.** Today, it can look like you saying "no" to something based on your biblical convictions and being punished. It can look like losing influence in your school or the end of relationships. Persecution can look like people spreading rumors or ignoring you. Regardless, we can expect it.

WHY DOES JESUS SAY "THE GOSPEL MUST FIRST BE PROCLAIMED TO ALL NATIONS" (V. 10)? WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN THIS COMMAND?

Matthew 24:14 reminds us that, "This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Our job as Christians is to take the gospel to the whole world. This call isn't optional but a command for everyone. God likely won't call all of us to a foreign country, but He does call us to share the gospel, to help send others, to give, and to pray. Jesus planted the truth of the gospel deep within the hearts of His disciples so that they would carry it forward. Generations to come would hear the truth about Jesus because of their faithfulness to the call. Jesus encouraged them to trust the Holy Spirit when they didn't know how to respond or what to say, and that same encouragement is true for us today. **We must dedicate ourselves to knowing God's Word and the truth of the gospel. Future generations depend on our faithfulness to this call.**

WE CAN EXPECT JESUS'S RETURN

READ MARK 13:21-27,32-33



SHOULD WE BE AFRAID OF JESUS'S RETURN? EXPLAIN.

No! We shouldn't be afraid, but we should be ready. We can't fully prepare ourselves for what Jesus's return will be like because no one has ever experienced it. Scripture often uses a combination of word pictures, imagery, and literal descriptions of events to give us an idea, but we have to trust that our good God has the perfect plan. **As believers, we should eagerly anticipate this day and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we live our daily lives.** When He becomes the goal and center of our lives, others will see and take notice. There's no fear for us in Jesus's return. He can be trusted! And it will be more incredible than we can image.



HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND IF SOMEONE CLAIMS TO KNOW THE EXACT TIME WHEN JESUS WILL RETURN?

Knowing exactly when Jesus will return isn't possible. Do you think it would change the way we lived if we knew? If Jesus wasn't coming in our lifetime, we might not worry as much about sharing the gospel, but if we knew we only had a month, we would panic! God knows us best; He knows the way our hearts and minds work. **Some things God keeps to Himself, and we have to trust Him. He didn't design us to carry all knowledge. We see this truth reflected from the very beginning, in Eden.** What you can know is that if someone claims to know when He's returning, they're incorrect. Only God knows.



WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO "BE ON GUARD!" AND TO "KEEP AWAKE!" (V. 33)?

Peter explained, "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). Our eyes should always be fixed on eternity, knowing that every day matters. Our words, text messages, side conversations, and actions all speak to who we are and what we believe. Would the people around you know that you're a Christian, even if you never spoke about Jesus specifically? **Living "alert" doesn't mean living anxiously or frantically but ready—ready to see the Lord, ready to share the gospel, ready to give a reason for your hope. Live with eternity in mind—with God's kingdom as your treasure—so that you don't get caught up in the whirlwind of worldly distractions.**

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU PRACTICALLY LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH IN JESUS WITH ETERNITY IN MIND? WHO IN YOUR LIFE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT JESUS?

Pray that God will give you clear opportunities to share about Him wherever you go. Whether it's wearing a shirt that has Scripture on it and someone asks you about it, or being intentionally kind and encouraging to someone you don't even know, there are many ways you can reflect Jesus. When someone asks you why you would say or do something, point them to Jesus! Take every opportunity to invite them to church and live out what Jesus teaches no matter where you go. **One of the greatest compliments someone can give you is that you're the same person wherever you go—church, school, home, work, or anywhere else. Let people see Jesus in you everywhere you are!** Think about one or two ways you can intentionally live out your faith this week and ask your group to pray for you as you take on this challenge. Next week when you get back together, see what God did!

SURELY NOT I?

