

08

THE SON
HAS
AUTHORITY

LEADER GUIDE



the **GOSPELPROJECT.**

ADULTS



SUMMER | 2026

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 on the third day, 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.

CONTENTS

Being a Trellis for a New Group	6
The Gospel Project Scope and Sequence	8
How to Use the Leader Guide	12
The Son Has Authority	16
Capernaum in Jesus's Day	50
The Chosen Disciples	84
The Omnipotence of God	128
6 Ways to Make the Most of Sunday School This Summer	160
The Discipline of Prayer	162

UNIT 22: RESPONSES TO JESUS

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

	Memory Verses	19
June 7	Session 1 The Official Believed (John 4)	20
June 14	Session 2 The Hometown Rejected (Luke 4)	30
June 21	Session 3 The Crowd Amazed (Mark 1)	40
June 28	Session 4 The Leper Proclaimed (Mark 1)	52

UNIT 23: THE WAY OF JESUS

	Memory Verses	63
July 5	Session 1 Faith and Forgiveness (Mark 2)	64
July 12	Session 2 Healing and Calling (Mark 3)	74
July 19	Session 3 Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12)	86
July 26	Session 4 Lord of Love (Luke 6)	96

UNIT 24: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

	Memory Verses	107
Aug. 2	Session 1 He Is the Messiah (Matthew 11)	108
Aug. 9	Session 2 He Resurrects Life (Luke 7)	118
Aug. 16	Session 3 He Forgives Sin (Luke 7)	130
Aug. 23	Session 4 He Teaches on Prayer (Luke 11)	140
Aug. 30	Session 5 He Teaches on Worry (Luke 12)	150

THE EDITOR

Jesus, there is no one like Him. He graced the paths of Israel two thousand years ago, and He graces the pages of our Bibles today. But even better, He graces us with His presence in our hearts.

If you have been a Christian for many years, it might be easy to read the stories of Jesus in this volume with pride, thinking you already know these passages. But I pray that the Spirit would enlighten your mind and revive your heart to see something new or learn something different about who Jesus is—His heart, His character, His purpose. There is much that we already know about Him, but being God, there is still much for us to learn.

Like the crowds, let us be in awe as if seeing Him heal or cast out demons for the first time. But even more, let us be like Peter's mother-in-law, who served Jesus after being healed. Or like the man with leprosy who proclaimed about Him because of his joy. Or the friends of the man with paralysis who brought him to Jesus knowing He could do anything. Or like the disciples who obeyed when He called. Or the woman who was a sinner who gave Jesus her all.

There is something to learn from all these people who were changed because they encountered Jesus. This should make us reflect on our story of our encounter with Jesus. Whether we have chosen to trust in Him or not, our encounter with Jesus will forever change us. If you have not placed your faith in Him, know that He beckons to you now. Choosing to follow Jesus will change your trajectory. He did that for the people in these passages, and He continues to do that in people's lives today.

Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults



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Adult Leader Guide
Summer 2026
Volume 2, Number 4

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BEING A TRELLIS FOR A NEW GROUP

By G. Dwayne McCrary



Growing tomatoes is easy, they said. All you need is some sunlight, soil, and water. No one shared the necessity for spacing, a trellis or stakes, and adding fertilizer. The plants needed more care and support than I anticipated. The challenge was real, but with the support and knowledge of others, our tomatoes survived and eventually flourished.

The same can be true of starting a new group. The process may sound simple, but the challenges are real. Facing a room with only you and one other person can be discouraging. Trying to connect with people who seem to have forgotten how to answer their cell phones can feel personal. Attendees who are present one week and gone for the next two also can contribute to the discouragement of starting a new group. Leaders of established groups can help the leaders of new groups survive and thrive in five ways:

- 1. Mentor.** Just as I needed the expertise of successful tomato gardeners, leaders of new groups also need expertise. Experienced leaders can walk alongside new leaders and help them fine-tune how they prepare, offer tips for reaching out to potential group participants, and share how they overcame some of the challenges new leaders face. One important thing to remember is that they also may notice our less-than-stellar habits, so we want to make sure we are setting a good example.
- 2. Adopt.** Supplying a new gardener with items like a tomato cage and preferred plant foods is a way to ensure a new gardener gets a good start. We can provide new groups with the tools they need to succeed. An established



We can pray for eyes to see the need and courage
to address it in the way He directs, seeking His heart
and direction, and acting on His answer.

group can offer a new group a fresh set of dry-erase markers, nametags, and other items they find helpful. We can even present these items to a new leader a couple of weeks before they start their new group, also inviting them to share about their journey in starting their new group.

3. **Praise.** As a novice tomato gardener, having a pro point out what I'm doing right can make a big difference. Affirmation goes a long way for new group leaders as they seek to reach people who aren't part of a Bible study group. We can encourage them when they do the right things, knowing their faithfulness will be honored in time.
4. **Celebrate.** The excitement of the first tomato is worth sharing and celebrating. So too is a new group. We can celebrate the start of a new group. We can applaud the growth of the group and the new people who are participating in Bible study. We can celebrate as new groups reach people our current groups have been unable to reach.
5. **Pray.** Regardless of how much experience a tomato grower has, some things are beyond their control—weather, pests, diseases, and so on. The same is true with new and established groups. Some things can only be addressed with prayer. We can lead our established group to pray for the new group, encouraging the leaders with our prayers. In some cases, a new leader just needs to know that someone is praying for them. We can be those people.

The group that gave birth to the new group needs prayer as well. The vacuum left by those who moved to the new group will open the door for new opportunities and growth. We also can lead our groups to ask God to help us determine when we need to help start a new group. God may tell us to support other groups who are starting new groups, or He may reveal that we need to start a new Bible study group. Our responsibility is to ask God rather than decide for Him. We can pray for eyes to see the need and courage to address it in the way He directs, seeking His heart and direction, and acting on His answer.

These five actions—mentoring, adopting, praising, celebrating, and praying—serve as a trellis for a new group and provide the support needed so they can be fruitful.

G. Dwayne McCrary is the manager of the adult ongoing Bible study team 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

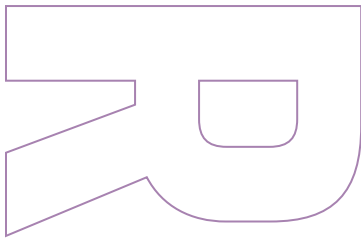
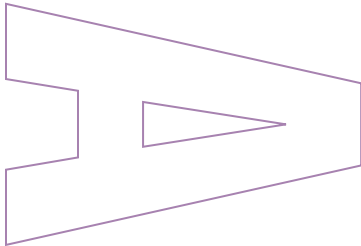
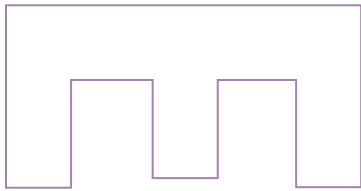
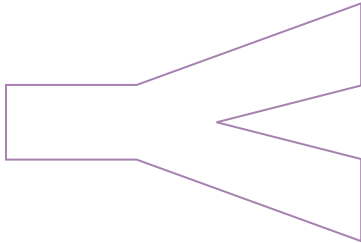
Our aim is to help people see the storyline of Scripture, the thread from the beginning to end, that weaves God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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

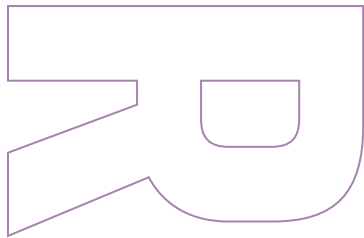
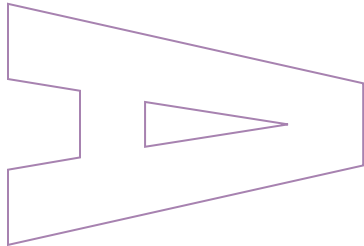
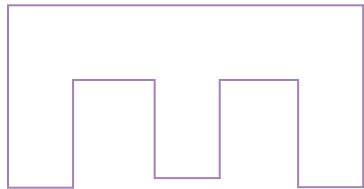
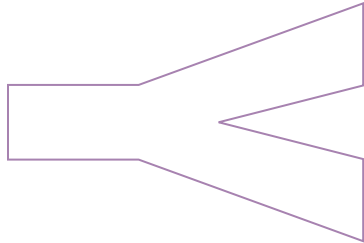
(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

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

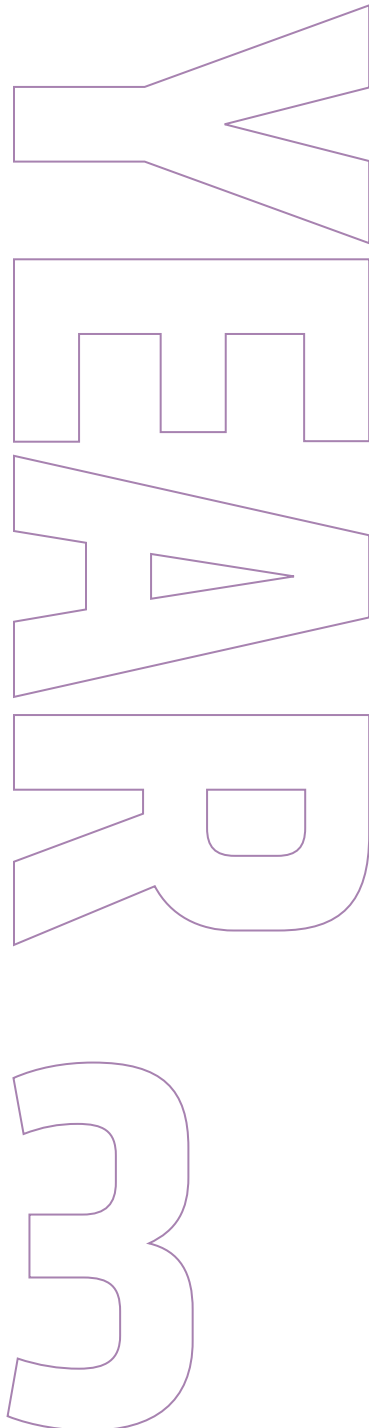
(The Gospels)

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

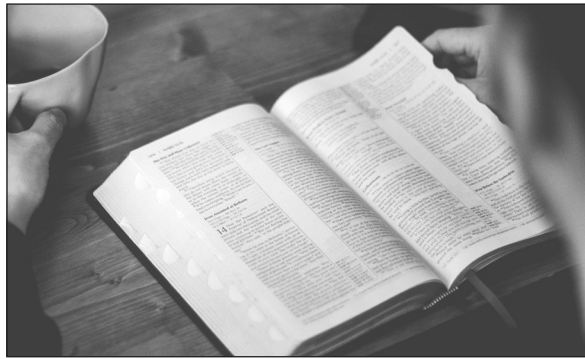
Unit 36: Jesus

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 Performs His First Miracle at the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12)

Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night (John 3:1-21)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Performs His Second Miracle in Cana (John 4:46-54)

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (John 2:13-22)

Jesus Speaks with a Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-42)

Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30)

Daily Readings

Day 1: John 4:43-54 Day 4: John 6:1-21

Day 2: John 5:1-23 Day 5: John 6:22-71

Day 3: John 5:24-47 Day 6: Psalm 142

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

21

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

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Notes

JESUS'S WORD IS POWERFUL AND ABLE TO HEAL
(JOHN 4:46-50)

Highlight words that depict the official's state of mind when he approached Jesus.

46 He went again to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum.
47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded with him to come down and heal his son, since he was about to die. 48 Jesus told him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe." 49 "Sir," the official said to him, "come down before my boy dies." 50 "Go," Jesus told him, "your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed.

Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee and was quickly approached by an official who was distraught over his son's condition. His son was dying and needed more than what a physician could offer. He approached Jesus with the expectation that Jesus would come with him to heal his son. In the same way that this official expected Jesus to come with him, we too have the tendency to come to God with preconceived expectations. Our downfall as broken people is to plead with God for what we think we need when we think we need it rather than trusting that God is faithful to our needs. Instead of anxiously expecting signs from God to work out our circumstances the way we want them to be handled, we must trust in His promises found in His Word.

LEADER NOTE: It is important to approach prayer with a heart of expectancy, eagerly awaiting God to work. His desire is for us to come before Him in confidence and to cast our burdens upon Him (Ps. 55:22; Phil. 3:6). Anxious, preconceived expectations happen when we ask God to work out our circumstances our way rather than trusting that God's authority and power are greater than our circumstances. Genuine faith exists in the heart of man when he gives up his burdens and relies solely upon the Lord.

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.

22 Unit 22 | Session 1 | The Official Believed

Key Concept: Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

Notes

In what ways have you had anxious expectations in your requests from the Lord?

Though the official may have thought his request would be received with urgency, Jesus unexpectedly responded, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (John 4:48). It is so easy to become entranced with the miracles rather than who the miracles point to. In this moment, Jesus taught us that He is the source of authority and power. The official believed that Jesus was able to heal his son as long as Jesus came to his house. Maybe he felt Jesus had to touch his son for the healing to happen. But Jesus, to demonstrate His authority and compassion for the official, said that his son would be healed roughly twenty-five miles away. Then the official, in faith, departed.

Often times God does not work in the way we think He ought to. He alone is sovereign, and our requests are not. Faith in His authority, power, and grace is what He desires from us.

LEADER NOTE: Pay special attention to two parts of Jesus's exchange with the official. First, Jesus made a point to show us that true faith does not occur solely based on signs and wonders. Faith is total trust in Him, even without the signs and wonders. Second, even though the official continued to plead with his anxious expectation, Jesus demonstrated compassion. Out of His compassion, Jesus demonstrated His power and authority with an act of grace. The same is true for us. Out of Christ's same heart of compassion, we were shown the ultimate act of grace and forgiveness by His death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

How does the reality of Jesus's authority and power affect how you approach Him in prayer?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"It often happens that while our Heavenly Father may not grant our desires in every particular, he nevertheless helps us in unexpected ways, so that we may learn not to dictate to him in anything."¹

-John Calvin (1509-1564)

23

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: Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled "Healing and Response." Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group's responses.

Notes

Healing and Response
Read the Bible passages below. Compare them by writing down the nature of the healing that Jesus performed and the people's responses.

	HEALING	RESPONSE TO THE HEALING
Mark 1:29-31		
Matthew 8:5-13		
Matthew 9:27-30		
John 4:46-54		

READ: Invite volunteers to read aloud each of the accounts listed on the chart.

INSTRUCT: Divide the large group into four smaller groups. Assign each group a different Scripture passage and instruct them to complete the information on their row on the chart. After a couple of minutes, recall the groups and ask a spokesperson from each group to provide that information. Record the groups' conclusions in the chart on the board, encouraging participants to record these in their PSGs as well.

DISCUSS: What were the similarities in these accounts from Scripture? (Jesus performed the healing out of compassion.) What were some differences? (Some asked for healing/others Jesus approached, Jesus touched some/others He healed from a distance) How did the people respond to these healings? (Some responded with faith, but the Pharisees responded with criticism.)

SAY: Jesus is fully God and fully man. He was acquainted with the physical ailments that so often plague our world. He knew pain and He knew suffering.

27



- 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: Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

HANDS: God has called us to be a witness in how we live and by the conversations we have with others. Jesus's identity as Savior and His authority as the Son of God are found in His Word, and He left His followers on earth to proclaim His name. His name must be proclaimed, for He is the only way to salvation from sin and death.

How can you be a faithful witness who proclaims Christ's authority, identity, and grace to others this week?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Revelation 21-22 and observe how the Lord will undo all the ramifications that sin brought into the world. As you read, thank the Lord for how He has delivered believers from sin and for the hope that awaits us.
- Reflect on your life. Jesus's divine authority demands a response. Journal about some areas in your life in which God is calling you to walk in faith.
- Think of someone who is having a crisis of faith right now. Find a practical way that you can minister to their needs, and encourage them to continue their journey in faith.

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


PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 142:5-7 with your group. Thank God that we can come to Him with our hurts and pains, knowing He is compassionate to us.

References
1. John Calvin, John, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Ephesus, IL: Crossway Books, 1964), 26-455.
2. MacLaren of Manchester, quoted in R. Scott Hughes, John: The Holy Bible, Preaching the Word (Ephesus, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 145.

Notes



- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

By Caleb Boss



Authority is a concept with which most humans have a love-hate relationship. On one hand, authority intrigues us, especially when it comes to our desire for power. On the other hand, as fallen creations, we do not like the idea of submitting to someone else's authority. It's in our nature. You see, our sin obscures the true essence of authority. True authority is not something we can obtain for selfish gain, but it is wielded by God, who is our loving Creator. Our sin separates us from God, and God, who is holy and righteous, is fully just in demanding repayment for our sin. That repayment is not anything you or I could offer, so God is within His rights to demand the only payment that fits the debt we owe—eternal death for we who are bound in our sin. Yet God didn't leave us hopeless in our sin. Instead of wielding His authority to condemn, He used His authority to offer redemption for our sin. What a beautiful display of grace with His boundless authority!

In this volume, we will see many accounts of Scripture in which Jesus proved Himself to be the long-awaited Messiah and Son of God. We also will see that Jesus's identity as the Son of God grants Him authority over all things. Let's take a quick bird's-eye view together to see how we should understand that Jesus is the Son of God and that He has been granted authority over all things from the Father.

THE SON

Jesus showed a multitude of signs that pointed to His identity as the Son of God. Throughout this volume, we'll see that Jesus performed many miraculous signs, such as healings and casting out demons (Mark 1:21-45; John 4:46-54). He also fulfilled Old Testament prophecy by proclaiming good news to the poor and declaring the coming of the kingdom of God (Luke 4:16-30). He even publicly forgave sins (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus's own people rejected His claims and called Him a blasphemer because they believed God is the only One who can forgive sins. In this they were correct, but what Jesus's own people rejected out of spiritual blindness, we recognize explicitly: Jesus is in fact the Son of God! He Himself is the fulfillment of the law, and He demonstrated His divine nature by performing miracles only God could do.

Jesus's authority
is not heavy-handed;
it is a blessing to
His people.

The things Jesus did and said all point to His identity as the Son of God.

As a New Testament Christian, I am reminded of what John, an eyewitness and Jesus's beloved disciple, said in his Gospel account:

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. (John 20:30-31).

What an incredible claim and promise! The things Jesus did and said all point to His identity as the Son of God. I hope you are encouraged to see His identity revealed as you dive into each account of Jesus's ministry recorded in this volume.

THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

Jesus's identity as the Son of God points us to His authority. While it is true that the Son of God is our Messiah, it is also equally true that He is our Lord. Jesus was, and is, a man of flesh and blood, and He is also fully divine. His divinity means lordship. He has authority over all things, for Jesus Himself said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). In each Bible story in this volume, we will see Jesus's authority carried out. He demonstrated His authority over creation, which is fitting because we are told in Scripture that all things were made by Him (Col. 1:16). When desperate people came to Him, He healed every sickness and disease. He cast out demons, and the demons had no choice but to obey His commands. Unlike our fallen desires to use authority for our own selfish gain, Jesus used His authority to display His glory and to extend

His gracious hand out of love for others. Jesus's authority is not heavy-handed; it is a blessing to His people. He demonstrated authority over His creation ultimately to show us that He has authority even over sin and death itself. Jesus alone is the Lord of life, and by faith in His grace alone are we saved.

As we read through this volume, understand that Jesus's authority over creation is but a small glimpse of the authority He has to grant salvation to the lost. His identity and authority put on display as the Son of God ultimately led Jesus to die on the cross and rise from the grave on the third day. He has defeated death, and He is still saving people from sin that would lead them to eternal death. What a blessing to see with eyes wide open the authority and victory that the Son of God has over our sin.

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 22

RESPONSES

TO JESUS



MARK; LUKE; JOHN



MEMORY VERSES

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

—Luke 4:18-19



THE OFFICIAL BELIEVED

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 4:46-54

CONTEXT

After Jesus met with the woman at the well in Samaria, she believed Jesus was the Messiah and told the people in her town. Many people in Samaria believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Two days later, Jesus resumed His travels in Galilee. While in Cana, He was stopped by an official who was in great distress because his son was at death's door. Yet his son was in Capernaum, roughly twenty-five miles away. Jesus revealed His authority over sickness in a way that showed His messiahship.

KEY CONCEPT

Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

As you examine John 4:46-54:

- Reflect that Jesus is compassionate even when people look for signs to believe.
- Emphasize that faith is believing without seeing, but seeing leads to deeper faith.



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TIMELINE

Jesus Performs His First
Miracle at the Wedding
in Cana (John 2:1-12)

Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night
(John 3:1-21)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Performs His Second
Miracle in Cana (John 4:46-54)

Jesus Cleanses the Temple
(John 2:13-22)

Jesus Speaks with a Samaritan
Woman (John 4:1-42)

Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth
(Luke 4:16-30)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: John 4:43-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: John 6:1-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: John 5:1-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: John 6:22-71 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: John 5:24-47 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 142 |



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

JESUS'S WORD IS POWERFUL AND ABLE TO HEAL

(JOHN 4:46-50).

Highlight words that depict the official's state of mind when he approached Jesus.

46 He went again to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum.

47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded with him to come down and heal his son, since he was about to die. **48** Jesus told him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe." **49** "Sir," the official said to him, "come down before my boy dies." **50** "Go," Jesus told him, "your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed.

Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee and was quickly approached by an official who was distraught over his son's condition. His son was dying and needed more than what a physician could offer. He approached Jesus with the expectation that Jesus would come with him to heal his son. In the same way that this official expected Jesus to come with him, we too have the tendency to come to God with preconceived expectations. Our downfall as broken people is to plead with God for what we think we need when we think we need it rather than trusting that God is faithful to our needs. Instead of anxiously expecting signs from God to work out our circumstances the way we want them to be handled, we must trust in His promises found in His Word.

LEADER NOTE: It is important to approach prayer with a heart of expectancy, eagerly awaiting God to work. His desire is for us to come before Him in confidence and to cast our burdens upon Him (Ps. 55:22; Phil. 3:6). Anxious, preconceived expectations happen when we ask God to work out our circumstances our way rather than trusting that God's authority and power are greater than our circumstances. Genuine faith exists in the heart of man when he gives up his burdens and relies solely upon the Lord.

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.

In what ways have you had anxious expectations in your requests from the Lord?

Though the official may have thought his request would be received with urgency, Jesus unexpectedly responded, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (John 4:48). It is so easy to become entranced with the miracles rather than who the miracles point to. In this moment, Jesus taught us that He is the source of authority and power. The official believed that Jesus was able to heal his son as long as Jesus came to his house. Maybe he felt Jesus had to touch his son for the healing to happen. But Jesus, to demonstrate His authority and compassion for the official, said that his son would be healed roughly twenty-five miles away. Then the official, in faith, departed.

Often times God does not work in the way we think He ought to. He alone is sovereign, and our requests are not. Faith in His authority, power, and grace is what He desires from us.

LEADER NOTE: Pay special attention to two parts of Jesus's exchange with the official. First, Jesus made a point to show us that true faith does not occur solely based on signs and wonders. Faith is total trust in Him, even without the signs and wonders. Second, even though the official continued to plead with his anxious expectation, Jesus demonstrated compassion. Out of His compassion, Jesus demonstrated His power and authority with an act of grace. The same is true for us. Out of Christ's same heart of compassion, we were shown the ultimate act of grace and forgiveness by His death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

How does the reality of Jesus's authority and power affect how you approach Him in prayer?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"It often happens that while our Heavenly Father may not grant our desires in every particular, he nevertheless helps us in unexpected ways, so that we may learn not to dictate to him in anything."¹

—John Calvin (1509–1564)

JESUS'S POWER AND AUTHORITY REALIZED LEADS TO FAITH (JOHN 4:51-54).

