

09

# THE SON HAS TRUTH

LEADER GUIDE

  
the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.

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ADULTS



FALL | 2026



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# GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

## A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

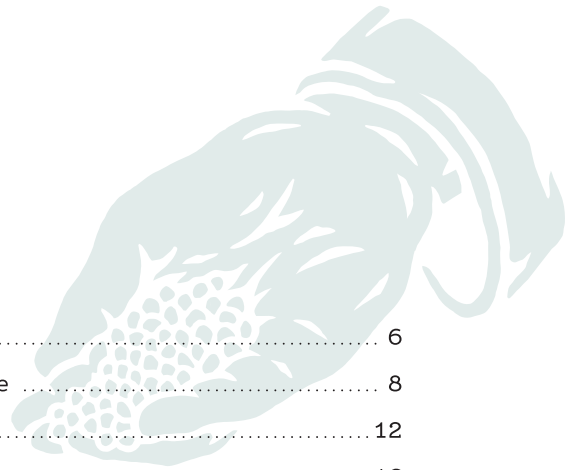
Then, in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. By God's grace in Christ, repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.



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## THE EDITOR

For some of us, the events of Jesus's life seem like stories in a children's book that we have gotten used to over the years. Yet if we truly shape our minds to visualize the complications, the confrontations, and the controversies surrounding all He did, we would be reminded of the truth and the power to which He spoke and lived.

Jesus spoke with precision in His parables. He wanted the crowds, the Pharisees, and His disciples to seek the truth of His words.

He revealed His authority over all—over this earthly domain, over disabilities, over diseases, over demons, over death. They all submit under His command and control.

He brought physical and spiritual healing with compassion and care like only God could and would. The way He lived is an example for us to follow.

Jesus's life of ministry was a picture of love and sacrifice even before His crucifixion. He endured temptation, opposition, hunger, fatigue, and grief as a human because of His desire to rescue us from sin.

As Paul stated in Philippians, Jesus “who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity” (Philippians 2:6-7).

In His humanity and deity, He is our King. He proved His authority and godhood through miracles only He could do. And as we shall see, He gave up His life for us and overcame the power of death for our salvation. That is the Jesus we worship and trust in truth.

### Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults



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### The Gospel Project®

Adult Leader Guide

Fall 2026

Volume 3, Number 1

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## THE WRITERS

### PERSONAL PREPARATION

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(Unit 25, Sessions 1-4)

Robin is a member of Richland Creek Community Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina, where her husband, Jason, serves as the Adult Ministry Pastor. Robin and Jason have two sons, Jonathan and Wyatt, and enjoy spending time with family, church friends, or relaxing with a good book.

#### **David McLemore**

(Unit 27, Sessions 1-5)

David aims through his teachings and writings to help believers read the Bible faithfully and see how every part of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. He writes on his website, Things of the Sort, and serves as an elder at his church.

#### **Dustin Turner**

(Unit 26, Sessions 1-4)

Dustin serves as the Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. Previously he served as the equipping pastor and then lead pastor of Vintage Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. He and his wife have two children: Gabriel and Emmalyn. When he's not reading, you can find Dustin enjoying his other hobby: Olympic weightlifting.

### GROUP EXPERIENCE

#### **Melanie Gillen**

(Unit 25, Sessions 1-4)

Melanie lives in South Carolina with her husband and two teenage kids. She has faithfully served the church for over twenty years. With an undergrad degree in Religion and a Master's in Education, she currently attends Southeastern Seminary to pursue a Master's in Ministry to Women. Mel finds the most joy when leading Bible studies or teaching others the truth of God's Word.

#### **Leslie Hudson**

(Unit 27, Sessions 1-5)

Leslie worships with her family at First Baptist in Dickson, Tennessee. She teaches high school youth Sunday School, plays in the praise band, and is active in women's ministry. She's passionate about counseling women biblically and pointing people to Jesus.

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(Unit 26, Sessions 1-4)

James serves as lead pastor at Glynwood Baptist Church in Prattville, Alabama. He is also a camp pastor for CentriKid Camps for 3rd- through 6th-graders. James blogs at 66in52.com, where he posts daily insights based on a chronological Bible reading plan. He and his wife, Trish, have two grown sons and one grandchild.

# TEACHING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

By G. Dwayne McCrary



God gifted each of us differently. Paul pointed out that God gifts “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Some take this to mean we need to stay in our lane, let the evangelist do his work while we do our work as a shepherd or teacher. However, this same Paul directed his protégé Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Paul’s direction to Timothy would be consistent with the Great Commission in Matthew 28, where Jesus directed all of His disciples to make disciples, which includes evangelizing. Those gifted as teachers may do evangelism differently than those gifted with service or hospitality, but we are all tasked with evangelism in some way.

Here are five things we can do to be more intentional about sharing the gospel when we lead a Bible study group.

## 1) BE PREPARED TO SHARE

We all need to be able to share how we became followers of Jesus and how others can do the same. If we need help, we can always refer to the information on the inside front cover of the Lifeway resources that explains how to respond to the gospel. We may have a favorite verse (John 3:16; 14:6; Rom. 6:23) or set of verses (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; Eph. 2:1-13) we can point to when sharing the gospel. The key isn’t so much which verse or verses we use but that we’re prepared to share when the opportunity arises.

## 2) INVITE PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

The people in our groups have stories to tell if we give them an opportunity. Some won’t share their story unless we invite them to share how they came to Jesus. This also helps those in our groups improve as witnesses for Christ and get more comfortable with sharing the gospel as they listen to others and share their own stories with the group.

## 3) LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

In Lifeway resources, at least one lesson each quarter is marked as evangelistic, but that doesn’t mean the others do not offer occasions to share the gospel. Most, if not every, Bible study session provides an opportunity to share the gospel. A lesson on the use of money can open a door by reminding the group that we use our money not to secure our salvation but in response to the salvation Jesus already secured for us. Subtle, yet still an opportunity to share the gospel. Many times we pass over those openings without thinking about it.

## 4) INCLUDE A WAY TO RESPOND

Telling a person about Jesus and His offer of salvation is only half the work. We need to offer them a way to respond. Asking them in front of the group may not be the best approach. We are asking them to make a big decision that requires careful thought. We can make ourselves available after group time or share our phone numbers in case anyone wants to talk more about what it means to follow Jesus. However we do it, we need to make sure no one is left wanting to know more or wanting to respond without an opportunity to do so.





## 5) ENCOURAGE THE GROUP TO PRAY FOR, INVITE, AND BRING ALONG PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR FROM GOD

One reason we may not always feel an urgency to share the gospel as we teach is that we are leading the same group of people week in and week out. In effect, our groups become functionally closed. By encouraging participants to pray for opportunities to share the gospel, invite people not currently involved in a Bible study group, and bring the people they invite with them, we might find ourselves more intentional about sharing the gospel when we teach. Notice that “invite” and “bring” are listed separately. We need to remind our groups that we can invite people to attend, but if we invite them and offer to pick them up or meet them in the parking lot, they will be more likely to say yes to the invitation.

Review the lessons for this quarter and note those specifically identified as evangelistic. Encourage your group to make special efforts to bring guests with them on the weeks these lessons are taught.

---

**G. Dwayne McCrary** is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway.

## SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

### GOSPEL STORY

Our aim is to help people see the storyline of Scripture, the thread from the beginning to end, that weaves God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

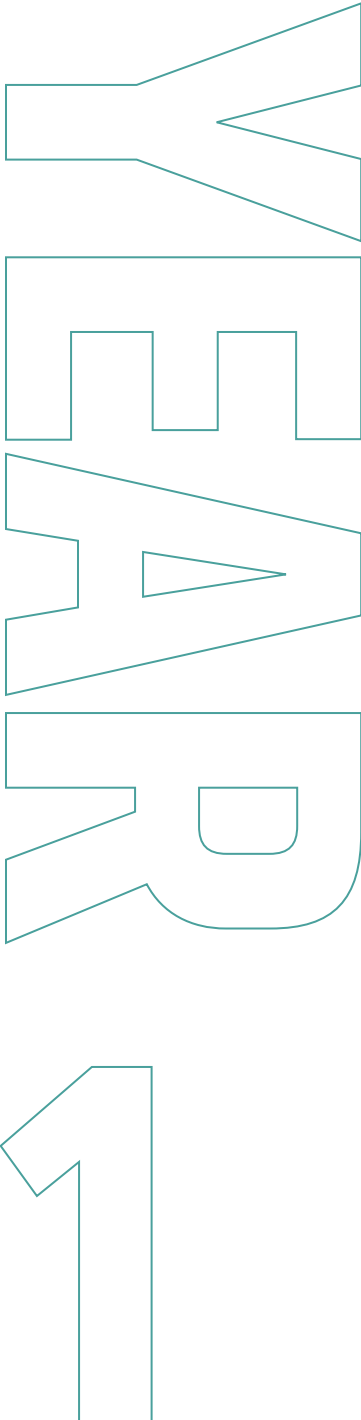
### GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him, helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

### GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to empower believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.





**VOL 01:**  
**CREATION AND COVENANT**

(Genesis; Job)

Fall 2024

Unit 01: Foundations

Unit 02: God's Promises

Unit 03: Struggles of Faith

**VOL 02:**  
**LAW AND LIFE**

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)

Winter 2024–25

Unit 04: God's Miraculous Work

Unit 05: God's Character

Unit 06: Humanity's Selfishness

**VOL 03:**  
**LAND AND LOSS**

(Joshua–1 Samuel)

Spring 2025

Unit 07: God Is for His People

Unit 08: God Delivers His People

Unit 09: God Cares for His People

**VOL 04:**  
**FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM**

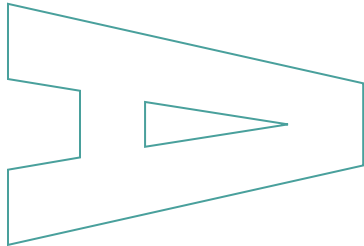
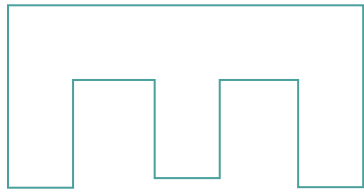
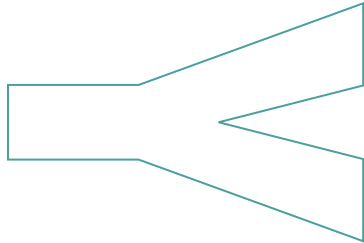
(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

Summer 2025

Unit 10: The Foolishness of God's People

Unit 11: Everything Belongs to the Lord

Unit 12: The Need for Wisdom



**VOL 05:**  
**DIVISION AND DEFIANCE**

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)

Fall 2025

Unit 13: Divisions

Unit 14: Renewal

Unit 15: Decline

**VOL 06:**  
**PROPHETS AND PROVISION**

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)

Winter 2025–26

Unit 16: God in the Exile

Unit 17: God in the Restoration

Unit 18: God in the Return

**VOL 07:**  
**THE SON HAS COME**

(The Gospels)

Spring 2026

Unit 19: The Arrival

Unit 20: The Preparation

Unit 21: The Ministry

**VOL 08:**  
**THE SON HAS AUTHORITY**

(The Gospels)

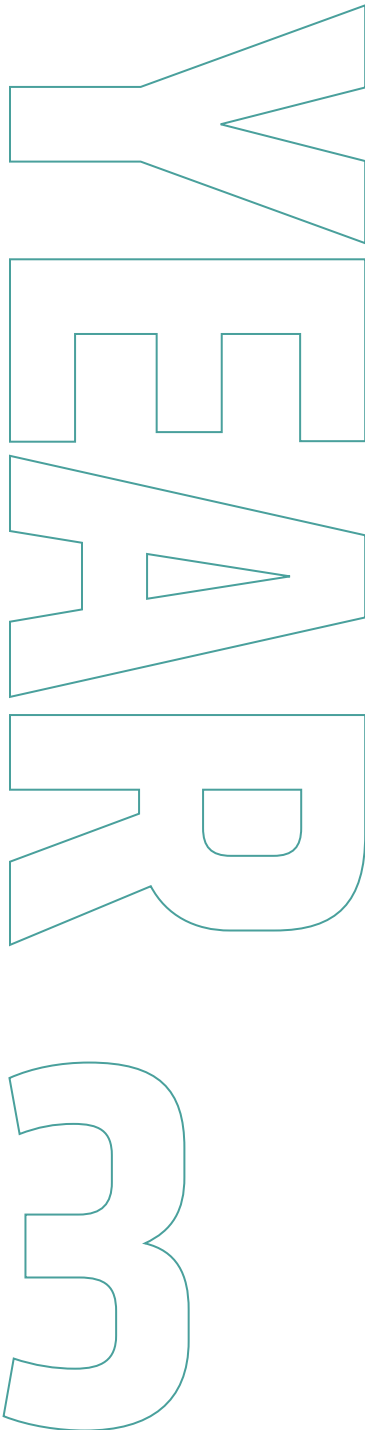
Summer 2026

Unit 22: Responses to Jesus

Unit 23: The Way of Jesus

Unit 24: The Teachings of Jesus





**VOL 09:**  
**THE SON HAS TRUTH**

(The Gospels)

Fall 2026

Unit 25: The Truth of His Power

Unit 26: The Truth of His Actions

Unit 27: The Truth of His Kingdom

**VOL 10:**  
**THE SON HAS RISEN**

(The Gospels; Acts)

Winter 2026–27

Unit 28: The Final Days

Unit 29: Post-Resurrection

Unit 30: The Gospel Spreads

**VOL 11:**  
**THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION**

(Acts; The Epistles)

Spring 2027

Unit 31: Sharing Truths of the Mission

Unit 32: Living Out the Mission

Unit 33: Christ Focuses Our Mission

**VOL 12:**  
**THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE**

(The Epistles; Revelation)

Summer 2027

Unit 34: We Are in Christ

Unit 35: We Are Citizens of Heaven

Unit 36: Jesus

## HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide is an important tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

### 1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- **Daily Readings**
- **Chronological Timeline**



**TIMELINE**

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12-16)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-18)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

**Daily Readings**

|                                             |                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Luke 8:1-8  | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Mark 4:10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Luke 8:9-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Mark 4:13-20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Mark 4:1-9  | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 81     |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

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## 2) STUDY FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages that will guide you and your group to prepare for Bible study during the week before group time begins. A Bible study prompt will help you engage with the Scripture passage, but encourage your group to do more than what's asked in the prompt. Space is provided for you and your group to add notes and questions and markings that will help you study the passage more deeply and see any nuances about the words and phrases of the Scripture provided. In addition to a brief commentary with thought-provoking questions to help you and your group dig deeper into the text, leader notes will provide you with additional nuggets for understanding the Scriptures. Use this Personal Preparation to experience what your group is experiencing as they study the week prior. Consider what questions, thoughts, or challenges they might have while engaging with the Scripture passages.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

Notes

PERSONAL PREPARATION

  
SCAN ME

**Bonus Content**  
Scan this QR code to see a comparative view of the parable of the sower in the Synoptic Gospels.

**GOD'S WORD NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND INTERNALIZED FOR TRANSFORMATION** (LUKE 8:11-15).

Highlight how Jesus defines these parts of the parable: seed, seed along the path, seed on the rock, seed among thorns, and the seed on good ground.

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing. 14 As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit. 15 But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit."

Jesus explained that the seed in the parable represents God's Word. A sower scatters seed with a purpose—he intends for the seed he scatters to germinate, thrive, and produce fruit. Although Jesus knew that not every gospel seed would be received, He preached with the expectation that some would bear fruit. For others, there would be obstacles.

Seed sown on hardened hearts cannot bring salvation, as Satan quickly snatches the truth away to prevent understanding and belief. The gospel offers abundant life, but the thief seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Seed sown on shallow hearts, though received joyfully, cannot endure for lack of nourishment ("no root"; Luke 8:13). Without the work of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart, shallow belief falls away during testing. Seed sown on a heart rife with thorns—"worries, riches, and pleasures of life" (v. 14)—is slowly strangled as worldliness and misplaced priorities prevent living faith.

**LEADER NOTE:** A common concern that arises when studying this parable comes in trying to understand which of the soils represents people who are saved versus those who are not. Darrell Bock stated that this concern misunderstands Jesus's message and "to ask this question of each soil is to misdirect the parable's emphasis. Jesus is not communicating the minimum response required to receive blessing. Rather, he is instructing the disciples on fruitfulness by pointing out obstacles that prevent such a response."

Which of these obstacles to receiving the gospel have you encountered in yourself or a loved one?

Notes

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the way to salvation, and following Him by faith with the Holy Spirit will lead to true transformation.

With such powerful obstacles at war against the gospel, it is a miracle that any seeds of faith survive to bear fruit. Yet that is exactly what happens with the fourth seed—this person receives the Word and holds fast to it, so that it endures and bears plentiful fruit. The difference lies in the soil of the heart. But how is it possible to have "an honest and good heart" (v. 15) suitable to receive God's Word and bear fruit? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh, enabling believers to trust God and obey with a heart of love (Ezek. 11:19-20).

**LEADER NOTE:** What does it look like to "hold on" to God's Word to "produce fruit" (Luke 8:15)? It looks like abiding in Christ. Jesus said: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:7-8). Believers who bear fruit do so by persevering in their faith in Christ, internalizing His Word, and praying for the Spirit to produce fruit through them. Then, as they walk in the Spirit, they bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:16, 22-23).

How should the expectation that some seeds will bear fruit motivate us to spread gospel truth?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

"We win the [spiritual] war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (Gal 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."  
—Thabiti Anyabwile

24 Unit 25 | Session 1 | Power of God's Word

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### 3) DIRECT THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to be used in the group context to engage your group in active learning. The personal prep you and your group put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during your group time. The first page of the Group Experience will help you engage your group members as they arrive. Dialogue suggestions describe the context, transitions, and a recap of Bible readings or previous sessions to remind your group of what has already been studied or give a framework for where the lesson is heading. The second page gives a visual representation of the activity from the Personal Study Guide. A teaching outline helps guide your members through the activity and the debrief discussion.

Key Concept: Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled "Four Soils, Four Responses." Recreate the chart on a board so you can record the group's findings as they interact with Scripture.

Four Soils, Four Responses

Read Luke 8:4-15. Record what Jesus said each type of soil represented, any corresponding obstacles to faith, and how to overcome those obstacles.

|                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| THE SEED ALONG THE PATH | THE SEED ON THE ROCK    |
| THE SEED AMONG THORNS   | THE SEED IN GOOD GROUND |

**READ:** Call for a volunteer to read aloud Luke 8:4-15.

**ENGAGE:** Form three smaller groups and assign each group a type of unfruitful soil from the parable. Instruct the groups to talk through the following questions and write down their thoughts on the chart in their PSG: (1) What did Jesus say the type of soil represented? (2) What are the obstacles that create barriers to faith? (3) How might you have overcome such obstacles to receive God's Word in faith and grow and bear fruit in your life?

**REGROUP:** After a few minutes, invite a volunteer from each of the groups to present their findings. Write down their discussion points on the chart on the board and encourage the other groups to fill in the details on their PSG.

**DISCUSS:** How does Jesus's explanation for the seed in the good ground contrast with that of the other soils? (Record responses on the board: "hold on"; "enduring"; "produce fruit.")

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- Group Activity
- Interactive Questions
- Theological Applications

## 4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

After the recap of the activity, help your group take the next steps with the day's Scripture lesson by walking them through the Head, Heart, and Hands applications. Invite volunteers to share and discuss answers to the questions for their mutual benefit. Then take prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week. And finally, guide your group to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word as you conclude the session.

**Key Concept:** Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

**HANDS:** Transformed hearts produce fruitful hands. As our hearts overflow with spiritual fruit, we show kindness and generosity to others. And because we love others, we desire to share the good news of the gospel with them so that they too can be transformed from the inside out. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare and soften the soil—the hearts—of unbelievers, and pray He will prepare you to share the gospel with them.

**For whom will you pray and share the gospel this week?**

**NEXT STEPS**

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Isaiah 55:10-11. Reflect on how this passage shows God's plan and sovereignty as His Word goes out.
- Spend some time reflecting on your personal walk with Jesus: What fruit are you producing in faith? What obstacles challenge your fruit-bearing, and how can you address those obstacles?
- Consider how you might be sowing, planting, or watering the seed of the gospel in your conversations with others, and evaluate how you may need to approach those conversations specifically.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 23 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

**PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES**

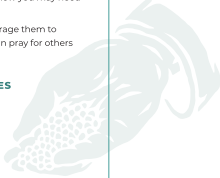
**PRAYING SCRIPTURE**

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 81:10-14 with your group. Thank God for giving us His Word and His gospel, and pray for your group to be people who listen to God's Word and obey it.

**REFERENCES**

1. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 73-84.  
2. *Thabiti Anyabwile, Leading Jesus in Luke*, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Daeleville: Holman Reference, 2018), 45-66.

Notes



- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

# THE SON HAS TRUTH

By David McLemore



Theologian A. W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”<sup>1</sup>

That statement raises an important question: Where did you get your thoughts about God?

There will come moments in your life when your ideas about God won’t remain theoretical. You will suffer, and in suffering, what you believe about God will either sustain you or crush you. And what’s more, one day you will face death, and what you believe about God will either be your hope or your terror.

So, where can you find thoughts about God that are true to who He actually is? The answer is from His self-revelation. God wants you to know Him. He doesn’t want you walking through life in the dark about the most important questions. He wants you to know way down deep that at the very bedrock of your existence is the everlasting arms of the good God who loves you and wants you to know how deep His love for you really is. That’s what the whole Bible is about. This volume draws our attention to that reality by showing how God’s truth is revealed most fully and finally in His Son.

## THE SON

We worship a triune God, so what we see in Jesus, the Son, is who God is. In other words, there is no version of God that doesn’t look like Jesus.

The passages explored in this volume show how Jesus reveals God not in fragments but in fullness. He is the Word of God (John 1:1). He is the King of God’s kingdom (Luke 19:28-40). He is the Creator of all (Mark 4; Matt. 14:22-33). He is the divine Healer (Luke 8:41-56; Mark 7:24-37). He is the gracious Provider (Matt. 14:13-21). He has power over death (John 11:38-44). He gives sight to the blind (John 9). He’s the Seeker of the lost (Luke 19:1-10). He is coming again (Mark 13). He is the Mediator of the new covenant (Mark 14:22-24).

In Jesus, truth became visible, touchable, knowable. And the amazing thing is not just that Jesus revealed truth but the beauty of the truth He revealed.

## In Jesus we see the truth of God's personhood through His words, compassion, and authority. We see His heart.

In Jesus we see the truth of God's personhood through His words, compassion, and authority. We see His heart. We see who He really is way down deep. And what we find explicitly in Jesus, backed up by His Word, is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, who won't let injustice reign but will settle it once and for all (see Ex. 34:6-7).

### THE SON HAS TRUTH

In Jesus, truth puts on flesh. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In Jesus, truth became visible, touchable, knowable. And the amazing thing is not just that Jesus revealed truth but the beauty of the truth He revealed. He is not just a creator; He's a redeemer. He's not just sovereign; He's loving. He's not just powerful; He's tender. He's not just transcendent; He's immanent. He's not just a judge; He's a just and merciful one.

The truth is that God is not just a god but the best possible God. He's perfect. There is no flaw in Him. There is no downside to Him. There is nothing in Him that should turn our hearts away from Him. There is nothing in Him that our hearts don't long for and desperately need. Again and again, the passages in this volume show us God's heart toward sinners and sufferers. When we sin, He forgives. When we mourn, He comforts. When we stray, He seeks. When we are betrayed, He stands by us. When we die, He welcomes us and will one day resurrect us.

Consider what Jesus shows us of God's heart for sinners and sufferers like us. He welcomes the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28-29). He receives all who come to Him (John 6:37). He has compassion on the broken (Luke 7:13; Mark 1:40-41). He lays down His life for us (John 10:11; 13:1). He intercedes for us now (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). He one day will make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

Jesus is good and does good, and He loves you. He wants you to know that way down deep. That's not just written in the Bible but proved on the cross. What is there in God that you don't need? What do you need that doesn't have an answer in God?

God's revelation not only corrects our view of Him but, perhaps more importantly, reveals His view of us. He loves us. He wants to save us. The truth of God is His lovingkindness toward us. That's a truth worth believing and obeying.

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2022), 1.

**David McLemore** aims through his teachings and writings to help believers read the Bible faithfully and see how every part of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. He writes on his website, *Things of the Sort*, and serves as an elder at his church.



THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 25

# THE TRUTH OF HIS POWER



MARK; LUKE



#### MEMORY VERSES

“He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Silence! Be still!’ The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ And they were terrified and asked one another, ‘Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!’”

—Mark 4:39-41



# POWER OF GOD'S WORD

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 8:4-15

## CONTEXT

Jesus traveled from town to town preaching the good news of the kingdom with His disciples. Jesus's preaching ministry was both the context and the subject of His parable of the sower. As Jesus traveled, He indiscriminately spread the seeds of the gospel far and wide. The four Gospels record a diversity of responses to Jesus's teaching: rejection, doubt, fear, joy, sadness, anger, and belief. In the parable of the sower, Jesus classified people's responses into four general categories as He illustrated the power of the Word and the danger of rejecting it.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.**

As you examine Luke 8:4-15:

- Discover why Jesus taught in parables: to expose who truly was seeking truth.
- Recognize that we are transformed and bear fruit when we hear and trust the gospel.



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## TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12-16)

**SESSION STUDY:** Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                    |                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Luke 8:1-8  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Mark 4:10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Luke 8:9-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Mark 4:13-20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 4:1-9  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 81     |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.



## IF WE TRULY SEEK GOD'S WISDOM, HIS TRUTH WILL BE REVEALED TO US (LUKE 8:4-10).

Circle the four types of soil on which the seed is scattered. Then underline the phrases that describe what happened to the seed in each soil type.

4 As a large crowd was gathering, and people were coming to Jesus from every town, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some seed fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the sky devoured it. 6 Other seed fell on the rock; when it grew up, it withered away, since it lacked moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns; the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 Still other seed fell on good ground; when it grew up, it produced fruit: a hundred times what was sown." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen." 9 Then his disciples asked him, "What does this parable mean?" 10 So he said, "The secrets of the kingdom of God have been given for you to know, but to the rest it is in parables, so that 'Looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

As crowds gathered around Jesus, He told them a parable about a sower who scattered seed. The agricultural setting would have been familiar to Jesus's audience, and the simple descriptions easy to follow. The sower and the seed remain the same in each example, but the condition of the soil changes throughout, producing drastically different results.

A path consisted of very hard, packed-down soil. The seed that fell there could not penetrate the soil and was trampled or eaten by birds. Likewise, neither the seed scattered on rocky ground nor the seed sown among thorns survived for long due to the constraints of their environments. By contrast, the final seed nurtured by good soil grew and produced fruit in abundance. After reciting the parable, Jesus said, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen" (v. 8).

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's call not only to hear His words but to listen closely is found throughout the synoptic Gospels (Matt. 11:15; Mark 13:9; Luke 14:35). In John's Gospel, the sheep that belong to the Good Shepherd hear His voice and follow Him. Jesus's desire for His listeners was that they would not only hear His words but would heed them, building their lives on Him and bearing fruit for the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:24-27; John 15:7-8; Jas. 1:22-25).

**What does Jesus's exhortation to listen tell us about Jesus's desire for His audience?**

At the conclusion of the parable, the disciples realized that though they heard Jesus's words, they did not understand Jesus's spiritual point, so they asked Him to explain it. Before answering, Jesus briefly explained the purpose and limitation of parables.