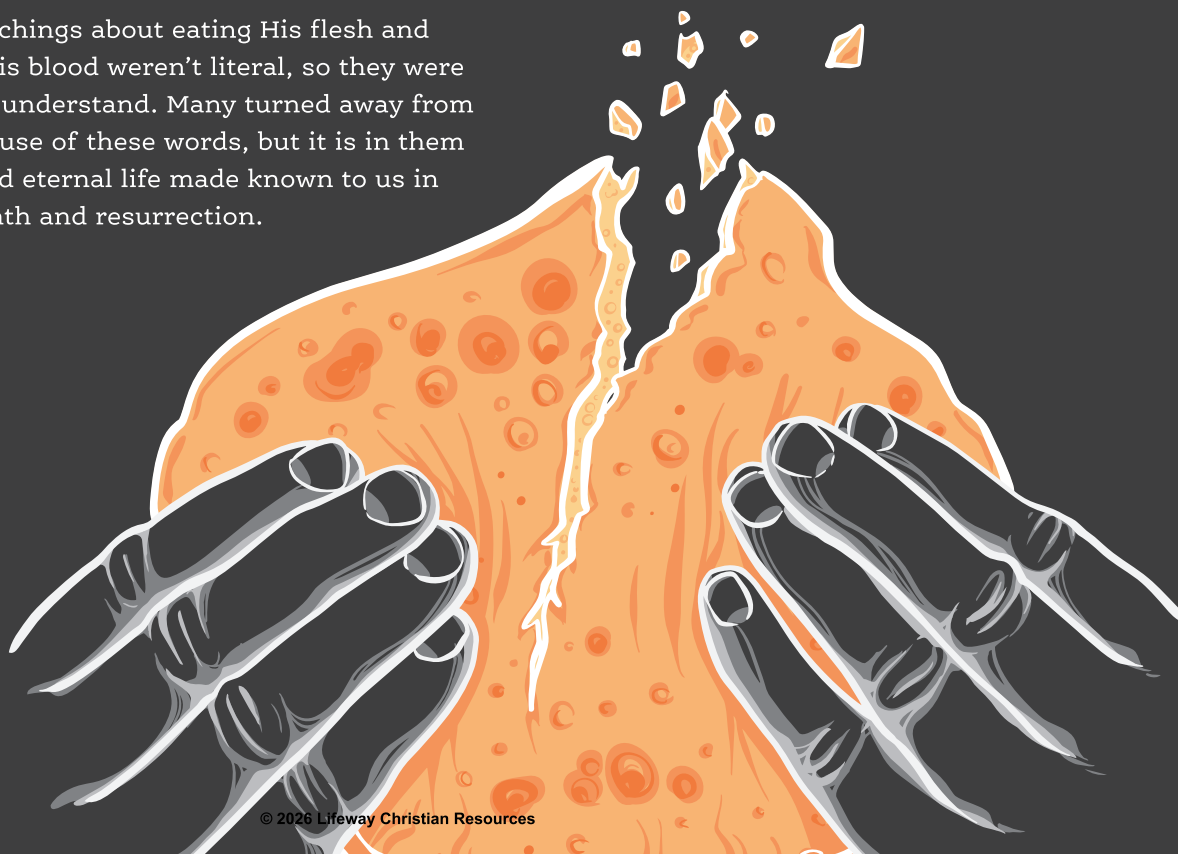
MAIN POINT.

Jesus endured betrayal for our salvation.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus's teachings about eating His flesh and drinking His blood weren't literal, so they were difficult to understand. Many turned away from Jesus because of these words, but it is in them that we find eternal life made known to us in Jesus's death and resurrection.



BREAD AND BETRAYAL

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

Mark 14

JESUS ENDURED BETRAYAL

MARK 14:17-21

17 And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

JESUS KNEW THE COST

MARK 14:22-31

22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus endured betrayal for our salvation.

Leaders: This week, walk with students to help them understand the beautiful significance of the Lord's Supper and why we partake in it still. Help them understand why we must approach it with reverence and gratitude.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS ENDURED BETRAYAL

MARK 14:18

"To break bread with someone was to enter into a pact of friendship and mutual trust. It would be an act of incredible treachery to break bread and then to betray your host. Not only was it someone who was breaking bread with Jesus—but it was one of His own friends who had been with Him for more than two years. This would have seemed unbelievable to the disciples. They did not know that Judas had already made arrangements to betray Jesus."²⁴

MARK 14:18-21

"Even though Judas's betrayal was ordained according to God's plan, he is morally responsible for his freewill action. Jesus will be betrayed and crucified according to God's predetermined will, but this in no way relieved Judas of his responsibility and guilt. In a divine mystery we will never completely comprehend in this life, we embrace the truth and tension that divine sovereignty never cancels out human freedom and moral responsibility. Both are true."²⁵