Underline the father's reaction to his son's healing and the effects that Jesus's grace had on his entire family.

51 While he was still going down, his servants met him saying that his boy was alive. **52** He asked them at what time he got better. "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him," they answered. **53** The father realized this was the very hour at which Jesus had told him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household. **54** Now this was also the second sign Jesus performed after he came from Judea to Galilee.

Before the official even reached his house, his servants met him with wonderful news—his son was now well! Jesus's compassion for the official was proven faithful. Although this father had not seen his son's healing, his servants' report led his mind back to what Jesus had said, even noting the time Jesus said it. Though we may not initially see God at work in our circumstances, when He does prove Himself faithful, His faithfulness should lead us to deeper faith. The official remembered what Christ had said, and Christ was proven to have healed the boy as He said He would. At times we may display weak faith or a lack of trust in God due to our expectations, yet His grace is sufficient at the right time to solidify our trust in Him alone.

LEADER NOTE: It is not wrong to believe as a result of God's faithfulness. Many of us may have a greater tendency than others to need tangible proof before belief. One of Jesus's own disciples, Thomas, needed to see and touch the scars in His hands and side before believing that He had in fact risen from the dead (John 20:25). It's one thing to doubt and then be joyously proven wrong by God's faithfulness. It's another issue entirely to only trust in the signs rather than the God who faithfully displays acts of grace.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"The way to increase faith is to exercise faith. And the true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest, blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise."²

—MacLaren of Manchester (1826–1910)

Key Concept: Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

Notes

Why do you think we feel we need to see to believe? How has God shown you grace to deepen your faith in Him?

The official and his entire household believed because of Jesus's compassion. You see, Christ's selfless love and His authority affect people. His faithfulness unto death on a cross gives us hope to believe that there is salvation from sin and restoration with God. We share the same faith as the official and his household. Although we have not seen Jesus face to face or witnessed His miracles, we do not have a blind faith. We have God's inerrant Word. We have the historical accuracy of His Word. We see the effects of salvation by the Holy Spirit upon the lives of believers. If you are a believer in Christ, you are evidence of Christ's continued work and are called to be a witness to those who do not yet believe.

LEADER NOTE: It's important to emphasize that Jesus's intentions after His ascension into heaven were for His followers to bear witness about Him. His apostles were the evidence to show people the mighty works and authority of Christ. The book of Acts is a reminder of the transformation we experience by placing our faith in Jesus. The apostle Paul, in particular, was completely transformed by faith so that he became the greatest missionary in the church, writing half the books of the New Testament and championing the life, ministry, and authority of Jesus Christ.

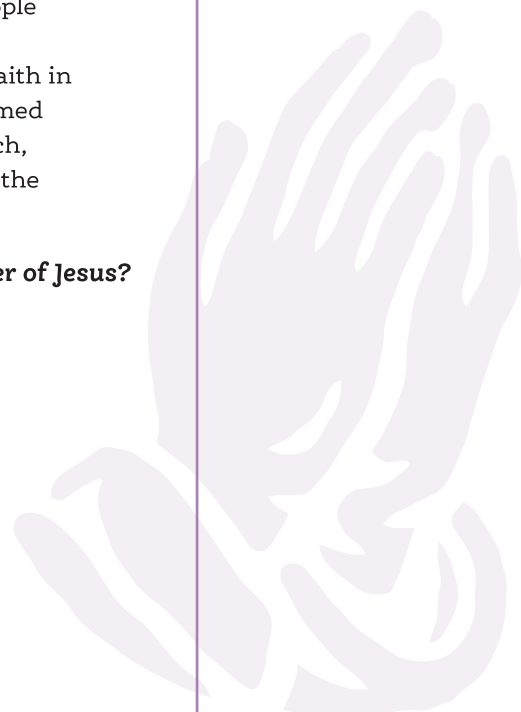
In what ways does your life bear witness to the authority and power of Jesus?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

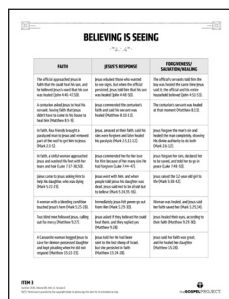
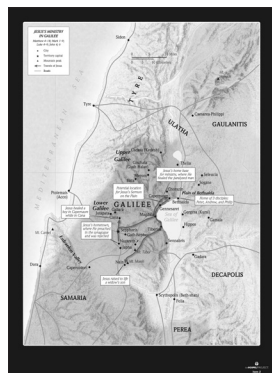
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Jesus's power to heal from afar points to His authority over all. That authority reveals itself in His victory over sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection. We merely need to have faith in Him.



Notes



ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As people arrive for the group experience, begin by asking this ice-breaker question: “What are some cultural things in which we put our faith in this world?” (Some examples may include a sports team, a pastor, political figure, community services such as the police department, etc.)

CONTEXT

SAY: This passage in John 4 tells of an official who believed in Jesus because of Jesus showing His divine authority. Jesus had previously come to this location and performed a miracle by turning water into wine. (*Highlight the town of Cana on Pacl’ Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry in Galilee Map.*) As He returned to this location, He once again proved His divinity through the supernatural healing of the official’s son.

TRANSITION: Today’s account in John 4 not only proves Jesus’s ability to heal physical ailments but also proves His ability to heal spiritually. The official’s son needed physical healing, but the official needed spiritual healing. Our faith is often built through stories and testimonies of God’s healing, provision, protection, and faithfulness.

RECAP

ASK: What stood out to you this week, either about the official’s actions or about Jesus’s actions?

ENGAGE: Pass out copies of **Pacl’ Item 3: Believing Is Seeing** and briefly talk about the crowds’ desire to see signs and Jesus’s rebuke of that perspective. Say: “As we study this passage of Scripture, it is important to remember that God is still good, still faithful, and still sovereign even if the outcome of our prayer is not what we think it should be. The Lord would still be good, holy, and worthy of our worship even if He did not heal the official’s son.”

TRANSITION: Throughout Scripture, we see many moments in which Jesus exhibited His divine authority to heal the sick. Let’s read through a few of these moments together to identify the nature of the need that was met, the outcome of the healings, both physically and spiritually, and people’s responses to the healings.



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Key Concept: Faith includes believing in Jesus's authority and power.

Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled "Healing and Response." Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group's responses.

Healing and Response		
Read the Bible passages below. Compare them by writing down the nature of the healing that Jesus performed and the people's responses.		
	HEALING	RESPONSE TO THE HEALING
Mark 1:29-31		
Matthew 8:5-13		
Matthew 9:27-30		
John 4:46-54		

READ: Invite volunteers to read aloud each of the accounts listed on the chart.

INSTRUCT: Divide the large group into four smaller groups. Assign each group a different Scripture passage and instruct them to complete the information on their row on the chart. After a couple of minutes, recall the groups and ask a spokesperson from each group to provide that information. Record the groups' conclusions in the chart on the board, encouraging participants to record these in their PSGs as well.

DISCUSS: What were the similarities in these accounts from Scripture? (*Jesus performed the healing out of compassion.*) What were some differences? (*Some asked for healing/others Jesus approached; Jesus touched some/others He healed from a distance*) How did the people respond to these healings? (*Some responded with faith, but the Pharisees responded with criticism.*)

SAY: Jesus is fully God and fully man. He was acquainted with the physical ailments that so often plague our world. He knew pain and He knew suffering.

Yet because He is fully God, He holds the power to heal both our physical and spiritual needs. When we experience Jesus's divinity and authority, it always demands a response of faith: Will we choose to trust Jesus with our lives and our needs or will we try to control the outcome in our own strength?

DEBRIEF

How does Jesus's authority to heal shape the way we view illnesses and sin?

How does Jesus's familiarity with pain and suffering lead us to a greater faith in Him?

SUMMARIZE

John 4:51 tells us that the official took Jesus at His word. Today, we have something the man did not have: the full canon of Scripture. We have story after story of Jesus healing both physically and spiritually. We have the full understanding that through Jesus's death and resurrection, we have hope beyond our current circumstances. There will always be sickness this side of heaven, but Jesus holds the authority to heal all sickness. Even when He chooses not to heal in the way we expect, He is still sovereign and good. Our faith is built on the hope of the resurrection to come.

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 **Head** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Some people go through the accounts of Jesus's miracles and think about how amazing it would have been to see such wonders.

Although it would have been amazing to experience, it is important to understand that the purpose of Jesus's miracles was to show the people that He had authority as the Son of God. Although the miracles are exciting, they had an important purpose: to point us to Christ.

How do the accounts of Jesus's ministry draw you closer to Him?



HEART: Sometimes the anxiety of our hearts can get the better of us.

We know the right response is to trust in God fully, but sometimes that is easier said than done. Amid our doubts or our anxious expectations, it is important to seek God first for who He is rather than what He can do for us. Part of salvation is surrendering our hearts to the Lord. He is faithful even when we cannot see it.

In what ways can you cast your burdens upon the Lord?



HANDS: God has called us to be a witness in how we live and by the conversations we have with others. Jesus's identity as Savior and His authority as the Son of God are found in His Word, and He left His followers on earth to proclaim His name. His name must be proclaimed, for He is the only way to salvation from sin and death.

How can you be a faithful witness who proclaims Christ's authority, identity, and grace to others this week?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Revelation 21–22 and observe how the Lord will undo all the ramifications that sin brought into the world. As you read, thank the Lord for how He has delivered believers from sin and for the hope that awaits us.
- Reflect on your life. Jesus's divine authority demands a response. Journal about some areas in your life in which God is calling you to walk in faith.
- Think of someone who is having a crisis of faith right now. Find a practical way that you can minister to their needs, and encourage them to continue their journey in faith.

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 142:5-7 with your group. Thank God that we can come to Him with our hurts and pains, knowing He is compassionate to us.

References

1. John Calvin, John, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), Jn 4:50.
2. MacLaren of Manchester, quoted in R. Kent Hughes, John: That You May Believe, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 143.

THE HOMETOWN REJECTED

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 4:16-30

CONTEXT

Luke 4 contains a couple of well-known milestones in Jesus's ministry, such as Jesus's temptation in the wilderness. Then Jesus began His ministry in Galilee. Based upon the parallels from the other Gospel accounts, Jesus had already called His disciples and performed miracles at this time. His reputation and authority were spreading amongst the Jewish people. The people in Jesus's hometown of Nazareth, however, would have their own opinion on this matter.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.

As you examine Luke 4:16-30:

- Note that Jesus identified Himself as the Anointed One whom Isaiah said would preach good news and set the captives free.
- Reflect that Jesus's hometown questioned His identity and authority after He preached grace for Gentiles.



TIMELINE

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-13)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30)

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man (Mark 1:35-45)

Jesus Ministers in Galilee (Luke 4:14-15)

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 4:14-30
- Day 2:** Luke 4:31-44
- Day 3:** Luke 5:12-16
- Day 4:** Luke 5:17-26
- Day 5:** Luke 5:27-39
- Day 6:** Psalm 31



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

JESUS FULFILLED SCRIPTURE AS THE MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED ONE (LUKE 4:16-21).

Underline the things the Spirit anointed Jesus to do.

16 He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. **17** The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written: **18** The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. **20** He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. **21** He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."

Jesus frequently went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. On this particular day, He was given the opportunity to read the Scripture passage. He stood up and read Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus's reputation and miraculous works had already caused people to question His identity. Could Jesus, in fact, be the Messiah? Through Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus confirmed His identity as the anointed Savior who came to preach good news to the hopeless. The captives would be set free from sin. The blind would see, not just when He healed them physically but when they saw the spiritual truth that Jesus is Lord. It was the year of the Lord's favor because His Son had come.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus "as usual" entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. He knew the importance of gathering for teaching. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us not to forsake the assembly of believers. Corporate worship is an important part of our walk with Christ. The church, as the body of Christ, should collectively worship to focus on the Lord and praise Him together. Jesus gave us a good example of this importance by attending synagogue consistently. His focus should be our focus: knowing and worshiping our holy God with other believers.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHRIST AS PROPHET: As one of His offices, Jesus fulfills the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate teacher and has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is also God's ultimate revelation of Himself, the very Word of God (John 1:1).

What does Jesus's habit of attending the synagogue teach us?

Jesus sat down immediately after reading Scripture and said that day Isaiah's prophecy had been fulfilled. We are privileged to know the entire narrative of Scripture, but imagine the perspective of the people in Nazareth. They just heard Jesus claim that He fulfilled this prophecy. Jesus, the son of a carpenter, claimed to be the Christ. His hometown of Nazareth was not a place of high prestige. Even Nathanael, one of Jesus's disciples, asked, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus's humble beginnings show us an unexpected Savior full of grace and truth. The people were looking for a Savior who would come with high accolades and would establish an earthly kingdom independent from Roman rule. But Jesus came to rescue captive souls from sin. Knowing that Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture is a joyous hope and confirmation of His identity as the Messiah.

LEADER NOTE: It's important to note the connection between Jesus's mission and our mission. He said He came to preach the good news to the poor, to set captives free, and to provide for the recovery of sight to the blind. We are called to proclaim what He accomplished so that people may be free from the captivity of sin and open their eyes to see the goodness of God and His salvation. But His mission is not only in a spiritual sense. Jesus looked out for the underdog. He wanted to lift up those who were downtrodden, powerless, and ashamed. We are also called to look out for the poor and vulnerable.

How does Jesus's claim from Isaiah and His miraculous works affect how you see your mission?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."¹

–C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

JESUS WAS REJECTED WHEN HE PREACHED A MESSAGE OF GRACE TO ALL (LUKE 4:22-30).

Highlight the examples that Jesus gave of God's work in the lives of Gentiles in the Old Testament.

22 They were all speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth; yet they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

23 Then he said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. What we've heard that took place in Capernaum, do here in your hometown also.'" **24** He also said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. **25** But I say to you, there were certainly many widows in Israel in Elijah's days, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months while a great famine came over all the land. **26** Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. **27** And in the prophet Elisha's time, there were many in Israel who had leprosy, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." **28** When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was enraged. **29** They got up, drove him out of town, and brought him to the edge of the hill that their town was built on, intending to hurl him over the cliff. **30** But he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.

Jesus's declaration caused amazement among the people. Again, Jesus just said He fulfilled Scripture. But the people then began to question His origin. They wondered, "This was Joseph the carpenter's son, right?" Their question of Jesus's kinship implied their doubt of His claim to be the fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah. Jesus, knowing their doubt, called them out on their contempt. Their hearts would not believe unless they saw the same signs and wonders He performed in Capernaum. If He could do miracles there, surely He could do so in His hometown. Doubting God can lead us down a road of contempt toward God. Doubting Christ's sufficiency leads us to look at things we think are better. Trusting in the identity and sufficiency of Jesus is essential to the Christian faith.

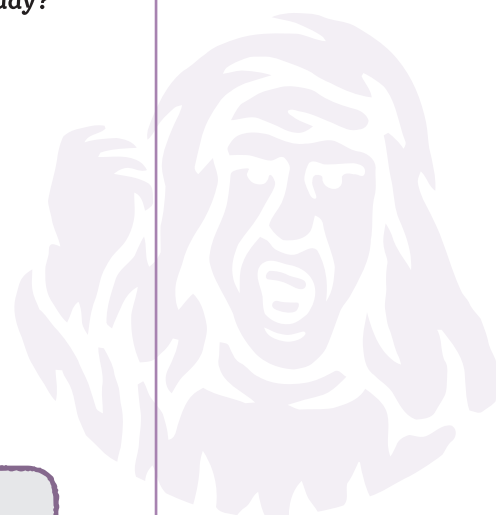
LEADER NOTE: Sometimes God uses our times of doubt to refine our faith. He is faithful to squash our unbelief and to create opportunities for unwavering faith to take its place. The danger of doubt is when we forget that Jesus is who He said He is—our Savior and Lord who is sufficient in His grace toward us. His identity, sufficiency, and grace are far superior to our doubt.

How can you find assurance of Christ's identity, sufficiency, and grace?

The Jews of Jesus's day believed they alone were special because they were God's people. Yet Jesus shared with the listeners in the synagogue a couple of Old Testament examples in which God extended grace through Elijah and Elisha toward Gentiles when the Jews continually rejected God (see 1 Kings 17:8-24; 2 Kings 5:1-14). Jesus's point was simple, profound, and authoritative—the grace of God is given to the Gentiles also. This revelation enraged the people so much that they drove Jesus out of the town with the intent to hurl Him off a cliff. Yet Jesus's identity and authority over the angry mob were displayed as He simply passed through them unharmed. The same truth that Jesus told them is still applicable today. Salvation from sin and an eternal relationship with God is freely offered to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ alone. What a blessing! What wonderful grace!

LEADER NOTE: Many false teachers in the world today try to justify a works-based salvation. The Jews of Jesus's day believed that if they upheld the Mosaic Law, they could rest in their position as God's people. Unfortunately, many Jews trusted in their own works but had no genuine saving faith in God's promised grace. Jesus pointed out to the people in Nazareth that God's grace is hope for all humankind. Anyone who comes to Jesus in a posture of repentance and surrender will receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

Why was Jesus rejected by His own people? How is He still rejected today?



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophetic words as One who would come to preach good news and release the captives, not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. The gospel is for all people, and salvation is for anyone who chooses to believe.

ARRIVAL

INTERACT: As people arrive for the group experience, begin by asking: “When have you experienced a rejection? What were the circumstances surrounding that rejection? How did you feel, and how did you move on?” (*Examples may include rejection by a potential high school boyfriend or girlfriend, by a potential employer, for a team sport, etc.*)

CONTEXT

SAY: Nobody likes to be rejected. Yet Jesus too understood what that felt like. Today’s passage reinforces Jesus as both fully God and fully man. He was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 61. He was anointed by God to free all of humankind from sin. The power to deliver and forgive sin is held by God and God alone. Jesus would not be able to forgive sin if He were not in fact fully divine. Yet He was rejected by His own hometown. He experienced personally what it’s like to be rejected, but He continued on His mission.

TRANSITION: Jesus does not fit in the boxes we create. He did come to set the captives free, but He came to set captives free from sin and death as well as from physical chains. He is entirely merciful, and in His mercy, He draws us to repentance. He is entirely gentle and entirely holy. The message of the gospel will be rejected by some, but in this rejection we can see the fullness of Jesus’s character and His ability to empathize with our struggles today.

RECAP

ASK: What was one key idea that stood out to you as you prepared this week? What was interesting about Jesus’s words? About the crowd’s response?

TRANSITION: In Isaiah 61, the Scripture Jesus read, the Jews understood those words as pointing to the Messiah, the Savior. When Jesus claimed that for Himself, everyone was amazed. Let’s explore a little bit more the implications of what Jesus said in reference to Isaiah 61.



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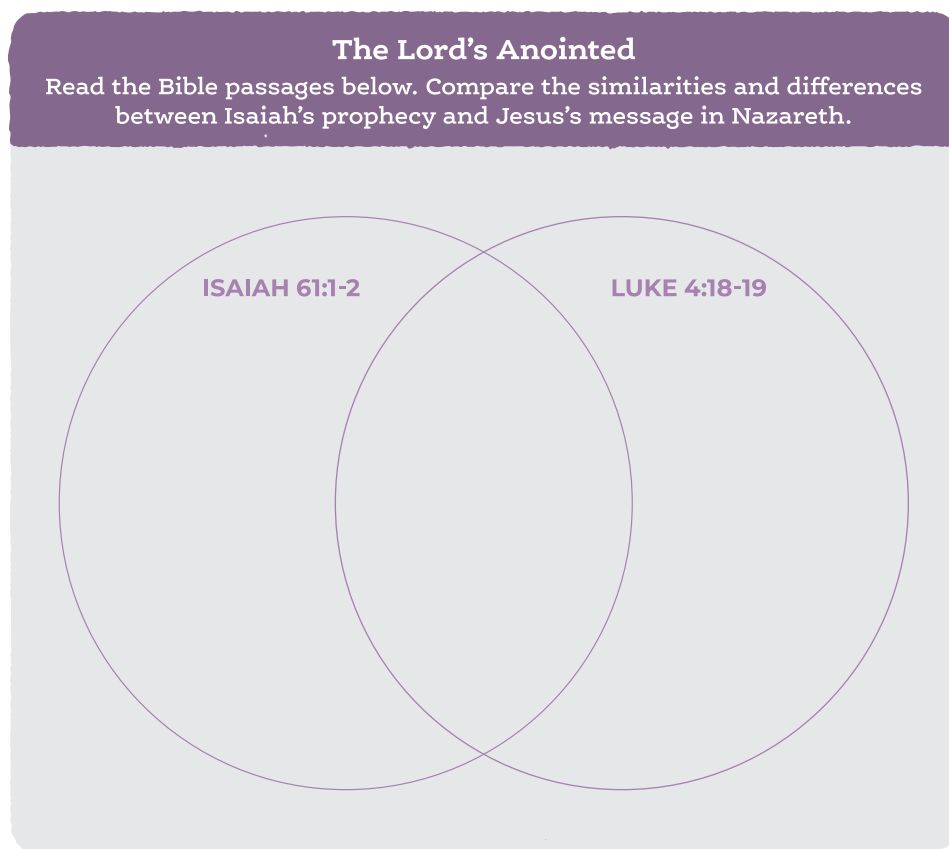
ministrygrid.com/gospelproject · gospelproject.com/leader-training.

Key Concept: Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.

Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

DIAGRAM: Direct your group to page 30 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a Venn diagram titled "The Lord's Anointed." Recreate this Venn diagram on a board in your room so you can record the group's findings as they interact with the Scripture text.



READ: Invite one volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 61:1-2. Invite a second volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:18-19.

INSTRUCT: As a large group, discuss the slight differences between what Isaiah prophesied the Anointed One would do and what Jesus preached in Nazareth. Record words or phrases that are unique to each passage in their section of the diagram. Write the shared words or phrases in the middle section.

-Isaiah 61:1-2: "heal the brokenhearted"; "[proclaim] the day of our God's vengeance; to comfort all who mourn"

-Luke 4:18-19: "recovery of sight to the blind"; "set free the oppressed"

-Both: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me"; "he has anointed me to bring/preach good news to the poor"; "proclaim liberty/release to the captives"; "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"

Key Concept: Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.



HANDS: Many in the world know of Jesus and willingly reject Him. There are also people in the world and around the corner from where we live who do not know anything about Jesus and the salvation He brings. This reality should cause us to be faithful witnesses, unashamed of Jesus's gospel message. As Jesus tried to convey to the people in Nazareth, God's favor is offered to any who will believe in the Son of God.

How can you be faithful in sharing Jesus Christ with a world that may be apprehensive to Him?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Isaiah 61 in its entirety and observe how the Lord brings beauty from ashes and joy from mourning. Think of times when you have experienced this personally. Thank Him for healing those hurts.
- Jesus cannot be boxed into our wishes of who we want Him to be. Are there areas of your life in which you have diminished His divinity or forgotten His humanity? If so, repent and ask Him to give you a right view of Himself.
- Find a way to minister practically to someone who is suffering and remind them that we serve a God who is familiar with suffering and can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

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 31:1-3, asking for God's protection for those who need His refuge and rescue. Praise Him that He is our rock and fortress and we can always count on Him.