Jesus's parables contain within them nuggets of kingdom truth, but these mysteries cannot be unlocked merely by hearing or personally dissecting their component parts. Their wisdom must be given, and only Jesus holds the keys to their riches (Col. 2:3). The disciples were granted this wisdom because they asked Him. Like Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, Jesus called out and invited all to pay attention. The disciples came to Him in faith and were rewarded with understanding. The rest only heard a story about a sower scattering seed.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's parables served a two-fold function. For the disciples who had ears to hear by faith, the parables revealed truths about the kingdom of heaven. But for "the rest" (those who had closed their eyes and hardened their hearts; see Matt. 15:15), the parables concealed understanding. In this way, the parables were a type of judgment on the unbelieving crowds, clouding God's mysteries. Thus, the people were divided into two groups: those who were given spiritual understanding of God's Word and those who were not (1 Cor. 1:10-16). Those two groups are still present today wherever God's Word is communicated.

**How does the fact that wisdom must be sought in a Person change the way we approach Bible study?**

Notes



### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

Notes



SCAN ME

**Bonus Content**

Scan this QR code to see a comparative view of the parable of the sower in the Synoptic Gospels.

## GOD'S WORD NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND INTERNALIZED FOR TRANSFORMATION (LUKE 8:11-15).

**Highlight how Jesus defines these parts of the parable: seed, seed along the path, seed on the rock, seed among thorns, and the seed on good ground.**

**11** “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. **12** The seed along the path are those who have heard and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13** And the seed on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. Having no root, these believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing. **14** As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit. **15** But the seed in the good ground—these are the ones who, having heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold on to it and by enduring, produce fruit.”

Jesus explained that the seed in the parable represents God's Word. A sower scatters seed with a purpose—he intends for the seed he scatters to germinate, thrive, and produce fruit. Although Jesus knew that not every gospel seed would be received, He preached with the expectation that some would bear fruit. For others, there would be obstacles.

Seed sown on hardened hearts cannot bring salvation, as Satan quickly snatches the truth away to prevent understanding and belief. The gospel offers abundant life, but the thief seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Seed sown on shallow hearts, though received joyfully, cannot endure for lack of nourishment (“no root”; Luke 8:13). Without the work of the Holy Spirit to transform the heart, shallow belief falls away during testing. Seed sown on a heart rife with thorns—“worries, riches, and pleasures of life” (v. 14)—is slowly strangled as worldliness and misplaced priorities prevent living faith.

**LEADER NOTE:** A common concern that arises when studying this parable comes in trying to understand which of the soils represents people who are saved versus those who are not. Darrell Bock stated that this concern misunderstands Jesus's message and “to ask this question of each soil is to misdirect the parable's emphasis. Jesus is not communicating the minimum response required to receive blessing. Rather, he is instructing the disciples on fruitfulness by pointing out obstacles that prevent such a response.”<sup>1</sup>

**Which of these obstacles to receiving the gospel have you encountered in yourself or a loved one?**

**Key Concept:** Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the way to salvation, and following Him by faith with the Holy Spirit will lead to true transformation.

With such powerful obstacles at war against the gospel, it is a miracle that any seeds of faith survive to bear fruit. Yet that is exactly what happens with the fourth seed—this person receives the Word and holds fast to it, so that it endures and bears plentiful fruit. The difference lies in the soil of the heart. But how is it possible to have “an honest and good heart” (v. 15) suitable to receive God’s Word and bear fruit? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh, enabling believers to trust God and obey with a heart of love (Ezek. 11:19-20).

**LEADER NOTE:** What does it look like to “hold on” to God’s Word to “produce fruit” (Luke 8:15)? It looks like abiding in Christ. Jesus said: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:7-8). Believers who bear fruit do so by persevering in their faith in Christ, internalizing His Word, and praying for the Spirit to produce fruit through them. Then, as they walk in the Spirit, they bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:16,22-23).

**How should the expectation that some seeds will bear fruit motivate us to spread gospel truth?**

### VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“We win the [spiritual] war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (Jas 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.”<sup>2</sup>

–Thabiti Anyabwile

Notes



**ARRIVAL**

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask who has a green thumb and who doesn't. Allow a few volunteers to give examples of their gardening successes or failures.

**TRANSITION:** Even the greatest gardener has successes and failures. Today, we're going to discuss a popular parable Jesus told about a sower who scattered seed. The seed fell on different types of soil, but only one soil had just the right conditions to allow the seed to take root and bear fruit.

**CONTEXT**

**SAY:** A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus often taught in parables, so much so that one-third of all Jesus's teachings were shared as parables. When interpreting a parable, it's important to ask what the main point of the parable is. One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel is how to get faith and use it in daily living. Jesus demonstrated this by teaching the disciples that faith comes through receiving the Word of God.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** As you read the passage recounting the parable of the sower this week, what stood out to you that you might not have noticed before?

**REVIEW:** Jesus told the parable of the sower to the large crowd that followed Him, and as Scripture states, He never taught them without a parable. Privately, His disciples asked Him what the parable meant. Jesus explained that the sower represents someone who shares the gospel of the kingdom. Just like a seed brings forth life, the gospel is life to those who believe. A seed can't grow unless it's planted; similarly the Word of God must be planted in someone's heart to grow and bear fruit. Yet the growth is dependent upon the type of "soil" into which the seed is planted.

**TRANSITION:** As we dig into the passage together, think about situations in your own life when you've tried to share the gospel with others and it didn't seem to go so well. Maybe the person responded joyfully but soon stopped going to church and living for Jesus after the newness wore off. Consider the soil of your own heart as well.



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**Key Concept:** Jesus taught the importance of receiving the Word and producing fruit from doing so.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Four Soils, Four Responses.” Recreate the chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Notes

### Four Soils, Four Responses

Read Luke 8:4-15. Record what Jesus said each type of soil represented, any corresponding obstacles to faith, and how to overcome those obstacles.

| THE SEED ALONG THE PATH | THE SEED ON THE ROCK    |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                         |                         |
| THE SEED AMONG THORNS   | THE SEED IN GOOD GROUND |
|                         |                         |

**READ:** Call for a volunteer to read aloud Luke 8:4-15.

**ENGAGE:** Form three smaller groups and assign each group a type of unfruitful soil from the parable. Instruct the groups to talk through the following questions and write down their thoughts on the chart in their PSG: (1) What did Jesus say the type of soil represented? (2) What are the obstacles that create barriers to faith? (3) How might you have overcome such obstacles to receive God’s Word in faith and grow and bear fruit in your life?

**REGROUP:** After a few minutes, invite a volunteer from each of the groups to present their findings. Write down their discussion points on the chart on the board and encourage the other groups to fill in the details on their PSG.

**DISCUSS:** How does Jesus’s explanation for the seed in the good ground contrast with that of the other soils? (*Record responses on the board: “hold on”; “enduring”; “produce fruit.”*)

## Notes



**SUMMARIZE:** Display **Pack Item 3: Kingdom Growth** and highlight specifically the “Believers’ Mission” section for the following. Say: “As Christians, it is our calling to share the gospel with others as we go about our daily lives. The sad truth is that not everyone who hears the gospel will follow Jesus. Some will reject the gospel outright; others will fall away through hardships and distractions. Only the good soil of a good heart produces fruit that lasts. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, the apostle Paul taught that gospel growth is often a team effort. We don’t know when we share the gospel whether we are clearing out thorns, picking out rocks, tilling the soil, or watering a planted seed. All Jesus calls us to do is be faithful to His commission to share the gospel.

## DEBRIEF

**How should this parable encourage us as we share the gospel with others?**

**What “fruit” should we expect to see in our lives as believers in God’s Word?**

## SUMMARIZE

The seed of the gospel is not sown in a climate-controlled, curated greenhouse. Instead, the gospel goes forth in a world that is openly hostile to it. That any of us receive the gospel and hold fast to it shows God’s miraculous mercy and kindness to us. Let us humbly pray for the gospel seed to take root in the lives of others so we can delight in the harvest.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 23). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Not only do we need God’s help to understand His Word, we also need His help to “hold on” to His Word. Any time we hear God’s truth, spiritual warfare commences in which Satan attempts to steal away those truths so we forget what we have learned (Jas. 1:22-25). But God’s power is greater than the devil’s

**What are some ways we can keep God’s Word in our mind and heart?**



**HEART:** The parable of the sower is about the battle taking place over the soil of people’s hearts. This parable gives us key markers to look for in our own lives to see if gospel transformation has taken place. Do we care enough about God’s Word to ask Him for help to understand and believe it? Do we hold fast to it when difficulties and distractions come? Are we bearing fruit in keeping with repentance and faith? These are evidences of true transformation.

**What evidence do you see in your life that the Holy Spirit has given you “an honest and good heart”?**



**HANDS:** Transformed hearts produce fruitful hands. As our hearts overflow with spiritual fruit, we show kindness and generosity to others. And because we love others, we desire to share the good news of the gospel with them so that they too can be transformed from the inside out. Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare and soften the soil—the hearts—of unbelievers, and pray He will prepare you to share the gospel with them.

**For whom will you pray and share the gospel this week?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Isaiah 55:10-11. Reflect on how this passage shows God's plan and sovereignty as His Word goes out.
- Spend some time reflecting on your personal walk with Jesus: What fruit are you producing in faith? What obstacles challenge your fruit-bearing, and how can you address those obstacles?
- Consider how you might be sowing, planting, or watering the seed of the gospel in your conversations with others, and evaluate how you may need to approach those conversations specifically.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 23 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 81:10-14 with your group. Thank God for giving us His Word and His gospel, and pray for your group to be people who listen to God's Word and obey it.

#### References

1. Darrell L. Bock, Luke: 1:1–9:50, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 733–34.
2. Thabiti Anyabwile, Exalting Jesus in Luke, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2018), 145–46.

# JESUS'S USE OF PARABLES

Adapted from an article by R. D. Fowler



What is a parable? The word *parable* means “to place alongside.” A parable is a figurative saying that illustrates a spiritual truth by comparing common experiences. Of the approximately sixty parables in the Synoptic Gospels, fifty-two are narratives. A parable, however, can also be a similitude (Matt. 13:33), an allegory (Ezek. 17:2; 24:3; Matt. 13:18,24,36), a proverb (Prov. 1:1,6; Mark 3:23), a riddle (Ps. 78:2; Mark 7:17), or a symbol (Heb. 9:9).

Many of us are familiar with Jesus's parables, though we may not understand exactly what they are or why Jesus used them. In Matthew 13:10, the disciples approached Jesus and asked, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?” This was the larger company of followers that included the Twelve (Mark 4:10). At this point, there was growing hostility toward Jesus. The disciples recognized a change had taken place in His method of teaching. His reply indicated a two-fold purpose in His use of parables to both reveal and conceal the mystery of the kingdom of God.

## FIRST-CENTURY TEACHING TOOL

Jesus was unparalleled in His use of parables, though He was not the first to use them. Parables were in use before the first century by writers such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. They were a common teaching method of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai between 60 BC and AD 30. Later rabbis also used parables in the Gemara and the Midrash.

Parables were also a part of earlier oral tradition in the Old Testament. Of the parables in the Old Testament, none is more familiar or more closely linked in style to Jesus's narrative parables than the parable that the prophet Nathan told

King David (2 Sam. 12:1-14) to expose his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. The parable had an immediate impact.

## IN JESUS'S TEACHING

Approximately one-third of all Jesus's sayings in Scripture were parables. Jesus's parables demonstrate Jesus's knowledge and understanding of human life in a variety of arenas, such as agriculture, agronomy, fishing, and others.

When we consider why Jesus used parables, we first recognize that His doing so was a fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 6:9-10). Additionally, they were effective for teaching the multitudes who followed Him because they would have been familiar with this form of instruction.

The old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” applies to Jesus's parables. The word pictures He painted in the minds of those who gathered to hear Him teach were precisely what made them effective for revealing truths. In Matthew 13, Jesus painted word pictures of a sower planting seeds and a man sowing good seed in his field only to find tares growing in his crop. Matthew also recorded Jesus's teachings referring to a mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure, a merchant seeking pearls, and a dragnet of fish. All of those subjects, even now, paint vivid pictures in our minds.

Jesus's parables were likewise timeless in their presentation. The message communicated in the first century communicates in the same way today. The parables of the sower, prodigal son, and the good Samaritan still communicate spiritual truths in the modern world. I am not a farmer, but I can easily grasp the parable of the sower and the different soils in modern agricultural practices.

*Those who seek a more complete relationship with Jesus  
desire to understand the parables and their meaning.  
They seek to understand what His parables reveal.*

Parables also make theological truth easier to understand. Similarly, today we employ various forms of multimedia to present and reinforce the message of the gospel in sermons and Bible studies. Like the parables, these help people understand the truth of Scripture more easily than a purely theological discourse might. Parables are clearly a tool for revealing truth.

Jesus's use of parables was paradoxical, however, in that they both revealed and hid truths. A paradox is something that contradicts itself yet remains true. Jesus said the parables were intended to reveal the truth and make it easier to grasp for those for whom the truth was intended. Equally true, however, they were intended to hide truth from those who reject Him (Matt. 13:11-15).

### EFFECTIVENESS IN JESUS'S DAY

Were Jesus parables effective for both purposes? The dogmatic answer, of course, is "Jesus used them, therefore, they were effective!" How, though, could they be effective for both revealing and concealing the truth at the same time?

The answer to that question is indicated by the different responses to Jesus's parables. In the multitudes that followed Him were two distinct groups of people. Both heard the parable of the sower; it was a good story, and it caught everyone's attention—but only one group sought to understand the spiritual truth the parable taught.

Those who rejected Jesus, those who were unreceptive to the message of the kingdom of God, listened but did not hear. All who heard the parable of the sower could understand the truth that seeds sown in different soils produced different

outcomes. The seed sown on the hard ground does not take root and does not produce a crop. For those who rejected Jesus, this was the only point to the parable. For those with no desire to understand, the true meaning remains hidden.

On the other hand, Jesus told His disciples they had been given the honor of understanding His parables. Yet they had to ask what the parable of the sower meant. For those who followed Jesus, who were spiritually committed to Him and whom the Spirit was calling to that kind of commitment, the parables served to awaken within them the desire to know and understand more completely. The disciples desired to know the hidden meaning. Sometimes the meaning became clear over time. Other times they needed help and asked for clarification.

We can correctly conclude, then, that Jesus's parables were effective for both concealing and revealing truth. The same is equally true today. Those who seek a more complete relationship with Jesus desire to understand the parables and their meaning. They seek to understand what His parables reveal. Unfortunately for those who reject Jesus, whose hearts are hardened against God, the meaning of Jesus's parables remains concealed.

---

**R. D. Fowler** serves as pastor at Bethel Baptist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.



# POWER OF THE KINGDOM

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 4:21-34

## CONTEXT

After Jesus taught and explained to His disciples the parable of the sower and the importance of letting the gospel sink deep roots into our lives, Jesus delivered several short parables about the kingdom of God. He again emphasized the importance of truly listening to His words and living out their powerful implications in the world. Jesus knew His kingdom would start off small in this world, but it also would grow and cover the whole earth.

## KEY CONCEPT

**The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.**

As you examine Mark 4:21-34:

- Reflect on the truth that God's kingdom grows in this world in God's power and timing, not ours.
- Contemplate that Jesus's ministry started small but would usher in a worldwide kingdom for His glory and purposes.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Mark 3:13-19)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Teaches Parables on the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:21-34)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Mark 5:21-43)

Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20)

Jesus Calms a Storm (Mark 4:35-41)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 4:21-25 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Luke 8:16-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 4:26-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 8:19-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 4:30-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 9      |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## WE ARE MEANT TO REVEAL THE MESSAGE OF THE POWERFUL KINGDOM OF GOD (MARK 4:21-29).

**Underline the final outcome or goal in each of Jesus's three illustrations.**

**21** He also said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn’t it to be put on a lampstand? **22** For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.” **24** And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you. **25** For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” **26** “The kingdom of God is like this,” he said. “A man scatters seed on the ground. **27** He sleeps and rises night and day; the seed sprouts and grows, although he doesn’t know how. **28** The soil produces a crop by itself—first the blade, then the head, and then the full grain on the head. **29** As soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Jesus continued to teach the crowds using everyday examples in surprising ways. “Would you bring a light into a room only to hide it?” He asked. Likewise, did God send Jesus into the world only to hide His light? Of course not. Although at this point, it may have appeared that way.

**LEADER NOTE:** When God sent His Son into the world, His glory (light) was concealed, to a degree, such that He wasn’t recognized (John 1:10; cf. Phil. 2:7-8). Although His miracles displayed His supernatural power and divine authority, Jesus was largely rejected. He would not “be put on a lampstand” (Mark 4:21) until He was “lifted up” on the cross (John 8:28). Now He shines brightly in His church as we are transformed into His glory (Matt. 5:14-16, 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6-7).

When Jesus spoke, He often concealed His truths in parables, similar to how He often tried to conceal His miracles (Mark 1:44; 5:43). In the series of short sayings in Mark 4, Jesus explained that though His kingdom was now largely hidden, it would soon be revealed in the Father’s perfect timing. But how would people respond to that revelation? “Pay attention” (4:24), Jesus warned because God’s revelation comes to us to the extent that we listen and receive it. As in the parable of the sower, the person who fails to receive the Word soon discovers that it has been stolen away. But the one who receives the Word by faith is rewarded with greater understanding.

**How are you putting the kingdom of God on a lampstand through your life?**

**Key Concept:** The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

Notes

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**MISSION OF THE CHURCH:** The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

Jesus expanded on these truths about the kingdom of God with another brief parable about a farmer scattering seed. The emphasis of this parable, however, is on the sure growth of the seed rather than the soil's condition. Once sown, the seed sprouts and grows, independent of the farmer's understanding or attention. The sun, rain, and soil nourish the plants to maturity, and then the harvest comes. Likewise, believers sow God's Word with the confidence that God is the One germinating, maturing, and readying His people for the harvest at Jesus's return (1 Cor. 3:7; Rom. 8:30).

**LEADER NOTE:** God accomplishes His work of growth, maturity, and harvest through the Holy Spirit's mysterious yet certain work in salvation. The Spirit blows where He wishes, producing new spiritual life by cleansing and renewing hearts (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5). As the Spirit leads believers, He produces in and through them the fruit of love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:16,22-23). The only way for God's Word to take root, sprout, mature, and bear fruit in a person's life is for Christ to sanctify believers by the Spirit and the Word (Eph. 5:26).

**What role does the church play in the certainty of God's coming kingdom?**

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"The point of Jesus' analogy is clear: Those who have received the light of the gospel are not to conceal it; rather they are to let it shine for others to see."<sup>1</sup>

—John MacArthur (1939–2025)

**GOD'S KINGDOM MAY HAVE STARTED SMALL AND HUMBLY BUT WILL GROW TO BE A BLESSING FOR ALL (MARK 4:30-34).**

**Underline how the mustard seed starts out, and circle its final form.**

**30** And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to describe it? **31** It's like a mustard seed that, when sown upon the soil, is the smallest of all the seeds on the ground. **32** And when sown, it comes up and grows taller than all the garden plants, and produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade."

**33** He was speaking the word to them with many parables like these, as they were able to understand. **34** He did not speak to them without a parable. Privately, however, he explained everything to his own disciples.

Jesus's next parable compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and plant. Considered the tiniest of seeds in the region, mustard seeds could grow to produce plants as tall as ten feet. Comparing God's kingdom to this plant would have surprised many of Jesus's listeners, who may have expected God's kingdom to begin with a dramatic overthrow of the Roman Empire. That was not God's plan, however.

The kingdom of God started with the death of one small seed, a death that would bear much fruit (John 12:23-24). In Jerusalem alone, thousands came to faith in Christ after Jesus's death and resurrection (see Acts 2; 4). The good news of what Jesus accomplished spread throughout Judea and Samaria and then through the entire Roman Empire. It continues to spread today on all continents and will not be stopped until people from all nations have come to find refuge in Christ (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 5:9), like birds nesting in a humble mustard bush.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's parable of the mustard seed alluded to Ezekiel 17, where God promised to plant a small twig that would produce branches and bear fruit, growing into a majestic cedar tree that sheltered "birds of every kind" (17:22-24). While Jesus's parable emphasized the smallest seed that grew to become a lush tree, Ezekiel's prophecy focused on God's sovereign work to bring down the prideful and exalt the lowly. Yet both stories picture birds nesting in a plant's branches, a reference to the diversity of nations that will turn to Christ. In Christ, believers of all nationalities have full access to God and His covenant promises (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:17-22).

**What are some blessings bestowed on those who find shelter in God's kingdom?**



**Key Concept:** The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

#### PHRASE STUDY

**KINGDOM OF GOD:** Jesus's miracles, preaching, forgiving sins, and resurrection ushered in God's sovereign rule. Jesus chose and sent out His followers with kingly authority (Matt. 28:18-20). Whether Jew or Gentile, those who trust in Jesus are transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God (Col. 1:13).<sup>2</sup>

Jesus's parables illustrated God's kingdom. The development and characteristics of His kingdom contrast so profoundly with the kingdoms of humankind that Jesus graciously prepared His followers for its in-breaking with many parables. Jesus was wise, though, not to overwhelm the people with more truth than their hearts could take in (Mark 4:33; cf. John 16:12). Little by little, He taught the crowds and explained to His disciples about His kingdom that would, little by little, topple earth's kingdoms and establish everlasting righteousness (Dan. 2:44; 9:24).

**LEADER NOTE:** Although Christ's kingdom has grown exponentially from the disciples' time until now, it is still rejected as foolishness by many (1 Cor. 1:23). Its fullness will not be realized until Jesus returns. While we wait, many people will not want to join a kingdom that bids us to come and die, but we believers in Christ sow His seeds of truth patiently and expectantly, knowing that God brings the growth and saves sinners (Jas. 5:7-8).

**How should our teaching model Jesus's teaching, both in what we teach and in how we teach it?**

#### CHURCH CONNECTION

Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God, and we are blessed to have a part in revealing the message of His kingdom, seeing God's glory grow.

Notes



Notes

**ARRIVAL**

**INTERACT:** As your group arrives, ask: “Recalling the previous session on seeds and soils, what have you planted as a seed and seen it grow into a beautiful, fruitful plant? What role did you play in this growth? What are some ways you have seen your faith grow like a seed into a plant?”

**TRANSITION:** Sometimes a little seed planted in the garden produces a bumper crop. Sometimes an underweight child at birth outgrows his or her parents in the teen years. Today in our Bible passage, Jesus used a parable of a mustard seed to illustrate the growth of His kingdom on earth.

**CONTEXT**

**REVIEW:** At the start of His ministry in the book of Mark, Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was near (1:14-15). After that, He and His disciples went throughout the region healing the sick, performing miracles, and preaching the gospel. In Mark 4, Jesus shifted to begin speaking in parables. Last week we focused on the parable of the sower and the soils, in which we learned that the condition of the hearer’s heart determines how the Word takes root. Today we will focus on Mark 4:21-34, which describes what occurs as the gospel takes root in a person’s life and in the world at large.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** As you read through the passage this week, what stood out to you about the kingdom of God?

**TRANSITION:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 4: Kingdom Parables**, and briefly review some of the ways Jesus described His kingdom. Say: “Jesus used the parables in Mark 4 to help the disciples understand how God’s kingdom can grow when there is faith. Jesus calls people to respond to the gospel with faith and trust and then to spread the Word among others.”



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**Key Concept:** The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 30 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Three Parables.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Notes

### Three Parables

Read Mark 4:21-34. Write out the beginning of each parable, how it ends, and summarize its meaning in your own words.

|                                     | BEGINNING | RESULT | MEANING |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| <b>LAMP</b><br>Mark 4:21-25         |           |        |         |
| <b>GROWING SEED</b><br>Mark 4:26-29 |           |        |         |
| <b>MUSTARD SEED</b><br>Mark 4:30-34 |           |        |         |

**DEFINE:** Remind your group that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus used the common images of a lamp, a seed, and a mustard seed so that the disciples would be able to grasp the bigger concepts that He was trying to teach them.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Mark 4:21-25.

**ENGAGE:** Lead your group to summarize the beginning, the result, and the meaning of the parable of the lamp. Write down their findings on the chart on the board and give them the opportunity to record them in their PSG as well.

**READ:** Invite a second volunteer to read Mark 4:26-29.

**DISCUSS:** Direct your group to identify the beginning, the result, and the meaning of the parable of the growing seed. Note that most of the growth occurred without the planter’s knowledge, but the planter still needed to scatter the seed. Record the group’s conclusions on the board.

## Notes

**READ:** Invite a third volunteer to read Mark 4:30-34.

**ENGAGE:** Lead your group to fill in the chart for the parable of the mustard seed. Point out that the kingdom of God started with Christ's death and resurrection, and now it has grown and traveled all over the world. People from every tribe, nation, and tongue will hear and believe the gospel, and like the variety of birds of the air nesting in a single tree, all believers in Christ will find rest in the shade of the kingdom of God.

## DEBRIEF

**Which parable encourages you the most? Why?**

**How do these parables illustrate what success looks like in faith and ministry?**

## SUMMARIZE

Recall **Pack Item 3: Kingdom Growth** and highlight the related sections for the following. Say: "The growth of the kingdom of God on earth is a responsibility that belongs to the Lord. God alone changes hearts, converts sinners, and restores His intended goodness in this world. And yet, God has called and equipped believers in Christ to participate in the growth of God's kingdom. Through the wisdom and power of God's Holy Spirit in us, we proclaim Christ and His gospel, we act in faithful obedience to see God work through us, and we look forward to the harvest of salvation God has promised to bring."

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 31). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** We often get ahead of ourselves in Bible study, looking for a quick application or encouraging insight without focusing on what the text actually teaches. We need to pray for God's wisdom to rightly interpret the Word of truth. Jesus's commands to "listen" and "pay attention" (Mark 4:23-24) admonish our minds to use diligence with God's Word just as much as they awaken our hearts to submit to what it says.

**What are some dangers of misinterpreting and misapplying God's Word?**



**HEART:** Jesus promised in Mark 4:24 that we will receive divine revelation to the degree that we open our hearts to it. The apostle Peter echoed this truth: "His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pet. 1:3). We can know and reflect Christ to the extent that we desire to know Him. So, like Paul, we pray for God to open the eyes of our hearts to all that God has for us (Eph. 1:18-19).



**Key Concept:** The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

**What obstacles or distractions keep you from desiring God's kingdom and God's Word, and how will you address those?**



**HANDS:** In Mark 4, Jesus is the lamp that will be revealed, yet in Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus tells His followers that they are the light of the world. He commands them to let their light shine so that others may “see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Jesus no longer walks on this earth physically, but He still reveals the kingdom to the world through the witness of His church. Our words and actions should reflect the light and love of Christ's kingdom.

**How will you point people to God's kingdom through your words and actions this week?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Start praying for an opportunity to share your faith with a co-worker, neighbor, family member, or friend.
- Talk with a pastor or outreach leader to figure out how you can join or support what God is already doing in your community.
- Like the old children's song about letting your light shine, consider what you can do this week to reveal the glory of God's kingdom.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 31 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 9:1-2 with your group, praising the name of the Lord and praying to boldly declare His goodness as you go throughout the week.

#### References

1. John MacArthur, Mark 1-8, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 213.
2. Stan Norman with Gentry Peter, “Kingdom of God,” in Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 988.

Notes





# POWER OVER NATURE

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 4:35-41

## CONTEXT

Jesus taught in parables to a large crowd of people by the Sea of Galilee. Using the natural amphitheater-like acoustics of the lake, He sat on a boat near the shore while the crowd listened. That evening, Jesus decided that He and His disciples should cross to the other side of the sea in the boat, taking time to rest after a long day with the crowds. A powerful storm broke through the calm night, however, testing the disciples' faith in Jesus. Who indeed was this Man whom they had left everything to follow?