JESUS KNEW THE COST

MARK 14:22-25

"A closer reading of the texts surrounding the Last Supper also reveals many indicators that Jesus's death should be understood as the focal point. For example, the event is framed and interwoven with the sections about Judas's betrayal of Jesus. This sets up the reader to be thinking about Jesus's impending death. Moreover, Matthew, Mark, and John all retell the story of Jesus's anointing by one 'Mary' as part of the buildup to the Passover, and Jesus explicitly comments that this was done in preparation for His burial. Additionally, the Passover week setting of the Supper, with its high point of the atoning, sacrificial lamb, easily pushes our thoughts toward Jesus's own death as we read the Supper account."²⁶

CONTEXT

All the Gospel writers included this narrative, and it's a tough passage to wrap our minds around. The disciples had no idea what they were walking into for this last supper with Jesus, and when He shared that one of them would betray Him, they each looked at their own hearts. In the other Gospel writings, Judas was named and sat silently to see what the others would say in response which "showed their innocence, and their attachment to Jesus. It showed how sensitive they were to the least suspicion of the kind."²⁷ These men had given up everything to follow Jesus, and the idea that one of them had betrayed Him (and the rest of the disciples in turn) was unimaginable. Even though Jesus had been preparing them for these events to happen, they weren't ready. Peter in particular spoke out, as was in character for him. He decidedly stood firm that he would never betray Jesus, but Jesus knew better. Peter was brash and loved Jesus with such passion that he couldn't imagine doing what Jesus said he would do. One commentator wrote that "we little know how feeble we are till we are tried."²⁸ The disciples truly struggled to follow Jesus's words at the table. Their world had just begun to turn upside down again, and they couldn't figure out what to do. Though every disciple agreed they'd never betray Jesus, in a few short hours, they would all flee in fear, leaving Jesus alone in His darkest moments.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

God's Purpose of Grace

All true believers endure to the end. Those God has accepted because of Jesus and sanctified by His Spirit will never fall away from the state of grace but will persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, grieving the Spirit, impairing their graces and comforts, and bringing shame on the cause of Christ and temporary judgments on themselves, yet they will be kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.

LEADERS' PRAYER

**FATHER, GIVE US THE SAME PASSION THAT THE DISCIPLES HAD,
BUT PAIR IT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE TODAY SO WE
WON'T BETRAY OR DENY YOU. AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, YOU ARE
EVERYTHING TO US. HELP US WHEN WE ARE WEAK SO THAT YOU
CAN BE SEEN AS STRONG!**





KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

Would you rather a home-cooked meal or takeout (1=Home every time; 10=Give me takeout daily)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

THE WORST BETRAYAL

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOSE TRUST IN SOMEONE?**
- **SHARE ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU WERE CONFIDENT YOU WOULDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE AND THEN YOU DID. HOW DID YOU REACT TO MESSING UP?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN HURT OR BETRAYED BY SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT?**

Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose. One of the worst feelings is knowing that you've disappointed someone so much that you lost their trust. Being a person who is trustworthy and dependable is what makes a great friend, but living it out isn't always easy.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Let's talk about trust. Can you really be trusted? If you made a list of the most important qualities you want in a friend, trust is probably on your list. Finding friends who are trustworthy is crucial in a culture where betrayal can happen on social media in an instant, but we must be trustworthy too—especially if we claim to love Jesus. If you've ever had a friend or family member betray your trust, you know how much it hurts. The sting of betrayal lasts a long time and isn't repaired easily—sometimes, not at all. How you handle betrayal says a lot about who you are and what you believe. If you run to the nearest person who will listen to gossip and complain, then you're reacting more like the world. Jesus showed us a better way. The amazing truth is that God will never betray you; He is perfectly trustworthy. We learn from Him what trust looks like! Though we may have great friends, Jesus is our greatest Friend. The more you depend on Him, the more you realize He is the only One capable of never letting you down.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus endured betrayal for our salvation.

JESUS ENDURED BETRAYAL

READ MARK 14:17-21

HOW COULD JESUS CASUALLY BRING UP SOMEONE BETRAYING HIM?

Jesus knew exactly what was happening and trusted God throughout the process.

Jesus knew He came for this moment. The disciples were in the middle of eating a meal with Jesus when He dropped a bombshell of information that would forever change the course of their lives and their ministries. If we knew the betrayal Judas had committed, we likely would've retaliated in some way.

But Jesus placed His trust in the Father, not in anyone or in anything of this world.

Jesus so trusted the Lord that He could endure the worst betrayal.

HOW DID THE DISCIPLES RESPOND TO WHAT JESUS SHARED?