References

1. C. S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity," *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 50–51.

Notes



THE CROWD AMAZED

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 1:21-34

CONTEXT

Mark the Gospel writer was not one of the twelve apostles, but he based his account on the testimony of the apostle Peter, a close companion of his. Mark succinctly and rapidly reported the story of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Mark 1 begins with John the Baptist's ministry, Jesus's baptism and temptation, and Jesus's calling the disciples. Jesus was in Capernaum teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath when He encountered a man with an unclean spirit.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

As you examine Mark 1:21-34:

- Recognize that Jesus had authority to drive out unclean spirits.
- Emphasize that Jesus's authority over all things included His ability to heal the sick.



TIMELINE

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Mark 1:12-13)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Demonstrates His Authority in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus Ministers in Galilee (Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man (Mark 1:35-45)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Mark 1:21-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Matthew 8:18-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Mark 1:29-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Matthew 8:23-34 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Matthew 8:14-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 56 |



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

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn why Jesus commanded people and unclean spirits not to make His identity known.

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER ALL THINGS SPIRITUAL (MARK 1:21-26).

Underline the unclean spirit's reaction to Jesus. Circle Jesus's response.

21 They went into Capernaum, and right away he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. **22** They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not like the scribes. **23** Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, **24** “What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” **25** Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” **26** And the unclean spirit threw him into convulsions, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him.

Entering Capernaum on the Sabbath, Jesus “right away” went to the synagogue to teach. Teaching was a primary focus of Jesus’s ministry. The people were “astonished” by Jesus’s display of authority through His teaching—it was “not like the scribes” (v. 22). There was something different about Jesus. Imagine listening to someone who not only knows the Scriptures but who understands them fully and speaks of them with Spirit-inspired authority!

So as Jesus was teaching, a man possessed by an unclean spirit interrupted Him. The spirit’s tone was one of chaotic disruption but also fear, for Jesus’s authority was a threat to him. It had been prophesied from the beginning that though Satan would inflict pain, Christ would have the victory (Gen. 3:15). The unclean spirit cried out in fear, wanting to know if Jesus had come to destroy it since it knew that the Holy One of God had authority over all spiritual beings.

LEADER NOTE: The demon and Jesus came head to head in a battle here. The demon tried to strike first by naming Jesus with His earthly name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” as well as His spiritual identity, “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). The demon knew better than the crowds or the disciples that Jesus is God the Son. And being God, Jesus had come to have victory over Satan and all demonic forces.

How do people view demons today, and why is it more difficult in modern Western cultures to believe in them?

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

Notes

With a quick rebuke, Jesus won the battle against the demon; it was no contest. He commanded it to be silent and to come out of the man, and it did, but not without a small tantrum. It threw the man into convulsions, shouted with a loud cry, and finally came out. Jesus was revealing Himself as one with authority over Scripture as well as one with authority over the spiritual realm, which included demons and angels.

Our souls are battling daily with temptations and the fiery arrows of the enemy. On our own, we cannot combat the evil forces that plague our world and mind. Jesus displayed authority over this unclean spirit, and He also has power over every temptation, sin, and unclean spirit that tries to take hold of our affections. Knowing Christ has authority over all things spiritual gives us hope to walk in this broken world with victory. Take great joy in knowing that the One who silenced and cast out the unclean spirit is also able to reign authoritatively and victoriously in you.

LEADER NOTE: As believers, we cannot be possessed by demons, but they still tempt us to sin. Yet sin is not always a result of the work of Satan and demons. Our own sinful will and flesh often leads us to sin (Jas. 1:13-15). When we sin, we don't need to spend time figuring out who led us to sin. We simply need to repent and confess, asking God for forgiveness and moving on with the help of the Holy Spirit.

What parts of your spiritual life do you need to yield more fully to Jesus?

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).

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER ALL THINGS PHYSICAL

(MARK 1:27-34).

Highlight the reactions of the people to Jesus's authority and power.

27 They were all amazed, and so they began to ask each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." **28** At once the news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee. **29** As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. **30** Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. **31** So he went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them. **32** When evening came, after the sun had set, they brought to him all those who were sick and demon-possessed. **33** The whole town was assembled at the door, **34** and he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

After Jesus cast out the demon, the people were amazed and said, "A new teaching with authority!" (v. 27). They saw that teaching with authority went hand in hand with action. But Jesus didn't stop there. He went into Simon Peter's house and healed Simon's mother-in-law, showing He had authority over the physical as well as the spiritual.

LEADER NOTE: Although we do not see these kinds of miraculous events happening as regularly today, that does not diminish the reality of Jesus's authority. Jesus still has control over the physical, and there are many accounts of healing that cannot be explained. But there are many times that He chooses not to heal physical ailments because His plans are better than ours. We may not know why He heals some and not others, but we know He is a good God and we can trust in His plans above ours.

After Jesus took Simon's mother-in-law's hand and raised her up, she began to serve them, being healed. That is the same response we should have to the authoritative Son of God—immediate and unconditional service to Christ.

As you reflect on God's provision in your life, how can you respond in service?

As news spread about Jesus's works, the community brought Him all the sick and demon-possessed, and they crowded at the door of Simon Peter's house. Jesus displayed His authority over the physical and spiritual by healing the sick and casting out demons. And like before, it was not yet His time

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

to be revealed, so He did not permit the demons to speak. Jesus’s actions revealed His identity as the Son of God, although the crowds couldn’t see that. Ironically, only the demons knew who He truly was.

LEADER NOTE: “When evening came” in verse 32 shows that the Sabbath had ended and everyone was able to bring the sick to Jesus. The word “brought” is an imperfect tense in Greek, which could be translated “kept on bringing.” Seeing Jesus’s abilities, the crowds kept coming. They came for the healing, but they didn’t know and didn’t believe in Jesus. The demons knew, but their knowing didn’t mean believing in terms of trusting or surrendering to His lordship. James wrote: “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder” (Jas. 2:19). This fact should cause us to reflect on whether we just know things about God or whether we actually know and trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Rather than engaging in exorcisms, believers today are called to engage in evangelism. Whenever we bring the gospel to nonbelievers and they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit washes them clean, takes up residence, and the demons are evicted.”¹

–John MacArthur (1939–2025)

Jesus’s authority over all things helps us see that His claims as the Son of God are indeed true. The foundational revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, required Jesus to graciously work miracles over the physical. The apostle Paul reiterated this truth by claiming that Jews required signs for belief (1 Cor. 1:22), yet now, as believers in the new covenant, we see Christ’s authority fulfilled and graciously displayed to us in His Word.

What convinced you or would convince you that Jesus is Lord and Savior?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus’s authority over the physical world and over the spiritual world includes His authority over Satan and demons as well as over sin, guilt, shame, and death. This authority and power reveals His identity as the Son of God.

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 38 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Jesus’s Authority.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

Jesus’s Authority		
Read Mark 1:21-34. Record the ways Jesus revealed His authority and power and the corresponding responses of the witnesses.		
	JESUS’S AUTHORITY	RESPONSE
THE CROWDS		
THE DEMON		
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW		
ME		

READ: Invite two volunteers to read aloud Mark 1:21-26 and 27-34.

INSTRUCT: Divide the large group into two groups. Assign one group the “Jesus’s Authority” column and ask the group to write down how Jesus displayed His authority to those in the first three rows on the chart. Assign the other group “The Response” column and ask them to write the responses of those in the first three rows to Jesus’s action and authority.

DISCUSS: As a group, discuss the following: “Why do you think the crowds [the demon, the mother-in-law] responded in this way?” Ask: “How would you have responded if you were the crowds, the demon, and the mother-in-law after seeing Jesus’s authority revealed in the way that He did?”

REFLECT: With the last row, first column, encourage each person to write down an example of how Jesus has worked or shown His authority in their life, whether in a difficult way or in a miraculous way. In the second column, encourage them to record how they responded to His work. Ask if anyone would like to share a difficult example. Ask if anyone would like to share a miraculous example.

SAY: Jesus has authority in the world and in our lives, but we get to choose how we respond to it. Sometimes we don't like His authority because we want control. Other times we are thankful for His authority and work in our lives. Jesus did not exercise authority in an oppressive way; rather, He drew people in with His authority. In His mercy, He calls us to holiness. In His gentleness, He calls us to strength.

DEBRIEF

When is it difficult to submit to Jesus's authority?

In what areas of your life do you need to recognize Jesus's authority and submit to it?

SUMMARIZE

As children of God, we submit to the authority of Jesus Christ because we know and trust He is the Son of God. His words still hold power to break chains and breathe life. Let us walk with authority and confidence not in our power but in the power of the One who has called us from death to life.

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 **Heart** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: It is difficult to comprehend the spiritual realm, let alone the miracles that Jesus performed. Yet the spiritual realm is real and active. Spiritual forces wrestle for our affections, but take heart in knowing that Jesus is Lord over the spiritual. There is no unclean spirit that is not subject to Jesus Christ. Be careful that you are not influenced by an obsession with the supernatural, but instead, set your mind on Jesus Christ, who is Lord over all.

In what ways should you approach the spiritual realm with a belief that Jesus is Lord?



HEART: Jesus's authority should affect us. The fact that the authoritative Lord over all willingly humbled Himself to death on a cross for us is truly a gracious gift for the forgiveness of our sins. As He showed His authority over the spiritual and physical, He also showed authority over sin and death. Our hearts can be made new in Christ because He has the final authority to give us eternal life.

How does Jesus's authority over the physical and the spiritual help you in your relationship with Him?

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.



HANDS: Since Jesus has authority over the spiritual and the physical, we have a Savior and Lord who empowers us. Since Jesus has all authority, believers have been tasked with the mission to go and make disciples of Him (Matt. 28:18-20). In Christ, we have victory over sin and can combat the world's temptations because He has already won the victory in our place.

With whom can you share about Jesus's authority and work in the world this week?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Ephesians 3:16-21. How does God's Word give us power? Take a few moments to think about an area of your life in which you need to remember that Jesus declared victory.
- Read Ephesians 4:1-3. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of humility and gentleness in areas where you struggle with pride.
- God uses each of us to accomplish His will and purposes. Ask Him to give you the boldness and authority you need to accomplish His will.

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 56:3-4 with your group, thanking God for protection over fear and evil, both physical and spiritual, because He has the authority to do so. Praise Him that we can put our hope in Him whenever we are afraid.

References

1. John MacArthur, Mark 1-8, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 65-66.

Notes



CAPERNAUM IN JESUS'S DAY

Adapted from an article by Argile A. Smith



Suppose you had the chance to walk with Jesus everywhere He went. What would you see as you followed Him to Capernaum? Resting on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, you would have found Capernaum not far from the place where the Jordan River flowed into it from the north. Although the exact location in Jesus's day has been debated for some time, the most likely spot is the present-day site of Tel Hum.

An ancient city, Capernaum probably existed during the days of the Old Testament. The name itself means "village of Nahum," though no evidence has been found to link the city with the prophet Nahum. During the intertestamental years, Capernaum experienced a transformation under the reign of the Greeks, from the grid-like layout of city streets and city blocks, each block measuring approximately 40 square meters. The center of each block contained three or four multi-family houses surrounding a common courtyard. Each house had several rooms that served as private living quarters. The floors and walls of the rooms were made of unfinished black basalt stone quarried from the nearby mountains.

By the time of Jesus's ministry, Capernaum had become a city of some size, boasting a population of over 1,000 residents. Compared to Nazareth with under 500 residents, Capernaum would have been considered rather large. It depended on two important industries: fishing off the Sea of Galilee and agriculture. Docked at the harbor, you would notice an assortment of boats, nets, and other equipment as well as a market for selling a fresh catch. Excavations of the family dwellings have even uncovered fish hooks lying on the floors of some of the houses.

Capernaum was also blessed with good soil as well as plenty of sunshine and rain for growing crops. Farmers usually fared well, harvesting everything from citrus fruits to dates to sell in the city. You would be able to see the signs of agricultural success everywhere in the city.

ROMAN RULE

During Jesus's ministry, the Romans ruled over Capernaum, and they seemed to be quite interested in the city. One reason for their keen interest had to do with tax collection from the income the locals made when they sold fish or agricultural products. The city also happened to be situated on an international trade route. This major first-century highway went all the way from Egypt through Judea to Syria and Mesopotamia. The city was also near a significant border crossing.

Imagine the number of travelers from all over that region who would come in and out of the city. Perhaps that's why the Romans placed a centurion and troops there (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10), to make the Roman presence known to visitors and residents of the city. Along with the soldiers stationed in the city, the Roman high official might have lived there (John 4:46). The Romans also had a tax office in Capernaum (Matt. 9:9) to tax the residents as well as travelers passing through.

JEWISH INFLUENCE

During Jesus's day, the Jews also figured prominently in the culture of Capernaum, making up the majority of the city's population. The Jews in Capernaum prospered. Recently, archaeologists found the remains of a large, impressive synagogue built with white limestone instead of black

Capernaum became an important city for Jesus as He ministered in Galilee. For Him, the city served as a base of operations and a home away from home.

basalt stone. It stood two stories high and was 65 feet long with three large entrances, rows of decorated columns, and a courtyard on the east side. Inside were seats for the leaders of the Jewish community. At the south end, you could view a stone carving of the ark of the covenant. The synagogue was quite elaborate, indicating the Jews had wealth to build such a monumental structure.

When archaeologists first discovered the remains of the building, they thought it may have been the synagogue in which Jesus taught and performed at least one miracle (Mark 1:21-26). But the structure was built at least two hundred years after Jesus's ministry. Beneath the floor of the synagogue, they did find another foundation of black basalt, which may have been the foundation of the synagogue in Jesus's day.

JESUS'S HOME

Capernaum became an important city for Jesus as He ministered in Galilee. For Him, the city served as a base of operations and a home away from home (Matt. 4:13; 9:1). Some of the most significant events of His ministry took place there, such as calling three of the twelve disciples—Peter and Andrew (originally from Bethsaida), and the tax-collector Matthew (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:29; cf. John 1:44).

The Gospel writers recorded several miracles Jesus performed in the city. He healed the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13). A paralyzed man's friends lowered him through the roof of a house to get him to Jesus, who they knew could heal him (Mark 2:1-12). Simon Peter's mother-in-law also suffered from a fever that Jesus healed (Mark 1:29-31). In fact, just south of the remains of

the synagogue, archaeologists found the remains of an octagon-shaped church built 400 years after Jesus's ministry. Underneath the foundation of the church, they uncovered another family dwelling. Christians must have used the building as a church because of the Christian names, writings, and symbols. The house dates all the way to the time of Jesus's ministry. Some scholars think the house belonged to Simon Peter, though others are not so sure. They agree, however, that the house was an important structure in the lives of early Christians in the city.

Jesus made Capernaum His home, but He did not avoid telling the sad truth about the city's future. He condemned Capernaum along with two other Galilean cities: Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. 11:20-24). In time, His prophecy came to pass. In the centuries after Jesus's ministry, Capernaum faced war, captivity, earthquake, and intrigue. After being destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly over the next nine centuries, the city was abandoned. Today, the site of Capernaum is owned by two religious groups. Franciscans—a Catholic order—purchased the western part of the site in order to preserve it. The Greek Orthodox church owns the eastern part for the same reason.

If you had the chance to step back in time into Capernaum, you would see a thriving Galilean city situated on an international highway that was the object of Roman and Jewish interests. Most of all, you would see the city that Jesus called home for most of His ministry.

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THE LEPER PROCLAIMED

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 1:35-45

CONTEXT

Mark 1 quickly tells us a lot about Jesus's early ministry. Although some of the accounts are not as detailed, Mark's Gospel accurately aligns with the other Gospel accounts. Up to this point in Mark 1, Jesus had been teaching with authority, casting out demons, and miraculously healing the sick, which showed His authority over all things physical and spiritual. After this, Jesus continued His ministry by traveling throughout Galilee, preaching and healing as He went.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus's commitment to His mission originated in His compassion for others.

As you examine Mark 1:35-45:

- Note that Jesus's purpose was to preach the good news.
- Recognize that Jesus's compassion on the leper led the man to spread the good news of Jesus.



TIMELINE

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority
in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a
Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus Appoints His Twelve
Disciples (Mark 3:7-19)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Mark 1:35-45)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals
on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Matthew 4:23-25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Matthew 8:1-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Mark 1:35-38 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Matthew 8:5-13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Mark 1:39-45 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 113 |



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

JESUS'S COMMITMENT TO HIS MISSION IS SEEN IN HIS PRAYER LIFE AND HIS PURPOSE (MARK 1:35-39).

Underline the phrase that points out Jesus's purpose in Galilee.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying. **36** Simon and his companions searched for him, **37** and when they found him they said, "Everyone is looking for you." **38** And he said to them, "Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come." **39** He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

In this section of verses, Jesus displayed a wonderful example of where to place our focus. Early in the morning, Jesus got up and went to a deserted place to pray. When your relationship with God is the center of your life, communion with Him is prioritized because He is the source of your joy. Jesus displayed an action of joyful devotion to His Father and a priority to communicate with Him. As believers, we too should commit ourselves to prayer, not just to "check a box" but because we have a God whom we love enough to prioritize communication with Him. Jesus taught us by example that ministry begins with our own hearts in an act of prioritizing prayer and a closeness to the Lord.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets, that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer girds the loins of God's warriors, and sends them forth to combat with their sinews braced and their muscles firm."¹

—Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)

LEADER NOTE: Prayer must be a priority to cultivate an intimate relationship with God. God has graciously given us access to Him through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. As our Great High Priest, Jesus advocates for us based on His death on the cross (Heb. 9:11-12). Since God has given free access to Himself through prayer, we come before His throne of grace daily (Heb. 10:19-22). The apostle Paul stated simply, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer is not just a dedicated time when you bow your head and close your eyes. As you go, in everything you do, pray!

Key Concept: Jesus's commitment to His mission originated in His compassion for others.

Why do you think Scripture mentions Jesus praying so often?

Notes

Jesus's purpose through His ministry was to preach the good news. He even told His disciples that the reason He came to earth was to proclaim the good news that salvation is available for sinners. Jesus, although He is currently not walking on earth today, still carries out this purpose through His people. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, have been indwelt and empowered with His Spirit to continue to preach the gospel to those who do not yet believe. That is why we still live on earth after we are justified by faith in Jesus. As we place our sole focus on God through prayer, He will equip us to be effective witnesses for Him.

LEADER NOTE: Many believe that salvation is a get-out-of-hell-free card. This is apparent in how they live. They claim to be Christ-followers but live like the rest of the world. Jesus modeled and commanded a purpose for every believer. We are called to live on mission. He has graciously given us the Holy Spirit to help us carry out His mission to make disciples. So, salvation is not a get-out-of-hell-free card but a call to live with purpose for the Lord.

How can you follow the Holy Spirit's guidance as you tell others the good news of Jesus?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

JESUS HEALS OUT OF COMPASSION, LEADING TO A DESIRE TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL (MARK 1:40-45).

Circle the action words in the passage below. Underline Jesus's motivation for His actions.

40 Then a man with leprosy came to him and, on his knees, begged him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. "I am willing," he told him. "Be made clean." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 telling him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

Jesus was approached by a man with leprosy who hoped Jesus would heal his disease. Leprosy was both physically contagious and ceremonially tainting, so the Jews would make the lepers announce their presence as they walked by so that no one would touch, bump, or brush against them. Yet this leper knelt before Jesus and begged Him for healing, for in faith he knew Jesus could make him clean if He were "willing."

WORD STUDY

LEPROSY: A general term used to describe different skin diseases. Old Testament law gave the priests the responsibility of diagnosing leprosy. Lepers were required to stay outside the city to avoid spreading the disease. Once healed, the man needed to show himself to the priest as the law commanded to be returned to the community (Mark 1:44; cf. Lev. 13-14).

Jesus was moved with compassion, even reaching out and touching the leper, which was unheard of in those times because of fear of contagion. But Jesus did so and healed the man. With Jesus's command, the results were immediate—the man was made clean and whole. Jesus does the exact same thing with us. Out of compassion, He saves those who were once spiritually "unclean" and washes them with His blood, making them eternally clean and whole.

Key Concept: Jesus's commitment to His mission originated in His compassion for others.

LEADER NOTE: Compassion can be described as concern and a desire to effect positive change with a heart of love for someone else. Jesus's compassion produced the grace and salvation extended to us. His love for us is the reason He sacrificed Himself on the cross. He took the punishment we deserved out of compassion for us, and that love was why God sent the Son in the first place (John 3:16). This good news produces positive, eternal change for anyone who puts their faith in Jesus as Lord.

What does Jesus's display of compassion tell us about His character?

Jesus instructed the man to tell no one. Instead, he was to go present himself to the priest and do as the law required to show that God had healed him. But the man, in his excitement, went and told anyone who would hear that Jesus had made his body whole. The joy that the gospel brings should cause us to do the same—and this with Jesus's explicit permission and command.

The news of Jesus spread so much that He could not go into the towns openly. Even as He went to deserted places, the crowds followed. Why? Because what Jesus offered was miraculous. Some came merely for the physical miracles. But others were searching for the peace and salvation that the good news of Jesus Christ brings. Through all of it, His compassionate grace remained steadfast.

LEADER NOTE: Many accounts in Scripture describe the gospel changing an individual, and they immediately told everyone they could about Jesus. The gospel truly is "good news." Jesus's compassionate grace ought to bring forth overflowing joy and a desire to proclaim Christ's salvation. This joy is the power of the Holy Spirit within a transformed believer in Christ. Jesus's love for us is not something to be kept to ourselves; it is meant to be shared and spread.

How does Jesus's compassion drive you to share His goodness with others?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

x

x

Jesus's mission was to preach the good news of salvation that would bring healing to a world in need. He accomplished this ultimately through His death and resurrection.

Notes

ARRIVAL

INTERACT: As people arrive for the group experience, ask: “When in your life has someone showed you immense compassion? How did that impact you in that moment? How has that experience changed the way you approach other people in similar situations?”

CONTEXT

TRANSITION: Over the past few sessions, we have observed Jesus’s divine authority over sickness, sin, and shame that plague the world. He alone holds the authority over both the physical and spiritual realms. In today’s session, we will see that His divine mission was grounded in immense compassion and His purpose to preach the good news.

SAY: Jesus went to a solitary place to commune with the Father in prayer. He and His disciples then moved on to neighboring villages, where He preached. In Capernaum, a leper fell to his knees before Jesus and asked to be healed, moving Jesus to compassion. Lepers in Jesus’s day were outcasts of society, having to live outside the city, away from family and community. Yet the King of kings was moved with compassion, even by outcasts with faith in Him.

RECAP

ASK: Recalling your personal preparation this week, why do you think it’s important to note that Jesus’s earthly ministry and divine work was fueled by compassion? What else stood out to you through the session?

SAY: Though Jesus healed the sick many times, His ultimate goal was to meet our spiritual needs. He came to seek and save the lost so that sinners may be reconciled to God the Father.

TRANSITION: Leprosy was a contagious and contaminating disease in Jesus’s day. As a result, lepers were untouchable. Their lives were marked by stigma, loneliness, and fear. The leper in our passage for today believed that Jesus held the power to heal Him—if He was willing. Jesus responded with love and compassion, “I am willing” (v. 41). Spiritually, as unsaved sinners, we are lepers, cut off from communion with our Creator. Yet Jesus, in His compassion, has willingly met us in our brokenness and shame, healed us of our sin, and restored us to be children of the Most High God.