## KEY CONCEPT

**We can have faith in Jesus because He is God, sovereign over all things, including nature.**

As you examine Mark 4:35-41:

- Take comfort that Jesus knows everything and is never surprised or anxious.
- Recognize that Jesus, being God, is sovereign over all things, including nature.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Mark 3:13-19)

Jesus Teaches Parables on the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:21-34)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Mark 5:21-43)

Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Calms a Storm  
(Mark 4:35-41)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (Mark 6:30-44)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 4:35-41 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Luke 8:22-25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 5:1-13  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 8:26-39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 5:9-20  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 44     |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS IS NOT ANXIOUS ABOUT WHAT WE ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT (MARK 4:35-38).

**Underline the disciples' reaction to the storm, and highlight Jesus's reaction.**

**35** On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." **36** So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. **37** A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. **38** He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?"

Jesus and His disciples decided to take a boat across the Sea of Galilee after a long day teaching the crowds. Sometime during the night, "a great windstorm" blew up, producing powerful winds and dangerous waves that began to swamp the boat (v. 37). Yet despite the perilous environment outside the boat, Jesus slept soundly within.

### PLACE STUDY

**THE SEA OF GALILEE:** At almost 700 feet below sea level, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on earth. Surrounded by steep mountains and hills, it can encounter powerful wind events when the cool air from the higher regions rushes down upon it, producing violent winds and waves.

These details mirror Jonah's turbulent voyage on the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa to Tarshish, where the prophet also was found sleeping through a storm (Jonah 1). Unlike the rebellious prophet fleeing from God's mission, however, Jesus slept peacefully within the perfect will of His Father. And indeed, He did sleep. Jesus, sharing the same fullness of humanity that we have, needed sleep the same way He needed food and water. Just like every human being, Jesus experienced temptation, felt pain, and was susceptible to death. It was because of this shared humanity that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses as sinful human beings, yet in His experience of human weakness, Jesus never sinned (Heb. 4:15).

**LEADER NOTE:** There is a connection between sleep and faith in the Old Testament. For example, David prayed, “I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety” (Ps. 4:8). Being fully man, Jesus was susceptible to injury and death like the disciples, yet He rested peacefully through the violent storm, knowing it would not harm them apart from His Father’s will. Jesus trusted the Father’s sovereign plan; thus, anxiety did not grip His heart as it so often does ours.

**How can the fact that Jesus is fully man bring comfort to us during times of difficulty?**

Jesus may have been sleeping peacefully during the storm, but the disciples definitely were not. Ironically, the disciples, several of whom were professional fishermen, came to Jesus for help when the waves began to spill over into the boat. Abrupt storms on the Sea of Galilee were not uncommon, so the disciples’ concern about this particular storm must have been warranted. The danger was real, and so was their fear. Previously, the disciples had witnessed Jesus’s use of supernatural power for the welfare of others in the healing of diseases and ailments and the casting out of demons. But their question for Jesus on the waterlogged boat in this storm exposed the doubt that often arises when believers experience difficulty: “Don’t you care?” (Mark 4:38).

**LEADER NOTE:** The Greek phrasing of the disciples’ question in verse 38 implies a positive answer, more like: “You do care that we are perishing, don’t you?”<sup>1</sup> They knew that Jesus cared, and yet, what they perceived as His failure to act led them to doubt. The same is often true of believers today. We strongly believe God is all-powerful, all-good, and loves us completely—until suffering comes. Suffering tests whether our stated belief is what we actually believe or not. In other words, suffering tests and reveals the quality of our faith.

**How can you ensure that what you believe about God on sunny days does not unravel on stormy days?**

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

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“The ship carried his humanity, but the power of his Godhead carried the ship and all that was in it.”<sup>2</sup>

—Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306–373)

## JESUS CONTROLS ALL THINGS, SO WE CAN TRUST HIM IN ALL THINGS (MARK 4:39-41).

**Identify the source of the disciples' fear before and after the miracle.**

**39** He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. **40** Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" **41** And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Jesus seemed surprisingly passive up to this point. Once awakened, however, His actions and words produced profound results. Jesus spoke to the sea and "rebuked" the wind as He previously had rebuked a demon, showing His authority over the natural as well as the supernatural realms (v. 39; see 1:25).

In the Old Testament, as an act of the Lord's judgment upon His idolatrous people, the prophet Elijah prayed it would not rain on the land, and for three-and-a-half years, it didn't. Then Elijah prayed again and it rained (1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45; Jas. 5:17-18). Unlike Elijah, Jesus commanded the elements directly by His divine power. He silenced and stilled them with the same voice that spoke creation into being. God alone controls the winds and seas (Job 28:25; Ps. 107:25-30; Nahum 1:3-4), so they obeyed Jesus immediately. In the stillness of the subsequent moment, the disciples faced the truth of Jesus's deity.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's command to the wind and sea was quite forceful, utilizing the same Greek words that were used of the exorcism in Mark 1:25: "rebuked" and "be silent" (translated "be still" here in 4:39; "silence" is another Greek word altogether). So in commanding the wind and sea to "be still," literally Jesus was saying, "Be muzzled!" Like the Almighty God who awoke—who rose up to act—to part the Red Sea (Isa. 51:9-10), so too did Jesus awake and speak with authority and put the chaotic sea in its place.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**JESUS'S DEITY:** Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. 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 God alone possesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), 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).



### Why does Jesus's divine nature demand a response from each of us?

Notes

After rebuking the wind and sea to silence and stillness, Jesus turned to gently rebuke His disciples. He identified the source of the disciples' doubts and fear: not the presence of a storm but the absence of faith. Jesus noted that His gospel seeds had not yet produced in them a faith that endured testing (Luke 8:13).

Failing to understand Jesus's limitless power and sovereign care over the storm, the disciples' hearts produced fear rather than faith. They were even more terrified after the miracle. Although the storm exerted a strength that overwhelmed the disciples' own, Jesus's power over that force was more potent than any power on earth. But did they need to fear Jesus's power? In the sense of respect, yes, but beyond that, the One who wielded power over wind and sea had not come to condemn them but to save them (John 3:17).

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's teachings and miracles led to an all-important question: "Who then is this?" (Mark 4:41). Unlike the crowds, the disciples were afforded front-row seats to Jesus's explanation of the parables and the calming of the storm. Yet they still struggled to understand and trust this miracle-working Messiah. Today's readers have the benefit of knowing about Jesus's death and resurrection as they see this story play out, so we can know the purpose, the result, and the goal of all Jesus's works in the Gospels. Still, doubts and distractions can threaten to erode our faith as well. Regardless, the most important questions we will answer remain: "Who then is Jesus? Will I put my trust in Him?"

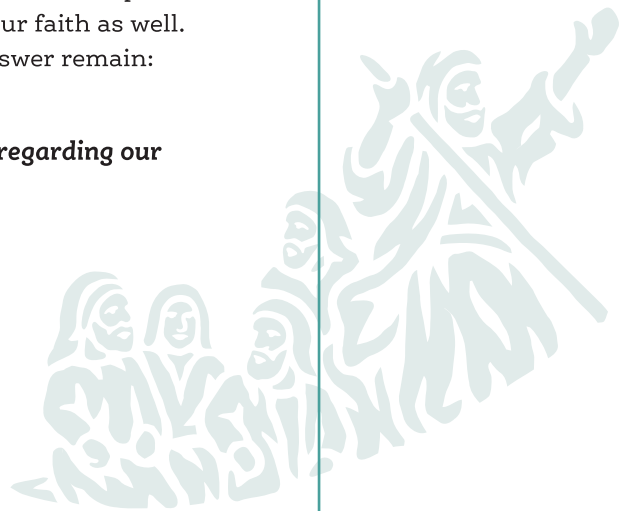
**What is the relationship between faith in Jesus and fear regarding our circumstances in life?**

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

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Jesus demonstrated His deity by calming the storm. As God, He is omnipotent and sovereign over all.



Notes



## ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask: “When have you seen immense power showcased by someone or something?” Answers may include a heavyweight lifter lifting a car or a large towboat pulling a cruise ship. Answers can even include a magician, through tricks, changing a dollar bill to a 100 dollar bill.

**TRANSITION:** When we see power revealed before us, we tend to be in fear or in awe. In today’s passage, Jesus showed His disciples His power over nature, not through trickery or human power, but through His divine power that is sovereign over all.

## CONTEXT

**REVIEW:** Display **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map** and point out where the events of the Bible passage took place. Say: “The first three chapters of the book of Mark share stories of Jesus healing the diseased and casting out demons. The disciples had experienced Jesus’s power. Yet in the last few verses of chapter 4, Jesus showed the disciples that He didn’t just have power over disease and sickness but over creation itself. Jesus wasn’t just a good teacher—He is God.”

## RECAP

**RECAP:** Ask: “Would anyone like to share something that stood out to you this week as you prepared for the session?” If some in your group were unable to prepare ahead of time, summarize the passage to get everyone caught up.

**TRANSITION:** Often life’s storms can cause us to panic, and they can distort our vision. But where we see danger, Jesus sees opportunity. He can use times of chaos to reveal His glory. Today’s group activity will contrast the human perspective of the disciples with Jesus’s perspective on their storm-tossed situation.



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**Key Concept:** We can have faith in Jesus because He is God, sovereign over all things, including nature.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 38 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “The Proper Perspective.” Recreate the chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

## The Proper Perspective

Read Mark 4:35-41. In the columns below, write down words or phrases that reveal the disciples' and Jesus's perspectives on the storm.

| THE DISCIPLES' PERSPECTIVE | JESUS'S PERSPECTIVE |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
|                            |                     |

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read Mark 4:35-38 aloud.

**ENGAGE:** Form smaller groups of two to three people. Direct the groups to work together to write down words or phrases that reflect the disciples' perspective on the storm.

**REGROUP:** After a few minutes, inform your group that at least four of the twelve disciples were fishermen from this region: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They had probably experienced many storms on the Sea of Galilee, but this one terrified them. Ask volunteers from the smaller groups to call out their findings. Record their answers and Scripture references on the chart so others can copy them to their PSGs.

**READ:** Invite another volunteer to read Mark 4:39-41.

**ENGAGE:** Lead the smaller groups to discuss Jesus's perspective on the storm based on who He is and His knowledge of the Father's will. After a few minutes,

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ask volunteers from the smaller groups to call out their findings. Allow time for group members to write down the conclusions and Scripture references in their PSGs.

**SUMMARIZE:** Display **Pack Item 5: Who Then Is This?** and read the verse to your group. Say: “The disciples realized that Jesus is not just any other man—He does what God can do because He is God the Son. The disciples looked at the storm around them and saw danger and potential death, and they were right to. And then they turned to Jesus, as they should have, though not out of faith but out of fear and desperation. Jesus, the incarnate Maker of heaven and earth, calmed the storm because all of nature is governed and sustained by His sovereign and mighty hand. The wind and sea obeyed Jesus. If we have the right perspective on Jesus, then so too should we.”

## DEBRIEF

**What will faith in Jesus’s power over creation mean for our perspective on the natural phenomena in our world, whether beautiful or dangerous?**

## SUMMARIZE

Jesus is God, and He can handle any storm, literal or metaphorical, that comes our way. Knowing He can calm a real storm reminds us that He has control over everything—creation, the world, our nation, our lives. We can trust Him with everything.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 39). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** One of humanity’s greatest temptations is to worship a God of our own making. Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection revealed to us the true God, wiping away any preconceived notions of Him. The fact that Jesus is fully God and fully human defies human understanding, yet it is a foundational tenet of the Christian faith. Jesus’s atoning sacrifice required both the death of a mortal man in our likeness and the moral perfection of the immortal God united in the one God-man—Jesus Christ.

**How would you answer the disciples’ question about Jesus: “Who then is this?”**



**HEART:** Our world is filled with real threats and trials, just as in the disciples’ day. We face health concerns, job stresses, relationship struggles, grief, natural disasters, and even poverty. We need to connect our faith in the sovereign, all-powerful God to our day-to-day concerns. To trust Christ more completely, we need to examine our hearts to discover what we fear more than God.

**How would you answer Jesus's question to the disciples: "Why are you afraid?" What threatens your faith today?**



**HANDS:** Jesus demonstrated a life lived with the peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7). Jesus understood that He was destined for the cross, so a storm was not a threat. We don't know what the future holds for us, but we know who holds our future. Many people need that kind of reassurance and hope.

**What are some ways you can provide comfort and support for those who are fearful of or suffering under the effects of this fallen world?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Spend some time in prayer and ask God to allow you to see your struggles through the perspective of Jesus.
- Consider memorizing Mark 4:39-41 this week. Contemplate the place of fear and faith in your life and what you believe about Jesus.
- Encourage someone this week with the truth that Jesus is God and He is sovereign even over the wind and the waves.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 39 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 44:23-26 with your group. Thank God that He is always worthy of our faith and praise, even when we doubt and question Him.

#### References

1. David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 191.
2. Ephrem the Syrian quoted in Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., Mark (Revised), Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 61.



# POWER OF HEALING

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 8:41-56

## CONTEXT

Jesus and His disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee to the predominantly Gentile region of the Gerasenes. After Jesus cast demons from a man into a herd of pigs, the people there asked Him to leave. Jesus and the disciples then returned to the Galilean side of the lake, where a crowd awaited His return. The crushing crowd's needs and expectations heightened the urgency of the moment as two people captured Jesus's attention. One was a respected leader of the local synagogue and the other was a woman who was ceremonially unclean—yet their stories intersected when they met Jesus.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Faith assures us that Jesus, as God, has the power to heal and resurrect.**

As you examine Luke 8:41-56:

- Notice that the woman had faith that she would be healed just by touching Jesus's clothes.
- Contemplate that even in times of hopelessness, hope prevails through Christ.





## TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches and Explains the  
Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15)

Jesus Calms a Storm  
(Luke 8:22-25)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Heals Two Daughters  
(Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand  
(Luke 9:10-17)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(Mark 6:45-52)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Luke 8:40-48 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Mark 5:35-43 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Luke 8:49-56 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Mark 6:1-13  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 5:21-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 4      |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

**FAITH ASSURES US THAT JESUS CAN HEAL (LUKE 8:41-48).**

**Underline words or phrases that highlight the desperation of both Jairus and the woman.**

**41** Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house, **42** because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him. **43** A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any, **44** approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped. **45** "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you." **46** "Someone did touch me," said Jesus. "I know that power has gone out from me." **47** When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. **48** "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The news of Jesus's power to heal and teach had spread throughout the region. Imagine the constant demands placed on Jesus, who could heal people with a touch or a word. For example, a leader of the nearby synagogue came and fell at Jesus's feet, pleading for Jesus to go with him and save his dying daughter. Could anything be more urgent?

Yet as Jesus was on the way to his house, another desperate soul availed herself of the crowd pressing against Jesus to sneak in and touch the edge of His robe. This woman's chronic medical condition undoubtedly had left her weak, hopeless, ceremonially unclean, and unable to worship at the temple (Lev. 15:25-31). Her hope reawakened, however, when Jesus passed by, so she reached out in faith that just one touch would heal her.

**LEADER NOTE:** The woman's actions revealed a mixture of faith and fear. She clearly preferred to remain hidden, approaching Jesus from behind and only touching the edge of His garment. When Jesus first asked who touched Him, she stayed quiet. Her chronic bleeding rendered her perpetually unclean, a status that cut her off from Jewish society and worship and from direct contact with others. When we further consider her physical fatigue and financial destitution (Luke 8:43), we see a woman in the shadows. Rather than giving in to her fears and hopelessness, she chose to act in faith that Jesus could heal her, even if He did so indirectly.

**How have you experienced hope in Christ in the midst of a hopeless situation?**

The woman's faith was immediately rewarded with complete healing. The flow of Jesus's divine power stemmed the flow of blood in her body. Despite the urgency of other needs, Jesus was not content to let this faith encounter end there. So, He asked, "Who touched me?" and waited for a response (vv. 45-46).

Trembling, the woman approached Jesus, in awe of His power and fearful of being exposed. Would the good Teacher be angry that an unclean woman had touched Him? Jesus did not wish to reproach her, though, but to reward her faith with the gift of personal relationship. The brief conversation that followed revealed to her that Jesus was more than her Healer—He was her Savior. It also made public both her confession of faith (Rom. 10:9-10) and Jesus's inclusion of this once-outcast woman as a daughter of the kingdom.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus was careful to explain that it was the woman's faith in Him that made her well, not simply touching His clothes. What did Jesus mean that "power [had] gone out" of Him (Luke 8:46)? God the Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and divine power to heal (Acts 10:38). Also, Jesus gave His disciples the authority and power to heal diseases (Luke 9:1). This means that divine power flows from the Father through the Spirit and the Son. Crowds flocked to Jesus to receive healing from His power. That healing was available to those who had faith in God and His Son (Luke 6:19; 7:50; 8:48). Jesus stopped everything, even His urgent procession to Jairus's house to heal his dying daughter, to acknowledge this woman's faith.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

**What things keep you from confessing publicly what Christ has done for you?**

## FAITH ASSURES US THAT JESUS CAN RESURRECT (LUKE 8:49-56).

**Underline the words and actions of the mourners, and circle Jesus's words and actions in comparison.**

**49** While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore."

**50** When Jesus heard it, he answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved." **51** After he came to the house, he let no one enter with him except Peter, John, James, and the child's father and mother.

**52** Everyone was crying and mourning for her. But he said, "Stop crying, because she is not dead but asleep." **53** They laughed at him, because they knew she was dead. **54** So he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" **55** Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he gave orders that she be given something to eat. **56** Her parents were astounded, but he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

A woman suffering from a disease for twelve years received new life at the same time we hear that a girl, only twelve years old, died of a disease. At first, it seems that Jesus's conversation with the woman, rewarding her faith, delayed Him from reaching the girl in time. News of this tragedy threatened to overshadow the joy of the woman's recent healing and Jairus's own faith.

Jairus's servant who brought the devastating news suggested, "Don't bother the teacher anymore" (v. 49). What could Jesus possibly do now? But Jesus encouraged Jairus to choose faith over fear. Jesus's divine power can reverse sin's curse on all aspects of our broken world—death included. Just as He had saved one "daughter" from disease (v. 48), so Jesus promised to save another daughter from death.

**LEADER NOTE:** More connected these two stories than the fact that they occurred near one another in space and time. The daughter was twelve years old, while the woman had been sick for twelve years. Touch was key in both stories, with the woman touching Jesus's robe and then Jesus taking the dead girl's hand to bring her back to life. Jesus emphasized faith in both stories, and the Greek word for "saved," or "made well," was used in both. Finally, Jesus referred to the woman as "daughter" right before He resurrected Jairus's daughter. These details show us that every touch, every healing, was sovereignly planned by a gracious God.

**How should we re-evaluate our understanding of urgency and interruptions in light of these two accounts?**

By the time Jesus and Jairus arrived at the house, mourners had begun their weeping in earnest. Shockingly, Jesus told the crowd there was no need to mourn, but being very familiar with the reality of death, they mocked Him. By contrast, when Jesus told the dead girl to get up, she immediately heeded His words and got up! The mourners correctly perceived that the girl had died, but they were wrong to laugh at the One who redefined death as sleep, something that could be temporary rather than final.

Since the time when humanity first sinned in the garden of Eden, death has reigned on earth. Jesus came to reverse that curse, as the resurrection of Jairus's daughter showed. Ultimately, Jesus accomplished this victory by defeating death Himself and becoming the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20). Those who belong to Christ by faith also will rise at His return, never to die again (vv. 23-26).

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus said the girl was not dead but sleeping because He knew her death was only temporary. The passage clearly affirms that the girl was dead. Her family and friends knew it to be true (Luke 8:53), and the author notes that her spirit, which had left her body at death, returned at her resurrection (v. 55). Jesus's words were not meant to undercut this miracle but to stress the temporary nature of death for those who put their faith in Him. Only a few witnesses were allowed to see the miracle since most would only care about the physical resurrection and not its spiritual significance.

**Why is "sleep" a true and comforting metaphor for the death of a believer in Christ?**

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus demonstrated His divine power by healing and resurrecting others. His power to physically heal and resurrect points to His power to spiritually heal and resurrect souls.

Notes



## Notes

## ARRIVAL

**INTERACT:** As a way to break the ice for your group experience, call for volunteers to share a time when they had a medical need, such as a broken bone, surgery, or wisdom teeth removal. Some may share a funny anesthesia experience or an embarrassing moment.

**TRANSITION:** For the most part, we have access to doctors and medical help to deal with serious medical needs. In our Bible story today, however, a woman exercised every available option and spent every cent to find relief for a problem that no one could heal. Her disease wasn't only a physical obstacle but a social and spiritual one too. Since her problem was an issue of blood, she was ceremonially unclean—unable to touch anyone or participate in temple worship until she was healed.

## CONTEXT

**REVIEW:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 6: Jesus's Miracles** and review with your group some of the miracles Jesus performed that showed His unique power. Say: "Over the past few weeks, we have discussed several different parables that highlighted the power of the gospel and the kingdom of God. Then the disciples witnessed Jesus's power over wind and waves. In today's Scripture passage, Jesus showed His power to heal. The two people involved couldn't have been more different. Jairus was a synagogue leader, likely well-respected and well-known in the community. The other person was the bleeding woman, considered unclean for twelve years. She was isolated, destitute, and an outcast. Yet because of their mutual faith in Jesus, they both received the healing they sought."

## RECAP

**SUMMARIZE:** Call for a volunteer to summarize today's story based on their personal preparation for the week. Ask: "If you only had a couple of minutes to tell someone this Bible story, how would you sum it up?"

**TRANSITION:** The story of the bleeding woman is sandwiched in the middle of the story of Jairus's daughter. This "interruption" in Jairus's story shows that Jesus is available to all who believe, regardless of their social status.

| MIRACLES                                       | WHERE     | WHEN             | HOW                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Healed the blind                               | Jerusalem | Matthew 20:29-34 | Jesus touched their eyes                                              |
| Healed the leper                               | Jerusalem | Matthew 8:1-4    | Jesus touched his skin                                                |
| Healed the deaf and dumb                       | Jerusalem | Mark 7:31-37     | Jesus put His fingers in the man's ears and spit saliva on his tongue |
| Healed the man with the withered arm           | Jerusalem | Matthew 9:1-13   | Jesus said, "Get up, stand up and walk."                              |
| Healed the man born blind                      | Jerusalem | John 9:1-7       | Jesus made mud with His spit and touched the man's eyes               |
| Healed the man who had been blind for 38 years | Jerusalem | John 9:14-17     | Jesus said, "Stand up, take up your mat and walk."                    |
| Healed the man who had been blind for 40 years | Jerusalem | John 9:18-24     | Jesus said, "Stand up, take up your mat and walk."                    |
| Healed the man who had been blind for 40 years | Jerusalem | John 9:25-34     | Jesus said, "Stand up, take up your mat and walk."                    |
| Healed the man who had been blind for 40 years | Jerusalem | John 9:35-41     | Jesus said, "Stand up, take up your mat and walk."                    |
| Healed the man who had been blind for 40 years | Jerusalem | John 9:42-45     | Jesus said, "Stand up, take up your mat and walk."                    |



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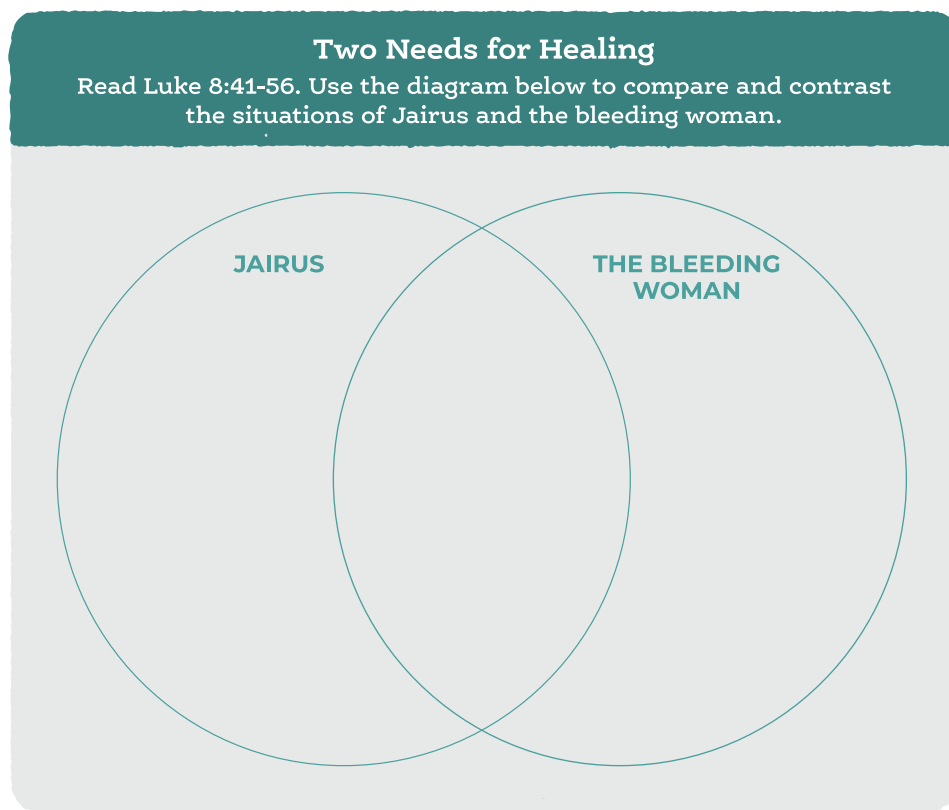


**Key Concept:** Faith assures us that Jesus, as God, has the power to heal and resurrect.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**DIAGRAM:** Direct your group to page 46 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a Venn diagram titled “Two Needs for Healing.” Recreate the diagram on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with the Scripture text.

Notes



**READ:** Invite two volunteers to read aloud Luke 8:41-56. Consider asking a man to read the verses concerning Jairus (vv. 41-42, 49-56) and a woman to read the verses concerning the bleeding woman (vv. 43-48).

**ENGAGE:** Lead your group to work together to write on the Venn diagram on the board the similarities and differences between Jairus’s situation and that of the bleeding woman, including the relevant Scripture references. Encourage your group to record the findings in their PSGs as well. Here are a few suggestions if your group needs help getting started:

–**Jairus:** a synagogue leader (v. 41); begged Jesus to heal his twelve-year-old daughter (vv. 41-42); the urgency of his situation was interrupted by Jesus’s response to the bleeding woman (vv. 45-48); received news his daughter had died (v. 49); Jesus encouraged him to believe (v. 50)

## Notes

–**The Bleeding Woman:** bled for twelve years (v. 43); spent all she had on failed treatments (v. 43); snuck up behind Jesus and touched His robe in secret (v. 44); praised for her faith by Jesus (v. 48)

–**Both:** believed only Jesus could help them (vv. 41-42,47); Jesus gave them what they sought (vv. 44,47-48,54-55)

**ASK:** What unified these two diverse people in their diverse situations? (*faith in Jesus*)

## DEBRIEF

**What should we make of Jesus's commendation of the woman's faith and His encouragement to Jairus to believe?**

## SUMMARIZE

Faith in Jesus is central to these two stories from Scripture because the woman's healing and the daughter's resurrection were dependent upon it. Jesus is the Great Physician, and He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Jesus meets all who have faith with compassion and power. He is able and willing to demonstrate His healing power in your life when you have faith in Him. Along with that faith comes trust in God's sovereign plan, because while Jesus has the power to heal all our diseases, it may be His will not to. Regardless of our circumstances and their outcomes, we can approach Jesus in faith and trust Him for whatever comes.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 47). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Every day we expose our minds to people or circumstances that either build our faith or tear it down. We need to be wary of influences that undermine our faith. We also must take advantage of opportunities to grow our faith through time with God, His Word, and His people. Jairus chose not to despair when His servant and mourners understandably discouraged him; rather, he listened to Jesus, trusted His words, and saw his daughter raised to life.