Have you ever racked your brain to recall if you've done something wrong? The disciples did this—panicking that maybe they had messed up somewhere. We can imagine the tension in the room. Jesus's friends couldn't imagine intentionally betraying Him and felt distressed at the very thought. Each of them tried to talk it out with Jesus and probably combed over in their minds every conversation and interaction to try and remember if they had done anything like what Jesus mentioned. **The disciples' love for Jesus made them feel like betraying Jesus was impossible, but one of them did.** And soon, they all would to some degree.

 **READ JOHN 13:1-5. IF JESUS KNEW HE WOULD BE BETRAYED BY JUDAS, WHY DID HE STILL LET JUDAS BE SO CLOSE TO HIM AND DO MINISTRY WITH HIM?**

We struggle to understand God's sovereignty—in other words, God's complete authority over all things. He can see what we can't see and knows all. He is always on time and is intentional about getting glory, so we choose to trust that His plan is good, even if it doesn't make sense to us. Jesus still faithfully taught Judas, utilized his gifts and skills, and was a brother and friend to him, even though He knew Judas would betray Him. Let's also remember that though Jesus was God in flesh, He was also fully human. He wasn't immune to the sting of His friend's betrayal, but Jesus knew there was purpose, even in betrayal. It would serve as a part of the process and move the timeline along toward the cross. **Jesus trusted in God's ultimate plan, even though the process was painful in every way. He treated His betrayer with compassion and dignity, even washing his feet along with the others (John 13:2-5).** What an example for us to follow!

JESUS KNEW THE COST

READ MARK 14:22-31



WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY SAYING WE'RE SUPPOSED TO EAT HIS BODY AND DRINK HIS BLOOD?

Jesus's instructions were deeply symbolic, first for His disciples and now for us. **The acts of breaking bread and pouring a drink remind us of Jesus's sacrifice for our sins.** As a community, Christians are supposed to take the Lord's Supper regularly (also called Communion). **The broken bread pointed back to the manna God provided in the wilderness (Deut. 8:3).** Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," and called Himself the "bread of life" (John 6:35).²⁹ His body was literally broken for us. The drink pointed to the blood spilled by countless animal sacrifices and to the final sacrifice Jesus made when He spilled His blood for us. Paul gave instructions about the Lord's Supper, reminding us, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).



WHY WAS JESUS COMMITTED TO SACRIFICING HIMSELF?

Old Testament prophecies pointed to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus quoted Zechariah 13:7, explaining that He was the Shepherd who was about to be struck down in death, and even His closest followers would run (v. 27). He was committed to obeying the Father and to fulfilling these prophecies because He saw the bigger picture—He was born to save us from sin; even His name meant this (Matt. 1:21)! **Jesus did the will of His Father, no matter the cost to Himself, because of His love for the Father and for us.**



HOW CAN THE WAY WE LIVE DENY THAT WE KNOW JESUS? WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN WE FALL?

If we're honest, answering this question is tough. Even Jesus's closest friends denied Him and ran in fear when the pressure hit. We're prone to the same fears, so we can't say we'd do things differently. We can deny Jesus in the way we speak and act, in remaining silent or in not loving others. **Living in a way that reflects we know Jesus is a daily, active choice. The capacity to betray Him lives inside each of us.** No one is perfect or immune to sin. Peter was convinced he would never do this, but Jesus knew better. If Peter and the disciples can fall for a moment, so can we. **If we fall, we don't have to stay there; we can get up, repent, and love Jesus and others. We can get in the Word and ask people to hold us accountable.**

WRAP-UP



WHO DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE TO HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE SO THAT YOU ARE GUARDED FROM FALLING AWAY OR DENYING JESUS?

Nothing guarantees you'll never slip up, but you can take wise steps to remain close to the Lord. **Your time spent in the Bible is never wasted, and spending time with other believers is necessary to sharpen your faith (Prov. 27:17).** If you don't have people to hold you accountable, pray for God to send someone. While you wait, look for someone else who *needs* a solid Christian friend and be that friend! The world will often say that you should spend your younger years living it up and being free, but you're never too young to walk closely with Jesus and let your passion for Him drive everything you do; that is *real* freedom. You don't have to buy into the lie that you can wait until you're older. Ask God to show you how to live more intentionally—in a way that holds you accountable and encourages others. **Instead of trying to do things on your own or pridefully thinking you'll never fall (that didn't work out well for the disciples, did it?), link arms with other believers. You'll find strength to stand when doing so is costly.**

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