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ministrygrid.com/gospelproject · gospelproject.com/leader-training.

Key Concept: Jesus's commitment to His mission originated in His compassion for others.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 46 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart for the activity “Unexpected Compassion.” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group’s responses.

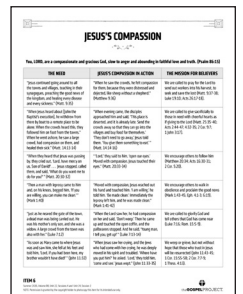
Unexpected Compassion		
Read the passages below. Write down what the people who encountered Jesus may have expected, and then write down what He did instead.		
	EXPECTATION	WHAT JESUS DID
THE LEPER (Mark 1:40-45)		
THE CROWDS (Matthew 9:35-38)		
THE WOMAN (Mark 5:25-34)		
MARY (John 11:28-44)		

INSTRUCT: Divide the large group into four smaller groups. Assign each of the passages from the chart to a group: Mark 1:40-45; Matthew 9:35-38; Mark 5:25-34; and John 11:28-44. Instruct the four smaller groups to read their passage as a group and discuss their findings regarding Jesus’s encounter with the people and how He showed His compassion to them.

REGROUP: Lead groups to report their findings. Pass out copies of **Pacl’ Item 6: Jesus’s Compassion** and highlight our call to act with Jesus’s compassion.

SAY: Jesus saw people and ministered to them with compassion. For the leper, Jesus recognized his need for healing touch and restoration to the community. For the crowds, He saw their need for a shepherd. For the woman, Jesus recognized her desperation and great faith, and He healed her. With Mary, Jesus wept, and then He raised Lazarus from the dead. The God who holds the power over sin, sickness, shame, and the grave is the same God who sees us in our suffering, hears our cries of desperation, and shows us compassion.

Notes



CONSIDER: Jesus showed compassion to all types of people, but He especially singled out misfits and outcasts, the lowly and humble. Who are the misfits and outcasts, lowly and humble, in your current community?

DEBRIEF

How do Jesus's compassion as well as His power give us hope as we face difficulties in our lives?

What are some ways we can display compassion to those who are in need?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus's compassion and kindness were on display when He healed the sick, raised the dead, and fed the hungry. However, the greatest show of compassion and power was when the King of Glory, looking upon humankind in our brokenness, bore our sin on the cross so that we might know salvation and forgiveness through faith in Him.

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: Prayer is something that can easily be forgotten in the Christian life. Many have a ritual of praying before a meal or using prayer as a personal wish list, yet our conversations with God need to be deeper than that. God desires intimate and consistent communication with His children.

How can you prioritize prayer this week to deepen your relationship with God?



HEART: Jesus's compassion is why we can have the opportunity for a transformed heart. Left to our own desires, our hearts only produce hostility toward God and disobedience to His perfect standard of righteousness. Jesus compassionately extended grace through His sacrifice on the cross so that we could have forgiveness, purpose, and eternal life.

What are some ways you can reflect often on the grace Jesus has extended to you?



HANDS: The power of the Holy Spirit upon believers should cultivate a joyful desire to share the compassion and grace of Jesus with others. Too many people to count have not been transformed personally by the gospel of Jesus Christ. As believers in Christ, we should have a joyful desire to proclaim God's gospel to the lost because He has commanded it and His grace is far too great not to be shared.

Who do you know who needs to hear the gospel? How can you be a joyful witness to them this week?

Key Concept: Jesus's commitment to His mission originated in His compassion for others.

Notes

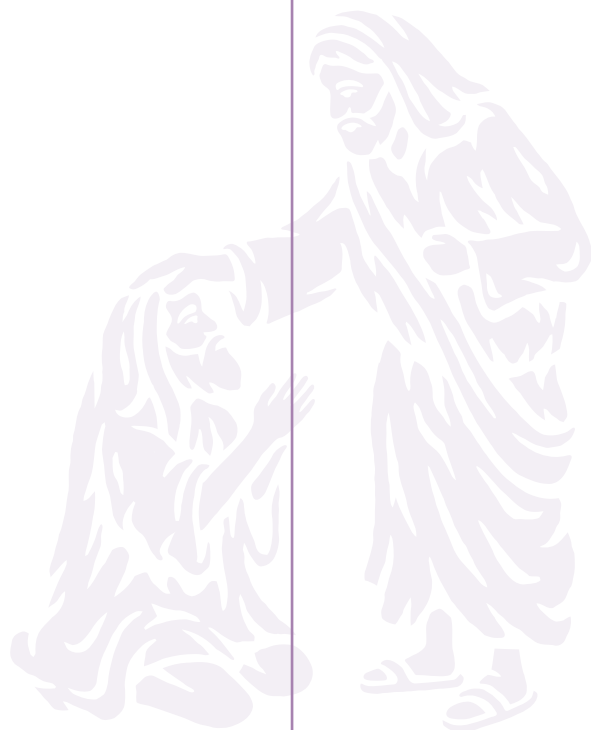
NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Isaiah 43:1-21. Meditate on how Jesus's compassion leads you into a deeper worship of Him. Play some worship songs and praise the Lord.
- Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Let the fact that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses guide you to a greater faith in Him as you face difficulties.
- Jesus sat with the outcast and welcomed the sinner. He comforted the mourning and rejoiced with those who celebrated. As you go through this week, ask the Lord to show you opportunities to become more intentional in loving the way Jesus loved.

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 113:5-7 with your group. Praise God that there is no one like Him. Thank Him that He lifts up the poor and needy, and ask Him how you can partner in this work in the world.

References

1. C. H. Spurgeon, "The Power of Prayer and the Pleasure of Praise," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 243.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 23

THE WAY OF JESUS



MATTHEW; MARK; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies,
do what is good to those who hate you, bless those
who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

—Luke 6:27-28



FAITH AND FORGIVENESS

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 2:1-12

CONTEXT

In his account of the life of Jesus, Mark wasted no time getting to the action. Jesus came on the scene proclaiming that the kingdom of God had come near to God's people through Him, and it was time for people to respond. Jesus immediately began backing up His claim with power, performing miracles. In today's passage, Jesus revealed something deeper about who He is and what He came to do. Even greater than miraculous healings, Jesus came to do something about humanity's greatest problem—sin.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

As you examine Mark 2:1-12:

- Note that because of the faith demonstrated, Jesus forgave the man who was paralyzed.
- Contemplate the significance of Jesus's declaration of forgiveness followed by His miraculous healing of the paralyzed man.



TIMELINE

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority
in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Mark 1:35-45)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Forgives and Heals a
Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on
the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Jesus Appoints His Twelve
Disciples (Mark 3:7-19)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Mark 2:1-12
- Day 2:** Mark 2:13-17
- Day 3:** Mark 2:18-22
- Day 4:** Matthew 9:1-8
- Day 5:** Matthew 9:9-17
- Day 6:** Psalm 121



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

COMMITTED FAITH LEADS TO FORGIVENESS (MARK 2:1-5).

As you read, underline details that demonstrated people's faith.

1 When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. **2** So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. **3** They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. **4** Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. **5** Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Today's passage gives an example of faith. A man who was paralyzed was trying to get to Jesus. He and his friends had perhaps heard about this Man who works miracles, and they hoped for one of their own. When the man who was paralyzed came face to face with the One who could heal him, Jesus was moved by "their faith," the faith of the friends and the man. This man and his friends believed in the reality of what they hoped for, and they pressed on to see proof of what they had not yet seen, as seen in the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1-2. Because of this faith, they were approved.

LEADER NOTE: When the Bible tells of miracles, it's more focused on the who rather than the what. It's about the object of faith, not the results. When your faith is in the right place, you can always trust that the result will be good, even if it's not what you expected. The main point of the faith seen in Mark 2 is not that it led to healing but that it led to Jesus Himself. And Jesus is the source of our healing, both physical and spiritual.

If someone who knew nothing about Christianity asked you to define "faith," what would you say?

WORD STUDY

FAITH: The Greek word for "faith" used in this passage comes from the same root as the verb translated "to believe." The word does not just mean head knowledge or intellectual ascent as we sometimes describe faith. Faith carries the nuance of absolute confidence that leads to obedience.

Key Concept: Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

Notes

So what is faith? Faith is confidence and trust, but it's a vehicle. It's the thing that connects us to the One who can save us. In faith, we acknowledge that we need saving and that Jesus is the One who does the saving. This is why faith and salvation go together in the Bible. Faith is not some magic trick. If the paralyzed man had come to someone other than Jesus, his faith wouldn't have mattered. What made the difference was to whom he directed his faith. Faith by itself cannot save us. Only Jesus can save us. Therefore, when we put our faith in Christ, we find ourselves in the presence of the One who can heal our hurts and forgive our sins.

LEADER NOTE: Often when we discuss the importance of our faith, we can be tempted to place the focus on ourselves rather than on Christ. It is important to note that in this passage, a small amount of focus is placed on the faith of the man and his friends. A large amount of focus is placed on the identity and authority of Jesus that was revealed in response to their faith. When studying the Bible, we should strive to make our main focus the same as the passage's main focus.

Jesus came to heal souls and forgive sins. Though He healed physical ailments, His main purpose was to bring salvation to the world, and salvation comes through forgiveness. Jesus always knows our deeper and greater need, even when we don't. That's why we need to trust and have faith in the One who is able to do it all. He has the power and authority to do so because He is God.

What deeper need do you want Christ to satisfy in your life right now?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS GRACIOUS: God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). Instead of leaving people in their sins, God demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

JESUS HAS THE POWER TO HEAL AND TO FORGIVE BECAUSE HE IS GOD (MARK 2:6-12).

Underline the events in this passage that show Jesus's authority.

6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts:

7 "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" **8** Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? **9** Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'? **10** But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralytic— **11** "I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home."

12 Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone.

As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The Jews had heard of prophets and men of God who could work miracles before, but they had not seen a man who claimed the authority to forgive sin. They questioned in their hearts Jesus's authority and called Him blasphemous, knowing rightly that only God "can forgive sins" (v. 7). If they could only believe that Jesus is God, they wouldn't have called it blasphemy.

But to prove to the skeptics that He could both forgive sin and heal a paralytic, Jesus told the man to get up and go home. We also see Jesus's divinity in the fact that Jesus could perceive in His spirit what the scribes were thinking. All these things point to Jesus as God; His power and authority revealed it all. And the response? "They were all astounded and gave glory to God" (v. 12).

What has Christ done recently that causes you to be astounded and give Him glory?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, He was not practicing humility. . . . That title was pregnant with theological significance concerning Jesus' deity and office. That was why Jesus used it here; He wanted to show His divine authority to forgive sin."¹

—R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)

Key Concept: Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

LEADER NOTE: We need to be able to take the practical implications of this passage and make them personal. The passage teaches that Jesus is God, and therefore, He can forgive sins. Jesus didn't just have the authority to forgive the man who was paralyzed and other people He encountered in the New Testament. Jesus has the authority to forgive you personally. You can study the Bible and appreciate it as a good story but never be changed by it. God intends for His Word to change our lives, and few things have the potential to be as transformational as the truth that Jesus is able to deal with your sins.

The main point of this passage is not that a man who was paralyzed went away walking and forgiven. The point is that God healed and forgave this man, or more precisely, Jesus as God healed and forgave this man. This passage is a key moment in the story of the Bible because, ever since Genesis 3, we've been waiting for someone to arrive in the story who could actually do something about humanity's sin. Mark 2:1-12 declares Jesus to be that someone!

LEADER NOTE: Many people in the Bible got upset or offended when Jesus didn't act or speak the way they expected Him to. They liked Jesus as long as He agreed with them, but when He stepped outside of their box, they were done with Him. People are still like that today. We need to ask ourselves if we are accepting Jesus for who He has shown Himself to be or if we are chasing a false Jesus of our own making who just does whatever we want Him to.

What is better—to be healed of a physical ailment or a spiritual one—and why?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus, as God, has the power to heal a person spiritually and physically. This is ultimately seen through His resurrection that gives us salvation and forgiveness of sin through our faith and trust in Him. One day our bodies also will be gloriously resurrected.

Notes

Notes

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As your group arrives, give each person a blank piece of paper and ask them to write in two columns: (1) “Those Whose Authority I Am Under,” and (2) “Those Whom I Have Authority Over.” After people have completed their lists, invite some volunteers to share a few roles and/or people under each list. Ask: “Why do you submit to some authorities over you, and why might you struggle to submit to other authorities?”

TRANSITION: It seems that authority depends on the circumstances, with one exception that we will examine today.

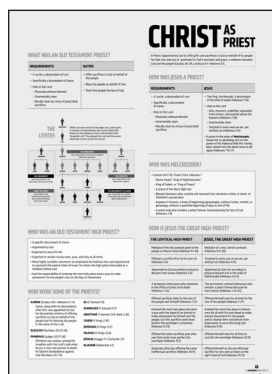
CONTEXT

SAY: In Mark 1:22, the crowds marveled at Jesus’s teaching “because he was teaching them as one who had authority.” This was an observation the people made in response to Jesus’s mastery of His subject matter. In today’s study, however, the authority that Jesus spoke of was not something He could have developed through dedicated study; rather, it was His by divine right. The scribes had a problem with Jesus forgiving sins because they did not recognize His authority, but they were wrong. Jesus, as our faithful, perfect, and divine High Priest, has the authority to forgive sins. *(Display Pacl’ Item 7: Christ as Priest and briefly review how Jesus serves as our Great High Priest.)*

RECAP

ASK: As you prepared this week, what did you notice about Jesus’s authority? How did others respond to Jesus’s authority?

TRANSITION: Today we will witness Jesus’s authority to reverse the eternal consequences of sin. This gift of forgiveness continues to be offered to all humanity through faith in Jesus Christ.



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Key Concept: Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 56 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find the chart “Jesus’s Power over All.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Jesus’s Power over All		
Read the passages below. Write down what Jesus did to show His authority and how people responded.		
AUTHORITY OVER	JESUS’S ACTIONS	PEOPLE’S RESPONSE
EVIL SPIRITS (Mark 1:23-28)		
SIN (Mark 2:1-7)		
PHYSICAL AILMENTS (Mark 2:8-12)		
RELIGION/TRADITION (Mark 3:1-6)		
NATURE (Mark 4:35-41)		
DEATH (Mark 5:35-43)		

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Mark 2:1-12.

DISCUSS: From the passage, fill in the chart about Jesus’s authority over sin and over physical ailments. Then divide your group into four smaller groups and give each group a passage from Mark from the chart. Instruct them to record Jesus’s action in that passage that showed His authority and also to write down how people responded.

ASK: As you look at the chart, what do you think is the hardest aspect of authority to believe Jesus has control over? Why?

DISCUSS: Why do you think the scribes pushed back against belief in Jesus’s authority? What might have drawn the man who was paralyzed and his friends to believe in Jesus’s authority?

CONSIDER: Jesus doesn’t always do what we expect or what we hope for. In today’s passage, the obvious thing for Jesus to do would have been to heal the

man first. But Jesus addressed his deeper need first. Ask: “If people had a prayer need for sickness, for financial help, or for marriage or relationship problems, what are some possible deeper needs there?”

SAY: Jesus is our ultimate authority, yet He is never authoritarian. He is compassionate, loving, and gracious and always wants the best for us. But He knows what “the best” is better than we know for ourselves.

DEBRIEF

When is it difficult for you to receive the forgiveness Jesus has the authority to give you?

Even with having faith in God’s forgiveness, when is it difficult for you to forgive others?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus’s authority to forgive sin was not developed through study, practice, or posturing. It is His because He is God. When we put our faith in Jesus, this removes the barrier of disbelief and frees us to desire God’s will above our own and to receive the forgiveness we need through Jesus’s sacrifice for us.

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: It is vital that we let God’s Word define what we believe about Him. We don’t get to just pick and choose our theology. The Word of God reveals God to us, and we must decide to believe it or not. Scripture declares that Jesus is God in the flesh and that He forgives sins. Our preferences and preconceived notions do not affect who He is. If the Bible makes a claim that seems hard to believe, then we must be the ones to bend, not the Bible.

How does God’s Word challenge your preferences and preconceptions?



HEART: The Gospels don’t just reveal the person of Jesus to us so that we can know more facts about Him. God has shown His Son to us in the Gospels so that we might know Him personally. Our takeaway must be more than just a set of doctrines to ascribe to. God’s special revelation in His Word should fill us with awe and wonder! Jesus, God in the flesh, is ready and able to deal with your sin. We should stand amazed at the wonder of this truth.

Where in your life do you need to believe that Jesus is able to deal with sin, whether yours or someone else’s?

Key Concept: Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.



HANDS: Many people in our world today respect and even revere Jesus.

They like some of the things He had to say. They think He was a kind, loving, and wise teacher. They don't, however, believe He is God in the flesh. Disbelief in the deity and identity of Jesus is not an option Jesus intended to leave us with. (*Display Paclr Item 8: Jesus Forgives Sins and reread the passage aloud.*) Many people need to be lovingly confronted with the reality of who Jesus claimed to be, and then they need to decide if they will accept or reject His claims.

With whom can you share that Jesus clearly claimed to be God?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Read Matthew 8:5-13 about the faith of the centurion, paying close attention to verses 8-10. Pray that God will reveal to you any area(s) of your life that you are withholding from His absolute authority.
- Recall the last thing you knew for certain that God led you to do. If you have not obeyed, then take steps to do so this week.
- If you can recall when God healed you of a physical ailment, write that out as a testimony and share it with others, including posting it on social media.

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

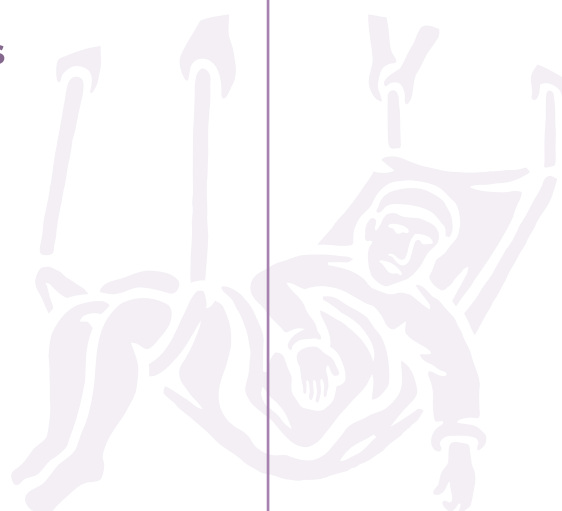
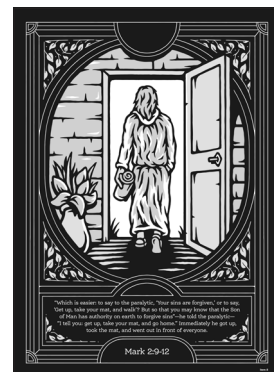
PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 121:1-4 with your group, thanking God for His help and protection from all things in the physical and spiritual realms.

References

1. R. C. Sproul, Mark, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 41.

Notes



HEALING AND CALLING

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 3:7-19

CONTEXT

Have you ever been in a huge crowd, feeling pressed in by people on every side? That's what Jesus experienced at many points in His public ministry. Everyone wanted in on the miracles, the healing, the blessing. Jesus felt compassion for the broken people seeking help. Yet Jesus had also come for something much bigger. In Mark 3, Jesus had begun His mission of salvation for all nations. To address the present problem of huge crowds and to look to the future after His resurrection, Jesus appointed twelve disciples and began preparing them for a lifetime of ministry.

KEY CONCEPT

When Jesus calls, His disciples obey to continue His mission.

As you examine Mark 3:7-19:

- Reflect upon the fact that crowds came to see Jesus for healing, and Jesus showed compassion to them.
- Recognize that Jesus chose and equipped disciples to be with Him, to preach, and to reveal His power.



TIMELINE

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority
in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a
Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

**SESSION STUDY: Jesus Appoints His
Twelve Disciples (Mark 3:7-19)**

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Mark 1:35-45)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on
the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Mark 3:7-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Matthew 9:18-31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Mark 3:20-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Matthew 9:32-38 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Mark 3:31-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 98 |



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

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn more about Jesus's strategy for beginning His ministry in Galilee.

JESUS'S MISSION OF HEALING DREW CROWDS (MARK 3:7-12).

Circle each mention of the crowds and their size.

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a large crowd followed from Galilee, and a large crowd followed from Judea, **8** Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon. The large crowd came to him because they heard about everything he was doing. **9** Then he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, so that the crowd wouldn't crush him. **10** Since he had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward him to touch him. **11** Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God!" **12** And he would strongly warn them not to make him known.

Large crowds followed Jesus, those from Galilee, Judea, and places beyond as well, represented in the mention of the other towns: "Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon" (v. 8). Jesus was attracting all people, not just the Jews. And why were they following Him? "Because they heard about everything he was doing." They heard about the teaching, the healings, the casting out of demons, and the eating with sinners. Many followed Him because they wanted something from Him, with some believing His message and others maybe not so much. The crowds were so large that Jesus had to get on a boat so as not to be crushed. Everyone wanted to be near Jesus because everyone had a problem they wanted Him to fix. Every human lives in brokenness, and we're all trying to find something that will satisfy our souls.

What could people hear about what the Lord is doing in and through your life?

LEADER NOTE: The crowds gathered around Jesus in throngs early in His ministry, but as He taught more about the values of God's kingdom and confronted people with the hard truths of the gospel, many of those in the crowds fell away. They wanted Him as a miracle-worker, but they rejected Him as Lord and Savior. Much the same happens today. People come to Jesus to get something from Him, but they do not count the cost. When following Christ is going to cost them something, they are gone as quickly as they arrived.

Key Concept: When Jesus calls, His disciples obey to continue His mission.

Notes

People who needed healing from physical ailments came to Jesus, so too did those who needed healing from spiritual ailments or needed demons cast out of them. But demons, knowing who Jesus was, “fell down before him,” proclaiming His identity as the Son of God (v. 11). The unclean spirits feared Jesus because He is the One whom God promised since the beginning. When Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent and humanity fell, God promised that One would come to crush the serpent (Gen. 3:15). He would save humanity by defeating the forces of evil and the power of sin. The demons recognized what the crowds did not—Jesus is the serpent-crusher—and they were terrified.

As Jesus gathered followers and worked miracles, His face was already set toward the cross. He already knew the suffering and the ultimate victory that lay ahead. The crowds, however, couldn't have imagined the wonders God had in store to bring about His people's salvation.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus's commands to others, even unclean spirits, in the Gospels not to reveal Him as the Son of God can seem really confusing. This is a concept known as the Messianic Secret.¹ Jesus fully knew the will of God throughout His mission on earth. He knew that God had sent Him to atone for sin through His death on the cross. He also knew that many of the Jews had been waiting for a messiah, for a king, who would provide physical salvation, not spiritual. If word of His identity spread too soon, the whole nation would be in an uproar, ready to crown Jesus as king and to declare war on their oppressors. That was not God's plan. So Jesus often told people to remain quiet about who He is so that He could focus on what He had come to do.

How has Jesus shown Himself to be more than you thought He was at first in your own life?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus calls us to follow Him. We are His disciples when we follow, obey, and trust in Him as Lord and Savior, preaching the good news to others.