**What influences in your life lead you toward doubt? What influences lead you toward faith?**



**HEART:** The bleeding woman approached Jesus with both faith and fear. Because of her fear, she would have been content to touch Jesus's garment and be healed. But Jesus wanted more for her—to know her and be known by her. We need to be cautious that we don't come to Jesus just because

of what He can do for us. He wants to help us, but He also wants us to know Him by faith.

**How do fear and faith influence your approach to Jesus for the things you need and the relationship you desire with Him?**



**HANDS:** Imagine how hard it must have been for the girl's parents to keep quiet about what Jesus had done for their daughter! Thankfully, we do not have the same restrictions. Jesus's last words to His disciples were to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). This mission begins and continues with us telling others what Jesus has done for us personally, primarily in our salvation from sin by faith in Him.

**Whom will you tell this week about what God has done for you through faith in Him?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Identify an area of your life that needs healing and restoration (relationship; physical or mental distress; etc.). Spend some time in prayer regarding your need. Your need is better in His hands than it ever will be in yours.
- Spend some time reflecting on your faith. If you struggle with faith, confess that to Jesus and ask Him to give you the faith that you need.
- Do you know someone who is struggling? Consider sending them a text, going to visit, or offering to bring a meal to help encourage their faith.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 47 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 4:1 with your group. Thank the Lord for the grace of His salvation by faith in Jesus, and let that overarching, undeserved blessing lead to humility as you approach the Father in the Spirit and fall at Jesus's feet with every other prayer request of faith.

Notes



THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 26

# THE TRUTH OF HIS ACTIONS



MATTHEW; MARK; JOHN



#### MEMORY VERSES

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him, ‘I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.’”

—John 11:25-27



# JESUS PROVIDES

CORE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 14:13-21

## CONTEXT

Each Gospel writer told the story of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit inspired them to put their own unique emphasis on it. Mark focused on the action. Luke focused on detailed, eyewitness accounts. Matthew narrated Jesus's life by alternating between a specific event and teaching. Matthew 14 begins with John the Baptist's disciples informing Jesus of his execution at the command of King Herod. Jesus then withdrew to a desolate place, presumably to grieve, but the crowds followed Him. Instead of frustration, Jesus responded with compassion, and the people witnessed His power to provide.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus is always able to provide for His people beyond what is needed.**

As you examine Matthew 14:13-21:

- Take comfort that Jesus's compassion and love motivate His actions.
- Give Jesus glory because He is "able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20).





## TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many  
Parables (Matthew 13:1-53)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

**SESSION STUDY:** Jesus Feeds the  
Five Thousand (Matthew 14:13-21)

Jesus Heals in Gentile Regions  
(Matthew 15:21-31)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                         |                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Matthew 14:1-12  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Mark 6:30-44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Matthew 14:13-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 13:1-35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 6:14-29     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 100    |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS ACTS WITH COMPASSION AND LOVE IN HEALING AND PROVIDING FOR HIS PEOPLE (MATTHEW 14:13-17).

**Underline all the reasons the disciples wanted to send away the crowd.**

**13** When Jesus heard about it, he withdrew from there by boat to a remote place to be alone. When the crowds heard this, they followed him on foot from the towns. **14** When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, and healed their sick. **15** When evening came, the disciples approached him and said, “This place is deserted, and it is already late. Send the crowds away so that they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” **16** “They don’t need to go away,” Jesus told them. “You give them something to eat.” **17** “But we only have five loaves and two fish here,” they said to him.

Jesus wanted to be alone, either grieved by the death of John the Baptist, wary of Herod’s interest in Him, or perhaps both. Yet despite His desire for silence and solitude, the desperation of the crowds wouldn’t allow it. What was a relatively short trip by boat for Him and His disciples was matched by the crowds taking the long way around on foot. Jesus couldn’t escape the mass of people. But rather than be annoyed by the presence of the crowds, Jesus had compassion on them. This compassion was a visceral emotion, a pulling on the heart strings. Jesus cared.

**LEADER NOTE:** In this narrative, Matthew intentionally contrasted Jesus with Herod in 14:1-12, pointing out that both fed people, but the differences could not be more stark. Herod invited nobility to dine with him, whereas Jesus would feed the needy. Herod’s feast was in the palace; Jesus’s feast was in the wilderness. Herod’s actions were driven by baser impulses, but Jesus was moved by compassion. Herod’s banquet resulted in injustice and death; Jesus’s picnic would result in people witnessing His power to provide. Jesus may have been the rejected King, but His kingdom was superior to Herod’s earthly kingdom.

Jesus had compassion for the crowd and healed their sick, but the disciples eventually noticed some logistical issues. It was late, and the people hadn’t eaten. Dispersing the crowds would take time, and the nearest village was a distance away. The disciples had no idea how the crowd of people would eat, and they didn’t want the responsibility of trying to feed them. They saw their situation through the eyes of reality: lots of people and little food on hand.

**What challenges keep you from showing compassion like Jesus?**

Jesus responded to the disciples' logical concerns with what sounded like a problem-solving challenge: "You give them something to eat" (v. 16). Jesus involved the disciples in what was to come by putting the initial responsibility on their shoulders. Again, the disciples looked around at the reality of their situation and saw it for what it was: "We only have five loaves and two fish here" (v. 17). The disciples were being truthful. The cost to feed this crowd would be over half a year's salary (John 6:7). Obviously, more than five thousand people could not be fed with five loaves and two fish.

Yet for all their human logic, the disciples failed to take into account Jesus's power: Jesus had healed diseases, cast out demons, and calmed a storm at sea (see Matt. 8–9). Here, Jesus was involving the disciples in His solution to the problem at hand, but He would supply what they needed. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand their role and acknowledge that He could provide for them even with the little they had. Jesus wanted His disciples to see reality through the eyes of faith.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's mission is our mission as believers. Just as Jesus involved the disciples in His ministry, so too does He involve the church today. And the recipe for involvement hasn't changed. First, we must see people as Jesus sees them—with compassion. Without compassion, we might see the needy as a nuisance or burden. Second, we must see every need through the eyes of faith, trusting that Jesus can multiply what we have from Him to meet the needs of others.

**What might having eyes of faith mean for your present reality?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

x

x

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

Notes



SCAN ME

**Bonus Content**

Scan this QR code to view the details each of the Gospel writers gave to the feeding of the five thousand.

## JESUS CAN PROVIDE ABOVE AND BEYOND WHAT WE NEED (MATTHEW 14:18-21).

**Circle descriptions of the extent to which Jesus provided for the people and His disciples.**

**18** “Bring them here to me,” he said. **19** Then he commanded the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. **20** Everyone ate and was satisfied. They picked up twelve baskets full of leftover pieces. **21** Now those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

With the five loaves of bread and two fish in hand, Jesus said a blessing, thanking God for the miracle He was about to perform. Matthew would have expected his readers to recall the Old Testament connections for this miracle. First, the miracle would have called to mind the manna in the wilderness that was announced by Moses. God led the Israelites through the barren desert without food so they would learn to trust Him. In response to their hunger, God promised to “rain bread from heaven” (Ex. 16:4). Like the Israelites, the crowds were in a desolate place without food, and Jesus miraculously provided bread.

Second, Matthew alluded to the story of Elisha recounted in 2 Kings 4:42-44. After a man brought twenty loaves of bread, Elisha told his servant to feed the people. The servant, like the disciples, saw only the small amount of bread compared to the large number of mouths to feed. But Elisha commanded him: “Give it to the people to eat . . . for this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat, and they will have some left over’” (v. 43), and it happened as the Lord promised. Sound familiar?

**LEADER NOTE:** An undisputed biblical truth is that God is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of everything. As Creator, God owns everything, and that means all created things are at His disposal. This truth also means that created, physical things are good, including our bodies and the food we put in our bodies. Jesus miraculously provided food for the crowd, revealing His power to provide as God the Son, the Creator and Sustainer of all.

**Why do you think Matthew wanted his readers to remember these stories from Israel’s history?**

**Key Concept:** Jesus is always able to provide for His people beyond what is needed.

It would be miraculous enough for the five loaves and two fish to barely feed the crowd, but they were “satisfied,” or full (Matt. 14:20). And then there were leftovers—twelve baskets full—a number generally used for completeness, like the twelve tribes and twelve disciples. Jesus doesn’t provide the bare minimum—He satisfies; He fills; He completes.

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“One basket for each apostle: . . . This was to manifest and magnify the miracle, and to show that the provision Christ makes for those who are his is not bare and scanty, but rich and plenteous.”<sup>1</sup>

—Matthew Henry (1662–1714)

Just as this miraculous feeding recalled the past, it also foreshadowed the future. Both in the Old Testament (Isa. 25:6–10) and in the New Testament (Luke 14:12–24; Rev. 19:6–9), the kingdom of God is compared to a feast. Jesus gave the crowd—and us—a glimpse of what His kingdom will be like: satisfaction, and even more, salvation.

**LEADER NOTE:** In Matthew 14, Jesus “took,” “blessed,” “broke,” and “gave” the bread (v. 19). At the last supper, Matthew recorded: “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples” (26:26). Matthew wasn’t implying the feeding of the five thousand was the same as the Lord’s Supper, but he was pointing ahead. He wanted his readers to see how this miraculous meal pointed to a future meal. Just as Jesus provided bread and fish to satisfy the crowd, He would provide His flesh and blood on the cross to satisfy our need for salvation.

**How have you experienced satisfaction in Christ?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus is a provider, providing salvation from sin and death.

Notes



Notes



## ARRIVAL

**INTERACT:** As people arrive, ask: “How has someone surprised you with generosity far beyond what you expected? How did you respond?”

## CONTEXT

**REVIEW:** In the chapters leading up to today’s passage in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus had been teaching about the kingdom of heaven and demonstrating His authority through miracles. Crowds were growing. People were bringing the sick to Him, and everywhere He went, needs seemed endless. At the same time, opposition against Him was rising, and news reached Jesus that John the Baptist—His forerunner—had been executed by the order of King Herod. Seeking a moment of solitude, Jesus withdrew by boat to a quiet place. *(Call attention to **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map** and point out the place where Jesus may have fed the five thousand.)* But the people followed Him. Thousands of men, women, and children walked around the shoreline just to be near Him. Even in His grief, Jesus responded to them with compassion. He healed their sick, cared for their needs, and ultimately took five loaves and two fish and fed more than five thousand people.

## RECAP

**ASK:** What details stood out to you from the passage as you prepared this week? What questions might you have about the text?

**TRANSITION:** Today we will look closely at the miraculous feeding of a multitude of people. This will help us consider how Jesus provides far more than we expect, both for our physical needs and for our faith.



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**GROUP ACTIVITY**

Notes

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 56 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “From Scarcity to Surplus.” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group responses as they interact with Scripture.

From Scarcity to Surplus

Read Matthew 14:13-21. Write down the problems as the disciples saw them. Then record what Jesus did to overcome the obstacles and meet the need.

| WHAT THE DISCIPLES SAW | WHAT JESUS DID |
|------------------------|----------------|
| MATTHEW 14:13-17       |                |
| MATTHEW 14:18-21       |                |

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 14:13-17.

**INSTRUCT:** Direct your group to divide into smaller groups of 3-4. Instruct the small groups to look back at the passage and identify (1) what the disciples saw in the situation and (2) what Jesus did in the passage. Encourage them to record their findings in their PSG and to reference the comments in the PSG’s personal preparation section for additional insight, if needed.

**READ:** Invite a second volunteer to read aloud Matthew 14:18-21.

**ANALYZE:** Direct the small groups to identify and record what the disciples saw and witnessed along with what Jesus did in the passage. Remind them to write down their findings in the PSG.

**REPORT:** After a few minutes, invite groups to share their responses. As they report, record their findings in the chart on the board. Encourage participants to record them in their PSG as well. Clarify and add Scripture references as needed.

**ENGAGE:** Ask your group: “What stands out to you as we consider the disciples’ perspective side-by-side with Jesus’s actions?” (*The disciples focused on what they lacked and the size of the crowd; Jesus saw an opportunity to provide for the people and to teach His disciples that His resources are limitless.*) Note that Jesus intentionally invited His followers to bring to Him what little they had, even when it seemed insufficient.

**APPLY:** Encourage your group to think about what small “loaves and fish” Jesus might be calling them to bring to Him this week. Lead the group to identify at least one practical area in which they can trust Jesus’s abundant provision.

### DEBRIEF

**Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to bring what they had, even though it wasn’t enough?**

**Where do you tend to see “what the disciples saw” in your own circumstances?**

### SUMMARIZE

Jesus is always able to provide for His people beyond what is needed. The disciples brought to Jesus only five loaves and two fish, but Jesus welcomed their small offering and turned it into more than enough for thousands. In the same way, Jesus invites us to bring Him whatever we have, no matter how limited it seems. He can take our meager offerings and multiply their amount or impact so that His compassion can reach the world through us. His resources are limitless, and by His grace, Jesus meets not only physical needs but the deeper spiritual needs that only He can satisfy.

### HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 57). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** While we trust Jesus to save our souls, we often lack faith to trust Him with our everyday physical needs. Reality forces us to believe that our only options are worry and hustle. Jesus’s feeding of the five thousand encourages us to trust God with all of our needs, including the physical ones.

**What are some needs that you should entrust to God’s care?**



**HEART:** It is far easier to acknowledge that we should trust God than to put that trust in action. Often something deeper in our hearts holds us back from trusting Him. Before we can trust God fully, we need to identify those heart issues that cause us to doubt Him and address them with prayer and remembering the history of God’s faithfulness.

**What keeps you from trusting God to provide for all your needs?**

**Key Concept:** Jesus is always able to provide for His people beyond what is needed.



**HANDS:** As with the disciples, Jesus wants to involve His church today in meeting physical and spiritual needs. When we make ourselves available to Jesus, He can use us to meet needs all around us. Yet while we are available, involved, and active, we must know it's really Jesus doing the work through us through the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

**How will you make yourself available this week to be used by God to meet the needs around you?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Spend time this week re-reading Matthew 14:13-21. Reflect on one place in your life where you feel you “don’t have enough,” and write a short prayer asking Jesus to help you trust His provision.
- Identify one small “loaf and fish” in your own circumstances, something that feels limited or insignificant, and offer it to Jesus for His use.
- Share with a trusted friend or group member a need or challenge you are facing. Invite them to pray with you and help you look for signs of Jesus’s abundant provision.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 57 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 100:1-3 with your group. Pray for opportunities for your group to serve the Lord with gladness. Thank Him for all He has done.

#### References

1. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1685.

Notes



# JESUS OVER CREATION

CORE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 14:22-33

## CONTEXT

Jesus's popularity surged when He miraculously fed over five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Unsurprisingly, the crowds wanted more of Jesus. To experience some much needed silence and solitude in the wake of John the Baptist's death, Jesus dismissed the crowds and retreated to a mountain by Himself after having sent His disciples on a boat across the Sea of Galilee. What happened next led the disciples to fear and then worship Jesus as the Son of God.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Because Jesus can do all things, we don't need to be afraid when following in His steps by faith.**

As you examine Matthew 14:22-33:

- Recognize that when trouble arrives, we need not fear because Jesus is with us.
- Focus on Jesus as being worthy of your faith and being the source of your salvation from sin and death.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many  
Parables (Matthew 13:1-53)

**SESSION STUDY:** Jesus Walks  
on Water (Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand  
(Matthew 14:13-21)

Jesus Heals in Gentile Regions  
(Matthew 15:21-31)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                         |                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Matthew 14:22-36 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Luke 14:15-24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 6:45-56     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 14:25-35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Luke 14:1-14     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 46      |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

**WITH JESUS, WE NEED NOT FEAR** (MATTHEW 14:22-27).

**Underline the reasons the disciples were afraid.**

**22** Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. **23** After dismissing the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. Well into the night, he was there alone. **24** Meanwhile, the boat was already some distance from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. **25** Jesus came toward them walking on the sea very early in the morning. **26** When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost!” they said, and they cried out in fear. **27** Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

After feeding the five thousand, Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him to the other side of the sea. For the next several hours, Jesus prayed alone on a mountain while His disciples made their trip without Him. Several details are necessary to keep in mind for the following narrative.

First, the disciples’ boat “was already some distance from land” (v. 24). John’s Gospel states the disciples had “rowed about three or four miles” (John 6:19). The Sea of Galilee is seven-and-a-half miles wide, so being some distance from land placed them in the middle of the sea.

**LEADER NOTE:** In the ancient world, the seas were not a neutral non-entity. Bodies of water were seen as antagonists bent on destruction. Seas often were described as “chaos” and synonymous with the sea monsters (leviathan, behemoth, dragons) that resided within them. Bodies of water were the embodiment of rebellion and death. Perhaps ancient people understood the sea this way because of their inability to control it. Therefore, Jesus’s walking on the seas was all the more shocking, as we will see. It showed He was the One who could control the waters of chaos (recall Gen. 1:1-13).

Second, the disciples were some distance from land while “well into the night” (Matt. 14:23), and Jesus came to the disciples “very early in the morning” (v. 25). This would have been between three and six in the morning. So the disciples were rowing in the dark and dead of night.

Third, the disciples’ boat was “battered by the waves, because the wind was against them” (v. 24). The Sea of Galilee is below sea level, surrounded by steep hills and mountains. This combination of geographic features causes rapid wind shifts and violent weather. With no land nearby, these conditions alone could have been terrifying.





### What circumstances can cause you to experience fear?

Notes

In this “perfect storm” of fear, the disciples saw someone walking on the water. While we read this story knowing exactly who was walking on the sea, the disciples did not yet fully grasp Jesus’s identity, so “they were terrified” (v. 26). Since no human can walk on water, they thought they were seeing a ghost. To address their fears, Jesus responded simply: “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (v. 27).

### Why could Jesus tell the disciples to not be afraid?

**LEADER NOTE:** Matthew pointed out something about Jesus that the Old Testament made clear about God: He has power over the sea and the waves. The disciples had already witnessed this when Jesus calmed the storm (Matt. 8:27; cf. Pss. 65:7; 89:8-9; 107:28-30). Job, commenting on the power and perfection of God, said: “He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8). Jesus does what only God can do.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

Prior to Jesus’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the disciples could experience and enjoy Jesus’s presence only in person because they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, who would be with them always. Now, despite whatever circumstances we face, as Christians we have the Holy Spirit with us at all times, so Jesus, God the Son, is with us always, “to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Jesus’s divine presence in our lives should remove our fear.

**WITH FAITH FOCUSED ON JESUS, WE CAN WALK  
AS HE WALKED (MATTHEW 14:28-33).**

**Underline the reasons Peter began to sink under the waves.**

**28** “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter answered him, “command me to come to you on the water.” **29** He said, “Come.” And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!” **31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” **32** When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. **33** Then those in the boat worshiped him and said, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

After seeing what they thought was a ghost and hearing Jesus’s voice, Peter did the unthinkable—he himself dared to walk on water. Remember: Mere mortals cannot walk on water; that’s God’s prerogative alone. But Peter was ready and willing if the faint shadow he saw on the water was in fact Jesus.

What Jesus did next not only displayed the power of His presence but also the power of His voice. At the command of Jesus, Peter stepped out of the boat. Peter could have done this for no one else. Only Jesus has the authority to demand faithful obedience.

And notice the direction Peter walked—directly “toward Jesus” (v. 29). His gaze was fixed on Jesus. Peter understood he could not walk on water by himself. This miracle was a result of Jesus’s power over creation, and Peter had faith in Jesus’s power over creation.

**What does faith in Jesus look like for you today?**

**LEADER NOTE:** Biblical faith is not less than mere belief, but it certainly is more than just belief. Faith begins with the intellect. We must believe certain truths about Jesus, including His existence, His full divinity and humanity, and His saving work on the cross. What we know about Jesus grows trust in our hearts. Trust means we are confident in who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Our belief and trust in Jesus finally lead to action. Faith becomes an act of the will in which we surrender ourselves to Jesus and His commands.

**Key Concept:** Because Jesus can do all things, we don't need to be afraid when following in His steps by faith.

### CHRIST CONNECTION

x

Jesus's divinity makes Him all-powerful, able to do all things. He invites us to live by faith in His power.

x

Notes

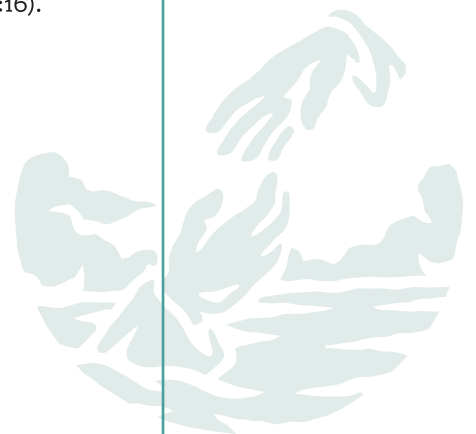
With his eyes on Jesus, Peter's steps stayed on the surface of the billowing sea. But what caught Peter's attention next weakened his faith. He saw "the strength of the wind" and "was afraid" (v. 30). Peter's faith immediately turned to fear because he took his eyes off the source of his faith. In response to Peter's cry for help, Jesus wasted no time reaching out His hand, once again doing what only God can do: "Reach down from on high; rescue me from deep water" (Ps. 144:7). Jesus used His divine power not only to allow Peter to walk on water but also to save him from the water.

**LEADER NOTE:** Don't miss what Jesus didn't do. Jesus had the power to calm the winds and waves, but when He reached Peter and the other disciples, the wind was still raging. Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water in the middle of the surging waves. He still did not calm the wind. When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink, Jesus saved him. But He still didn't calm the wind. Jesus's presence and even His salvation does not mean the absence of forces against us, but in the midst of those forces, Jesus can save.

We might assume Peter had zero faith, given his sinking outcome, but Jesus didn't say that. Peter's faith wasn't bankrupt. "Little faith" is not the same as no faith (Matt. 14:31). Peter's response of "Lord, save me!" (v. 30) was similar to that of the man who cried to Jesus in Mark's Gospel: "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

After Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind finally ceased, and then the disciples "worshiped [Jesus] and said, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt. 14:33). Their confession foreshadowed the later confession of Simon Peter the doubter: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16).

**What are some ways we can grow in our faith in Jesus?**



**ARRIVAL**

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask: “When have you felt overwhelmed by a situation until someone stronger or more experienced came to help you?” Prepare to share a story from your own life to get the interaction started.

**TRANSITION:** It can be such a relief when you are feeling overwhelmed to receive help from someone stronger or more experienced. Today we will see how Jesus’s power and presence give us confidence to follow Him by faith—without fear.

**CONTEXT**

**RECALL:** Remember the crowd following Jesus wherever He went, even when Jesus was trying to be alone to grieve and pray? He wasn’t angry or frustrated with them; instead, He was moved by compassion and healed their diseases and miraculously fed more than five thousand people. But then Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him by boat while He stayed behind to dismiss the crowd and to pray. The disciples pushed out onto the Sea of Galilee at night, and once again they faced wind and waves against them. They were exhausted and far from shore. And this time, Jesus wasn’t in the boat with them.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** What was one key idea that stood out to you as you prepared this week?

**SAY:** As you read from Matthew 14 this week, you encountered a moment of fear and exhaustion for the disciples when Jesus came to them, walking on the water. Naturally, they were terrified, but He said, “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (Matt. 14:27).

**TRANSITION:** While we think of the setting of the story—a boat in the middle of a large lake with the wind beating against it—let’s work through the passage together, focusing on Jesus’s power over creation. Think about how His presence strengthens our faith and removes our fear as we follow Him.



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[ministrygrid.com/gospelproject](https://ministrygrid.com/gospelproject) • [gospelproject.com/leader-training](https://gospelproject.com/leader-training).

**Key Concept:** Because Jesus can do all things, we don't need to be afraid when following in His steps by faith.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CASE STUDY:** Direct your group to page 64 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a case study experience titled “From Fear to Faith.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses as they interact with the Scriptures.

Notes

### From Fear to Faith

Case Study: Read Matthew 14:22-33. Consider Simon Peter’s responses to his situation, how you might respond, and what we learn.

| FEAR (vv. 24-26)                                                                     | FAITH (vv. 27-29) | FOCUS (vv. 30-31) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| WHAT SHOULD WE LEARN FROM PETER AND THE DISCIPLES’ RESPONSE TO JESUS (vv. 27,32-33)? |                   |                   |

**READ:** Invite two volunteers to read aloud Matthew 14:22-27 and 28-33.

**INSTRUCT:** Divide participants into three groups and assign each group either Fear, Faith, or Focus. Instruct the small groups to reread their assigned verses and to write down in their PSG how Peter responded to the situation.

**REGROUP:** After a few minutes, regroup and invite a representative from each group to present their findings. As they report, record their responses in the chart on the board. Encourage participants to write these observations in their PSG.

**REFLECT:** Ask the group to reflect individually on what they would have done if they were Simon Peter. Lead your group to think through how fear arises, how faith responds, and how focus on Jesus changes everything, writing down personal responses in the Fear, Faith, and Focus sections in the PSG.

Notes

**ENGAGE:** Ask follow-up questions such as: “What triggered Peter’s fear? What are some triggers for our own fears? What does Peter’s first step onto the water teach us about faith? What are some ways God might be calling us to have faith and “step out of the boat”? How does Jesus’s response to Peter’s sinking encourage you in your own struggles with faith and doubt?”

**DIG:** Jesus met His followers at every stage—fearful, bold, distracted, sinking—and offered His presence, peace, and power. For the final section of the activity, with the last row, ask: “What should we learn from Peter and the disciples’ response to Jesus (vv. 27,32-33)? How does seeing the movement from fear to faith to focus help you understand your own walk with Jesus?”

### DEBRIEF

**Where do you most identify yourself right now—fear, faith, or focus—and why?**

**How does Jesus’s response to Peter give you peace of mind during hardship?**

### SUMMARIZE

Keeping our focus on Jesus through this passage, we see that Jesus prayed, and then He came to the disciples in their trouble, strengthened their faith by showing His power, and saved Peter when his faith faltered. Peter walked on water not because he was strong but because Jesus empowered him to do what only Jesus can do. *(Pass out copies of **Pack Item 7: Jesus and Water** and mention how Jesus’s sovereignty as God the Son was displayed through His interactions with water.)* Even when Peter’s focus shifted and fear rose, Jesus was nearer and more faithful than Peter realized. Following Jesus doesn’t mean we will avoid trials and difficulties, but it does mean we never face them alone.

### HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 65). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** What we believe about Jesus is essential to our faith. Jesus’s identity determines how much we should believe in and trust Him. Thankfully we can know who Jesus is because of the faithful witness of the Gospels, which offer us a clear and compelling picture of Jesus’s identity as fully human and fully divine.

**How does this story help you grasp the deity and humanity of Jesus?**



**HEART:** We can intellectually assent to something about Jesus but not allow that information to affect how we live. It is often during the trials of life that we can truly assess our heart-level trust of Jesus. Nevertheless, we





should regularly check our hearts as we are able with God's Word and God's Spirit to identify what might be preventing us from trusting in Jesus more fully.

**Looking at the trials in your life, what barriers to faith and obedience are keeping you from following Jesus more closely?**



**HANDS:** Faith is often proven in action. Peter demonstrated faith in Jesus when he stepped out of the boat. Our faith also will require us to do something with it. Intellectual beliefs and heart-level trust translates to living faith lived out in real time. But this is also when faith gets difficult. Yet we don't need to be afraid because Jesus, the Son of God, has come near to us and He is always with us.

**What might God be calling you to do with your faith and focus on Jesus?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Spend time this week meditating on Matthew 14:27. Write it out in your own words and pray it over any area of your life in which fear has been growing.
- Identify a situation in which you sense Jesus calling you to trust Him more boldly. Share that with a trusted friend or group member and ask them to pray with you as you take a step of faith.
- Set aside intentional time for prayer, following Jesus's own example in this passage. Ask God to strengthen your focus on Christ rather than on the wind and waves around you.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 65 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 46:1-3 with your group. Thank God that He is our refuge, and pray that your group will run to Him in times of trouble.

Notes



# JESUS HEALS

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 7:24-37

## CONTEXT

In Mark 7, Jesus journeyed to locations most Jews would not step one toe in. The regions of Tyre and Sidon were Gentile territories. The Decapolis too was comprised of ten Greek cities. These places, and the people in them, would have been viewed as unclean and therefore avoided by Jews. Mark, however, highlighted Jesus's perspective that differed greatly from the traditions of mere humans. Even in this stage of His ministry, Jesus was revealing His fulfillment of the law, and that meant correcting people's understanding of what was clean and unclean.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.**

As you examine Mark 7:24-37:

- Recognize that while Jesus first came to the Jews, His message and gift of salvation would be for all who believe in Him.
- Contemplate that people who encountered Jesus proclaimed all the miracles that He did, even though Jesus told them not to.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many Parables  
(Mark 4:1-34)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(Mark 6:45-52)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Feeds the Five  
Thousand (Mark 6:30-44)

**SESSION STUDY:** Jesus Heals in  
Gentile Regions (Mark 7:24-37)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                        |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 7:1-37     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Matthew 16:1-28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 8:1-38     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 15:1-16:31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Matthew 15:1-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 117       |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS'S MESSAGE OF SALVATION, HOPE, AND HEALING IS FOR BOTH JEW AND GENTILE (MARK 7:24-30).

Circle the words of Jesus, noting specifically how Jesus treated the Syrophenician woman.

**24** He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice.

**25** Instead, immediately after hearing about him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his feet. **26** The woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth, and she was asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, because it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

**28** But she replied to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." **29** Then he told her, "Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter." **30** When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

Jesus did the unthinkable! Rather than travel around the Gentile region of Tyre or quickly through it, Jesus intentionally made His way to this region and even entered a house there, contrary to all Jewish expectations of faithfulness to God's law. Gentiles didn't have to do anything "unclean" to offend the Jews. The Jews considered them unclean for simply not being descendants of Abraham.

**LEADER NOTE:** The people of Israel were called by the Lord to be set apart from the surrounding nations. Practices such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and their diet set the Jews apart physically and visibly. The point of being set apart was not to avoid the Gentiles but rather to be a light to the nations, pointing them to God, the Creator of all, through their obedience to God's commands. By the time of Jesus, however, the Jews sought to remain as separated and isolated from the idolatrous Gentiles as possible.

Jesus was becoming increasingly popular, even in this Gentile area. Unsurprisingly, then, the Syrophenician woman came searching for Him. Not only did the woman enter the same room as a Jew, she fell at Jesus's feet, no doubt getting extremely close to Him. But she was desperate—her daughter was demon-possessed. Don't miss how "unclean" this woman was: She was a Gentile woman, ethnically Syrophenician, and she had a demon-possessed daughter!

**How do you think Gentiles might have felt around Jews in Jesus's day?**

**Key Concept:** Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.

**LEADER NOTE:** Today, we underestimate the supernatural. But the ancient world accepted that angels and demons existed and interacted with humans. In the New Testament, demonic oppression was primarily experienced psychologically, yet many were tormented physically as well. Demonic deliverance was an important part of Jesus's ministry because it foreshadowed the ultimate, future victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan.

Jesus's response to the woman's plea for help wasn't shocking to the original readers of Mark's Gospel. Jesus's ministry was first to Israel, "the children" (v. 27). He was the Jewish Messiah, who came to set free the Jewish people from the curse of their broken covenant. The woman's response to Jesus, however, was shocking. She accepted and affirmed the priority of the Jews in Jesus's ministry, but she appealed to His mercy nonetheless.

Notes

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**DOGS:** In Jesus's day, dogs were half-wild scavengers. Yet domesticated dogs would sit under the table and eat what fell to the floor.<sup>1</sup> In using this term, Jesus was not insulting the Gentile woman but emphasizing His ministry priority for the lost children of Israel. After Jesus's death and resurrection, the gospel of salvation would be extended freely to all who believe, both Jew and Gentile (cf. Acts 13:46; 26:23; Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10).

The woman understood that Jesus's ministry was to the Jew first, but that didn't mean He couldn't serve the Gentiles too. Jesus had fed (6:30-44) and would feed again (8:1-10) the Jews with bread, yet this Gentile mother believed that even a crumb of the blessings God had for the Jews could save her daughter, and her faith in Jesus was rewarded. Jesus healed the woman's daughter of the unclean, demonic spirit.

**How has God revealed His care for the Gentiles throughout the Scriptures?**

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus ushered in a kingdom that would fix what was broken by sin, including illnesses, diseases, and disabilities. He healed both Jew and Gentile in His earthly ministry, which pointed to His death and resurrection that brings salvation to all who believe.

## JESUS HEALED THOSE WHO WERE DEAF AND MUTE, A SIGN OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP (MARK 7:31-37).

**Circle Jesus's actions and underline the results of His actions.**

**31** Again, leaving the region of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis. **32** They brought to him a deaf man who had difficulty speaking and begged Jesus to lay his hand on him. **33** So he took him away from the crowd in private. After putting his fingers in the man's ears and spitting, he touched his tongue. **34** Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!"). **35** Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly. **36** He ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more they proclaimed it. **37** They were extremely astonished and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Once again, Jesus was in Gentile territory. The Decapolis, a region comprised of ten or more cities, was a center for Greco-Roman thought and culture and was no friend to Judaism. Yet even in this region, the Gentiles were aware of Jesus and what He could do (Matt. 4:25). Perhaps they had heard of His power from the man whom Jesus had freed from a legion of demons some time before (Mark 5:20). Despite being Gentiles, the people of this region had heard that Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. So like the Syrophoenician woman seeking help for her daughter, some Gentiles brought to Jesus a deaf man and begged Him for healing.

**What must the Gentiles have believed about Jesus to bring the deaf man to Him?**

Instead of healing the man then and there, Jesus took him to a private place. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus often performed miracles in private or at the very least requested that the healed individual tell no one what happened. There would be a time for people to spread the good news of Jesus's healing and power—after His resurrection.

**LEADER NOTE:** Why would Jesus not want others to know about His identity? His time had not yet come. Jesus had to control public perception of what His messiahship meant (see Mark 8:31-38). Jesus's messiahship was unveiled ultimately at the cross. His identity as the Messiah was not one of political power and prestige but one of humble submission and suffering. He came to die on the cross to save His people from their greatest oppressors—sin and death.



Mark here described Jesus's healing technique in great detail. Jesus often healed with touch, but here He healed by touching the organs affected. Moreover, it seems Jesus even put His spit in the man's ears and/or on his tongue. Mark also recorded Jesus's attitude and declaration to accomplish this miracle. Jesus looked up, demonstrating His attitude of prayer toward His Father. Mark said Jesus "sighed deeply" (7:34), referring to the intense emotions He felt toward this man and his condition. And finally, Jesus uttered this Aramaic word: "Ephphatha!" This was not a magic incantation; rather, Jesus accomplished this healing with an authoritative command: "Be opened!"

Instantaneously the man was healed! The man who could not hear and who struggled to speak now spoke clearly in the presence of many witnesses. The Gentiles were amazed by Jesus's abilities, and they wanted to tell everyone what they had seen and heard. More than just an account of Jesus's miracle of healing the deaf and mute man, the people shared their evaluation of Jesus: "He has done everything well" (v. 37). We too should share of Jesus's work on our behalf and praise Him for His holiness and perfection and salvation.

**LEADER NOTE:** The prophet Isaiah foretold of a time when "the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy" (Isa. 35:5-6a). With Jesus's first coming, He inaugurated this future, giving us glimpses of what His kingdom will look like. When Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom on earth, there will be no more illness or suffering. John recorded, "Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new'" (Rev. 21:4b-5a).

**What will it mean for you to believe that Jesus "has done everything well"?**

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

x

x

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

Notes



## ARRIVAL

**INTERACT:** As your group arrives, ask: “When have you seen someone go out of their way to help someone others might overlook? How did that experience impact you?”

**TRANSITION:** Jesus came to save the outcasts and the overlooked in His day, and He does the same today. No one is outside of His reach.

## CONTEXT

**SAY:** In the first part of Mark 7, Jesus had a confrontation with the Pharisees, who rebuked the disciples for eating with “unclean hands” (v. 5). In turn, Jesus told the Pharisees that they “nullify the word of God by your tradition” (v. 13). Jesus taught that it is what comes from the inside—from the heart—that defiles someone. Immediately after this confrontation, Jesus traveled to Gentile territory. (*Call attention to **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map** and point to the regions of Tyre and the Decapolis.*) Most Jewish teachers avoided Gentile regions, but Jesus intentionally stepped into these areas, showing that His mission extended far beyond Israel alone.

## RECAP

**ASK:** What was one key idea that stood out to you as you prepared this week and read the Scripture passages?

**TRANSITION:** As you prepared this week, you might have been taken aback by Jesus’s initial response to the Gentile woman. But Jesus went on to commend the woman’s faith in Him. The two Gentiles in our passages—a desperate mother and a deaf-mute man—experienced Jesus’s willingness to heal those who come to Him in faith. Let’s look closely at Mark 7:24-37 and see how Jesus crossed boundaries to bring healing, hope, and restoration.



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**Key Concept:** Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 72 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “From Hope to Healing.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group's findings as they work through the Scriptures.

Notes

### From Hope to Healing

Read Mark 7:24-37. Compare and contrast the circumstances surrounding the Gentile man and woman, and see the breadth of Jesus's love for all.

|                     | SYROPHOENICIAN<br>WOMAN (vv. 24-30) | MAN IN THE<br>DECAPOLIS (vv. 31-37) |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| THE NEED            |                                     |                                     |
| THE<br>BARRIERS     |                                     |                                     |
| JESUS'S<br>RESPONSE |                                     |                                     |

**READ:** Invite one volunteer to read aloud Mark 7:24-30 and another volunteer to read Mark 7:31-37.

**INSTRUCT:** Divide the group into two teams. Assign one team the Syrophenician woman's story and the other the healing of the deaf-mute man from the Decapolis. Ask each team to reread their assigned passage carefully and to fill in the categories on their side of the chart in their PSGs.

**REPORT:** Invite each team to share their findings. As they report, record their responses in the chart on the board. Help the group notice key contrasts (different needs; different backgrounds) and shared themes (same compassionate Savior). Ask: “What barriers—cultural, social, or physical—might we encounter today that need to be overcome for the sake of the gospel ministry going forward?” Encourage participants to record the completed chart in their PSG for personal reflection.

**ASK:** How do these two healings compared side by side help you see more clearly that Jesus welcomes anyone who comes to Him in faith?

**CONNECT:** Explain that Jesus's healing ministry is a picture of His greater mission: to save people from every background and restore them fully. Direct the group to take a moment and consider someone in their life who might feel "far off" and how Jesus's willingness to cross barriers challenges them to reflect His love toward that person.

### DEBRIEF

**How does seeing Jesus cross cultural, social, and physical boundaries challenge the way you think about the church's gospel mission?**

### SUMMARIZE

These two healing accounts—one involving a Gentile mother crying out for her daughter, the other involving a deaf-mute man in the Decapolis—show Jesus intentionally moving toward those on the margins. With the Syrophenician woman, we see persistent, humble faith that trusts Jesus even when His timing or methods seem unclear. With the deaf-mute man, we see Jesus's tender, personal compassion as He takes the man aside, touches him, and restores him fully. Jesus's kingdom is wide enough and His grace strong enough to welcome every nation, tribe, and tongue. No one is beyond the reach of Jesus's compassion.

### HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 73). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Jesus did the impossible. Jesus drove out demons, healed the sick, and performed miracles. But in Mark 7, the Syrophenician woman and the man from the Decapolis could have allowed the culture at the time to keep them from experiencing such miracles. Yet they didn't. Their faith wouldn't allow anything to prevent them from getting to Jesus, who had made Himself available to them in the first place.

**How has Jesus crossed cultural, social, and physical boundaries to minister to you?**



**HEART:** The Syrophenician woman understood Jesus was her only option. If Jesus couldn't heal and save her daughter, no one could. Her desperation fueled her faith, and she persisted in faith even when she seemed to meet with resistance. Sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered, and we can grow bitter, feeling God does not love us. Instead, the Syrophenician woman teaches us not to give up and to humbly wait for Jesus's mercy.

**How do you need to grow in your persistence and humility in prayer and faith?**



**HANDS:** We do not know who brought the man who was deaf and mute to Jesus, whether they were family or friends. We know they had heard of Jesus and knew He could heal the man. In our own communities, we know people who need the help that only comes from Jesus. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to share with them the good news that saves.

**How will you lead people to Jesus this week so they might find the healing and salvation only He can provide?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Reflect on Mark 7:24-37 this week and ask God to show you where you might be overlooking people whom Jesus moves toward.
- Identify someone in your life who feels “far off” and pray specifically for an opportunity to show Christlike compassion to them.
- Consider one barrier—fear, prejudice, busyness, etc.—that keeps you from loving others as Jesus does, and take one step to tear that barrier down in faith and obedience.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 73 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 117. Invite the group to name things they can praise the Lord for. Thank God for His greatest gift, Jesus. And thank God that He reaches all nations.

#### References

1. R. C. Sproul, Mark, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 172.



# JESUS RESURRECTS

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 11:17-27,38-44

## CONTEXT

The book of John is unique among the four Gospels. John's Gospel highlighted seven signs Jesus performed that pointed to His identity as not only the promised Messiah but God Himself. John also included seven "I am" statements that intentionally connected Jesus's identity to the God who revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM" at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). In John 11, Jesus performed both a miraculous sign and declared an "I am" statement to show His power over life and death.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe.**

As you examine John 11:17-27,38-44:

- Notice that Martha understood that Jesus could do whatever He wanted, including resurrect her brother.
- Affirm that Jesus's desire was for people to believe in Him and His mission.





## TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many Parables  
(Mark 4:1-34)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(Mark 6:45-52)

**SESSION STUDY:** Jesus Raises Lazarus  
from the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand  
(Mark 6:30-44)

Jesus Heals in Gentile Regions  
(Mark 7:24-37)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                      |                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> John 11:1-16  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> John 11:38-57 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> John 11:17-27 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> John 12:1-11  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> John 11:28-37 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 21      |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

## ANYONE WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS WILL LIVE FOREVER WITH HIM (JOHN 11:17-27).

**Circle Jesus's "I am" statement. Then underline Martha's response.**

**17** When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem (less than two miles away). **19** Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. **20** As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. **22** Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. **26** Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" **27** "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

The siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were no strangers to Jesus. These were some of Jesus's closest friends. Jesus Himself was grieved to know Lazarus had died and his sisters were mourning. Nevertheless, Jesus understood Lazarus's death was an opportunity for revelation. In ancient Judaism, a belief persisted that a dead person's soul hovered over his body hoping to reunite, but the soul only stayed for three days. Lazarus had been dead for four days, which meant his soul was gone and it was too late for hope.<sup>1</sup>

Mary and Martha responded to Jesus uniquely in a previous encounter (Luke 10:38-42), and they did so here as well. This time Mary remained in the house, possibly angry at Jesus, but Martha came to Him on the road, grieving but hopeful. Martha believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus, and though her brother was now dead, she still had faith in Jesus, saying: "Whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (John 11:22).

**How are you prone to respond to Jesus when circumstances don't work out how you think they should?**

Jesus's response to Martha, promising her brother's resurrection, was not a surprise to her. Like most Jews in the first century, Martha believed in a future resurrection. But what Jesus said and Martha heard were two different points. Martha was thinking about the future—"the last day" (v. 24)—while Jesus was planning to act in the present.

**LEADER NOTE:** While most Jews believed in a final resurrection of all people, no one in Jesus's day was expecting the Messiah to die, let alone resurrect. Jesus's resurrection transformed the way His followers understood the future resurrection. Jesus's rising from the dead was the first stage—the firstfruits that would come at the beginning of the harvest (1 Cor. 15:20). The second stage will be the final resurrection of all people at the end of the age.

Next, Jesus uttered perhaps His most popular “I am” statement: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Notice what Jesus was and wasn't saying. He was not saying He can provide resurrection and life but that He is the resurrection and the life. These are not gifts Jesus provides but qualities of His divine identity (see 1:1-4). Resurrection and life are experienced by those who are in Christ.

Of course, to experience resurrection and life requires faith, specifically faith in who Jesus is. Martha believed in Jesus, saying: “I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God” (11:27). But it does seem Martha was confused about what Jesus was intending to do next, bringing the future into the present.

**LEADER NOTE:** Belief in Jesus is the goal of John's Gospel. While examples of belief are featured throughout his writings (for example, see 1:6-7; 4:39-42), John stated the purpose of his Gospel in his conclusion: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:30-31).

**What does it mean to be united with Christ and share in His resurrection?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

## BY RESURRECTING THE DEAD, JESUS POINTED TO HIS MISSION FOR THE FATHER'S GLORY (JOHN 11:38-44).

**Highlight Jesus's purpose for this resurrection miracle.**

**38** Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. **39** "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. **42** I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." **43** After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

John wanted his readers to know that Lazarus was really dead. A stench of rot was in the air. Nonetheless, Jesus said, "Remove the stone" (v. 39). Unlike our burial customs, ancient Jews often placed their dead in above-ground tombs. These tombs often were caves with a slab to lay the body upon. After one year, the body would have decayed and the deceased's bones would be placed in a small ornamental box called an ossuary.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus was undeterred by the stench of death. Again He referenced belief as He told Martha that with faith she "would see the glory of God" (v. 40). Each of the seven signs Jesus performed in John were meant to reveal the glory of God in Jesus to the witnesses of Jesus's works. But the active ingredient of such sight and recognition was faith. Without faith, the people missed the meaning of the miracle.

**LEADER NOTE:** In John's Gospel, Jesus performed seven signs: turning water into wine (2:1-11), healing the official's son (4:46-54), healing the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-16), feeding the multitude (6:1-14), walking on water (6:16-21), healing the man born blind (9:1-41), and resurrecting Lazarus (11:1-45). The seven signs, including Lazarus's resurrection, pointed to the glory of God revealed in Jesus. John wanted his readers to understand that Jesus reveals the glory of God because He is in fact God the Son.

**What are some ways we can witness the glory of God today?**

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Death reigns everywhere, for the death of the soul is alienation from God. So people who believe in Christ, although they had been once dead, begin to live; for faith is a spiritual resurrection of the soul and, as it were, brings the soul alive, that it may live for God.”<sup>3</sup>

–John Calvin (1509–1564)

Next, John gave us a glimpse into Jesus’s prayer life. A couple of features of Jesus’s prayer are worth noting. First, Jesus prayed to God. By looking up and addressing God as Father, we get a glimpse into the intimate relationship between Father and Son. Second, Jesus wanted the crowd to hear Him pray to the Father. He wanted them to get a picture of the Son’s relationship with the Father. Jesus wanted the crowd, including Martha and Mary, to know the Father sent the Son to do His will.

**LEADER NOTE:** Through John’s Gospel, we learn much about the Trinity. John taught us that the Persons of the Trinity are unified and yet distinct. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons in one God, each equal in essence and power. Yet a distinction of Persons is most clearly seen through the “mission” of Jesus: The Father sent the Son. The Persons of the Trinity have to be distinct for one to send another. Just as the Father sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Spirit (14:16). These truths teach us that all three Persons of the Trinity are actively involved in our salvation.

As God the Son, Jesus exercised His divine authority and commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave. With words, Lazarus was resurrected back to life. This final sign revealed the glory of God in Jesus. As Creator, God is life itself and therefore the source of life. In an instant, Jesus was able to extend life back to Lazarus. No one else could do this but God!

**What hope do you find in Jesus’s power to resurrect Lazarus from the dead?**

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus’s power to resurrect the dead means He was also able to resurrect Himself, through which He secured victory over sin, death, and the powers of darkness. He did this also to give eternal life to those who believe.

Notes



| SIGN                                  | DESCRIPTION                                                               | REFERENCE     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Jesus cleanses the temple          | Jesus cleanses the temple of the money changers and the sellers of doves. | John 2:13-17  |
| 2. Jesus turns water into wine        | Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding in Cana.                       | John 4:46-54  |
| 3. Jesus heals the man born blind     | Jesus heals the man born blind with mud.                                  | John 9:1-17   |
| 4. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead | Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb.           | John 11:1-44  |
| 5. Jesus feeds the 5,000              | Jesus feeds the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish.                      | John 6:1-14   |
| 6. Jesus walks on water               | Jesus walks on water during the storm on the Sea of Galilee.              | John 6:16-21  |
| 7. Jesus gives life to the dead       | Jesus gives life to the dead through His resurrection.                    | John 11:17-44 |

## ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask: “Have you ever seen something restored or revived that you thought was beyond repair? Please share your experience.”

**TRANSITION:** We have probably seen videos of home renovations or restorations that defy reality. But in our Bible passage today, Jesus did not just resuscitate or revive someone who was dead for a few heartbeats. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb.

## CONTEXT

**REVIEW:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 8: John’s Seven Signs**, and briefly review the signs John highlighted to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Say: “In the Gospel of John, Jesus revealed His identity through miracles and teachings, and the religious leaders’ opposition to Him grew in response. At the end of John 10, their hostility intensified to the point that Jesus withdrew across the Jordan River to keep from being stoned to death. While He was there, His close friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, became gravely ill. But rather than leaving immediately to go heal His friend, Jesus waited two days, telling His disciples that this illness would reveal God’s glory and deepen their faith (John 11:1-7).”

## RECAP

**OUTLINE:** On a board, write, “Jesus arrives in Bethany.” Lead the group to draw on their personal preparation for the week and to create a simple outline of the story with the next key moments from the narrative: Martha’s confession of faith, Mary’s tears, Jesus’s weeping, and finally Jesus’s call for Lazarus to come out of the tomb.

**TRANSITION:** In your reading this week, Jesus met Martha and Mary in their grief, spoke hope into their sorrow, and revealed His identity before demonstrating His power. Let’s explore today’s passage and consider how Jesus’s power to raise the dead strengthens our faith and offers life to all who believe in Him.



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**Key Concept:** Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 80 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “From Grief to Glory.” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they work through the Scriptures.

Notes

### From Grief to Glory

Read John 11:17-27,38-44. Write down how the people in the narrative experienced grief, confession, compassion, and then Jesus’s glory.

GRIEF

CONFESSION

COMPASSION

GLORY

**READ:** Invite two volunteers to read aloud John 11:17-27 and 38-44.

**PAIR UP:** Instruct your group to form pairs. Direct them to assign details, along with the verse reference, from each Scripture section to the four categories in the chart: grief (expressions of sorrow and loss), confession (statements of belief in Jesus), compassion (Jesus’s response to human suffering), and glory (actions that reveal God’s power). Allow time for pairs to discuss and form their ideas. After a few minutes, invite volunteers to share their findings. Record these in the chart and encourage your group to jot down any thoughts shared in their PSG.

**DISCUSS:** Considering Jesus’s and people’s actions in the four categories, how should we understand Jesus’s care toward us in our suffering? *(grief: Jesus cares deeply about us as His people in our suffering and death // confession: regardless of our circumstances and suffering, Jesus wants us to trust in Him and believe He has our best in mind // compassion: Jesus is with His people in their suffering, desiring their best, which is faith in Him as the resurrection and*

## Notes

*the life // glory: Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God and the Messiah, our King and Savior from our sin and its consequences; Jesus is the resurrection and the life, the source of our hope in a world presently marked by sin, suffering, and death; Jesus revealed that those who trust in Him do not need to fear death since He has the power to overcome it)*

**APPLY:** Both Martha and Mary met Jesus with the same statement: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died” (John 11:21,32). Their words expressed real grief yet also a deep confidence in Jesus’s power. Jesus responded by pointing them to a greater truth. He was not merely someone who could ask God for a miracle—He is the source of life. When we get a troubling medical diagnosis, when we fear violence and persecution for our belief in Christ, what comfort does this passage give us?

## DEBRIEF

**How does seeing Jesus turn grief to glory challenge your fears and assumptions in your own sufferings?**

## SUMMARIZE

Display **Pack Item 9: The Resurrection and the Life** and read the verse. Say: “Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe in Him. John 11 shows this power not only in the miracle itself but also in the way Jesus met people in their grief, strengthened their faith, and revealed His identity. Each moment—from grief to confession to compassion to glory—points us toward the greater resurrection Jesus offers all who trust in Him. So, along with Martha, we must consider Jesus’s question: ‘Do you believe this?’”

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 81). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Belief requires truth. We cannot have faith in someone we do not know anything about. Martha had faith in Jesus because she believed Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God. While her understanding, like ours, was no doubt incomplete, she trusted in the Jesus she knew, the Jesus she believed God had sent into the world, the Jesus who is the truth.

**How can you grow in your knowledge of and faith in Jesus?**



**HEART:** Faith always requires more than mere details. We can know a lot about something but not trust it. How many people have safely jumped out of a plane? Many with parachutes. Yet that fact wouldn’t necessarily change your fear of skydiving. What we know to be true about Jesus must penetrate our hearts to the point we’re willing to stake our lives on Him.



**What doubts, fears, and sins might you need to confess to grow in your faith?**



**HANDS:** Our trust in Jesus is meant to lead to changed lives. What we believe about Jesus should change what we do and don't do. Because the resurrection is true, we do not need to fear death. We can trust that death does not have the final say because Jesus will call us out of our graves. This truth not only gives us confidence to face death, it should give us confidence in life.

**How will your life look different because you believe Jesus will resurrect you?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Spend time this week meditating on Jesus's description of Himself as the resurrection and the life. Reflect on what this means for your fears about death or loss.
- Look for someone who is grieving or struggling and offer a simple act of compassion, just as Jesus entered into Mary and Martha's sorrow.
- Identify one area of your life that feels "hopeless" and intentionally entrust it to Jesus in prayer, believing He brings life where death once ruled.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 81 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 21:1-4 with your group. Thank the Lord that He is the resurrection and the life and He has already defeated sin and death for our gift of eternal life in Him and with Him.

#### References

1. Gerald L. Borchert, John 1-11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 354.
2. Byron R. McCane, "Ossuary," in The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology, ed. Paul Corby Finney (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 267.
3. John Calvin, John, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), Jn 11:25.

Notes



# MARY AND MARTHA

By Leslie Hudson



The Gospel narrators focus on Jesus's closest circle of His disciples, the twelve apostles. But those weren't Jesus's only close friends. We know He was also tight with a trio of siblings in Bethany: Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Though Lazarus takes the spotlight in John 11—being raised from the dead tends to do that—we should take a few minutes to get to know Lazarus's sisters a little better. Their story is an integral part of Lazarus's story and walks Jesus right up to the cross.