JESUS APPOINTED HIS DISCIPLES TO FURTHER HIS MISSION (MARK 3:13-19).

Underline each thing Jesus did that set the twelve disciples apart from His other followers.

13 Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted, and they came to him. **14** He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, to send them out to preach, **15** and to have authority to drive out demons. **16** He appointed the Twelve: To Simon, he gave the name Peter; **17** and to James the son of Zebedee, and to his brother John, he gave the name “Boanerges” (that is, “Sons of Thunder”); **18** Andrew; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, **19** and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

This passage is an important moment in the Bible. When Jesus called and set apart the twelve disciples, He laid the foundation for His church. These men, with the exception of one, would carry the good news of Jesus’s death and resurrection and His offer of salvation to the ends of the earth.

What Jesus was doing is called discipleship. He invited these men into His life, taught them, and then equipped them to do the same works that He was doing. As Jesus invested in these men, He knew they would change the very course of human history. His followers would become known as “men who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

LEADER NOTE: While it is true we are called to the same mission the disciples were called to, it is important to note that these men were given a unique office and role by Jesus. After Jesus’s death and resurrection, Jesus as the risen Lord personally commissioned these men to begin the work of global evangelization. They had special authority to lead the church, and it was through many of them that God did the special work of inspiring the writing of the New Testament. One criterion for inclusion of a book in the New Testament was a connection to one of the apostles in its authorship.

WORD STUDY

APOSTLES: The word used to describe the Twelve in the original Greek is *apostolos*, or “sent ones.” This is an apt description of the role given to those twelve, as Jesus appointed them and immediately sent them out on short-term ministry missions. Later, after His resurrection, they would be sent to the ends of the earth.

Key Concept: When Jesus calls, His disciples obey to continue His mission.

What can you do to start or continue to follow the call God has on your life?

Notes

Jesus's calling and commission of the disciples revealed the heart of God: God wanted to involve His people in His mission. Jesus called disciples because He desired to give those whom He loved a role in the plan of salvation. That desire extended from those first twelve disciples to the church as a whole.

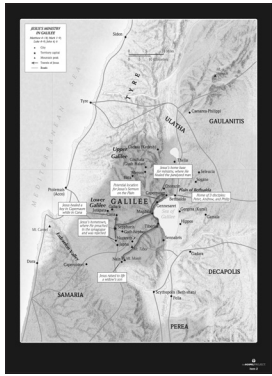
What began with the disciples continues in us today. We who have given ourselves to Christ have been commissioned and sent out to proclaim who Jesus is and what He has done. We have been given authority, and He has promised that nothing can hinder the church from doing the work of God!

LEADER NOTE: People may not know what is meant by the phrase “the mission of God.” When we talk about the work Jesus called the disciples to do, and the work that God now calls the church to do, we are talking about God’s redemptive plan throughout all of human history to deal with humanity’s sin, to restore His image-bearers to a right relationship with Himself, and to fulfill His original design in creation of an earth full of and ruled by those who bear His image rightly. The church participates in that mission today through evangelism, sharing the good news of Jesus’s death, resurrection, and impending return.

How does it make you feel to be called to participate in the same mission the twelve disciples were given?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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



ARRIVAL

WRITE: Pass out a piece of paper to each person as they arrive. Instruct them to write “Bucket List” at the top (refers to what you want to do before you die, before you “kick the bucket”) and to write down what they would’ve written on their Bucket List at the age of 18 years old.

ASK: How many things on that list were things you just wanted to do, and how many did you feel you were called to do? How do you distinguish a calling from a desire?

CONTEXT

SAY: The Gospel of Mark spends the first eight chapters showing that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. The events recorded are more concerned with that purpose than with detailing each event in the life of Jesus in chronological order. Our last session, focused on Mark 2, dealt with Jesus’s authority to forgive and heal when people place their faith in Him. Today’s passage starts with crowds of people coming to Jesus from a variety of places. *(Call attention to Pacl’ Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry in Galilee Map, and point out the locations mentioned in today’s passage: map includes the region of Galilee, the region “beyond,” or east, of the Jordan River, and the cities of Tyre and Sidon; Judea, Jerusalem, and Idumea were further south, beyond the edge of the map.)*

RECAP

ASK: From your personal preparation this week, what stood out about Jesus and His actions in today’s passage? What questions might you have?

TRANSITION: People feel drawn to Jesus for many reasons. Sometimes it’s to get something that would benefit or bless them. But Jesus calls us simply to come to Him, to be in relationship with Him, and to be part of His family. Today we will look at some aspects of calling.



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Key Concept: When Jesus calls, His disciples obey to continue His mission.

Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 64 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find the chart “Desires and Calling.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Desires and Calling		
Read the passages below. Write down the motives of each group of people who came to Jesus, and write down Jesus’s intentions for them.		
	MOTIVES	JESUS’S INTENTIONS
THE CROWDS (Mark 3:7-12)		
THE DISCIPLES (Mark 3:13-19)		

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Mark 3:7-12.

ANALYZE: For the first box in the first row on the chart, ask: “Why did people come from so many locations and so far away? What may have been their motives to come and see Jesus?” (*Jesus’s fame had already spread; people were curious or wanted to hear Him in person; people wanted to be healed or to witness the action.*) For the second box in the first row, ask: “How did Jesus respond? What can we infer about His intentions for the crowds based on what He did?” (*Jesus got into a boat for self-preservation and to accommodate the crowds; He could have gone away, but He stayed and presumably taught, healed, and cast out demons. // Jesus had compassion for the people and wanted them to be nourished spiritually and to be made well both physically and spiritually; He wanted them to experience and become part of His kingdom.*)

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Mark 3:13-19.

ENGAGE: For the second row on the chart, ask: “What might have been the disciples’ motives for obeying Jesus’s call to discipleship?” (*They believed Jesus is the Messiah; they were compelled by His presence [see Mark 2:14]; they believed Jesus was sent by God.*) Highlight Judas’s name on the list of disciples. Ask: “What do you think Judas’s motives were compared to the other disciples? What were Jesus’s intentions for these disciples?” (*He appointed them and sent them to preach and to drive out demons, extending and fulfilling Jesus’s own ministry to the ends of the earth.*)

CLARIFY: It is important to note that Jesus intended to equip these men to carry on His work. Their proclaiming His words was fundamental in the founding of the church in the book of Acts after Jesus’s resurrection and ascension. The apostle John recorded Jesus’s words of prayer for those who would believe in Him through the message of His apostles (John 17:20).

DEBRIEF

How can we know when God is calling us to do something for His glory?

SUMMARIZE

Throughout His ministry, Jesus showed compassion on the crowds, even though not all were wanting to believe in Him. Jesus appointed the twelve disciples to extend the reach of His compassion to even more people and to the ends of the earth. To this end, Jesus called the Twelve to be part of His life that He might teach and equip them for the gospel ministry.

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: We must understand the truth and weight of God’s calling believers to participate in His mission. Jesus began His ministry by commissioning those who believed in Him to be participants, not just spectators. The same is true today—as believers in Christ, we are called to kingdom work.

How does the calling and commissioning of the apostles challenge your idea of what it means to be a Christian?



HEART: One of the great wonders of the Bible is that God includes His people in His work. The transcendent, perfect, holy God invites mortal sinners turned saints to be a part of His plans for universal history. What great mercy and grace! What a privilege! This should be a cause of great joy and wonder for us.

How do you see God's love for you in His calling on your life?



HANDS: God's call should be a joyful thing, but it also should be sobering.

The Bible states, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected" (Luke 12:48). We are not just spectators in God's plan of redemption. Christ calls us to Himself to receive salvation and then to proclaim that very same gospel to others. Every Christian has a responsibility to join Christ in proclaiming the gospel.

How can you participate in God's mission for an unbelieving friend, seeking an opportunity to share Christ with them?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Ask God to show you anything in your life that may be crowding out your time with Him. Pray that He will show you how to come to Him with pure motives to be in His presence.
- Proclaiming God's Word can seem very intimidating, especially when you do not know what to say. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, making a list of what verses 3-4 say is "most important."
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what God is calling you to do to be part of His mission to see the world come to faith in Him.

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.

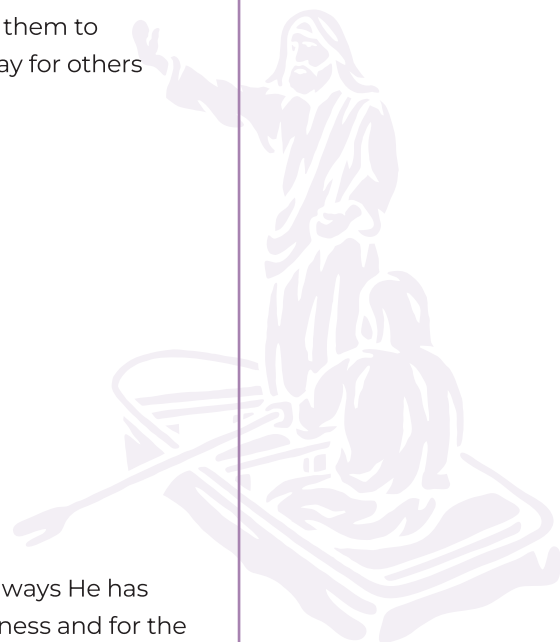
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray Psalm 98:1-3 with your group, thanking God for the ways He has performed wonders, especially in Jesus. Thank God for His goodness and for the privilege of taking His gospel to the ends of the earth.

References

1. Rodney Reeves, "Messianic Secret," in Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1116.



THE CHOSEN DISCIPLES

By Daniel Youngblood



Many historians, Christian and non-Christian, agree that the most influential event in all human history was the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the worldwide movement that He and His followers launched. Following the teachings of their Rabbi, the Twelve launched a global mission that would rewrite the course of history.

Who were these men who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6)? They weren't that different from many of us. Many were workers from rural regions around Judea with limited education, power, or esteem. They weren't the most knowledgeable, the most spiritual, or the most religiously convicted of the Jews. They were just normal men. We know their names not because of who they were originally but because of who they became after they encountered Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

SPECIALLY CHOSEN . . .

The disciples weren't chosen because they were special. They were special because they were chosen. This was unique to Jesus's disciples. When a young man wanted to train to be a rabbi, he would seek out the teacher he wanted to follow and hope to earn a place among that rabbi's students. Jesus, however, didn't follow the culture's norms. He sought His students out, and He chose them. Out of the many disciples who followed Jesus, the Twelve were given the designation of "apostle," or "sent one" (Mark 3:13-14). They were specially set apart. It is important to see that the call to follow Jesus comes from Jesus Himself. He does not wait for potential disciples to come to Him. He seeks them out, and He makes the lost, the lowly, the average, and the unlikely into saints through the power of the Holy Spirit.

BY SOMEONE SPECIAL . . .

Do you ever wonder who the Twelve believed Jesus was when they first accepted His call? They could see He was special, but who could have predicted where that call would lead? As Jesus revealed who He is and what He came to do, the Twelve slowly understood that they had been chosen by Someone even greater than they realized.

They heard Jesus claim authority to forgive sins, call Himself Lord of the Sabbath, teach that the kingdom of God had come, and call people to repent. They witnessed Jesus cleanse lepers, make lame men walk, and show His authority over death itself. They ran in fear at His arrest and crucifixion, yet they also saw Him resurrected and touched the holes in His hands and side. They felt His breath on their faces as He told them to receive the Holy Spirit and go to all the nations to proclaim His name.

After all they saw and heard, the disciples came to believe this Rabbi was no simple teacher. They were chosen by the incarnate God of the universe. The eternal Word, God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, had set them apart to be the first ambassadors of His kingdom coming to earth.

No, there was nothing essentially special about those who were chosen, but there was something incredibly special about the One who did the choosing. The reality of Jesus's identity transformed their lives, and that transformation fueled them to go forth and transform the world itself. The same is true of all disciples of Jesus today. The God who loves us has chosen us, and through following Him, we are transformed into something greater than who we were.

Jesus didn't follow the culture's norms.
He sought His students out, and He chose them.

FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE

What does it mean to be chosen? It means God calls people for a purpose and tasks them with a mission. It has always been God's way to choose people made in His image as the means by which He accomplishes His will. God chooses a few out of the many so that through the few His blessings can be multiplied and spread to the many as well. He created Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth with His image and ruling His world for His glory, but they sinned, and humanity fell from our first mission. He chose the family of Abraham, the twelve tribes of Israel, to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. His promise was that through this chosen nation, He would bless all the nations of the earth. But Israel broke the covenant and failed in their mission as well.

Jesus Christ came as the fulfillment of Adam's mission and Israel's mission. He is the ultimate Chosen One of God, and as He came to save people from all nations, tribes, and tongues, He calls His followers to come join His mission. Jesus chose the Twelve and sent them out to share the good news of His salvation with all nations. He has chosen us and sent us out to preach the good news in the very same way.

Daniel Youngblood is a middle school Bible teacher at Christ Covenant School in Ridgeland, Mississippi, and a member of Morrison Heights Baptist Church in Clinton, Mississippi. He and his wife, Isabella, married in August 2025. Daniel is pursuing a PhD at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and looks forward to a lifetime of teaching God's Word to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

No, there was nothing essentially special about those who were chosen, but there was something incredibly special about the One who did the choosing.

LORD OF THE SABBATH

CORE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 12:1-14

CONTEXT

People didn't know what to do with Jesus. In Matthew 11, even John the Baptist struggled with doubts about Jesus. Jesus lamented an unresponsive generation, yet to those who did accept Him, Jesus gave one of the greatest promises in Scripture: "Come to me . . . and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). In Matthew 12, however, we see the religious leaders' misunderstanding of the heart of God. They mistook God's provision of the Sabbath to display God's goodness for the good itself.

KEY CONCEPT

Mercy and goodness outweigh ritual and law.

As you examine Matthew 12:1-14:

- Note that the law is a means to an end, not the end itself.
- Recognize that Jesus heals and restores because He is merciful and good.



TIMELINE

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Matthew 8:1-4)

**SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches About and Heals
on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14)**

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man
(Matthew 9:1-8)

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

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Mark 2:23-3:6
- Day 2:** Matthew 12:1-21
- Day 3:** Matthew 12:22-50
- Day 4:** Matthew 13:1-23
- Day 5:** Matthew 13:24-58
- Day 6:** Psalm 59



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

JESUS POINTS TO MERCY AS GREATER THAN SACRIFICE (MATTHEW 12:1-8).

Highlight each reference to the law or to another Old Testament passage.

1 At that time Jesus passed through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat some heads of grain. **2** When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “See, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” **3** He said to them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry: **4** how he entered the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence—which is not lawful for him or for those with him to eat, but only for the priests? **5** Or haven’t you read in the law that on Sabbath days the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? **6** I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. **7** If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. **8** For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

In the busyness and non-stop action of traveling with and ministering with the Messiah, there came a time when Jesus’s disciples were hungry on the Sabbath. So Jesus let them eat. Some Pharisees watching nearby, who already didn’t like Jesus, seized the opportunity to “expose” His lawlessness for letting His disciples break the Sabbath. The Pharisees did exactly what many religious people today often do—they overlooked real people and their needs in favor of rigid human rules and regulations.

LEADER NOTE: In 1 Samuel 21, David and his men were running from Saul and were hungry. When they approached Ahimelech the priest at the tabernacle in Nob, he gave them the bread of the Presence, consecrated bread that only priests were supposed to eat by law (Lev. 24:5-9). Jesus was making the point that love of God and love of neighbor surpasses other laws. Other instances in Scripture where the law was broken for the well-being of God’s people was when the Hebrew midwives saved the Hebrew babies, lying that the babies were born too fast (Ex. 1:9), and when Rahab lied to save the Hebrew spies in Jericho (Josh. 2:5).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

What is a modern-day example of someone who cares more about the letter of the law than the genuine needs of people?

The Pharisees were caught up on a technicality. Harvesting and threshing were prohibited on the Sabbath, but the disciples were only plucking enough to eat at the moment (cf. Deut. 23:25). Rabbis had prohibited plucking and eating grain as one of the thirty-nine actions that they defined as work on the Sabbath.¹ Jesus, as the Messiah, could have responded to their strict interpretation by declaring His authority and let that be that. Instead, Jesus used their complaint to expose a problem in their hearts—they did not understand the goodness of God that lay underneath His law. They saw regulations meant to restrict people where God gave loving guidelines intended to bless and give rest.

The laws, the rituals, and the sacrifices were never an end in themselves. God's people were never meant to look for salvation in religious rites. God's laws were meant to reveal God's character and draw the hearts of the people into loving communion with their Lord. Jesus clarified that God had never intended His people to strut around wielding Sabbath restrictions like a club to beat people when they stepped out of line. The rule was graciously given to motivate and encourage people toward the kind of life God created them to live: pleasant and joyful, with time for rest and worship.

LEADER NOTE: Are there areas in which the modern church has tended to be more like the Pharisees than like Jesus? We should read this passage as a cautionary tale against applying the laws of God without understanding the heart of God. We must continually ask ourselves, "Are my thoughts and actions consistent with God's character, or am I walking in my own wisdom and understanding?" Such questions can help us identify past errors to avoid future ones.

When have you or someone you know misunderstood or misapplied the heart behind one of God's commands?

BIBLICAL CONCEPT

LORD OF THE SABBATH: To claim to be Lord of the Sabbath was to claim to be Lord of the law. The only Lord of the law is the One who gave it—God Himself. In this passage, Jesus did not just tweak cultural norms; He claimed divine authority.

LOVING CARE TOWARD OTHERS FULFILLS THE LAW OF GOD (MATTHEW 12:9-14).

Underline words in the passage connected to law. Circle words in the passage connected to love.

9 Moving on from there, he entered their synagogue. **10** There he saw a man who had a shriveled hand, and in order to accuse him they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” **11** He replied to them, “Who among you, if he had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn’t take hold of it and lift it out? **12** A person is worth far more than a sheep; so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath.” **13** Then he told the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and it was restored, as good as the other. **14** But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, how they might kill him.

Jesus already exposed the fault in the Pharisees’ hearts and asserted His authority as Lord of the Sabbath. He already declared that the heart of God prefers mercy over sacrifice and real love over rigid religiosity. But Jesus did not just talk the talk. With lurking Pharisees, who were already fuming with anger, Jesus marched into the synagogue on the Sabbath and acted out the principle He had just taught for the benefit of a man who suffered and needed healing.

The Pharisees questioned Jesus and were hoping for another reason to condemn Him. Previously, they accused Jesus’s disciples breaking Sabbath laws. This time they watched to see if Jesus would dare to heal someone on the Sabbath. In one action, Jesus brought together His miraculous healing ministry and His prophetic condemnation of the religious leaders’ hard hearts. The man’s shriveled hand was made whole, and the Pharisees were madder than ever.

LEADER NOTE: To apply these principles without the wisdom of God’s Word and the guidance of His Spirit can lead to many errors. Many today are quick to overlook or outright reject the truth of God’s Word in the name of “love.” That is not what Jesus was doing here. Jesus was upholding the law in a way that intentionally resisted the Pharisees’ perversion of the law. Rejecting God’s commands—sinning—is never an act of love in reality. There must be a middle ground between becoming like the Pharisees and becoming lawless and willing to justify any behavior in the name of love and kindness. The answer is found in the person of Jesus, who is both perfectly loving and perfectly truthful, One who could declare both “Neither do I condemn you” and “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore” (see John 8:11).

What norms of ours might Jesus upset if He walked into one of our church services?

In this passage, you can almost feel the anger and disappointment of Jesus as He marveled at the spiritual numbness of the religious leaders. Jesus declared that they valued sheep more than they valued men made in the image of God. Jesus understood that the Sabbath was made for the good of man and the glory of God. He declared that doing good to a man in need is the thing that most glorifies God. And this was not just “kind of good”; Jesus said that His actions were lawful. He kept the law, the true heart of the law, by healing the man, and the Pharisees broke the law by caring more about their traditions than image-bearers. Jesus’s actions echoed His teaching that all the Law and the Prophets hang on the greatest commandments: love God and love your neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40).

LEADER NOTE: What might seem to us like merely debating the interpretation of the law was actually Jesus asserting a strong claim to be the Messiah. The Pharisees absolutely realized that Jesus’s words and actions were pointing to His messianic authority, and they were furious. According to them, Jesus’s behavior was heretical and blasphemous because they refused to believe He is the Messiah, and from that moment on, they plotted to kill Him.

How is God glorified when His people do good to those around them?



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As your group arrives, ask them to think of a time they broke the law because a higher priority made it necessary. Invite a few volunteers to share briefly their examples. Ask for a show of hands: “Have you ever broken or ignored a law because it was inconvenient or harmless? Have you ever broken a law, such as a speed limit, because you knew you could get away with it?”

CONTEXT

SAY: After commissioning the twelve disciples (Matt. 10:1-15; Mark 2:13-19), warning them of the trials to come and urging them to fear God as they ministered to people’s needs, Jesus continued teaching and preaching in towns and villages, calling the lost to come and find rest for their souls in Him (Matt. 11:28). Some of the things that burdened the people were all the religious “laws” imposed by Jewish tradition. Jesus’s interaction with the Pharisees in today’s passage would not be the only time Jesus would criticize the religious leaders for their oppression and hypocrisy (Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46).

RECAP

ASK: As you prepared this week, did anything stand out as something you had never considered before?

SAY: Many of the religious laws enforced by the scribes and Pharisees were based on the Mosaic law but were man-made distortions of the laws God had given through Moses. In fact, strict obedience to their human laws had become more important for them than reflecting God’s mercy and grace. The disciples, since they followed Jesus and did not have a source of income, were within their rights to eat some heads of grain from the fields (Deut. 23:24-25), but the Pharisees accused them of breaking the Sabbath laws. Jesus, therefore, confronted the Pharisees about God’s desire for faithful love over stringent rule-keeping (see Hos. 6:6).



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GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 74 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find “The Letter and the Spirit.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

The Letter and the Spirit

Read the passages below. Write down the law’s instructions in “The Letter” column. Write down the heart behind God’s law in “The Spirit” column.

THE LETTER	THE SPIRIT
EXODUS 20:8-11	
EXODUS 20:12	
EXODUS 23:1-2	

REVIEW: Pass out copies of **Pact Item 9: The Sabbath** and briefly review it. Say: “The Sabbath laws were not supposed to be a burden or constant source of frustration for God’s people. But the Pharisees, who were devoted to following God’s laws, imposed strict interpretations of what was ‘unlawful,’ or considered ‘work,’ on the Sabbath. They focused on and added to the letter of the law but forgot the spirit of the law—God’s heart behind the laws He gave them.”

ENGAGE: Invite volunteers to read the verses listed on the chart: Exodus 20:8-11; 20:12; and 23:1-2. For each passage, lead the group to identify and record the letter of the laws and God’s intention behind the laws.

SAY: God gave each of these laws to Moses while he spent forty days on top of Mount Sinai. They are good laws that flowed out of God’s good character, and following them would help the Israelites prosper in the land. Yet not every circumstance fell neatly under a specific law, which was why Moses spent his days deliberating hard questions about the law (see Ex. 18:13-23). The spirit of



the law refers to the heart issue the law was meant to address. Jesus often called out the Pharisees for their strict adherence to the letter of the law while disregarding God's heart behind it.

READ: Invite volunteers to read aloud Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 7:9-13; and Matthew 26:59-61.

DISCUSS: The Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the law of Moses, but on several occasions, Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy. Ask: "How did the Pharisees 'interpret' the law to forbid compassion on the Sabbath? To absolve themselves of responsibility to care for their aging parents? To manipulate false witnesses at Jesus's unlawful trial?"

DEBRIEF

Why do you suppose Jesus debated with the religious leaders before He healed the man on the Sabbath?

Why are motives and the heart so important to Jesus?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus was more concerned with His relationship with people than He was with following man-made religious dogma. His ability to remain true to His Father's will is an example we should follow rather than trying to criticize or conform to those who are not in agreement with us.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 75). 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: We must understand the intention and design of the commands of God. God gives laws to His people for their good. If a command of God is not bringing good to His people, then perhaps we have misunderstood His command, or we have a skewed view of what is good. We should look to Jesus as the One with the authority to show us the true intent of God's law.

Where might your thinking on God's commands need to move away from rigid religiosity toward life-giving love?



HEART: Love fulfills God's law. We obey the Lord when we serve others and reflect God's love for them. We can be certain that we are within God's will when we love His image-bearers well. If we find in ourselves a lack of love for others, we should ask God to stir us up to greater love.

What is one situation in your life right now in which you need to ask God for greater love toward others?



HANDS: Jesus both taught people about the heart of God's law and took action to demonstrate the heart of God's law. When Jesus healed the man in the synagogue, He displayed to all those watching the true love and mercy of God. Christians, as the body of Christ, are called to display the loving heart of God in the same way.

What is one way you can actively display the loving heart of God through your actions this week?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Spend at least ten minutes each day praying for your church, its spiritual leaders, its ministries, your upcoming worship service, and members whom you know are struggling.
- Consider speaking with one of your church's leaders about the reason for any elements of your worship services that you do not understand.
- Jesus showed compassion to the people He healed, whether they chose to follow Him or not. Consider helping someone this week without pre-judging how they should respond to your help.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 75 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 59:16-17 with your group. Thank God for His help as you deal with enemies who seek to malign or attack you because of your love for Him. Thank the Lord for and joyfully proclaim His faithful love.

References

1. Craig L. Blomberg, Matthew, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 196.

LORD OF LOVE

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 6:20-23,27-36

CONTEXT

Jesus did amazing things. He healed the sick, made lame men walk, cleansed lepers, and cast out demons. He called ordinary, untrained, unlikely men to be His closest followers and told them He would use them to change the world. He confronted the religious leaders of the day, exposing their hypocrisy. When Jesus taught, He revealed things about the meaning of life, the hearts of men, and the nature of God that have echoed through history. Luke 6 contains the Beatitudes, some of Jesus's most wonderful, influential, and challenging teachings.

KEY CONCEPT

The way of Jesus is humble, sacrificial love that is countercultural.

As you examine Luke 6:20-23,27-36:

- Meditate on Jesus's message that those who are persecuted are blessed.
- Recognize that Jesus calls us to love sacrificially, even to love our enemies.



TIMELINE

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Luke 5:12-16)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a
Paralyzed Man (Luke 5:17-26)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals
on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

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

John the Baptist Seeks
Confirmation That Jesus Is the
Messiah (Luke 7:18-35)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 6:1-16
- Day 2:** Luke 6:17-49
- Day 3:** Matthew 5:1-48
- Day 4:** Matthew 6:1-34
- Day 5:** Matthew 7:1-29
- Day 6:** Psalm 147



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

THE HUMBLE AND MEEK REJOICE IN THEIR HEAVENLY INHERITANCE (LUKE 6:20-23).

Underline the attributes of blessed people, and circle the rewards of blessed people.

20 Then looking up at his disciples, he said: Blessed are you who are poor, because the kingdom of God is yours. **21** Blessed are you who are hungry now, because you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, because you will laugh. **22** Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, insult you, and slander your name as evil because of the Son of Man. **23** Rejoice in that day and leap for joy. Take note—your reward is great in heaven, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the prophets.

Jesus’s words in this passage likely are familiar to many. They are called “the Beatitudes,” and they appear here in Luke and in Jesus’s famous Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. Many who study the Bible think these teachings were not something Jesus said once or twice but a compilation of challenging teachings that Jesus proclaimed many times. These words are at the center of the paradoxical message that Jesus shared with His disciples: In the kingdom of God, the things the world values do not matter and the things that seem like foolishness to the world bring about the blessed life.

LEADER NOTE: There is no question that many biblical values are at odds with the things our culture allows and even celebrates. The way of Jesus has always been countercultural. Therefore, Christians should seek to understand and engage with the world around them rather than hide themselves away from it. Jesus called His disciples to faithful engagement with the lost world in which they lived, not fearful isolationism. We must ask ourselves what it looks like to engage with the lostness around us while also staying separate from the temptations and traps of worldly living.

How are Jesus’s teachings about what it means to be blessed different from what the world says?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus ushered in a countercultural, upside-down kingdom that put love as the highest value. This love is shown ultimately in how He died for us that those who trust in Him might have life and not perish.

Key Concept: The way of Jesus is humble, sacrificial love that is countercultural.

Jesus encouraged His disciples by saying that in the midst of hardship and persecution, they are still blessed: 1) because the kingdom of God is theirs, and 2) because their reward is great in heaven (Luke 6:20,23). Those who follow Jesus live in the hope of eternal life in His kingdom and endless blessing in the presence of God. That is the promise that Jesus came to make a reality. Once you understand and put your faith in that promise, navigating the difficulties of this life becomes possible.

Christians can walk through life without stress about possessions, sustenance, or survival because our eternity is already secure. We can weather trials of persecution in Jesus's name, knowing that unending joy is on the horizon. We can endure living as outcasts and being the world's laughingstock because we know our Father is pleased with us and will vindicate us in the end. We are called and commanded to "rejoice" because we know how the story ends (v. 23).

LEADER NOTE: Sometimes the idea of persecution can feel disconnected for Western believers. Compared to many times in history and many places in the world today, most Christians in America experience very little in the way of direct danger or consequences because of their faith. It's important to remember that this reality could change in an instant and has in various places at various times. The believer must be ready to stand for Christ no matter the situation, grounded in the eternal hope we have in Christ. We also should constantly remember and pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who live in parts of the world where persecution is a daily reality.

Which blessing in this passage brings you the most comfort or joy?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"While the world imagines progress, strength, and a grand future, the disciples know about the end, judgment, and the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, for which the world is not at all ready . . . That is why the disciples are rejected as strangers in the world, bothersome guests, disturbers of the peace."¹

–Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945)

Notes



LOVING OTHERS, INCLUDING ENEMIES, IS THE WAY OF JESUS (LUKE 6:27-36).

Highlight each imperative (command) in the passage.

27 “But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. **29** If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don’t hold back your shirt either. **30** Give to everyone who asks you, and from someone who takes your things, don’t ask for them back. **31** Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them. **32** If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. **33** If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. **35** But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. **36** Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

If you thought the passage before this was challenging, there’s much more where that came from. Everyone loves the idea of love, but few people are ready to commit to the radical definition of love that Jesus taught. Jesus escalated His countercultural call when He taught His people how they are to show love. Everyone loves the people who love them, but the way of Jesus calls people to go further—Jesus called His disciples to love their enemies. They were to respond to hate with goodness. When struck, they were not to retaliate. When robbed, they were to give even more. They were to treat even the lowest of the low with the same dignity they wanted to experience. They were to give radically with no regard for gain or return. In short, they were to stand out for their radical love in a world that loves sparingly and conditionally.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS LOVE: To say that God is love is to say that God is the essence of love, or that perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn’t the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might become reconciled to Him.

Key Concept: The way of Jesus is humble, sacrificial love that is countercultural.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus gives four examples of visible, active love in verses 29-30 that stress restraint and generosity. If struck, give the other cheek. If your coat is taken, give your shirt as well. Give to those who ask, and don't ask for things back that were taken from you. Clearly, God's way is very different from our culture's, so following His way will make us different from the world. We must exude love and mercy like God does. Despite our natural inclination to "want what's ours," Jesus calls us to be better, to be like Him.

When have you seen a Christian stand out because of his or her radical love?

How are Christians to live with such radical love, even for their enemies? The answer is rooted in our previous passage: because we know our reward in heaven is already secure (v. 23). Christians need not avenge themselves nor live with a survival mentality because Christ has already conquered every enemy, all evil, and even death itself! There is nothing that an enemy can do to Christians that can threaten them in any meaningful way. Therefore, we are free to love even our enemies, praying that one day even they become our brothers and sisters in Christ by faith. Why are Christians to love this way? It proves that we are children of the Most High. This is the way our Father loves, and when we love like Him, it brings Him glory.

LEADER NOTE: Luke stressed love for our enemies throughout his Gospel. Only Luke mentioned that Jesus said at the crucifixion, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). Luke recorded Stephen saying a similar phrase at his stoning (Acts 7:60). One of the greatest and most tangible evidences of our loving God is when His people love their enemies.

Whom in your life do you find hard to love? How might Christ be calling you to radical love in that situation?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"We who hated and destroyed one another, . . . now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly . . . that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all."²

—Justin Martyr (c. 100–165)

Notes

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As the group assembles, ask: “When have you shown restraint when someone offended or harmed you?” (*Offer an example of someone cutting you off on the road or someone who gossiped about you, or you may share a real example from your own life.*)

TRANSITION: Showing restraint or holding back when people have offended us or spoken poorly about our faith is difficult to do, but Jesus tells us to love others, even our enemies, those who are against us. That’s hard to do, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, we know we are able to. It’s just a matter of whether we want to or not.

CONTEXT

SAY: Wherever Jesus went, He stirred up controversy, not because He was trying to cause trouble but because His words and actions pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious elite and His commands called for a deeper understanding of the character of God. Luke 6:17-19 records that crowds were coming to Jesus to be healed of physical diseases and to be freed from being tormented by demons. Jesus had recently called twelve men to be His apostles (Mark 3:13-19), but many more disciples were following Him to hear Him teach.

RECAP

ASK: What stood out to you this week as you prepared for this session? What statements or commands convicted you or caused you to ponder or question its meaning?

TRANSITION: Previously, we saw Jesus hold His Father’s will above conflicting human regulations regarding the Sabbath by showing compassion and healing the sick and disabled even on the Sabbath. Here Jesus taught what He exemplified in the previous session: He taught His disciples the importance of loving others like God loves them and what it means to be children of His kingdom.



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Key Concept: The way of Jesus is humble, sacrificial love that is countercultural.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 82 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Humble Living and Loving Others.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

Humble Living and Loving Others		
Read Luke 6:20-23,27-36. Write down how the first set of verses can be connected to the second set. Then write down the blessings mentioned.		
	HOW IT'S RELATED TO LOVING OTHERS	BLESSINGS
POOR		
HUNGRY		
WEeping		
INSULTED		

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Luke 6:20-23,27-36.

SAY: The first set of verses may initially seem separate from the second, but a life of humble living and living through persecution results from loving others sacrificially. There is a connection there. Let’s find the connections.

ENGAGE: Direct the group to write down how the verses in the first set can be a result of the second set. For example, it is possible to become “poor” by giving generously to others. Examine verses 20-23 in this way. Then ask: “What would our world look like if more Christians lived this way?” Also lead the group to record the blessings highlighted in Jesus’s Beatitudes.

DISCUSS: Being persecuted for our faith can include persecution for sharing the gospel and for living out sacrificial love to others, even being persecuted by those in the church. Ask: “What are some real-life examples of what Christians can be doing today to show sacrificial love that might result in persecution? How do the blessings we have, as seen in these Beatitudes, help us be more motivated to love others, even our enemies?”

CONCLUDE: The apostles that Jesus was teaching here were the same ones hiding from the Jews after Jesus was crucified. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, they boldly proclaimed the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles and were persecuted for it. It can be very challenging to have love toward people who mistreat you. In some cases, the people who put the apostles to death thought they were doing God's will, as Jesus prophesied (see John 16:1-2). Yet the disciples prayed for and did good to those who hated them, knowing it would give God glory, and it did, calling still more to faith in Jesus (see Rom. 12:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).

DEBRIEF

How can the church be a place of sacrificial love for those in its community?

Where in your life do you need to show more love to your “enemies” or those who have offended you?

SUMMARIZE

We often spend time praying for opportunities to help those in need. The truth is the opportunities are always there. We need to pray that God will open our eyes to recognize those opportunities and respond to them with Christ-like love as well as show His love to those who intend us harm.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 83). 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: The great love of God secures eternal blessings for Christians who are struggling through life in this world; it also calls us to display a radical kind of love even to our enemies. We must understand how different the way of Jesus is from the way of the world in order to begin to effectively live it out.

What is a worldly standard or definition of love that you are tempted to believe?



HEART: The Christian's motivation to show radical love to others is rooted in our own experience of the mercy we have received from God the Father through His Son. If the experience of God's love has grown cold within you, then the reflection of that love will be rare outside of you. If we need a rekindling of God's love in our hearts, we need look no further than His Word, which recounts all the things God has done for us because of His great love.

What spiritual disciplines could you focus on to grow your awareness of Christ's love for you?



HANDS: Talk can be cheap. We can study, discuss, pray, sing, write, and post about the love of God, but until we pair our words with action, we're like the clanging gong that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 13. Our time reading God's Word, time in prayer, and our time worshiping together should fuel a radically loving lifestyle, day in and day out.

What is one specific step toward radical love that you can take this week?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Do your own study, researching those times Jesus was mistreated. Record them along with the references as well as how He responded.
- Read the following verses and keep a journal this week of opportunities you have to put their messages into practice: Romans 5:3-4; 8:28; Galatians 6:2; James 1:12.
- Speak to your pastor or others in your church to find out if they have a list of resources to help people in need that you could keep and refer to when you encounter opportunities to help others.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 83 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

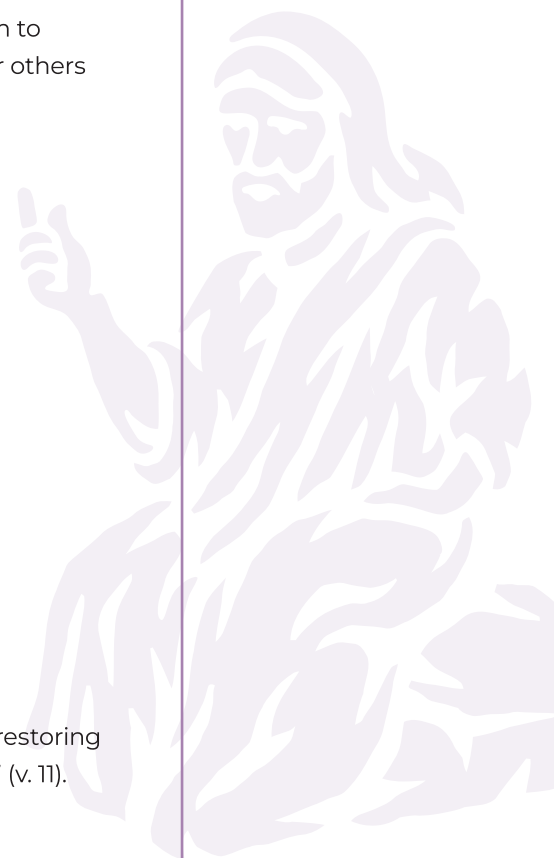
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 147:10-11 with your group. Thank God for restoring His people, providing for those who "put their faith in his faithful love" (v. 11).

References

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Martin Kuske et al., trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, vol. 4, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 104.
2. Justin Martyr, "The First Apology of Justin," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 167.



THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 24

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS



MATTHEW; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

—Luke 11:11-13



HE IS THE MESSIAH

CORE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 11:2-10,16-19

CONTEXT

John the Baptist was raised up by God as the prophet promised to precede the coming of the Messiah. He was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord by calling them to repentance and baptizing them as they confessed their sins. He fulfilled this mission as he pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But as John's ministry decreased, he was arrested and imprisoned for speaking out against Herod's unlawful marriage. This led to some questions about Jesus's increasing ministry: Was Jesus indeed the Messiah? So John reached out from prison for an answer.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

As you examine Matthew 11:2-10,16-19:

- Identify the evidence that proves Jesus is the promised Messiah.
- Analyze the foolish standards by which people reject Jesus as the Messiah.



TIMELINE

John the Baptist Calls People to Repentance in Preparation for Jesus and Baptizes Jesus (Matthew 3:1-17)

John Is Arrested for Confronting King Herod (Matthew 4:12)

SESSION STUDY:
John the Baptist Seeks Confirmation That Jesus Is the Messiah (Matthew 11:1-19)

John Scales Back His Ministry (John 3:22-36)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29)

John Is Beheaded by King Herod (Matthew 14:1-12)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Matthew 10:1-15
- Day 2:** Matthew 10:16-42
- Day 3:** Matthew 11:1-15
- Day 4:** Matthew 11:16-24
- Day 5:** Matthew 11:25-30
- Day 6:** Psalm 149



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

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn more about John the Baptist's imprisonment.

JESUS POINTED TO HIS ACTIONS AS EVIDENCE OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP (MATTHEW 11:2-10).

Circle the actions of Jesus that validated His messiahship.

2 Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples **3** and asked him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" **4** Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: **5** The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, **6** and blessed is the one who isn't offended by me." **7** As these men were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? **8** What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothes? See, those who wear soft clothes are in royal palaces. **9** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written: See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you."

When John the Baptist was first introduced, he was described as a bold, eccentric, humble man who boldly proclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah. Now John was in prison, and he questioned whether Jesus really was the One who was promised. It is possible that John was discouraged—he was in prison for confronting King Herod about his illicit marriage to his brother's wife (Luke 3:19-20). Perhaps John's unjust persecution was the cause of this doubt, but regardless of the motivation, John was not as sure about Jesus as he was at first.

Jesus's response was not a simple affirmation but a description of the evidence that would affirm to John that Jesus is the Christ. All the miracles that Jesus performed up to that point should have made it abundantly clear to John and to anyone else that Jesus is God the Son. The voice of God, who spoke after Jesus's baptism, spoke the undeniable truth—Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, and God is well-pleased with Him (Matt. 3:17).

LEADER NOTE: When Jesus replied to John's question, He alluded to Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1-2. Isaiah 35:5-6 describes the blessings that would accompany the Israelites' redemption, and Isaiah 61:1-2 is an explicit messianic passage that Jesus said was fulfilled in Himself in Luke 4:16-21. John the Baptist would be very familiar with Isaiah's words and would be able to make a quick connection between Jesus's miracles and what God promised the Messiah would accomplish.

Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

Notes

What evidence from your life proves that Jesus is who He says He is?

Jesus not only pointed to the miracles that gave evidence that He is the Messiah, but He also pointed back to John as evidence of fulfilled prophecy. Jesus did not defend Himself but instead defended John the Baptist and affirmed his role in the coming of the Christ. Jesus referenced Malachi 3:1, a clear prophecy of the forerunner for the Christ, and He identified John as this forerunner.

Jesus declared that John the Baptist was not just a prophet of something that would happen later, but he was the one who announced that the promises of God were being fulfilled at that time in Jesus. John's doubt did not discredit his ministry. John was human, and as such, he needed Jesus's help clarifying the truth. Jesus affirmed John's ministry and affirmed His own messiahship.

LEADER NOTE: Questions regarding doubt can be a difficult conversation in Christian circles. Some say that any form of doubt is sinful, which it could be, but this passage gives Christians a clear and helpful example of how Jesus views doubt. Jesus did not condemn John for questioning His identity. Rather, Jesus confronted John's doubt with reassurance and affirmation by pointing to His miracles and the Old Testament prophecies. When we know someone is struggling with doubt, we should encourage them to bring their questions directly to God, to use Scripture and Jesus's work as evidence to reassure them, and to affirm Christ as their security.

Why are the Old Testament prophecies important for understanding the New Testament?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SPECIAL REVELATION: Special revelation refers to God's revealing Himself to humanity through historical events, His Word, and through Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, human beings learn about God's character, His will, His purpose for creation, and His plan of redemption. Special revelation shows us the nature and character of God, and because God has revealed Himself in this way, we can know Him—through a saving relationship with Him in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

REJECTING JESUS IS FOOLISH AS THE FRUIT OF HIS WORK IS EVIDENT (MATTHEW 11:16-19).

Contrast the ways the people viewed John the Baptist and Jesus: underline what they said about John, and circle what they said about Jesus.

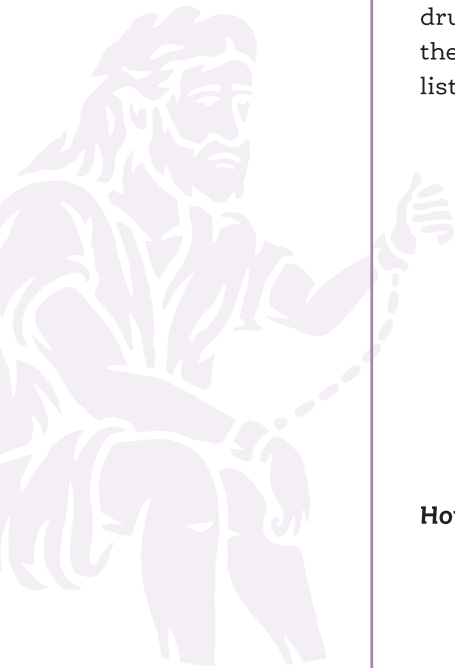
16 “To what should I compare this generation? It’s like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to other children: **17** We played the flute for you, but you didn’t dance; we sang a lament, but you didn’t mourn! **18** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ **19** The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

In this section, Jesus condemned the people for being stubborn and refusing to listen to God’s message. He compared them to children complaining that games were not going their way in verses 16-17.

Jesus then drew a comparison between Himself and John. He remarked that John was not an indulgent man, that he did not eat or drink. John often fasted and practiced strict dietary habits (9:14). The people criticized John for being too strict and harsh, saying he was possessed by a demon. Jesus, on the other hand, came eating and drinking—He did not fast like John did, and He ate meals with sinners (9:10-15). Because of this, Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton! For both John and Jesus, the people complained about their lifestyles, more concerned with critiquing their eating habits than with listening to their message, witnessing their miracles, or following their lead.

LEADER NOTE: The social behavior of both Jesus and John was deeply scrutinized by the masses as an ad hominem attack against their message—meaning the masses tried to attack the person rather than the position they held to discredit both. The people were not satisfied with neither John’s nor Jesus’s behavior and used it as an excuse to disregard their teaching. The complaints from those in Jesus’s day are not much different from what many religious people do today. Equating non-essential choices (like whether you fast or share meals with sinners) with essential choices (like preaching the gospel) creates a spirit of criticism and distracts from obedience.

How might your complaints be keeping you from obeying Jesus?



Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

Because the people were so caught up in this attitude of criticism, they rejected both John and Jesus. So Jesus exposed how fickle their hearts were. Regardless of how the Messiah was revealed to them, whether through John's proclamations or Jesus's teachings and miracles, the people rejected the truth.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Though the evidence of Jesus and His works is historically accurate, many will reject Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 7:13). Still, we have a mission to share the gospel with others to give people the opportunity to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

How can we confront our own fickle, unbelieving generation with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

In conclusion, Jesus declared what the people needed to hear, making a statement about wisdom. The people in the crowd would have remembered the numerous references in the book of Proverbs to wisdom calling in the streets. Proverbs often personified wisdom as a woman speaking to her children and pleading with them to listen to her. Here Jesus called the people to listen to what He was saying and to understand who He is. Since Jesus is “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24), when He stated that “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (Matt. 11:19), He meant that His and John's ministry would be vindicated by their actions—meaning they would be clear of blame and their actions would be justified.