## A STRONG FRIENDSHIP

The first time we come across this family as we consider the Gospels chronologically, Lazarus wasn't even mentioned. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out His disciples in groups of two (vv. 1-12) and celebrated their victories (vv. 21-24), preached rejection to towns that were unrepentant (vv. 13-16), and shared the story of the good Samaritan (vv. 25-37). Then we read a story of Jesus entering a village, where "a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home" (v. 38). Martha was caught up in entertaining Jesus's entire entourage, but even though "they" were traveling, Martha welcomed "him," meaning Jesus.

Often the story is told that Martha was too busy entertaining, but we're not sure that was the case. Luke reported that she was "distracted by her many tasks" (v. 40), and considering that it was Martha's house (v. 38), any homeowner can understand. Hear her question again, not with a nagging tone but with the sound of an exhausted woman: "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand" (v. 40). Maybe Martha truly wanted to sit at Jesus's feet as Mary did, but she carried the burden of a household. (And all the Type A people shouted "Amen!")

Jesus's gentle answer (v. 41), acknowledging her stress and high emotions, revealed He wasn't mad at her, and neither should we be. Rather, we, like Martha, should see that more than any responsibility, we need to sit at Jesus's feet and hear His Word, giving us the soul-care we desperately need.

We, like Martha, should see that more than any responsibility, we need to sit at Jesus's feet and hear His Word, giving us the soul-care we desperately need.

## A FAMILY TRAGEDY

Lazarus's name appears in Scripture only when it's practically too late. In John 11:1, we read: "Now a man was sick—Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha." Naturally, the sisters sent a message to Jesus: "Lord, the one you love is sick" (v. 3). Jesus explained to His disciples that the sickness "would not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (v. 4). At Jesus's instruction, they waited two more days before heading to Bethany. By the time they arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days.

*Jesus's prophecy that Lazarus's death would end in glory  
was fulfilled in a way no one could have predicted—  
in Jesus's death so that we might have everlasting life.*

The sisters heard separately that Jesus had arrived, and both approached Him with the same statement: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died” (vv. 21,32). We hear the faith of these sisters burning through their tears of grief. Yes, they believed, but they wondered, “Why didn’t Jesus come sooner?”

### MARTHA'S FAITH

Though Martha’s grief was certainly overwhelming at the time of Lazarus’s death, she kept her faith grounded by saying aloud what she knew to be certain: “I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you . . . I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. . . . I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world” (John 11:22,24,27). We can find comfort in our own lives by also choosing to believe and therefore speak (2 Cor. 4:13) what we know to be true of Jesus.

### MARY'S LOVE

In Mary’s final mention in Scripture, she demonstrated her love for the Lord and her understanding of what He had done. She “took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped his feet with her hair” (John 12:3). Though Matthew and Mark also recounted this story, only John revealed Mary’s identity. He also pointed out that this happened “six days before the Passover” (v. 1). Passover would have been Jesus’s last supper on the night He was betrayed. John connected the dots for us: In raising Lazarus, Jesus risked His safety by returning to the Jerusalem area. Through that miracle, the Jews had been pushed to the breaking point; raising Lazarus from the dead was the final straw to make them decide

that Jesus must die (11:45-57). Jesus’s prophecy that Lazarus’s death would end in glory (v. 4) was fulfilled in a way no one could have predicted—in Jesus’s death so that we might have everlasting life (3:16).

We can’t identify Mary’s thoughts, but in sitting at Jesus’s feet (Luke 10:39), she had captured His worthiness and His passion. She heard Him say He would die when the disciples missed it, and she didn’t waste the opportunity to honor Him.

As you reflect on these sisters from Bethany, open your heart to their hospitality, grief, compassion, and faith. They knew Jesus, loved Him, believed Him, knew His Word, and devoted their lives to Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you a heart like theirs even today.

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**Leslie Hudson** worships with her family at First Baptist in Dickson, Tennessee. She teaches high school youth Sunday school, plays in the praise band, and is active in women’s ministry. She’s passionate about counseling women biblically and pointing people to Jesus.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 27

# THE TRUTH OF HIS KINGDOM



MARK; LUKE; JOHN





#### MEMORY VERSES

“Today salvation has come to this house,”  
Jesus told him, “because he too is a son  
of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come  
to seek and to save the lost.”

—Luke 19:9-10



# BLIND TO SEEING

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 9:24-27,35-41

## CONTEXT

John's Gospel contains seven "I am" statements in which Jesus assumes the divine name of God found in Exodus 3:14. The second of these appears in John 8:12 and 9:5, where Jesus proclaimed, "I am the light of the world." What comes next is a demonstration of His light breaking into the darkness. Christ's light healed and saved a man born blind while also revealing the blindness of those who refused Him. The conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities intensified as evidence of Jesus's divinity and messiahship grew.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus opens people's eyes to the fact that He is the Messiah, but we can choose to believe or not.**

As you examine John 9:24-27,35-41:

- Contemplate that Jesus makes blind people see, both literally and metaphorically.
- Recognize that the Pharisees were able to see with their physical eyes but still chose to sin in their spiritual blindness by not believing who Jesus was.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Feeds the Five  
Thousand (John 6:1-15)

**SESSION STUDY: Jesus Heals  
a Blind Man (John 9:1-41)**

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(John 6:16-21)

Jesus Encounters Zacchaeus  
(Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into  
Jerusalem (John 12:12-19)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> John 7:1-52  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> John 9:24-41 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> John 8:12-59 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> John 10:1-42 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> John 9:1-23  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 82     |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

**JESUS BRINGS LIGHT TO THOSE IN DARKNESS (JOHN 9:24-27).**

**Circle the statement that gives glory to God.**

**24** So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” **25** He answered, “Whether or not he’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!” **26** Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” **27** “I already told you,” he said, “and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become his disciples too, do you?”

The story of the man born blind starts in verse 1, and it is a story about responding to Jesus. The Pharisees’ searching question, “What did he do to you?” (v. 26), lies at the heart of every conversion story. When God saves a person, He changes them at the deepest level of their being, transferring them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13). Such life change becomes obvious, like a man born blind who can suddenly see, and it demands an explanation.

John’s Gospel offered that explanation not only to the man born blind but to the world blinded by sin that regains its spiritual sight in Christ. Before healing the man, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5). As the light of Christ shines in the darkness, there are two possible responses: go toward the light or flee from exposure. The gospel never leaves room for ambiguity. There are no “neutral” reactions to it.

Light is an exposing element. It reveals what is truly there. In the darkness, we can only guess what’s there. When Jesus came as “the light of the world” (John 9:5), the natural response was to step into His light and trust Him as Savior. But not all responses were so favorable. Some, like many Pharisees and religious leaders, refused to see what the light exposed.

**LEADER NOTE:** In John 3:19, Jesus told Nicodemus: “The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.” Why do people deny Christ? Obviously, it’s not a matter of evidence. In the case of the blind man, wouldn’t his healing be persuasive enough for all witnesses? Rejecting Christ is a matter of an evil heart. The human heart by its sinful nature doesn’t love the light; it loves the darkness. To become lovers of the light, Jesus must come into our hearts and drive out our darkness. As He did with the blind man, Jesus must do a miracle in us. Otherwise, we will never believe.

**Key Concept:** Jesus opens people's eyes to the fact that He is the Messiah, but we can choose to believe or not.

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus opens people's eyes to His messiahship, but they can choose to believe in Him or not. Those who recognize their sin and need for a Savior will believe; the hard-hearted will not.

**How have you experienced the light of Christ exposing the darkness in your own heart?**

When commanded to “give glory to God” (v. 24), the healed man did just that, proclaiming what Jesus had done for him. He had been blind, and now he could see, and Jesus was the cause. He could tell the Pharisees his story again—and no doubt he would tell it the rest of his life—but he would not come up with a narrative that didn't involve Jesus opening his eyes. There was no other explanation for him, and there isn't for any Christian. The only question left is this: Do you want to become His disciples too?

**LEADER NOTE:** The man born blind was real, yet John also used his situation to represent our own spiritual blindness. Just as Jesus opened the man's physical eyes, He must open our spiritual eyes. The reason anyone becomes a Christian is not due to their moral integrity, mental acuity, or personal holiness but solely by the grace of Christ. Notice the man didn't approach Jesus; Jesus approached him. The man didn't ask for sight; Jesus simply gave it. The action of Jesus came before anything else, and that is how it is in our own lives. Jesus acts, and we respond in faith.

**If you were asked, “What did Jesus do to you?” how would you answer?**

### VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“Believers don't need to know all the answers before they can share Christ with others. All they must know is how Jesus changed their lives. . . . We should tell people what Jesus did for us, and trust God to help our words draw others to him.”<sup>1</sup>

—Bruce B. Barton

Notes



## JESUS CAME TO JUDGE THOSE WHO CHOOSE NOT TO SEE THAT HE IS THE MESSIAH (JOHN 9:35-41).

Circle the words referring to sight in this passage.

**35** Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” **36** “Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?” he asked. **37** Jesus answered, “You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” **38** “I believe, Lord!” he said, and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind.” **40** Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, “We aren’t blind too, are we?” **41** “If you were blind,” Jesus told them, “you wouldn’t have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

The Gospels present Jesus as a man who always went to the outcasts. Verse 34 tells us the Pharisees, unhappy with the response to their inquiry, cast out the once-blind-now-sighted man from the synagogue. When Jesus heard the news, He went and found the man. Imagine the emotional rollercoaster! The man experienced a miracle that resulted in his excommunication. One kind of suffering was relieved only to be cast into another kind. Was his physical sight now a spiritual problem? No, and Jesus wanted him to know that.

Jesus found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (v. 35). Jesus often used the phrase “the Son of Man” to refer to Himself as the One who reveals God to man.<sup>2</sup> Seeing Jesus, the man now saw his God. His response was immediate and profound—“I believe, Lord!” (v. 38). He then worshiped Jesus, the only right response to the revelation of the Messiah. The man’s physical blindness had already been healed, and to the man’s delight, Jesus healed his spiritual blindness too.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus gave the man a simple invitation: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” And the man only knowing that Jesus was possibly a prophet, but someone who gave him sight, asked for more insight: “Who is he. . . that I may believe in him?” Jesus identified Himself as the one, and the man responded in belief in His Lord. It all started with a simple invitation, a question, “Do you believe in Jesus?” It’s as simple as that.

**How does Jesus’s miracle and pursuit of the man relate to our gospel mission as believers in Christ?**





### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**NEW IDENTITY OF THE BELIEVER:** When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God's family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a "new creation" in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

While the man worshiped Jesus, some Pharisees stood in judgment. Yet in the end, it is not their judgment that matters—it is Jesus's. In verse 39, Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment." By that He meant He came to show the truth of things, to which some will respond with faith and worship while others respond with rejection.

Some are blind and know it, and some are blind but don't know it. What a warning this is to all who read John 9. We can have the gift of physical sight and not see our spiritual need, and we can be physically blind and see Jesus clearly. This is why Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:18-19 that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength."

**LEADER NOTE:** The extreme danger the Pharisees highlighted is that they believed they could see when they were spiritually blind. They claimed to have true knowledge of God but denied Him when He stood before them. We must never be wise in our own eyes but ask for God's divine light to see who He really is. There is always a danger of making God into our own image—to create an idol—rather than receive Him as He has revealed Himself in the Word, and in Jesus in particular. The question at the heart of every person's life is the one Jesus asked Peter in Matthew 16:15: "Who do you say that I am?"

**What do we need to "see" in order to be saved by faith?**

## Notes

## ARRIVAL

**PREPARE:** Before your group arrives, make a few minor adjustments to your room's setup. You may want to rearrange chairs, take down a wall hanging, replace a curtain with a new one, or something similar.

**INTERACT:** As you interact with your group, don't ask if they notice anything different, but pay attention to see who notices your adjustments. As the group settles down, explain that you've made a few changes and see if anyone, now prompted, can identify what you did.

**TRANSITION:** Sometimes we see details and changes on our own, but sometimes we need someone else to point them out to us.

## CONTEXT

**SAY:** After leaving the temple in Jerusalem following a debate with the Pharisees (John 8:12-59), Jesus's disciples saw a man who had been born blind. They asked Jesus whether it was the man's sin or his parents' sin that caused his disability. Jesus explained that neither was the case; rather, God had ordained his blindness so that God could be glorified in him (9:1-5). Jesus made mud from dirt and spit, placed it on the man's eyes, and instructed him to go wash; when the man returned, he could see (9:6-7)! Everyone was astounded at the man's instant recovery. The Jewish leaders, however, refused to believe the truth, choosing instead to accuse the man of lying and sinning (9:13-23). But Jesus was right: this miracle would bring to light the truth of who He is.

## RECAP

**RECAP:** Recall **Pack Item 8: John's Seven Signs** and highlight the varied responses of the Jews to the signs of Jesus's power and authority. Ask: "As you read the text this week, how did the word play between sight and blindness draw you deeper into the story?" Then say: "The man was healed by Jesus, and he recognized Jesus is the Son of Man. But the Pharisees refused to see the truth even though no one could argue the man had been miraculously healed."

**TRANSITION:** You may not have noticed a slight difference in this room, but once I revealed the truth, I bet you felt your eyes had been opened. As we delve into this week's passage, let's pray that we allow Jesus to open our spiritual eyes so that we may know and believe the truth of who He is.

| SIGN | TEXT                                                | MEANING                                | CONTEXT                 |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1    | Jesus heals a man born blind (John 9:1-41)          | Jesus is the Light of the World        | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 2    | Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44)   | Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 3    | Jesus heals a man with a withered arm (John 6:5-14) | Jesus is the Bread of Life             | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 4    | Jesus cleanses a leper (John 13:1-17)               | Jesus is the Holy One                  | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 5    | Jesus heals a man with a lame leg (John 8:1-11)     | Jesus is the Light of the World        | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 6    | Jesus heals a man with a blind eye (John 9:1-41)    | Jesus is the Light of the World        | Jesus is the Son of Man |
| 7    | Jesus heals a man with a lame leg (John 8:1-11)     | Jesus is the Light of the World        | Jesus is the Son of Man |



**Listen to session-by-session training every week on**

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[ministrygrid.com/gospelproject](http://ministrygrid.com/gospelproject) • [gospelproject.com/leader-training](http://gospelproject.com/leader-training).

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 92 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find "Seeing Jesus." Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group's findings as they interact with Scripture.

Notes

### Seeing Jesus

Read John 9:1-41. Write in the appropriate space how the man born blind and the Pharisees identified Jesus.

| HOW THE MAN BORN BLIND SAW JESUS | HOW THE PHARISEES SAW JESUS |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (v. 11)                          | (vv. 16,24)                 |
| (v. 17)                          | (v. 28)                     |
| (vv. 30-31)                      | (vv. 39-41)                 |
| (vv. 35-38)                      |                             |

**ANALYZE:** Break up the group into two smaller groups, assigning each group a column in the chart. Instruct each group to read through the verses given and to write down how the man born blind saw Jesus and how the Pharisees saw Jesus. In the last empty space, encourage each person in your group to write down how they see Jesus. Come together as a group and discuss your answers.

**ASK:** What do you see as significant about the man's answers identifying who Jesus is? (*His understanding or sight grew and progressed as the man grew in his knowledge of Jesus.*) What do you find interesting about the answers in the Pharisees's column? (*The Pharisees declined in their knowledge and became spiritually blinded by their ignorance.*)

**ENGAGE:** Ask if anyone has had a similar experience of a progression of understanding in who Jesus is on their own journey of faith. Allow some time for the group to share such experiences and to share their own personal responses to how they see Jesus.

**DISCUSS:** Ask your group: “Based on Jesus’s teaching in verse 39 and the surrounding conversations with the man and the Pharisees, what is the connection between seeing and believing?” Stress that what we believe to be true about Jesus shapes how we respond to Him.

### DEBRIEF

**What is our role as believers in Christ to help others see, know, and believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God?**

### SUMMARIZE

Jesus didn’t reveal Himself mysteriously or secretly. He plainly identified Himself as the Messiah, the promised Son of God. His life, His words, and His miracles pointed to the truth of His identity. Today, the world has the Bible as Jesus’s story, testimony, and proof. Even with God’s revelation of His Son, some people simply choose not to believe in Jesus. Each individual chooses to see, know, and believe the evidence presented about Jesus or not.

### HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 93). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** God does not ask us to set aside our intellect to become a Christian. Rather, He invites us to think things through carefully. John 9 clearly shows that the truth of Jesus’s power reveals who He is. Yet the Pharisees rejected Him despite His miracles and described Him as a sinner. The difficulty with Christianity is not that God asks us to “take it on faith” without any foundation but that a sinful heart suppresses the truth.

**What are your sources of authority for your beliefs about Jesus?**



**HEART:** How Jesus treated the blind man is a window into how He treats His people. The most profound revelation in these passages was not in the healing of the man’s eyes but the salvation of his soul. When he was kicked out of the synagogue, Jesus went and found him, revealed Himself as the Savior, and saved the man. Jesus knew exactly what the man needed, and He pursued Him, all the way to the cross. We all are blind in our sin, but in Jesus we have a Savior, if we look to Him in faith.

**How does Jesus’s pursuit of the man change the way you see the heart of Christ for you?**



**HANDS:** When Jesus rubbed mud on the man’s eyes, He sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash and be healed (vv. 6-7). The man didn’t hesitate. When Jesus later asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” the man was

quick to ask, "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" (vv. 35-36). Then he believed in and worshiped Jesus (v. 38). The call of God to every human heart is to do the same—believe in Jesus and worship Him. Often responses to God's call come in the form of a process; sometimes people need follow-up to make sure they understand the gospel.

**Who will you pursue with the gospel of Jesus or follow up to see if they need more understanding?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Consider writing out your testimony or some examples of how Jesus has changed you. Seek an opportunity to share these words with someone who doesn't have a relationship with Jesus.
- Pray for people who have hardened their hearts against the Lord, that they will see Jesus clearly in His Word and in your life.
- Respond to Jesus's identity in the Bible by journaling. Start a list of Jesus's descriptions of Himself complete with Scripture references as you read through the Gospels.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 93 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

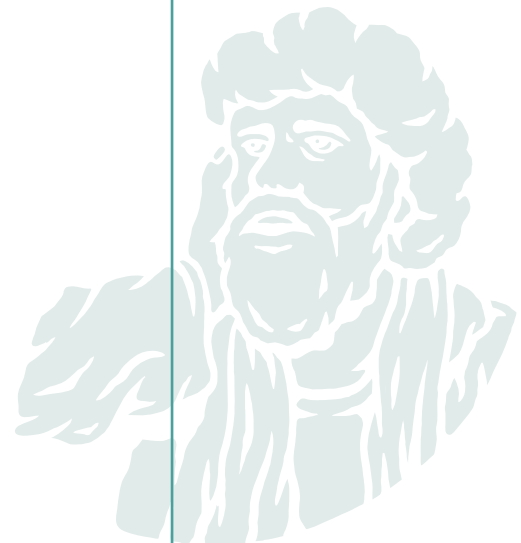
### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 82:5-8 with your group. Invite your group to pray silently or vocally for people they know to be healed from spiritual blindness.

#### References

1. Bruce B. Barton, *John, Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 199.
2. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 376.

Notes



# GETTING TO GIVING

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 19:1-10

## CONTEXT

Luke's Gospel is broken into roughly three sections. Luke 1:1–9:50 is the initiation of Jesus's public ministry, including His teachings and miracles. Luke 9:51–19:10 tells of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem under the shadow of the cross. Luke 19:11–24:53 tells of Jesus's arrest, death, and resurrection. In today's passage, Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem for the joy set before Him, prepared to endure the cross (Heb. 12:2). But on His way, He needed to make a stop for the salvation of a sinner.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus came to seek and save the lost.**

As you examine Luke 19:1-10:

- Notice that Jesus saw Zacchaeus's eagerness and invited him to fellowship with Him.
- Contemplate that like Zacchaeus, we should respond to Jesus with joy, submission, and repentance.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Feeds the Five  
Thousand (Luke 9:10-17)

Jesus Heals a Blind Man  
(John 9:1-41)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Walks on Water  
(John 6:16-21)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Encounters Zacchaeus  
(Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus's Triumphal  
Entry into Jerusalem  
(Luke 19:28-40)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                           |                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Matthew 17:1-18:35 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Luke 17:1-18:43 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Matthew 19:1-20:34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 19:1-27    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 9:1-10:52     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 49        |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.



## JESUS INVITES ALL WHO ARE EAGER TO FIND HIM (LUKE 19:1-5).

**Circle the details Luke offers about Zacchaeus, and underline Zacchaeus's actions in this passage.**

**1** He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. **3** He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. **4** So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way. **5** When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house."

The Gospels show us that Jesus often extended grace to unexpected people. Zacchaeus is a perfect example. Notice how Luke introduced him as a rich chief tax collector. Zacchaeus, a Jew, would have collected taxes from his fellow Jews to give to Rome. While today an accountant might be given a salary, in Jesus's day, tax collectors routinely collected more than was due, skimming off the top and cheating the people to build their own wealth. As a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus was the boss, which meant his opportunity to collect was large. From his later confession, he made it clear that he made a lot of money through dishonesty and theft.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jericho was a wealthy, well-traveled trade route in Judea, so it most likely had a customs house. As people traveled in and out, Zacchaeus may have grown rich from their comings and goings. But there was something about Jesus that made him want to see Him. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus up in a tree, while the crowds saw the most corrupt, most sinful, most despised, face in the crowd, Jesus saw one that was lost and sought to see Him. Jesus extended the kind of grace and mercy He would soon put on display at the cross. This further emphasized Jesus's divine mission to seek and save the lost. It reveals the deeply compassionate heart of Christ.

It should come as no surprise that Zacchaeus was a despised man as a traitor and a cheat. In the eyes of the Jews, he was the worst of sinners. Yet in Luke's Gospel, some tax collectors respond positively to Jesus's teachings, including Matthew the disciple (5:27-32; cf. 3:12; 7:29; 15:1-2; 18:9-14). Luke indicated that Zacchaeus, like the tax collectors who previously accepted Jesus's teaching, was eager to see Him.

**What kinds of people might we be tempted to classify as the worst of sinners to despise and avoid today?**

The text reveals another important detail: Zacchaeus was a short man. Given his reputation, the crowd was unwilling to make room for this short sinner so he could see Jesus walking by. Zacchaeus's desire to see Jesus was so strong that he climbed a tree, a highly unusual act for a man of his social status that exposed him to public shame and humiliation. His eagerness was rewarded, however, as Jesus walked his way. Upon seeing him, Jesus said that it was necessary for Him to stay at Zacchaeus's house that night.

This was a divine appointment. Jesus considered His visit with Zacchaeus as part of His mission. So even though Zacchaeus climbed the tree looking for Jesus, Jesus also was looking for Zacchaeus. More than mere chance or circumstance, this necessary encounter held a redemptive purpose—Jesus came to seek and save sinners, of whom Zacchaeus was one of the foremost of his city.

**LEADER NOTE:** No matter one's social status, it was not common for people to invite themselves over for dinner. In Jesus's day, and in some places in the Middle East now, the community selects the form of hospitality, not the guest.<sup>1</sup> That could be why Jesus sometimes ate with Pharisees who resented Him; they may have been the hosts with the most social standing when He traveled to a town (see Luke 7:36-50). That Jesus invited Himself to a notorious sinner's house was unheard of. For Jesus, however, it was necessary.

**How can we determine if we are experiencing a “necessary” encounter with someone for the sake of the gospel?**

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“The door of hope which the Gospel reveals to sinners is open very wide. Let us leave it open, as we find it; let us not attempt, in narrow-minded ignorance, to shut it. We should never be afraid to maintain that Christ is able to save completely (Hebrews 7:25) and that the vilest sinners may be freely forgiven if they will only come to him.”<sup>2</sup>

—J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)

Notes



## JESUS OFFERS SALVATION TO THOSE WHO ARE LOST AND WANT TO BE FOUND (LUKE 19:6-10).

**Underline the response of the crowd, and circle Zacchaeus's response.**

**6** So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. **7** All who saw it began to complain, "He's gone to stay with a sinful man." **8** But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much." **9** "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

Grace is scandalous. It is unfair, and that bothers us, especially when we see someone getting something good that we think they don't deserve. The crowd in Jericho the day Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree struggled with what they saw when Jesus met and talked to that sinful man. They complained because a tax collector like Zacchaeus should not have received the benefit of salvation coming to His house. Of all the people in the city that day, why would Jesus focus on Zacchaeus? Didn't others deserve it more? Well, that's the problem with grace. It's not dependent on what we deserve. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. No wonder He found Zacchaeus.

**LEADER NOTE:** Throughout the Gospels, there is a constant complaint that Jesus spent time with sinners. Of course, the complainers did not mean sinners in the general sense but in the sense of people with a lower moral and social status than them. That didn't matter to Jesus, however, because He came for exactly those people. The reason for the complaint leveled against Jesus is the very gospel that saves us. He loves to redeem sinners. That means we all qualify to be in His presence. This passage illustrates the truth that the gospel is good news for all people, for we all are sinners.

**Do you find yourself identifying with the complainers or with Zacchaeus in this passage? Why?**

While the crowd complained, Zacchaeus rejoiced. Meeting Jesus was the greatest moment of his life. His heart longed to meet Jesus, even if he didn't realize how earnestly until Jesus came to him and invited Himself to his house. His life was now changing, and the change would become evident to all. That's what grace does. It comes to an undeserving soul, changes it entirely, and new works flow out. We can struggle to hold this order clear in our minds, but we cannot obey into salvation; rather, obedience flows from salvation. The truly changed life can only flow from a truly changed heart.

The evidence of Zacchaeus's repentance is shocking. We must not forget his status. He was rich. He had a certain lifestyle he was used to. And there is no indication that he struggled with his occupation before he met Jesus. Yet when he met Jesus, he gave it all up immediately. He repented on the spot—perhaps even before Jesus came to his house.<sup>3</sup> The encounter with Jesus was grace enough to move Zacchaeus to give sacrificially to the poor and to vow to repay what he had extorted—four times as much. The rich man was willing to become poor to have Jesus.

Notes

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**REPENTANCE:** Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus referred to Zacchaeus as “a son of Abraham” (v. 9). To be a son of Abraham was to be a recipient of the covenant promises made to Abraham. As a Jewish man, Zacchaeus was already a son of Abraham by natural descent. But as Paul taught in Romans 9:6-13, not all children of Israel are children of Abraham. But for those who believe in Jesus—Jew or Gentile—God makes us children of Abraham, inheritors of the promises (Rom. 4:9-12; 10:9-13). The thing that makes one a son is not the bloodline of their fathers but whether or not they come under the blood of God's Son.

**How have you seen the grace of Jesus produce true change in your own life?**

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus's ministry and mission was to bring salvation to those who are lost and looking to be found.

## Notes

## ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask the following opening questions: “What have you lost and found this week? What was the most valuable thing you have lost and found? What emotions accompany losing and finding something that really matters?” After each question, invite one or two volunteers to share their answers briefly.

**TRANSITION:** We hate to lose things. Even in today’s world, where we can digitally track our phones or cars, we still lose the stuff we want to keep. And like how we find ourselves longing for the things we lost and never found, we’re going to see today that Jesus has that same longing yet deeper: He came to seek and save the lost, and He goes out of His way to find them.

## CONTEXT

**OVERVIEW:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 10: Encountering Jesus** and briefly highlight people’s varied responses to Jesus. Say: “Today’s narrative occurred not long after a rich man asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life (Luke 18:18-30). When Jesus told him to sell his possessions, he ‘became extremely sad, because he was very rich’ (v. 23), and Jesus remarked, ‘How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’ (v. 24). Yet Jesus entered Jericho to find another rich man: Zacchaeus. (Point out the city of Jericho on **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map**.) These two rich men provide us a contrast: one claimed he had kept the law from his youth (v. 21), the other was a thieving tax collector and a sinner (19:7); one bowed, the other climbed; and one left in despair, while the other received salvation with joy.”

## RECAP

**ASK:** What stood out to you in the story of Zacchaeus during your personal preparation this week? What might be different about reading this story as an adult if you first heard it as a child?

**SAY:** The story of Zacchaeus is appropriate for the young and old alike. You may even remember the kid’s song about the “wee little man.” But let’s remember that the focus of Zacchaeus story is Jesus. As we walk through the passage today, let’s keep our eyes on Jesus and consider Zacchaeus through His eyes.



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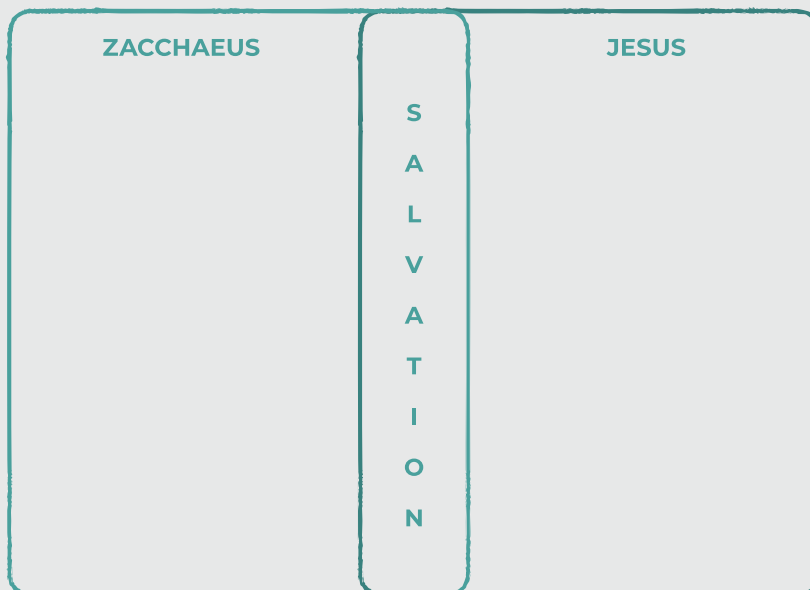
## GROUP ACTIVITY

**DIAGRAM:** Direct your group to page 100 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a diagram for the actions of Zacchaeus and Jesus in Luke 19:1-10. Recreate this diagram on a board in your room so you can record the group's responses as they interact with the Scripture.

Notes

### Salvation Has Come to This House

Read Luke 19:1-10. In the diagram below, write in each section the steps Zacchaeus and Jesus took to reach the point of Zacchaeus's salvation.



**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 19:1-5.

**DISCUSS:** Based strictly upon what the Scripture tells us, what do we know about Zacchaeus? What do we observe about him? What might we assume?

**ANALYZE:** Engage your group in sharing aloud from verses 1-5 the actions of Zacchaeus and Jesus, writing them in the diagram. Point out the eagerness of Zacchaeus as revealed in his desire to see Jesus, his running, and his climbing.

**CONNECT:** Invite a volunteer to read John 6:44 aloud, and explain that Zacchaeus had not come to his eager desire to see Jesus on his own; he had been drawn by God the Father. Note that Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and called him by name though He and Zacchaeus had never met—Jesus was looking for the man with an invitation to fellowship.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 19:6-10.

## Notes

**ANALYZE:** Continue completing the diagram as a group by considering the actions of Zacchaeus (vv. 6,8) and Jesus (vv. 9,10) and adding to the board.

**CONNECT:** Direct your group to circle the preeminent step involved in Zacchaeus's salvation. (*Jesus came to seek and save the lost.*) Stress that Jesus graciously offered salvation to Zacchaeus in His invitation to fellowship. While Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus to save him. Emphasize that Zacchaeus's subsequent actions of repentance were not a condition of his salvation but an overflow of a changed heart through meeting Jesus.

## DEBRIEF

**What is our response, knowing Jesus seeks to fellowship with us?**

**How might Zacchaeus's salvation story compare to your own testimony?**

## SUMMARIZE

Did you, like Zacchaeus, do whatever it took to see Jesus clearly and to yield to His lordship in your life when you first encountered Him? Eagerness to follow Jesus is not only for the newly saved; it's for all of us who have been walking with Him for ten, twenty, or seventy years because what was true then is still true today: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 101). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** What made the difference in Zacchaeus's life that changed him from a sinner to a saint? It was nothing other than an encounter with Jesus. That's what this sinful world needs, and that's what God offers in the preaching and sharing of the gospel. We don't need to overcomplicate it. The simplicity of the gospel is enough: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

**What does Zacchaeus's story teach us about the transforming power of meeting Jesus?**



**HEART:** It is not a hard-and-fast rule that Jesus will call everyone away from their wealth, but He does call us all away from whatever holds our hearts. He may call us to give away our possessions as Zacchaeus did. He may call us away from some of our dreams and plans for our lives. But whatever Jesus calls us to do, it is a call into deeper intimacy and joy with Him.

**What might joyful repentance look like in your own life as Jesus calls you into deeper intimacy with Him?**





**HANDS:** Following Jesus can look a million different ways, depending on what obedience to Christ looks like in our lives. But it is, at the very least, a change in direction. We no longer seek to get whatever we can however we can to bolster our selfish desires. Instead, we joyfully lay aside our wants and follow Jesus wherever He leads, knowing that we can trust Him to be with us along the way.

**What will it look like for you to lay aside self-focused desires and follow Jesus with joy wherever He leads?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Review this week's passage as you spend time in God's Word, setting your mind and heart to seeking Jesus, seeing Him, and fellowshiping with Him.
- Consider your own sin and repentance, bringing that to Jesus and inviting Him to show you how to respond.
- Pray for friends and family members who do not have a relationship with Jesus to encounter Jesus, and pray that the Holy Spirit would use you as a reminder of Jesus's power to change people through saving faith.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 101 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 49:5-9 with your group, confessing that no amount of wealth can save. Thank God that He sent Jesus to redeem and save us and to give us eternal life with Him.

#### References

1. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 180.
2. J. C. Ryle, *Luke, Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), Lk 19:1-10.
3. Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 468.

Notes

# SERVANT TO KING

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 19:28-40

## CONTEXT

Since Luke 9:51, the Gospel writer had been preparing his readers for Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. In Luke 19, the time had come. Jesus went to Jerusalem unafraid, knowing what would happen to Him. This was the moment for which He came into this world—to go to the cross to redeem His people from their sins. Everything was prepared, even down to the servants who would provide the donkey for His entry and the upper room for His last supper. Jesus was fully in control.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus is the humble King as prophesied, bringing peace and glory to God.**

As you examine Luke 19:28-40:

- Recognize that Jesus rode into town on a colt, fulfilling prophecy.
- Praise Jesus, the humble King, who is worthy of all praise from all of creation.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Heals a Blind Man (John 9:1-41)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Foretells the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Luke 21:5-36)

Jesus Encounters Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40)

Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:7-38)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                           |                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> John 12:12-50      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Matthew 23:1-39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Luke 19:28-21:4    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Mark 11:1-12:44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Matthew 21:1-22:46 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 150       |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS RODE INTO TOWN ON A DONKEY, REVEALING HIS HUMILITY (LUKE 19:28-35).

**Underline Jesus's instructions to His disciples, and circle their obedience.**

**28** When he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. **29** As he approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples **30** and said, "Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. **31** If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say this: 'The Lord needs it.'" **32** So those who were sent left and found it just as he had told them. **33** As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" **34** "The Lord needs it," they said. **35** Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their clothes on the colt, they helped Jesus get on it.

Even though the Jews were already seeking information about Jesus's whereabouts to kill Him, Jesus rode into Jerusalem like He owned the place.<sup>1</sup> Notice how in control He was over everything. Preparations were made in advance. People were waiting. A colt was ready. His disciples were told where to go, what to say, and to whom to say it. The Lord was running this show down to the smallest detail. Yet there is no hint of pride in anything the Lord did. Instead, His humility shines in the text.

**LEADER NOTE:** The Jews of Jesus's time were familiar enough with Zechariah 9:9 to recognize the significance of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Beyond recognizing the image, they understood its importance. The Messiah-King was said to be righteous, victorious, and humble. The word translated "victorious" could be translated as "having salvation," but the meaning is similar. The salvation King Jesus provides is victory over sin and death. His righteousness and victory are first revealed on a cross, not in a crown.

**How does seeing Jesus in full control even as He walked toward suffering and death strengthen your trust in His control over your own life?**

Since Luke 9:51, Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem. Now, finally, Jesus was on the outskirts of the city. The time had come. His hour—the hour when He would redeem His own—was near. The King was about to enter His city. As He did, He knew He was walking right into the grip of His enemies. Yet He did not enter on a war horse with sword drawn. He entered humbly, fulfilling ancient prophecy.

**Key Concept:** Jesus is the humble King as prophesied, bringing peace and glory to God.

### CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus was prophesied to come as the Messiah on a donkey (Zech. 9:9), revealing His humility and His sovereignty as Lord.

Though Luke did not quote this reference like Matthew and John did, Zechariah had prophesied: “Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech. 9:9). It was no accident that Jesus chose a donkey to finish His journey into Jerusalem, the city of peace. He came as the Prince of Peace, not a warrior ready to slay but the Savior ready to be slain to make peace between God and man on the cross (Col. 1:20).

The glory of God came down to this world in Jesus, His Son. And waging war on the sin that ruined His creation, Jesus first fought not by trampling underfoot those who rebelled but by being trampled to death by His enemies—by us all—to save the rebels who would turn to Him.

**LEADER NOTE:** The triumphal entry is a vital event in Jesus’s redemptive plan. Especially in Luke’s Gospel, this is the moment the reader has anticipated since Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem (see 9:51). Jesus’s triumphal entry was a pivotal step toward the cross, where He would die for the sins of His people. Such a moment was vital not only to Luke’s Gospel but to the whole biblical storyline. All of history was moving toward this point when the Messiah would come and accomplish salvation.

**As followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, what weapons do we have for our fight against sin and our gospel mission in the world?**

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Our Redeemer is the sovereign Lord and King of all the universe. He did not come to Jerusalem to be made a king. He came into Jerusalem triumphantly as the King. He was going, by way of the cross, to receive his kingdom.”<sup>2</sup>

—Don Fortner (1950–2020)

Notes



## JESUS IS KING AND WAS WORSHIPED AS THE MESSIAH (LUKE 19:36-40).

**Circle the way the crowd praised God during Jesus's triumphal entry.**

**36** As he was going along, they were spreading their clothes on the road.

**37** Now he came near the path down the Mount of Olives, and the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen: **38** Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven! **39** Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." **40** He answered, "I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out."

As Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem in His triumphal entry, He was greeted by a whole crowd of disciples who both understood and misunderstood the meaning of this event. Here was the King who would bring peace to the city, making it an abiding reality. No doubt nationalistic hopes began to soar: The Messiah had come, and He would establish His rule on the earth—God would finally get His glory.

Although the crowd rightly praised Jesus as God's promised King, they did not fully understand the true meaning of His entrance. How could they? Who would imagine victory and peace would come through death? Who could comprehend that the cross would lead to the crown?

**LEADER NOTE:** Most Jews of Jesus's day expected the Messiah to be a warrior-king like David, someone to come and restore Jerusalem to its former glory, to throw off the oppression of Rome, and to redeem their nation from the grip of pagans. But Jesus didn't come to be that kind of king, at least not in His first coming. Instead, He came to die. To many, as Jesus suffered and died on the cross, it looked as if He failed. It seemed He wasn't the Messiah after all. But the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man (1 Cor. 1:25). God's plan of salvation included the cross first and then the crown. First, the Messiah would die, then He would reign. The people's messianic expectations were turned on their heads in God's perfect will.

**What are some ways you have seen God and His gospel defy worldly wisdom?**

Jesus had accomplished a lot in His public ministry so far. The disciples had seen the miracles with their own eyes. They knew the prophecies. They recognized Jesus for who He was. So they praised Him on His humble and triumphant ride into Jerusalem. They gave glory to God for His gracious provision of the promised Savior and King.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CHRIST AS KING:** God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

But not all who saw Jesus praised Him. The Pharisees were disgusted by what they saw and heard. They too grasped the significance of Jesus's riding in on a donkey, but they didn't believe it was right. How could a mere man receive the praises due only to God? So they commanded Jesus to rebuke His worshiping disciples.

Jesus's response to the Pharisees says a lot about who He is. Some skeptics say Jesus never claimed to be God during His life, but no one who understands the Old Testament can read this account and not see that Jesus was boldly claiming to be God's equal. He willingly received praise as God, something that would have been considered blasphemy if He were just any other man. So confident was Jesus in His response that He declared the stones would cry out if the disciples remained silent because He deserved to be praised.

**LEADER NOTE:** If Jesus had come first to judge the world and restore it to purity through a refiner's furnace, there would be no chance for any other human to remain. Everyone fails the test of holiness. No one is good, not even one (Rom. 3:10). The only hope for the world was for Jesus to come as He did. Praise God that the Messiah didn't rise only to our expectations, for they are far too low for the kind of glory God has planned for Himself and this world.

**What are some ways we might be guilty of stifling praise for God and His Son?**



## ARRIVAL

**PREPARE:** Before group time, consider the different roles you fill on a daily basis: parent, employee, church servant, grandparent, housecleaner, cook, repairman, painter, shopper, etc. Bring some household items you wear for each of those duties, such as gardening gloves, an apron, a stained shirt, coveralls, and so forth. Be prepared to display them to the group.

**ENGAGE:** Explain that you've brought some different clothing and accessories to reveal the different roles you play in life. Hold up each item in turn, allowing the group to guess aloud. For each item, briefly share what you do in that role and how it reveals an element of your identity. At the end, explain that there are many elements to your identity; you are not limited to one.

**TRANSITION:** Jesus filled many roles on earth. He was a healer, teacher, friend, counselor, storm-calmer, prophet, and more. Yet at this point in His ministry, people were still unsure of His identity and His purpose.

## CONTEXT

**RECALL:** Of all the people who should have welcomed Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees, the experts in the law, should have been first on the list. They knew the Scriptures better than anyone, yet they rejected Him. (*Pass out copies of Pack Item 11: Jesus and the Pharisees and review their run-ins with Jesus.*) The prophet Zechariah wrote: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9). The reactions of the crowd and the religious elite to Jesus's fulfillment of this prophecy could not have been more different.

## RECAP

**ASK:** What stood out to you about Luke 19:28-40 this week during your personal preparation? How is the triumphal entry different from the other passages we've been studying about Jesus lately?

**SAY:** The story of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem involved much more than just Jesus's choice of transportation. In this scene we see prophecy fulfilled, humility revealed, and Jesus, the Son of Man, accepting praise due to God alone.



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**Key Concept:** Jesus is the humble King as prophesied, bringing peace and glory to God.

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 108 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “The King Revealed.” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group’s responses as they interact with Scripture.

Notes

### The King Revealed

Read Luke 19:28-40. In the columns below, write down how these actions of Jesus point to His earthly and/or heavenly identity.

|                                                   | EARTHLY<br>IDENTITY | HEAVENLY<br>IDENTITY |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| INSTRUCTIONS TO THE<br>DISCIPLES (vv. 29-31)      |                     |                      |
| PREDICTING THE<br>FUTURE (vv. 32-34)              |                     |                      |
| RIDING A COLT<br>(v. 35)                          |                     |                      |
| RECEIVING PRAISE<br>FROM THE CROWD<br>(vv. 37-38) |                     |                      |
| REBUTTAL TO THE<br>PHARISEES (vv. 39-40)          |                     |                      |

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 19:28-35.

**ENGAGE:** As a group, consider the three actions from the chart that are found in verses 28-35 and how each action points to an earthly (humble) identity of Jesus and/or to His heavenly (kingly) identity as God the Son. Explore how Jesus’s approach to Jerusalem revealed both His humility and royalty, which are, in fact, both earthly and heavenly elements in themselves.

**ASK:** What are some of the details that Jesus gave in His instructions to His disciples? What do we learn about Jesus in His attention to detail? How does this reveal that Jesus was God on earth? Why is it important that we see Jesus as God of the big plans and also God of the details?

## Notes

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 19:36-40.

**DIG:** Say: “This passage points to several Old Testament Scriptures that may not be immediately obvious to us. Let’s look at a few of those.” Enlist volunteers to read 1 Kings 1:32-35; 2 Kings 9:11-13; Psalms 118:19-26; 148:1-6; Habakkuk 2:9-11; and Zechariah 9:9-10. After reading each passage, engage your group in considering how that Old Testament insight helps us better understand Luke’s description of Jesus’s triumphal entry.

**ENGAGE:** Complete the chart by noting how each action found in verses 36-40 provides insight into Jesus’s “earthly identity” and/or His “heavenly identity.” Call to mind that for much of His earthly ministry, Jesus commanded people (and even demons!) to keep His heavenly identity quiet. Then ask: “Why do you think Jesus was so explicit about His identity in this passage?”

## DEBRIEF

**How do Jesus’s humility and royal identity encourage and challenge us to live as we follow in His footsteps?**

## SUMMARIZE

Jesus walked on earth as a humble servant, yet His disciples occasionally saw glimpses of His deity. Today, we as His followers should remember that Jesus is our humble King. *(Display Pack Item 12: Christ as King and point out how Jesus’s obedience to the do’s and don’ts of Israel’s kings revealed His humility and authority as God’s promised King.)* One day Jesus will return in His glory to set up His kingdom on earth. Until that time, we trust His power, authority, and promises as we invite others to join His kingdom through sharing the gospel.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 109). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Passages like this call us deeper into the Bible to see the Old Testament promises and their fulfillment in Jesus. When we start to see the Bible’s bigness, we come away amazed, like the disciples in Luke 24. Jesus showed them that He is the hero pointed to in every story, a revelation that caused their hearts to burn within them (Luke 24:32).

**What practices could help you read the Bible in a way that sees its bigness and leads your heart to burn with worship for Christ?**



**HEART:** Seeing Jesus ride on a donkey toward the cross could not be more moving when you understand that the King of the universe did that for you. He humbled Himself for you. He lived a perfect life for you. He died



for you. He rose again for you. The gospel is not just general good news for the world but particular good news for *you* to fill your heart with the love of Christ.

**How does seeing Jesus's humility change the way you see yourself and others?**



**HANDS:** Praise is the natural reaction to the coming of any king, but especially to the coming of the King of kings. Jesus scolded the Pharisees for asking Him to squelch His disciples' praise. That was not arrogance on Jesus's part because He is the true King of the world. Jesus is the only rightful King, so praise is the only appropriate response.

**How will you praise Jesus as your King with your words and actions this week?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- In light of Jesus's role as a servant, choose to live a humble life: serve others, help the helpless, and give to those who can't repay in Jesus's name.
- Let today's passage inspire you to become a more diligent student of the Old Testament. Take the time to look up cross-references in your Bible to help you understand the significance of this week's passage.
- As you pray this week, believe that Jesus has glory, power, and authority in the heavenly realm, interceding for us as we come before His throne.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 109 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 150:1-2 with your group. Invite volunteers to call out powerful acts of God's abundant greatness that God has performed in their own lives.

#### References

1. Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 293–94.
2. Donald S. Fortner, *Discovering Christ in the Gospel of Luke*, vol. 2 (Durham, England: Go Publications, 2012), 234.

Notes



# PERSECUTION TO GATHERING

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 13:5-11,14-16,24-27,32-33

## CONTEXT

In the final days before His betrayal, Jesus told His disciples what to expect upon His return at the end of the age. His looming death on the cross would not be the end of the story. There would be much more to come for His followers: The gospel must be preached, people must be saved, and Jesus will return in glory. Though Jesus's message can be difficult to understand, it is a gift of grace to us all. He told us what to expect in the future. He assured us that, come what may, He is in control, He is coming back, and He will make all things right.

## KEY CONCEPT

**We stay alert, knowing Jesus will one day return, though we don't know when.**

As you examine Mark 13:5-11,14-16,24-27,32-33:

- Take comfort that though persecution will come during the end times, the gospel will still be preached and Jesus will come again for His people.
- Recognize that no one knows when Jesus will return, so we always need to be alert and ready for Him.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Heals a Blind Man  
(John 9:1-41)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Foretells the Destruction of  
Jerusalem and the Temple (Mark 13:1-37)

Jesus Encounters Zacchaeus  
(Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into  
Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)

Jesus Institutes the Lord's  
Supper (Mark 14:12-26)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                        |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 13:1-13    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Matthew 25:1-46 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 13:14-37   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 21:5-38    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Matthew 24:1-51 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 10        |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

## THE END TIMES WILL BRING FALSE RUMORS AND PERSECUTION (MARK 13:5-11).

Circle the commands to be ready that Jesus gives His followers.

**5** Jesus told them, “Watch out that no one deceives you. **6** Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and they will deceive many. **7** When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don’t be alarmed; these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. **8** For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. **9** But you, be on your guard! They will hand you over to local courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a witness to them. **10** And it is necessary that the gospel be preached to all nations. **11** So when they arrest you and hand you over, don’t worry beforehand what you will say, but say whatever is given to you at that time, for it isn’t you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”

On account of sin and the sinful nature we inherit from Adam, people’s hearts are bent away from God. Even disciples of Jesus are prone to believe lies, conspiracy theories, and rumors. Jesus knew this, so He prepared His followers for what was and is to come, not to stir fear in our hearts but to give comfort. Many may be deceived in the end times, but His people must not be.

Yet deception is only one part of the difficulties to come. Persecution is another. There will be wars, earthquakes, and famines, but more personal challenges lay ahead. God’s people will be handed over to courts, flogged, demanded to bear witness, and even to deny the faith. We have seen many such instances in the history of the church. Jesus wants us to know that such things are not glitches in the system but features for the Christian life. Why? Because through the suffering of His saints, His gospel is proclaimed and goes forth.

**LEADER NOTE:** Some people make a whole career out of trying to predict the date and time of Jesus’s return. The truth is that information is not granted to us. It wasn’t granted to Jesus either, only God the Father knows (13:32). Take current events seriously, of course, but it is wise not to make more of events than is warranted. Rather, look for opportunities to preach the gospel, to bear witness to Christ in the hard days, to put your trust in Him, and to serve Him.

**How does Jesus’s warning strengthen your confidence to remain faithful when trials come?**



Warnings of persecution can cause intense anxiety, even in believers. When dragged before governors and kings—important and powerful judges—what can a Christian say? Should we prepare our speeches now? Should we take courses in apologetics to have all the answers at the ready? What if the judges and magistrates ask a question we can't answer or make a demand we cannot meet? The good news is that Jesus told us we need not worry about what we will say in those moments. The Holy Spirit will speak for us and through us. When everything is on the line for you, you will not be alone!

How can we know this is true? Because just a little while after Jesus said these things, He went through the ultimate, unfair trial. He stood before the Sanhedrin, the Roman governor, and the Judean king. He was beaten and sentenced to death on false charges. More than mere sympathy, Jesus is the One who has conquered everything that makes us afraid. He is the only One who, after judgment and execution, rose from the dead never to die again, and He will come again. So He can truly say to us: "You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

**LEADER NOTE:** What a good shepherd Jesus is not to leave us in the dark about what is to come, even if He doesn't give all the details we wish we knew. The point is less about the specifics of the suffering and more about the specifics of the support. When the day of trouble comes, we are not left to ourselves. Jesus is with us! The Holy Spirit is with us! God Himself will be our comfort and our support.

**Does the promise of the Holy Spirit with you in persecution give you comfort or raise questions? Why?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST:** The Bible is clear that one day Christ will return in bodily form (Matt. 24–25) to rule and reign over all creation. Scripture gives no timeline as to when it will occur (Acts 1:7), only assuring that it will be unexpected (Matt. 25:8–10) and glorious (Matt. 24:30). Because of the mystery of these events, several views have emerged in the attempt to understand everything the Bible teaches about His coming reign. One view holds that upon His return, Jesus will begin a literal 1000-year reign on earth. Another holds that this millennium occurs in this church age, to be followed by His return. Another still holds that the millennium symbolizes Christ's reign in heaven and in the hearts of Christians while we wait for His return. Despite differences, all views agree that the imminent return of Christ is the hope of every Christian, knowing that when He returns, all things will be made new.

## THOUGH WE KNOW NOT WHEN, JESUS WILL RETURN (MARK 13:14-16,24-27,32-33).

**Highlight the poetic imagery in the passage below.**

**14** “When you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be” (let the reader understand), “then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. **15** A man on the housetop must not come down or go in to get anything out of his house, **16** and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat. . . . **24** But in those days, after that tribulation: The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; **25** the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. **26** Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27** 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** Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father. **33** Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming.”

Verse 14 opens with an allusion to Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 regarding “the abomination of desolation.” Jesus was pointing to days not long after His ascension when the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans and the Jews would have to flee from Jerusalem. Of course, Jesus’s apostles didn’t know that would happen when He spoke these words to them. They did not have the advantage of hindsight that we do.

**LEADER NOTE:** Stemming from Daniel’s prophecy in the latter parts of his book, the phrase “abomination of desolation” refers to a sacrilegious act in the temple. In 168 BC, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the temple by placing an altar to Zeus in the place where burnt offerings were made to God. Then he sacrificed a pig—an unclean animal and unacceptable sacrifice. It was natural for everyone to look upon that event as the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy, but here Jesus indicated it was only a partial fulfillment.

Yet Jesus also spoke beyond AD 70. The passage is filled with Old Testament imagery. Joel 2:10; 3:15 speak of the sun, moon, and stars darkening. On the great day of the Lord, at the end of this present age, when the Lord returns to finally redeem and restore this broken world, there will be a kind of de-creation. Everything will be shaken so that what remains are only the things that cannot be shaken—the everlasting things of God (Heb. 12:25-29).

**What “shakable” things are you tempted to cling to, and how might Jesus be inviting you to rest more deeply in what cannot be shaken?**

**Key Concept:** We stay alert, knowing Jesus will one day return, though we don't know when.

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"The Son of Man is coming in the midst of both calamities and promises, both the grief of nations and the longing of the saints. He is the common element in both. He who is common to both will end the one by inflicting judgment on the nations, and will commence the other by fulfilling the longings of the saints."<sup>1</sup>

—Tertullian (c. 155–220)

After all these things, the Lord will appear in glory! He will gather His people into His everlasting kingdom in a renewed heavens and earth, and we will be with the Lord forever in joy and gladness. This will be utterly amazing! But we don't know when it will happen, nor can we know. God has not revealed that information. Our part isn't to try to figure it out. How could we ever know if Jesus Himself didn't know? Our part is to stay alert, to keep close to Jesus, and to await His return eagerly. Watching and waiting is not revolutionary. Anyone can do it. He's not asking too much from us. He's only asking us to be ready when He comes. The great day of the Lord will be awful for those who oppose Him, but for those who love Him, it will be marvelous.

**LEADER NOTE:** The fact that Jesus didn't know the day or hour is an immense help to us rather than a hindrance. So many people throughout the years have attempted to calculate the day and time of His return. They've led people down wrong paths and taken the focus off the right things. But since we can't know the day or hour, we can live every day like it's the last. We can live every day with the hope of His return. This should make us eager to share the gospel, to walk in obedience, and even to rejoice in our sufferings. Not knowing when Jesus will return makes every moment matter even more.

**When you imagine Christ appearing in glory to gather His people, what stirs in your heart?**

### CHURCH CONNECTION

Jesus spoke of the end times when He will return, gathering His people after a time of hardship and persecution. No one knows when He will come, so in the meantime, we stay alert and preach the gospel.