LEADER NOTE: Verse 19 of this passage requires a deeper look into Proverbs to grasp its meaning. As mentioned, the book of Proverbs often referred to wisdom as a woman calling out in the streets. Proverbs 8:32-36 expresses that those who find wisdom find life and those who do not instead find death. Along the same lines, the apostle Paul wrote: “The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved” (1 Cor. 1:18). Jesus's generation rejected Jesus and John because they rejected the evidence and the truth. Those who reject Christ today do the same.

Notes

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As people arrive, begin with this icebreaker question: “When have you needed proof before you believed something?” (*reading reviews before a purchase; waiting to see actions before trusting someone’s word; seeing a car or sofa or larger purchase before buying used from a stranger*)

SAY: Just like we often look for evidence before we believe, John the Baptist sought some proof to justify his faith that Jesus is the Messiah.

CONTEXT

SUMMARIZE: John the Baptist, who boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God, was now imprisoned for speaking out against King Herod’s unlawful marriage to his brother’s wife. A popular conception of the Messiah at the time was of a liberator who would overthrow Rome, bring the Israelites back to their homeland, and restore the nation of Israel. But having pointed to Jesus as the promised Messiah and handing off his ministry to this One he believed to be greater than him, John began to have some doubts in prison. Was this the time for the kingdom or not? Was Jesus truly the Messiah or was there another? These questions led John to seek answers from Jesus directly.

RECAP

ASK: What stood out to you in your personal preparation this week about how Jesus revealed His identity in response to John the Baptist’s question?

SAY: Recall that the works and evidence Jesus pointed to for John’s benefit fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, just as John himself had in preparing the way for the Messiah. No doubt this encouraged John’s faith, but the same evidence also led people with hard hearts to reject Him.

TRANSITION: With this in mind, we are going to do an activity that will challenge us to understand how John’s disciples might have processed Jesus’s response to John the Baptist’s question.



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ministrygrid.com/gospelproject · gospelproject.com/leader-training.

Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CASE STUDY: Direct your group to page 92 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a case study activity titled “Are You the One?” Recreate the response sections on a board so you can record the group’s thoughts.

Are You the One?
 Read the passages below and prepare a response for John’s disciples to bring back to him.

CASE STUDY: Imagine you are one of John the Baptist’s disciples. You’ve been sent to Jesus with John’s question: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” You’ve just heard Jesus point to His works as proof of His identity. Now you must process what you have heard.

MATTHEW 11:5-6

ISAIAH 35:5-6	ISAIAH 61:1-2
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WHAT WOULD YOU TELL JOHN THE BAPTIST IN PRISON?

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 11:2-6.

ENGAGE: Guide the group to identify the actions Jesus pointed to in this passage that affirmed His messiahship. Distribute copies of **Pacl/ Item 10: Jesus’s Miracles in Galilee** and highlight a few of the healings Jesus referenced. Write down Jesus’s evidence on the chart, citing Scripture references.

SAY: Any one of the miracles that Jesus performed should have been enough to convince most people that He was unique as a human being. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, and even raised the dead to life. Other prophets and apostles would do such things, but the Old Testament Scriptures revealed the Messiah would do all these things.

ANALYZE: Form small groups of three to four. Instruct these small groups to read Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2 and to write down what Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would do. Then, with Jesus’s actions and Isaiah’s prophecies in mind, ask: “What would you report back to John? How would you reassure him?”

MIRACLE	WITNESS	PURPOSE	RESULT
Jesus healed a demon-possessed man (Mark 9:14-15)	The demon-possessed man and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority over evil forces	The demon-possessed man was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)	The paralytic and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to forgive sins	The paralytic was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6)	The man with a withered hand and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to forgive sins and heal the sick	The man's hand was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:1-10)	The blind man and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to heal the sick and give sight to the blind	The blind man was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a deaf man (Mark 7:31-37)	The deaf man and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to heal the sick and give hearing to the deaf	The deaf man was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus raised a dead man (Mark 5:21-24)	The dead man's family and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to raise the dead	The dead man was raised and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Mark 1:30-31)	The man with a fever and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to heal the sick	The man was healed and the crowd was amazed
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Mark 1:30-31)	The man with a fever and the crowd	To show Jesus had authority to heal the sick	The man was healed and the crowd was amazed

REGROUP: Invite each small group to select one “disciple” to report back to the large group as if they were telling John the Baptist what they saw and heard and what it meant. Encourage them to ground their response in Scripture and in Jesus’s actions. Say: “Having heard these reports, notice how Jesus pointed to evidence, not just words. His works spoke louder than a simple yes.”

DEBRIEF

Why do you think Jesus chose to let His works speak for Him instead of giving a direct yes?

How does Jesus’s evidence comfort us when we face doubts about who Jesus is?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus’s actions fulfilled prophecy and proved His identity as the Messiah. The evidence was clear, but people’s responses varied—some believed; others rejected Him. Likewise, our response to the gospel of Jesus reveals the condition of our hearts.

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 **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: This passage challenges us to think thoroughly about who Jesus is and how we ought to respond to Him. Sometimes we struggle with doubt, but we can remember that Jesus’s miracles proved He is the Messiah. Sometimes we let our own preferences or criticism cloud our ability to hear and obey God’s words. Therefore, we must examine how our beliefs are shaped. May our beliefs be based not on popular opinion, public bias, or even personal experience but on the truth found in Scripture.

How does the truth of Jesus in Scripture address your doubts and questions in life?



HEART: Moments of doubt or unbelief are familiar to most Christians and reveal how our faith can be clouded by our experiences. An imprisoned John the Baptist shows that even the most faithful Christians can have moments of uncertainty. When we face illness, family strife, or unjust persecution, it may be difficult to see God’s goodness. We need God’s grace in our struggles to help us rest in the truth of who He is and what He has done.

What struggles are you facing that call for you to turn to Jesus as He is revealed in Scripture?

Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.



HANDS: John the Baptist's ministry and the many miracles of Jesus reveal that obedience to God is not just with words but with wise actions. Likewise, our obedience should correspond to God's instructions in His Word. When we obey the Lord, we can trust our actions to be vindicated by Him, even though the world may criticize, rebuke, and persecute us in response.

What actions will you do this week to help others see the wisdom of God in Jesus and His gospel?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Testify with Scripture. Like John the Baptist's disciples, share with someone this week what you have seen and heard of Jesus through His Word.
- When doubts arise in your heart, read Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1-2 aloud and pray, asking God to steady your heart with the truth of Christ's works.
- Live as evidence. Intentionally practice mercy and kindness this week so that your actions display the wisdom and power of the Messiah (Matt. 11:19).

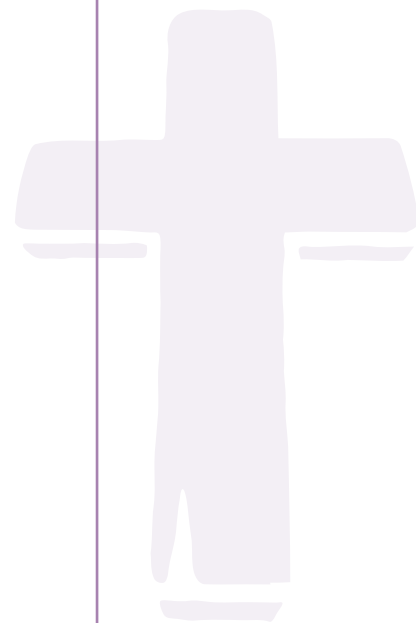
Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 93 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 149 with your group, focusing on verses 4-5. Thank God for adorning the humble and the faithful with salvation in Jesus Christ.

Notes



HE RESURRECTS LIFE

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 7:11-17

CONTEXT

Luke recorded his account of Jesus's sermon on the mount in Luke 6. After Jesus concluded His teaching, He entered Capernaum and encountered a Gentile centurion who came to Jesus to plead for the healing and life of his servant. This healing Jesus performed from a distance, praising the centurion's faith. He then traveled to a village called Nain, where He encountered a funeral procession. Jesus's compassion for the widowed mother of the deceased young man led Him to perform a miracle on her behalf.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus gives new life because He is compassionate and good.

As you examine Luke 7:11-17:

- Take comfort in the fact that Jesus has power even over death.
- Contemplate how Jesus's power to renew life, both spiritually and physically, fits into the good news that we are to share with the world.



TIMELINE

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man
(Luke 5:12-16)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals
on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Raises a Widow's Son
from the Dead (Luke 7:11-17)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a
Paralyzed Man (Luke 5:17-26)

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

John the Baptist Seeks
Confirmation That Jesus Is
the Messiah (Luke 7:18-35)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Luke 7:1-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Luke 7:24-28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Luke 7:11-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Luke 7:29-30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Luke 7:18-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 88 |



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

JESUS HAS COMPASSION ON US AND WANTS TO GIVE US NEW LIFE (LUKE 7:11-13).

Underline the circumstances surrounding the mother and son in this passage.

11 Afterward he was on his way to a town called Nain. His disciples and a large crowd were traveling with him. **12** Just as he neared the gate of the town, a dead man was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the town was also with her. **13** When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said, "Don't weep."

When Jesus entered Nain, he entered a serious and sorrowful scene—a funeral procession for a widow's only son. Since this woman was a widow, aside from her grief at losing her child, her only son's death meant that all provision and protection died with him.

LEADER NOTE: Understanding the cultural context of this scene may provide more gravity to what was happening. A widow in the first-century would have been extremely vulnerable without a husband to provide for her. She likely was struggling already. Yet her son would be the primary provider, so his death did not just bring about emotional loss but also economic and social loss. Her future would have been entirely uncertain, so when Jesus met her, he was addressing real, felt needs.

Jesus's compassion for the bereaved mother was not simply pity for her circumstances. His emotions were not performative. His compassion was not just a feeling to be experienced but one that led to action. Jesus's example here is clear. He did not just feel sad for the woman, but His empathy produced an action that showed care and provision for the woman.

How should knowing that Jesus is compassionate toward our pain change the way we approach our struggles?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Our Lord Jesus Christ never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His heart is still as compassionate as when he was on earth. His sympathy with sufferers is still as strong. Let us bear this in mind, and take comfort from it."¹

—J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)

Key Concept: Jesus gives new life because He is compassionate and good.

Notes

Interrupting the funeral procession, Jesus gave the widow a strange command: “Don’t weep” (v. 13). He was not chastising this mother for her mourning or for feeling sorrow about her loss. This command wasn’t a condemnation of her tears but a comment on the reality the woman was about to experience. “Don’t weep” was a promise of the work Jesus was about to do.

Soon the mother’s tears would no longer be necessary because Jesus would perform a miracle. Jesus has power over life and death, so He had the authority to do something about this grieving mother’s circumstance. The widow couldn’t see all that Jesus was about to do, but that couldn’t stop Jesus. His gentle command was a request for faith from the widow, to trust that when He told her not to weep, it was not a request without a promise.

LEADER NOTE: This event helps the reader see both Jesus’s humanity and His holiness. Jesus is fully human, affected by the emotional pain and sorrow of other humans. Jesus is fully God, powerful enough to do something about this pain. He was able to sympathize with the sadness of the widow, a very human capability, and He also was able to make a request as God, asking the widow not to weep, for He would be able to make her tears cease.

How might you need to reevaluate the circumstances in your life that lead you to mourning and weeping?

Jesus’s request with His promise to this mother foreshadows the promise Jesus made about His own resurrection. Death would not have the final word over this woman’s son, nor would it have the final word over Jesus’s sacrifice on our behalf.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus can bring new life in our own lives. As we trust in Him and submit to Him, we are given new life in Jesus, and He will give us resurrected bodies at His return as well.

JESUS HAS THE POWER TO RESURRECT LIFE, AND MANY NEED TO KNOW IT (LUKE 7:14-17).

Underline all the action words related to Jesus's miracle in this passage.

14 Then he came up and touched the open coffin, and the pallbearers stopped. And he said, "Young man, I tell you, get up!" **15** The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. **16** Then fear came over everyone, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us," and "God has visited his people." **17** This report about him went throughout Judea and all the vicinity.

After Jesus told the widow not to weep, He demonstrated exactly why He said this to her. The first thing Jesus did was something entirely unexpected. He touched the open coffin where the dead man was, which according to Old Testament law would make Him unclean. But as God the Son, Jesus's compassion and holiness were greater than His concern for ritual uncleanness, as we see when He touched a leper (Mark 1:40-42), was touched by a woman with a bleeding problem (Mark 5:27-34), and touched the widow's son's coffin (Luke 7:14). Further, Jesus could not be made unclean by death or sickness because, as God the Son, He has power over both.

Why do you think Jesus was willing to touch the open coffin?

While touching the coffin and standing in close proximity to the corpse, Jesus commanded the dead man to get up, and the man did so and began to speak. With words, Jesus told a grieving mother not to weep, and again with words, He raised her dead son to life, giving her the family and security she needed.

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.

This miracle was important, but so was the reaction of the crowd. Their response was fear, awe, and worship. Why? Because they saw the dead raised to life, and the only logical response was to worship God, the One with power over life and death. Through this miracle, the crowd recognized Jesus as a prophet and that God was helping His people, but they did not understand that Jesus is actually God the Son.

LEADER NOTE: The people responded to this miracle with fear (Luke 7:16). Fear is often misunderstood by Christians. In verse 16, it refers to awe or fear that produces a reverence and wonder at God's power. This fear did not cause the people to run away or tremble but to worship. For those who know Jesus by faith, we can approach God with such fear, with a confident recognition of who God is and who we are before Him. Because of Jesus, we can respond to God's power with worship because we know we are secure and saved in Christ.

The crowd likened this miracle to the work of a prophet. No doubt the people saw the parallels with the story in 1 Kings 17:17-24 where the prophet Elijah raised the widow's child from the dead. Yet the reality of this situation was greater. God had raised the dead and God had "visited his people" (Luke 7:16) because God was present among them in the flesh!

LEADER NOTE: The comparison of this miracle to Elijah's raising the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:8-24 is intentional. Parallels include the mention of the town gate (Luke 7:12; cf. 1 Kings 17:10), the widow grieving her only son's death (Luke 7:12; cf. 1 Kings 17:18), the language of giving him back to his mother (Luke 7:15; cf. 1 Kings 17:23), and the recognition of Elijah and Jesus as a man of God (Luke 7:16; cf. 1 Kings 17:24). The major difference, however, is that Elijah prayed to ask God to raise the boy, and the Lord listened (1 Kings 17:21-22). Jesus, by His own authority, spoke the command to raise the boy. Elijah was indeed a prophet; Jesus is God in the flesh.

Regardless of the people's understanding about Jesus's identity, their response to His miracle was correct. This was the work of God, so they worshiped, and they saw in Jesus the power of God, so they told others about Him. This miracle did not just remain as a conversation within the crowd, a local legend; rather, this news about Him was shared and spread across the entire region.

When have you experienced Jesus's compassion and power, and how did you share the experience with others?



Notes



ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As group members arrive, invite responses to this: “Describe an act of compassion you’ve witnessed that changed someone’s situation in a powerful way.”

TRANSITION: Recall **Pacl’ Item 6: Jesus’s Compassion** and review with your group how Jesus’s compassion for others spurred Him to act. Briefly discuss how we are called to respond with compassion to those in need. Say: “In today’s study, we’ll be looking at an act of compassion from Jesus that revealed His life-giving power.”

CONTEXT

SAY: Jesus had become something of a local celebrity in the region of Galilee because of His teachings and miracles. Crowds followed Him from one place to another. But where some people might let such popularity go to their heads, Jesus kept His feet on the ground with an eye for people’s faith and a compassionate heart for the plight of others, just as He does for people today.

RECAP

ASK: In your personal preparation this week, studying about Jesus’s life-giving miracle for a widow’s dead son, what stood out to you about Jesus’s compassion and His power?

TRANSITION: Today’s passage shows us that Jesus is not distant from our pain. His compassion leads Him to act, and His power leads Him to give life. The people in the town of Nain experienced both the mercy of God and His glory through this miracle, and we experience the same through studying this account.



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Key Concept: Jesus gives new life because He is compassionate and good.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 100 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Before and After.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

Before and After	
Read Luke 7:11-17. Write down what the widow experienced before and after her encounter with Jesus. Then record your own before and after.	
BEFORE	AFTER
WIDOW	
YOURSELF	

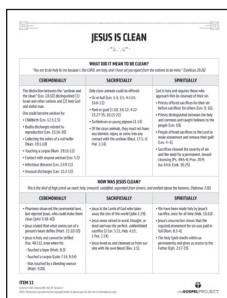
READ: Invite a volunteer to read Luke 7:11-12.

DISCUSS: Highlight how the widow’s life, like ours, could be described in two snapshots: before Jesus and after Jesus. Encourage your group to talk through what the widow might have experienced in the moments before Jesus interrupted her son’s funeral procession. (*fear of the future; grief over her son; sorrow for her loneliness; guilt as if God were punishing her*) Under the “Before” column in the chart, record words and phrases from the group for what this mother might have felt in this situation. Say: “Many of us who have experienced the loss of a loved one may have experienced these same feelings. But Jesus arrived on the scene in this woman’s darkest moment.”

READ: Invite a second volunteer to read Luke 7:13-17.

DISCUSS: Lead your group to consider what the widow might have experienced when Jesus defied customs by interrupting the funeral procession and touching the coffin. (*To address any confusion about Jewish laws concerning being*

Notes



“unclean” after such an action, pass out copies of **Pacl’ Item 11: Jesus Is Clean** and highlight Jesus’s unique, divine, and holy authority as our Great High Priest.) Then under the “After” column, write down words and phrases for what she might have felt after Jesus’s miracle, and encourage the group to record these in their PSG.

INSTRUCT: Each of us who has trusted in Jesus as our Lord and Savior has had a moment when Jesus met us in our darkest hour, namely, when we recognized that we were spiritually dead in our sin and separated from God. Instruct the group to write down what they felt before and after their encounter with Jesus, who brings new life to those who are spiritually dead.

DEBRIEF

How does remembering your own “before” and “after” story encourage you to trust in Jesus’s compassion and to share His life with others?

SUMMARIZE

Just as the widow’s story was rewritten by Jesus’s compassion, our lives as believers in Christ bear witness to His power to bring new life, and we are called to help others see their own “after” in Him.

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 **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Jesus’s authority over death demonstrated who He is, but the crowd did not categorize Jesus properly, thinking He was simply a prophet like Elijah. Their understanding of Jesus was limited and therefore not a full picture of His identity. Jesus was a prophet, and much more—He is fully God and fully man, God the Son in human flesh.

How might you have a limited or incomplete understanding of who Jesus is in your life?



HEART: Jesus was moved with a gut-level compassion for the widow. His compassion reminds us that God is not distant or removed from what we feel and experience; rather, Jesus is able to empathize with our feelings. God is not indifferent to human pain—to our pain.

What thoughts and emotions arise when you contemplate the truth that Jesus has compassion toward you in your suffering?



HANDS: Jesus's compassion spurred Him to action. He did not simply feel and then walk away. For those who follow Jesus, this miracle is an example for us. While we may not raise anyone from the dead, we do have the power and authority of Jesus in us through the Holy Spirit. When we see someone suffering and are moved with compassion, we should take action: pray, offer support and care, and meet physical needs as well as spiritual ones.

How can you show someone in need that compassion spurs action instead of just empathetic feelings?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Whom can you comfort? Like Jesus in Luke 7:13, notice someone's grief or need this week and come alongside them by supporting them with compassion through both prayer and meeting their practical needs.
- Evaluate your heart and see if there are any ways you are still living in your "before." By God's grace, you are not who you once were, so walk confidently in your new life.
- God has shown His compassion for us in the Son taking upon Himself the punishment we deserve and in the Holy Spirit continuously interceding and praying on our behalf. With these truths in mind, take time this week to journal and reflect upon God's compassionate heart.

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.

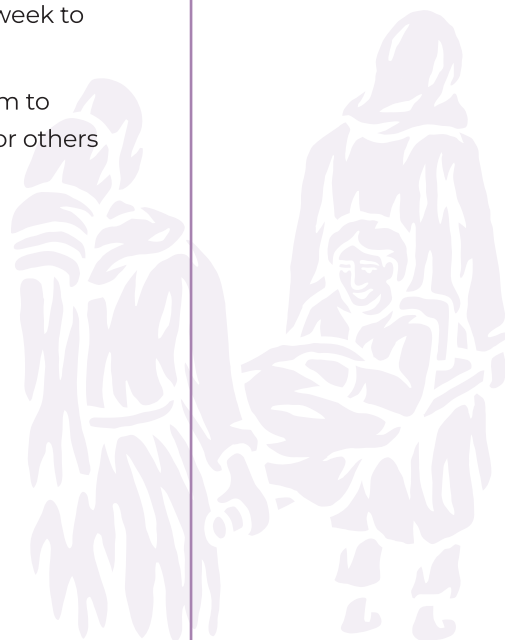
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 88:9-12 with your group. Thank God that He does hear our cries for help even though we may feel hopeless and sorrowful. And thank God for His promise in Jesus that He will not leave us in the grave but will raise us up in resurrection according to His compassion and grace.

References

1. J. C. Ryle, Luke, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), Lk 7:11–17.



THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

By Daniel Stevens



“Can God make a rock so heavy that He cannot lift it?” Often discussions of God’s omnipotence quickly devolve into philosophical speculations like these, but the truth that God is all-powerful as laid out in Scripture ought to be received as spectacularly good news. (Incidentally, no, God cannot do that because the question involves a contradiction. It is like asking, “Can God know so much that He does not know something?” or “Can God be so much in a place that He is not there?”)

God’s omnipotence means that He is all-powerful, that He can accomplish anything He wills to do, and that nothing can stop Him from doing His will. This has historically been part of the definition of what it means for God to be God and is usually grouped with other “omnis” when talking about the divine nature: (1) omniscient—God is all-knowing, (2) omnipresent—God is present in all places and not physically limited, and (3) omnibenevolent—God is perfectly and limitlessly good.

GOD’S POWER FOR HIS GLORY

The Bible begins with a grand display of God’s omnipotence. He speaks, and all the universe bursts into being (Gen. 1). This act of creation and the ongoing sustaining of the created world speaks of God’s limitless and eternal power (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 1:3). God is so powerful that we do not have words to sufficiently describe His strength. All the forces of the physical world are both made and upheld by Him, and what we can describe are only the fringes of His power (Job 26:13-14).

God’s power is not mere mechanical action but the full execution of His will: “The LORD does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth” (Ps 135:6; cf. 115:3). The movement of weather (135:7), the judgment of the wicked (vv. 8-11), and the reward of His people (v. 12) are all accomplished by His power. As the newly repentant King Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed: “There is no one who can block his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Dan. 4:35). No force can stand in the way of God doing His will. He is all-powerful and will accomplish what He sets out to do for His glory and the worship of His name.

GOD’S POWER FOR OUR GOOD

In Scripture, however, God’s great power is not shown chiefly in creating and sustaining the world but rather in the salvation of His people. Isaiah stated, “The LORD’s arm is not too weak to save” (Isa. 59:1). The language of the “arm” or “hand” of the Lord is frequently used in the Old Testament to point both to the limitless strength of God and the way He reveals His power to save His people and judge their enemies. After God led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian host, Moses sang:

LORD, who is like you among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, and the earth swallowed them. (Ex. 15:11-12)

God's omnipotence means that He is all-powerful, that He can accomplish anything He wills to do, and that nothing can stop Him from doing His will.