Notes

## ARRIVAL

**PREPARE:** Before the group experience begins, write the following on index cards, one per card: “What will the stock market do in one month? What will you eat for lunch today? Will you get a puppy next week? Who will be the next person to break the world record in the mile? What will be the greatest joy you experience next year?”

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, give an index card to five volunteers. Say: “We all might think we know what the future will bring to some extent. Let’s see what our confidence in predicting the future looks like.” Invite each volunteer to read their card, provide an answer, and give a percentage of confidence of their answer. Explain that Jesus gave us some information about the end times. Some elements we know for certain, while others aren’t revealed with clarity.

## CONTEXT

**SUMMARIZE:** After the triumphal entry, Jesus cleansed the temple (Mark 11:15-19), taught on prayer (11:20-25), squared off with the Jewish authorities (11:27-33; 12:13-37), told parables (12:1-12), and offered His followers warnings and instructions (12:38-44). As Jesus and His disciples left the temple, one of them commented on the architecture of the temple (13:1). When Jesus foretold that the temple would be destroyed, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus privately when the end times would happen and what the signs would be (13:2-4). Jesus’s answer in this week’s core passage was relevant to His disciples that day and also for us 2000 years later.

## RECAP

**ASK:** What did you learn about the end times this week? What questions do you still have about the end times?

**REVIEW:** In your personal preparation with Mark 13 this week, you learned that Jesus gave His disciples some specific details about the end times. However, He didn’t reveal one primary element—when! Still, because of Jesus’s teaching, we know what to watch for and how to live until that day. Let’s explore this passage together.



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## Notes

**ENGAGE:** Lead your group to add to the chart using the content in these verses. Use the leader note on page 142 and to explain that Antiochus IV Epiphanes had already desecrated the temple in a grotesque way over a century before Jesus was born, yet that was not the desecration Jesus foretold. Another would come that would begin the dark days of tribulation but conclude with the light of Jesus's glorious return and restoration of God's creation and people.

**DEBRIEF**

**What are some wrong ways to respond to the Bible's end times prophecies?**

**What are some ways we should respond to Jesus's warnings in Mark 13?**

**SUMMARIZE**

We can summarize today's passage with a few quotes from Scripture: "Be on your guard!" (Mark 13:9); "Let the reader understand" (v. 14); and "Watch! Be alert!" (v. 33). If we have questions about the end times, we should search the Scriptures. As we see signs of the end times, we must remember Jesus's promises. As we consider people who do not know Jesus, we must share the good news with them so they too can be saved from the wrath to come. Jesus will return. Until then, we know, watch, and share.

**HEAD, HEART, HANDS**

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 117). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Mark 13 is a heady chapter, forcing us to think through the end times. There is no end to speculation about those days—when they will come, what it will look like, and so on. Jesus warned His disciples to be careful that no one would deceive them about His return (Mark 13:5), and we should pray for wisdom and discernment as we wait.

**How can you be sure that no one will deceive you about Christ's return?**



**HEART:** We have a relative few Scripture passages that describe what the end times will be like, but there are two things that we can know for sure. First, we know that one day this age as we know it will end. Second, we know that Jesus will return to make all things new. Any scenario with Jesus at the center cannot ultimately be bad news for the Christian, even with the trials and tribulations to come.

**How does the promise of Christ's return fill you with hope today?**

**Key Concept:** We stay alert, knowing Jesus will one day return, though we don't know when.



**HANDS:** The appropriate response to Jesus's words in Mark 13 is faithful obedience. We should be alert and well-read with our Bibles to discern the truth. We should live prayerfully. And we should share the gospel with others, serving the Lord wherever He has put us. Our regular lives devoted to the Lord are the perfect ground from which to watch and wait for Jesus's return.

**In the ordinary rhythms of your life, what will it look like to watch and wait for Jesus's return?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Follow the cross-references in today's passage to Old Testament passages that prophesy the destruction of the temple and the end times.
- Take your fears, questions, and burdens about the end times to Jesus in prayer. Ask Him to give you peace and to show you His purpose for you in the coming years.
- Consider Jesus's response to the end times: they are certainly coming. Think of the people you encounter that need to know the hope and peace that comes with trusting Jesus that they too can rejoice when that day comes, knowing it could be any day starting tomorrow. Make a plan in sharing the good news of salvation with them.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 117 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 10:16-18 with your group. Thank God that at Jesus's return, any injustice and hardship we face from the wicked will be no more.

#### References

1. Tertullian as quoted in Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Mark (Revised)*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 178.

Notes





# THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

By Greg Kilgore



What would you do if you knew everything? What would you do if you knew all the possible outcomes of every situation in circumstances past, present, and future? Many people likely would use this knowledge for their own personal benefit and gain. Thankfully, this ability to know all things is not an attribute that humans possess.

The word omniscience comes from the Latin *omni* meaning “all” and *scientia* meaning “knowledge.” Omniscience is the attribute of God where He possesses all knowledge. Nothing can surprise God or catch Him off guard. Nothing is hidden from His sight. Psalm 147:5 says, “Our Lord is great, vast in power; his understanding is infinite.” First John 3:19-20 says, “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things.” The God of the universe knows “all things.”

## GOD’S OMNISCIENCE IS A BLESSING

God’s vast knowledge is a wonderful blessing to His people. Psalm 139 is full of references to God’s infinite knowledge. This infinite knowledge of God causes David to respond in worship: “This wondrous knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it” (v. 6). Thus, the omniscience of God should lead us to worship God for how great and knowledgeable He is.

This key doctrine serves as a great comfort to the believer. We belong to the One who knows all! That means that God knows us better than we know ourselves. That is a frightful thought when we think about our sinfulness in light of God’s holiness. However, this gives us great hope because He has defeated sin and death. God knows how sinful we are, yet He still has made a way for us to know

Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. In His perfect wisdom and knowledge, God knew that a plan of redemption through Christ was needed to redeem us from our sinfulness.

## JESUS IS OMNISCIENT AS GOD THE SON

Jesus, being fully God, possesses this attribute of omniscience. John stated, “Jesus . . . did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25). Jesus having the ability to know what is in the hearts of human beings is an example of His divine omniscience on display. Often He displayed that He knew what people were thinking in their hearts (Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Mark 2:6-8; Luke 6:8). After the resurrection, when Jesus asked Peter a third time if he loved Jesus, Peter replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (John 21:17).

Jesus is fully God and fully man. His deity and humanity (a mystery to our finite human minds) are preserved perfectly in Him.

God knows how sinful we are, yet He still has made a way for us to know Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. In His perfect wisdom and knowledge, God knew that a plan of redemption through Christ was needed to redeem us from our sinfulness.

Additionally, Jesus revealed that He had divine foreknowledge. In John 11, Jesus assured His disciples that Lazarus's sickness would "not end in death" but would glorify God (v. 4). He later had to tell His confused disciples: "Lazarus has died. I'm glad for you that I wasn't there so that you may believe" (vv. 14-15). After Lazarus's death, Jesus told Martha, "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23). John also indicated that "Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and the one who would betray him" (6:64). At the triumphal entry, Jesus again displayed His divine foreknowledge to instruct His disciples about the colt that He would ride into Jerusalem (Luke 19:30).

### **JESUS ACCEPTS THAT ONLY THE FATHER KNOWS THE HOUR**

Jesus is clearly shown in the Gospels to be omniscient as fully God and fully man. But Jesus also accepted that God the Father knows when Jesus will return to earth, yet Jesus does not. Jesus stated: "Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father. Watch! Be alert! For you don't know when the time is coming" (Mark 13:32-33). Does this contradict the other sections of the Gospels that clearly portray Jesus as possessing equal omniscience as God the Son? No, Jesus is fully God and fully man. His deity and humanity (a mystery to our finite human minds) are preserved perfectly in Him. How Jesus could know all things and have limited knowledge on the specific date of His return will remain a mystery to us humans. However, we can trust the Lord and think through this topic as a theological exercise where Jesus here is likely speaking in terms of His human nature, not His divine nature.

We could get caught up in some of these important theological topics and debates and yet miss the point of God's omniscience. Praise the Lord He is the One who knows all! We can trust Him and His perfect plan for our life. If we return to Psalm 139, at the end of the psalm, David reminded us that the purpose of God's infinite knowledge is to drive us to the Lord in repentance and faith. David wrote: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way" (vv. 23-24). Jesus is the One who perfectly knows and has made known this everlasting way.

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**Greg Kilgore** is the associational missions strategist for the Mid-Valley Southern Baptist Association and an elder at Woodward Park Baptist Church in Fresno, California. He and his wife, Megan, have three children: Owen, Camille, and Judson Titus. Greg is a PhD student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also teaches as an adjunct professor.

# BETRAYAL TO BLESSING

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 14:17-26

## CONTEXT

Jesus “triumphantly” entered Jerusalem, humbly riding on a donkey. Over the next week, He cleansed the temple of thieves, denounced the Jewish authorities, and taught about the future destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Near the end of the week, in the upper room, before Jesus celebrated and transformed the Passover meal, He had a startling message for His disciples: one of them would betray Him. This betrayal was not a surprise to Jesus. He knew it all along, and as He neared the day of His death, it was time for the traitor to do what he had been appointed to do.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus endured betrayal, remaining faithful to the mission of establishing a new covenant.**

As you examine Mark 14:17-26:

- Recognize that at the last supper, Jesus knew He would be betrayed by one of His disciples.
- Rejoice that even knowing Judas’s coming betrayal, Jesus remained focused on sacrificing His life for the salvation of all.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Raises Lazarus from  
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Foretells the Destruction  
of Jerusalem and the Temple  
(Mark 13:1-37)

Jesus Is Betrayed and Tried  
(Mark 14:27-15:15)

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into  
Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
**Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper**  
(Mark 14:12-26)

Jesus Is Crucified and  
Buried (Mark 15:16-47)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                        |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 14:1-26    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> John 13:1-14:31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Matthew 26:1-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> John 15:1-17:26 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Luke 22:1-30    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 55        |



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

## Notes



SCAN ME

**Bonus Content**

Scan this QR code to see the Old Testament prophecies of Judas's betrayal and its fulfillment in the New Testament.

## JESUS ENDURED THE SUFFERING OF BETRAYAL (MARK 14:17-21).

**Underline the hints Jesus gave for the identity of His betrayer.**

**17** When evening came, he arrived with the Twelve. **18** While they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.” **19** They began to be distressed and to say to him one by one, “Surely not I?” **20** He said to them, “It is one of the Twelve—the one who is dipping bread in the bowl with me. **21** For the Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.”

In this moment, Jesus and the Twelve were observing the Passover feast as commanded in the law of Moses. What should have been a joyous remembrance of God's deliverance, however, suddenly became somber as Jesus declared that one of them would betray Him. Imagine the shock in the room. Sure, Jesus had enemies, but did He have one in this room? It was only reasonable for them to be distressed and to ask for clarification.

Mark said each of the Twelve—one by one—asked Jesus, “Surely not I?” Why one by one? Perhaps they all had some self-doubt. They loved Jesus, but they had seen how people reacted to Him. Perhaps they knew their own weak and sinful hearts. Each thought, “Will I be the one to betray Him?” Even if unintentional, they each worried they might be the cause of Jesus's downfall, except surely the one who had already made the arrangements with the chief priests (vv. 10-11).

**What are some ways you might have the potential to betray Jesus?**

To the disciples' self-searching query, Jesus gave a non-answer: “It is one of the Twelve” (Mark 14:20). One eating with them now in that intimate setting would be the one to betray their Lord. Why didn't Jesus tell the other disciples it was Judas? We can't be sure, but Jesus said later in His prayer: “I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled” (John 17:12). If the rest of the disciples knew, would Judas have made it out of that room? But the Scripture had to be fulfilled, and the path was already laid out. Jesus would go “just as it is written about him” (Mark 14:21), possibly a reference to Psalm 41:9, where David said, “Even my friend in whom I trusted, one who ate my bread, has raised his heel against me.”

**LEADER NOTE:** Psalm 41:9 is not the only passage that foretold the Messiah's betrayal. Isaiah 53:8-9; Daniel 9:26; and Zechariah 13:7 all hint at betrayal. Because Jesus knew the Old Testament well, He understood the events swirling around Him as the fulfillment of prophecy. He wasn't surprised by Judas's betrayal, even if He was wounded by it. This kind of fulfillment doesn't mean that Jesus just stepped into it emotionless. He felt very deeply everything that happened. He knew His mission, but that did not make it automatically easy to fulfill.

Even though it was foretold, Judas was still responsible. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility coexist. God is in control of everything, and we are morally responsible for our actions. Judas's betrayal was not excused because it was a fulfillment of prophecy. His sin was his own, as was his judgment. It would have been better, in fact, if he were never born at all, for his eternity apart from Jesus will be far worse than never existing. Such a sobering reality highlights the seriousness of sin.

**LEADER NOTE:** Mark's Gospel is the shortest and most direct, sparing many details. But we shouldn't think Jesus was just "going through the motions" in this passage. Jesus experienced sadness worthy to be called "a man of suffering" (Isa. 53:3). When He entered humanity, He took upon Himself our ability to be wounded. He felt deep pain from Judas's betrayal. He experienced abandonment on the cross. He suffered the greatest agony in His death. Yet all the suffering He endured was to prevent our eternal suffering, and as Hebrews 12:2 says, He did it joyfully.

**How does Judas's fulfillment of prophecy challenge your understanding of the nature and authority of Scripture?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus suffered more than just the cross. He suffered humiliation and betrayal. Yet He endured because of His love and commitment to His mission to bring salvation and establish a new covenant with God's people.

## JESUS ENDURED TO THE CROSS BECAUSE OF HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE NEW COVENANT (MARK 14:22-26).

**Highlight the elements of the Lord's Supper and what they represent.**

**22** As they were eating, he took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." **23** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. **24** He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. **25** Truly I tell you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." **26** After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

In 1 Corinthians 11:28, the apostle Paul said we ought to examine ourselves before partaking in communion, or the Lord's Supper. That is the model Jesus gave us in this passage. Jesus announced His coming betrayal, and each disciple asked Jesus if he were the one who would betray Him. Then Jesus took the bread and wine and served the first communion meal.

**What weaknesses and sins are revealed through your own self-examination right now?**

**LEADER NOTE:** Self-condemnation is not the same thing as self-examination. A sober awareness of weakness and sin leading to repentance is not a disqualification from partaking in communion. Some people struggle with this even to the point of not taking communion for years because they feel unworthy of it. But the only qualification any of us have to partake in communion is a faith-filled recognition of our very unworthiness that made it necessary. What could glorify Jesus more than showing you in the tangible act of communion that your sins are indeed forgiven. You need not stay away. You can come. Jesus Himself welcomes you to His table.

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"There is a reality in the celebration of the Lord's Supper beyond a memorial. Yes, Jesus in His humanity is in heaven, but in His deity, He is not restricted by time and space. So, we can have full assurance when we come to the Lord's Table that we come into His real presence. He is there."<sup>1</sup>

—R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)



Such examination humbles us to receive the gift of Christ's body and blood offering. The disciples that evening were not aware of the deep meaning behind Jesus's words, but soon they would see. The offering Jesus made in the Lord's Supper symbolized the offering He made on the cross. The bread represented His body, the wine His blood. The broken body and shed blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins—a beautiful reality!

Like Judas's betrayal, Jesus's death on the cross would be a fulfillment of Scripture. Through it, Jesus, our Prophet, Priest, and King, would institute the new covenant as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Christ would sacrifice Himself as the final offering for the forgiveness of sins to fulfill the old covenant and initiate the new covenant (Heb. 8:13). In the Lord's Supper, this is exactly what we celebrate. Jesus took, He blessed, He broke, He gave, He offered Himself—body and blood—to save His disciples and us.

The brevity of the passage must not be taken to mean this is an unimportant event. Here Jesus began something new, meaningful, and long-lasting. We still celebrate the Lord's Supper today. It is one of the ordinances enjoyed by churches around the world and throughout the centuries. This is one reminder of the dying and resurrecting love of Christ. It is a gift from our Savior to taste and see that He is good (Ps. 34:8).

**LEADER NOTE:** The Lord's Supper both points back to the cross and forward to the resurrection. In verse 25, Jesus tells His disciples He will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it in the kingdom of God, when He returns and redeems and restores this world finally and fully. On that day, the Bible tells us, there will be a great feast like that at a wedding, where Jesus will drink of the wine again with His people (Rev. 19:1-10). He once again will be our host, and all the Lord's Suppers we have tasted throughout our lives will be consummated in that meal with Him forever.

**How should Jesus's sacrifice of His own body and blood shape the way we come to the Lord's Supper?**



#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE LORD'S SUPPER:** The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

**ARRIVAL**

**PREPARE:** Before your group arrives, write “Let’s go to the beach!” on the board.

**ENGAGE:** Point to the board and say: “A trip to the beach sounds like fun to most people. But those who have planned a beach trip and recovered from a beach trip know that it’s a lot of work.” Engage your group in considering all the preparation that goes into a trip to the beach.

**TRANSITION:** Sometimes we don’t realize all the work that goes into something. As a kid, you didn’t know how much your parents prepared to make a simple family vacation happen. As an adult, you do. The same is true of Jesus’s death and resurrection. He suffered so much more than just the cross: humiliation, betrayal, anguish, rejection, and more. But He endured it all because of His love and His faithfulness. In this week’s passage, we get a glimpse of Jesus’s endurance even in the face of betrayal.

**CONTEXT**

**REVIEW:** At the beginning of Mark 14, the chief priests were looking for a way to arrest Jesus and kill him (v. 1). But they feared arresting Him at the Festival of Unleavened Bread might spark a riot (v. 2). Yet after Jesus was anointed in Bethany by what seemed to be a waste of resources (vv. 3-9), Judas approached the chief priests to betray Him for money (vv. 10-11). Then beginning in verse 12, Jesus and His disciples began preparing for the Passover night by securing a room and the necessary resources for what would become the most meaningful meal of their lives.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** What stood out to you from this passage in a fresh way this week? What did this passage reveal to you about Jesus? What did you observe about the disciples?

**TRANSITION:** This week’s text focused on Jesus’s final Passover meal and the revelations that He gave as they were eating: that He would be betrayed, that He would offer His life as a sacrifice, and that the kingdom of God was a certainty.



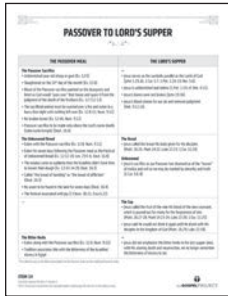
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Notes



**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Mark 14:22-26.

**CONSIDER:** Pass out copies of **Pack Item 14: Passover to Lord's Supper** and review how the Lord's Supper that Jesus initiated here was different and new. Ask: "What is the connection between sharing a meal and having a close relationship? What did Jesus's conversation during the meal point to? What are some meals in Scripture that hold significance or mark something important?"

**ENGAGE:** Continue to fill in the chart with Jesus's words that reveal His suffering and faithfulness. Point out that Jesus was willing to endure the many elements of suffering because He was faithful to His Father and His mission of establishing the new covenant through His death.

DEBRIEF

**As you look at Jesus's words of suffering and faithfulness, how does this shape your understanding of the cross and your salvation?**

SUMMARIZE

When we focus on Jesus at the last supper, we see obedience, foreknowledge, and commitment. Jesus had a clear view of the cross, and He was not surprised at His betrayal, suffering, or death. As we walk through the heartbreak of our own lives, we can have confidence that Jesus understands our griefs and sorrows and He comforts us with His salvation and example as we remember His sacrifice and look ahead to the kingdom of God.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 127). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Jesus's declaration of the new covenant was not something that occurred in the heat of the moment. Rather, the new covenant pointed back to the covenant God promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, culminating with the promise to forgive their iniquity and never remember their sin. When we observe the Lord's Supper, we celebrate Jesus redeeming us and remembering it no longer.

**Why was it important for Jesus to institute the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of both His death and the new covenant?**



**HEART:** Self-reflection and evaluation are appropriate, even necessary, and the Lord's Supper provides an explicit opportunity to participate in such reflection. As we contemplate our sin, consider our need for forgiveness, and then approach the table, our hearts are prepared to receive the grace Jesus offers.

**How does Jesus's sacrifice for your sins encourage you to repent and come to Him for grace and forgiveness?**



**HANDS:** When we come to the Lord's table, we come with nothing in our hands. We need nothing in our hands. Jesus isn't asking for anything from us; He's giving everything to us. All we need for communion with Him is a recognition of our need and faith that Jesus supplies what we need. We come as we really are to who Jesus really is—our complete Savior.

**What would you say to a fellow believer who thinks they need to skip the Lord's Supper until they are "worthy"?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) aloud each day this week, dwelling on these phrases: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10).
- Highlight Mark 14:17-26 in your Bible and be sure to read it prayerfully before you take each Lord's Supper.
- As you eat this week, consider how your table may be used to foster deep and beautiful relationships. Invite some people over for a meal.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 127 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 55:12-14 with your group. Thank Jesus for enduring humiliation, betrayal, pain, and death for His glory and for our eternal life.

#### References

1. R. C. Sproul, Mark, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 368.

Notes



# FOUR WAYS TO DEAL WITH ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM

By Darren Wiedman



It's that thing in your small group that nobody wants to talk about but everyone knows is there. The odd behavior. The unique personality. Or more than likely, the touchy subject. According to social media, the earth is flat or round, vaccines help or harm, and the media is lying or telling the truth. This is a difficult time to be alive if you like definitive answers. And it can make for some tense exchanges and hurt feelings, even in churches and small groups, where you'd think everyone would be on the same page.

But even in biblical times, there was conflict. The apostles argued about which of them was the greatest? Mary and Martha disagreed about how to serve guests. And Pilate asked the ultimate question (although rhetorically), "What is truth?"

Today's small groups continue the tradition. When we can't see eye to eye, it may be time to have a heart to heart. Here are four ways to overcome the dreaded elephant in the room.

## 1) IGNORE IT

Is your elephant the small porcelain type that rests on a corner shelf or a large smelly one that sits in the circle? If it's the former, you may be able to divert attention away from it by emphasizing the other positive aspects of group life: discussions about the Bible, fellowship, laughter, and food.

## 2) CONFRONT IT

Often the elephant comes in with one particular person. You don't want to appear to take a side against someone in front of everyone, so a private discussion will be best. Keep in mind that it's difficult to convince anyone that their thinking is incorrect or goes against all factual evidence. So don't bother trying to persuade someone they're wrong; rather, remind them about the purpose of the group: to focus on Christ and biblical learning. In other words, leave your elephant at home, or take it to a different circus.

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Continually encourage  
your group to  
fix their gaze on  
the gigantic love of Jesus.  
Everything else  
is small by comparison.

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### 3) EMBRACE IT

If your group has an elephant that can't be ignored, maybe it's time to bring it out into the middle of the group and take a good look. This would require permission beforehand if it's one particular person's elephant. But if it's a group issue like politics (elephants and donkeys), perhaps you can all come to an agreement that both of them need to stay outside. Or maybe, if you're brave, you can devote an entire group session to discussing each side of the various issues from a biblical perspective. (I can think of very few scenarios where that would end well, but maybe your group is spiritually mature enough to take that on.) But for many other issues—someone's obnoxious laugh, the woman who cries about everything, the overly expressive worshiper—acknowledging the elephant in front of everyone can greatly reduce its size and impact.

### 4) PRAY ABOUT IT

This really should be the first thing you do. Every elephant is different. And only God knows the best way to deal with them. In reality, the elephant in the room is less of a challenge than the humans in the circle. The whole point of small groups is discipleship. And sometimes God will use an elephant to train a person. After all, Jesus helped the apostles understand the unexpected requirements for anyone wanting to be the greatest; He helped Martha get a better perspective on priorities; and He proved that He, in fact, is the truth, even if Pilate never understood.

And maybe that's the ultimate solution to the elephant in your room. Continually encourage your group to fix their gaze on the gigantic love of Jesus. Everything else is small by comparison.

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**Darren Wiedman** is a copywriter for Lifeway's Adults Ministry team who relies heavily on God's grace and Jesus's atoning work on the cross.



# THE DISCIPLINE OF BOLD FAITH

By Rachel Myrick



Jesus's disciples often struggled with "little faith" (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Luke 12:28). The moments when Jesus chided His disciples for little faith, He also pointed out their little faith was due to their doubt. Jesus stated: "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (Mark 11:22-23). A small kernel of saving faith that believes God can do the impossible allows us to face life's circumstance with bold, confident faith.

## DO NOT FEAR

Fear is a natural reaction to the threat of danger, whether real or imagined. But fear also reveals a lack of faith in God's sovereignty. When the disciples feared the storm on the Sea of Galilee, they woke Jesus, saying: "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?" (Mark 4:38). The disciples recognized the threat the storm presented. But their very real fear showed their very real lack of faith in who Jesus is. They knew He was a miracle-worker, but when He stopped the storm, they asked in terror: "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!" (v. 41). How many times in our lives have we struggled with fear? Maybe we faced natural disasters, a devastating diagnosis, or even a physical or spiritual attack. In those circumstances, Jesus wants us to trust Him, to acknowledge our fear but rest in His power to do the impossible (Isa. 41:10; Matt. 10:28; John 14:27).

## STEP OUT IN FAITH

Some time later, the disciples got a do-over. After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent the disciples ahead of Him across the sea. In the early

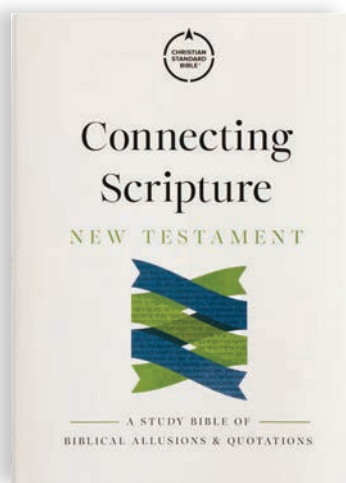
morning, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and "cried out in fear" (Matt. 14:26). Jesus commanded them to have courage, and Peter took that literally. Peter said, "Lord, if it's you . . . command me to come to you on the water" (v. 28). Hooray, Peter, now you're getting it, we think as he stepped out of the boat and walked toward Jesus. Yet when he took his eyes off of Jesus, he sank like a stone. Jesus saved him but asked, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (v. 31). When we walk with the Holy Spirit, there may be times when He wants us to step out in bold faith. Prayerfully and boldly take that first step, knowing all things are possible with Christ (Matt. 19:26).

## ASK IN FAITH

At first glance, the bleeding woman mentioned in Luke 8:43-48 appeared timid and afraid. She snuck into the mass of people swarming Jesus, hoping only to touch His hem and then escape without being noticed. But Jesus proclaimed: "Daughter . . . your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (v. 48). The only problem was that by stopping for the woman, Jairus's servant informed him that it was too late, his daughter was dead: "Don't bother the teacher anymore" (v. 49). Remember Jesus was on the way to heal Jairus's only daughter when He was interrupted. Can you imagine how Jairus felt hearing the news that it was too late? Yet Jesus assured him: "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved" (v. 50). Faith that Jesus could do anything, even when all hope was lost, restored Jairus's daughter (v. 54). What situation seems hopeless for you right now? John stated: "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15). Pray for Jesus to help you, and have faith.



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## THE SON HAS TRUTH

Jesus's ministry on earth was grounded in the truth and His divine identity and power. He spoke in truth and He lived in truth. Through parables and other teachings, Jesus taught us to seek truth, hear it, and grow because of it. His miracles over creation, over sickness, and over death prove the truth of His authority. And as more and more people took the step of faith to trust in Him, we see the truth of the growth of His kingdom. The events surrounding Jesus are not just stories, they're truth—evidence for the One who is God's Son, the Savior of the world.

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