When looking forward to the great deliverance that Jesus would bring, the prophet Isaiah asked, "To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1).

In the New Testament, God's power to save remains a dominant theme where we find the power of God revealed in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus to save His people. The power that raised Christ and exalted Him over "every ruler and authority, power and dominion" (Eph. 1:21) is the same power that works in and for us who believe (1:20). Since nothing can stay God's hand:

neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

We should see in Jesus an echo of the power that spoke light out of darkness to create the world and the power that speaks life into the spiritually dead.

Because God's love and power are inseparable, all the unlimited power of God works for the good of His people.

JESUS AND THE POWER OF GOD

While the primary display of God's power in Jesus is the salvation worked through His death, resurrection, and ascension, we see the power of God on display in Jesus's earthly ministry as well. As perfect man, we find Jesus perfectly relying on the Spirit and performing wonders through the Spirit's anointing (Luke 4:18-19). But we also see Jesus directly exercising power that only God has because He is God the Son. Jesus has the authority to forgive sins, which belongs to God alone (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21). He speaks, and the created world obeys (Matt. 8:27; Mark 4:41). He speaks, and death gives way to life (Mark 5:41-42). We should see in Jesus an echo of the power that spoke light out of darkness to create the world and the power that speaks life into the spiritually dead when we are saved (2 Cor. 4:6).

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HE FORGIVES SIN

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 7:37-39,41-50

CONTEXT

Though Jesus was known popularly as a prophet who taught and performed miracles with authority, He had some very powerful and influential opponents. Those who rejected Jesus's mission sought to discredit Him by labeling Him "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:34). The former labels were unfounded, as they describe a sinful lifestyle, but the latter accusation was unquestionably true. The Pharisees bristled at the thought of such friendships, but Jesus embraced them so that sinners might be forgiven.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus forgives sinners who come to Him in adoring faith.

As you examine Luke 7:37-39,41-50:

- Note that the woman abandoned all propriety to show Jesus love and reverence.
- Reflect upon the fact that when we are graciously forgiven, we love more.



TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

Jesus Teaches About Worry (Luke 12:12-34)

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son
from the Dead (Luke 7:11-17)

**SESSION STUDY: Jesus Forgives
a Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50)**

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

John the Baptist Seeks Confirmation
That Jesus Is the Messiah (Luke 7:18-35)

Jesus Teaches About Prayer
(Luke 11:1-13)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 7:31-35
- Day 2:** Luke 7:36-39
- Day 3:** Luke 7:40-43
- Day 4:** Luke 7:44-48
- Day 5:** Luke 7:47-50
- Day 6:** Psalm 3



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

WE SHOW FAITH BY ABANDONING ALL FOR CHRIST (LUKE 7:37-39).

Circle the action words detailing what the woman did for Jesus, and underline the response of the Pharisee.

37 And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster jar of perfume **38** and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume. **39** When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—she's a sinner!"

The Pharisee and the woman are contrasting figures in this story, and their actions and heart posture should be compared throughout this passage. First, the two are contrasted by the reason for their presence at this meal. The Pharisee was the host who extended the invitation to Jesus as his guest. The woman arrived as an uninvited and unwelcome intruder to the Pharisee.

One similarity between the Pharisee and the woman was that they both wanted to spend time with Jesus, though for different reasons. Recall that not long before this event, crowds who witnessed Jesus raise the widow's dead son to life declared across the land that He was a prophet. The woman most likely heard this declaration, so she arrived with a humble heart to anoint Jesus with her tears and expensive perfume. A prophet might be able to offer her the forgiveness she desired.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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.

LEADER NOTE: The cultural implications of the woman's actions are important in understanding the full picture Luke gives in this passage. A woman letting her hair down in public was considered a shameful act, an intimacy reserved only for a woman's husband. Likewise, a woman was not permitted to touch a man who wasn't her husband, yet this woman did both. On top of these cultural restrictions, she also was a known sinner, which meant she should have been treated like an outcast.

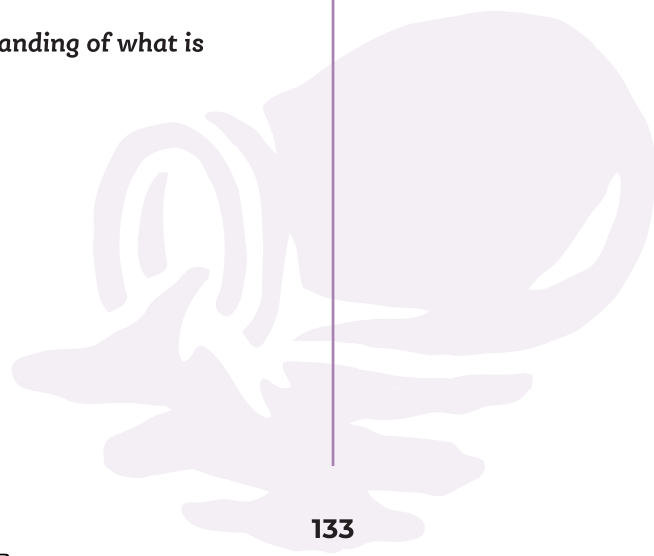
What might the woman's actions have revealed about her understanding of who Jesus is?

The woman humbled herself without even speaking a word to Jesus. In contrast, the Pharisee's inner dialogue in verse 39 revealed the state of his heart. He was not interested in forgiveness because he did not see himself as a sinner like the woman.

Seeing the interaction between Jesus and the sinful woman, The Pharisee developed an argument in his head that discredited Jesus, and his argument was based on the word "if." He thought, "if Jesus were a prophet, then He would stop this woman immediately because no real prophet would let a sinner touch Him." The Pharisee concluded that since Jesus allowed the sinful woman to anoint Him, Jesus was immediately disqualified from the title of "prophet."

LEADER NOTE: Luke moved from outward appearances to inward dialogue and heart posture. The woman looked like a sinner in her appearance and even in her actions as she disregarded cultural norms. The Pharisee, on the other hand, had status and outward respect as a religious leader and the resources to provide a meal for Jesus. Yet the hearts of these two people could not be more different from how they appeared on the outside. The woman was humble and had a true understanding of who Jesus is, whereas the Pharisee was prideful and did not understand Jesus or His purpose.

How does this woman's boldness challenge our understanding of what is required to come before Jesus?



JESUS'S MISSION IS TO FORGIVE SINNERS, AND IN RESPONSE, WE LOVE HIM MORE (LUKE 7:41-50).

Circle each time Jesus uses the words “sins” and “forgiven/forgave.”

41 “A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?” **43** Simon answered, “I suppose the one he forgave more.” “You have judged correctly,” he told him. **44** Turning to the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in. **46** You didn’t anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. **47** Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” **48** Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” **49** Those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” **50** And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Jesus knew Simon, the Pharisee, was appalled by this woman; Simon’s silent comment within his heart was not a secret to the Son of God. Instead of shaming or rebuking Simon directly, Jesus wanted to tell him something. While Simon respected Jesus enough to call Him “teacher” and allowed Jesus to speak (v. 40), the next words out of Jesus’s mouth showed Simon that he did not respect Jesus to the degree that He deserved.

Jesus told a parable about two debtors, with one debtor being forgiven of a larger debt, to illustrate the point He wanted to make with Simon. Jesus then asked Simon which debtor would love the forgiver more. Not realizing he was about to see himself in the parable, Simon said the one with the greater debt would love the forgiver more. Simon’s answer was correct, but his understanding and application of this truth was not as clear.

What are some ways you struggle to apply Scripture personally?

Jesus then revealed the true lesson of the parable: The actions of the woman were honorable, kind, and most of all loving, while Simon did not treat Jesus with the honor and love He deserved. Simon was self-righteous and ignorant regarding his own sinful shortcomings. The woman, on the other hand, knew how sinful she was, so she humbly put herself at Jesus’s feet so that He would be lifted up and honored.

Key Concept: Jesus forgives sinners who come to Him in adoring faith.

Notes

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“If our Physician is almighty, our disease cannot be desperate; and if He casts none out that come to Him, why should you fear? Our sins are many, but His mercies are more: our sins are great, but His righteousness is greater: we are weak, but He is power.”¹

–John Newton (1725–1807)

LEADER NOTE: In first-century Jewish culture, it was an ordinary custom to honor guests by offering water for their feet and greeting them with a kiss, courtesies Simon ignored for Jesus. Anointing with oil was an act of honor for special guests. In neglecting basic courtesy, Simon revealed he did not love Jesus. In contrast, the woman kissed Jesus’s feet, not His face, and poured out expensive oil to honor Him, demonstrating her humility and her love.

Because of her bold outpouring of love, Jesus acknowledged the woman’s faith and humility and told her she was forgiven. As the parable illustrated, because her debt was so great, she loved Jesus more. But in reality, the difference between her and the Pharisee was she acknowledged her sin, whereas Simon ignored his. The woman understood that only Jesus was worthy of her worship, and because of her loving faith, Jesus forgave her of her sins.

LEADER NOTE: In the parable Jesus told, the debtors loved the forgiver after their debts were canceled. It is obvious here, however, that the woman loved Jesus before He forgave her sins. Her actions were fueled by love and faith in Jesus (v. 50). These actions were not the cause of her forgiveness but the evidence of her faith in Jesus that forgiveness would be offered to her.

Why do you think an awareness of our own sin makes us more grateful and more loving toward Jesus?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus came to forgive sinners, and He did so through His death and resurrection, saving those who love and trust Him.

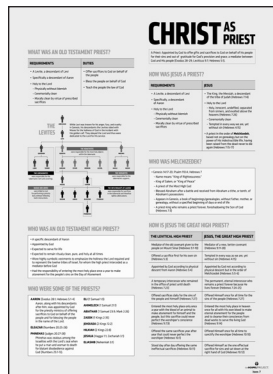
ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: Before the session, write on several index cards a common expense a friend or family member might pay for, such as a cup of coffee, a birthday lunch, gas for a road trip, and so forth. Include a few lavish expenses, such as paying off a student loan, covering medical bills, buying groceries for a year, or even paying off a mortgage. Make enough cards for each person in your group. Shuffle the cards and pass them out face down to your group as they arrive, instructing them not to look at the card until you give the signal. Say: “We are going to pretend someone footed the bill for whatever card you were given. Flip over the card and think about how you would react to such generosity.” Invite a few responses of the group.

ASK: Have you ever experienced generosity like this before? How did you react?

CONTEXT

SAY: Prior to our passage for today, Luke recorded that Jesus had healed a Gentile centurion’s servant and raised to life a widow’s dead son, her only son and remaining source of support and security. These were two gracious gifts from the Son of God that He gave in response to faith and out of His compassion. In today’s passage, Jesus would grant an even greater gift, one we should instinctively desire and one every person in the world needs, whether they recognize it or not. The salvation and forgiveness of sins that Jesus gives is one way He serves as our Great High Priest. *(Recall **Pac1r Item 7: Christ as Priest** and point out how Jesus has the authority to forgive sins: by offering Himself as the once-for-all, perfect sacrifice for sins.)*



RECAP

RECALL: Based on their personal preparation for this session, call for your group to summarize Simon the Pharisee’s assessment of the woman who anointed Jesus’s feet and then Jesus’s own assessment of the woman. Then ask: “What was Jesus’s assessment of Simon the Pharisee? How do our actions reveal what is going on in our hearts?”

TRANSITION: As we have seen and will see again, the more we understand the depth of Christ’s mercy toward us, the more our hearts overflow in devotion to Him. Forgiveness frees us from bondage and moves us to worship in how we live, how we give, and how we love others for the sake of Christ.



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Key Concept: Jesus forgives sinners who come to Him in adoring faith.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 110 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Debt and Devotion.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses. Make sure you write down Scripture references as your group works through the activity.

Debt and Devotion	
Read Luke 7:37-39,41-50. Record ways we minimize our sin (“Little Debt”), and record insights about the seriousness of sin (“Great Debt”).	
LITTLE DEBT	GREAT DEBT

READ: Invite two volunteers to read Luke 7:37-39 and 41-50 aloud.

EXPLAIN: Note that a denarius was equal to one day’s wages for an average laborer. So in Jesus’s parable, while both debtors owed a good deal of money, five hundred days’ wages was a far greater debt than fifty days’ wages. Ask: “Why did Jesus connect the size of the debt to the depth of love shown?”

IDENTIFY: Direct your group to the “Little Debt” column on the chart. Call for the group to identify ways we might minimize our sin. (*it’s not that big of a deal; I didn’t really hurt anyone else; everyone else does it; I’m a good person in other aspects of my life*) Record responses under the “Little Debt” column.

SAY: It is very important to note in reading this passage that nowhere in this interaction did Jesus minimize, condone, explain away, or lessen sin—the woman’s sin or the Pharisee’s. All sin is serious to God, and according to Scripture, all sin—apart from Christ’s forgiveness—separates us from God.

DISCUSS: Call for some volunteers to read the following passages: Isaiah 59:1-4; Romans 3:10-18; James 1:14-15; 2:9-11. Lead the group to discuss what these passages have to say about the seriousness of sin. Record the group's insights, along with the related Scripture references, under the "Great Debt" column.

ASK: How did the woman show she understood her "great debt"? How did the Pharisee's indifference to Jesus reveal the inner workings of his heart?

DEBRIEF

What happens to our love for Jesus when we forget the depth of our sin and our forgiveness?

What practices can help us remember the "great debt" Jesus paid to reconcile us to God?

SUMMARIZE

The Pharisee offered Jesus little because he saw little need for forgiveness. The woman offered Jesus everything because she knew her debt was great. In Christ, our sin-debt is fully forgiven, and our response should be joyful, sacrificial devotion to Him.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 111). 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: Luke 7:37-39,41-50 shows that forgiveness flows from Christ's authority and not from our own merit. Simon the Pharisee assumed holiness meant Jesus ought to separate Himself from sinners. But Jesus embodied true holiness in forgiving sin based on faith. This passage teaches that understanding our debt before God rightly leads to a deep appreciation and understanding of God's grace.

How do you need to reevaluate your perspective on and interaction with sinners in light of Jesus's example?



HEART: The Pharisee and the woman demonstrated the contrast between a skeptical, indifferent heart toward God and a faith-filled, warm devotion to Him. The woman risked rejection and humiliation because of her love for Jesus. Our affections and actions are shaped by magnifying the grace of God. Forgiveness produces love, and love produces worship, but first, we must acknowledge and confess our sin.

What sins do you need to confess so you can be forgiven and love the Lord with your whole heart?

Key Concept: Jesus forgives sinners who come to Him in adoring faith.

Notes



HANDS: True faith overflows into action. The woman's love for Jesus was costly. Our devotion to Jesus today still requires sacrifice. When we receive forgiveness, we ought to live as forgiven people like the woman, with humility and love. The woman in Luke 7 is an example to us of what it looks like to show tangible, loving service to Jesus. Faith in Christ not only saves us but should transform our actions.

How should your forgiveness in Christ shape your interactions at home, church, and work?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Each morning this week, thank God specifically for paying your sin debt and giving you life in Christ. Pray through 1 John 1:5–2:2.
- Give generously of your time, resources, or encouragement this week as a tangible expression of gratitude for Christ's forgiveness.
- Like the woman in Luke 7, take a step of faith to express devotion to Christ in a way that others can see His transforming grace at work in you.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 111 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

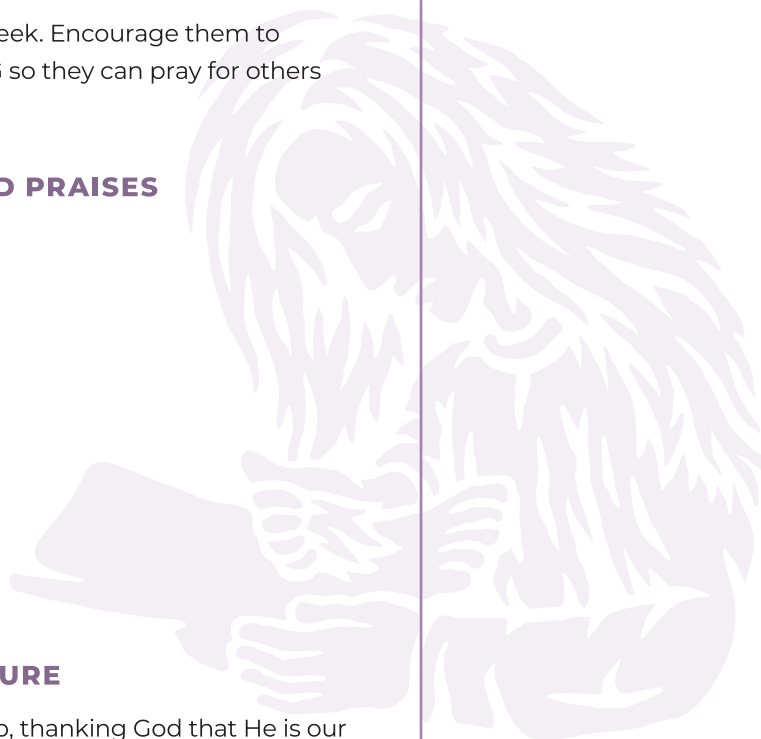
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 3:1-4 with your group, thanking God that He is our Savior and the One who lifts up our head when others condemn us for past sins. Thank Him for giving us mercy, love, and salvation.

References

1. John Newton, *The Works of the Reverend John Newton . . . With a Life of the Author by the Rev. Richard Cecil* (London: George Virtue, 1839), 236.



HE TEACHES ON PRAYER

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 11:1-13

CONTEXT

Having called twelve disciples to follow Him, Jesus trained these men in His ways. He performed miracles in their presence, taught crowds in their hearing, and explained His parables to them while leaving others pondering their meaning. Jesus even empowered His disciples and some others to cast out demons and to heal the sick as He sent them out to prepare His way. The disciples enjoyed their success in the field, but after returning to Jesus, they asked Him for one thing—to teach them how to pray.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus teaches us how to pray because He wants to give us good gifts.

As you examine Luke 11:1-13:

- Recognize that we should pray for God's kingdom, true needs, forgiveness, and protection against temptation.
- Rejoice that when we ask God for good gifts of the kingdom according to His will, He will gladly give them to us.



TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son from the Dead (Luke 7:11-17)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches About Prayer (Luke 11:1-13)

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

Jesus Forgives a Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50)

Jesus Teaches About Worry (Luke 12:12-34)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 9:1-27
- Day 2:** Luke 9:28-62
- Day 3:** Luke 10:1-24
- Day 4:** Luke 10:25-42
- Day 5:** Luke 11:1-13
- Day 6:** Psalm 138



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

JESUS TAUGHT US HOW TO PRAY FOR KINGDOM PURPOSES (LUKE 11:1-4).

Number the parts of Jesus's prayer in order.

1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say, Father, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread. **4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation."

Jesus's disciples approached Him with a request: "Lord, teach us to pray" (v. 1). This revealed that they believed Jesus had an intimate relationship with the Father, and they desired to learn how to come to God like Jesus did. Jesus responded by providing them an example to follow.

Jesus began the prayer with "Father, your name be honored as holy" (v. 2). He taught the disciples to call God by the name "Father" to demonstrate that they too were able to approach God in a relational way as a child approaches his dad. While Jesus emphasized the personal nature of prayer, He also emphasized God's holiness. This prayer showed the disciples how their hearts ought to be oriented toward God—with both familial love and humble reverence.

WORD STUDY

HOLY: Holiness means to be set apart, pure, and perfect. God is completely holy. He cannot sin, and His righteous response to sin is wrath. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus emphasized that before asking for anything, our hearts should recognize God's holiness and our dependence on His mercy.

How should addressing God as Father and holy affect the way we approach God in prayer?

Next, Jesus taught them to pray, "Your kingdom come," which is both a request and a declaration. As a declaration, this phrase states that God's kingdom will certainly come. It is also a request that God would bring justice, peace, and righteousness to this broken world while we await His kingdom's arrival.

Key Concept: Jesus teaches us how to pray because He wants to give us good gifts.

Notes

LEADER NOTE: Often prayer can be more about personal requests and needs than about God-focused priorities. While God absolutely invites His children to bring their cares to Him, we also must seek and understand God's will. God's plan for the world has existed from the beginning of time, and our prayers ought to be in line with God's desires (Ps. 37:4). Praying for God's kingdom to come changes the way we view our own requests. Prayer shapes priorities and aligns our hearts with God's purposes.

Jesus's example prayer then turned to daily needs: "Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). The disciples were to depend upon God for their physical sustenance and provision, just as Israel had to during their forty-year journey in the wilderness.

How does asking for "daily bread" challenge the way you think about dependence, provision, and contentment?

Jesus then directed the prayer toward reconciliation (v. 4). Forgiveness is a gift from God and should also be extended to others in light of God's mercy toward us. And finally, the request to protect us from temptation shows that we need God's protection and guidance as we live in this fallen, sinful world. Jesus's prayer continues to serve as a framework for how we should approach God in prayer.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus linked receiving God's forgiveness with extending forgiveness to others. Christians want to receive forgiveness, but we often harden our hearts when someone hurts us. God's forgiveness shapes our ability to forgive. Since God graciously forgives us of all our sins, we have no reason not to forgive someone who sins against us. Forgiving others shows others what God is like and invites them to know God as the merciful Father He is.

CHRIST CONNECTION

x

x

Jesus's life was full of prayer and gives us an example to follow in praying for the right things because He desires to bestow on us the good gifts of God. Jesus's best gift is salvation that He gives us freely when we trust in Him.

JESUS TELLS US TO PRAY BECAUSE GOD WANTS TO GIVE US GOOD GIFTS (LUKE 11:5-13).

Underline the response of the friend, and circle the response of our heavenly Father.

5 He also said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, **6** because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don’t have anything to offer him.’ **7** Then he will answer from inside and say, ‘Don’t bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can’t get up to give you anything.’ **8** I tell you, even though he won’t get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend’s shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. **9** So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? **12** Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Jesus continued His teaching on prayer with two illustrations that painted a vivid image of God’s generosity through prayer. Jesus began by asking His audience to imagine a man going to a friend’s house in the middle of the night to ask for provisions for an unexpected guest. Understandably, the friend wouldn’t want to get out of bed. But because of the man’s “shameless boldness” (v. 8), the friend would provide all that was requested.

This story contrasts human reluctance with God’s willingness. Jesus was not implying the disciples needed to wear down God or annoy Him until He responded. Rather, Jesus was showing that if we know we can go ask for help from a friend in the middle of the night, then we certainly can have boldness to go before our loving Father and ask for His help. For those who approach the throne of God with boldness and faith, God will happily supply all that is needed.

LEADER NOTE: Verses 9-10 can sometimes be misunderstood or misconstrued, especially by proponents of the prosperity gospel. Some believe these verses mean you can come to God with a list of what you want and He will give you whatever you ask for. It is important to understand the context of these verses—the Lord’s Prayer. This guide for believers reveals what is aligned with God’s will, what God is willing and ready to answer.

Key Concept: Jesus teaches us how to pray because He wants to give us good gifts.

Notes

What can we learn about God's character by contrast with the reluctant friend in Jesus's parable?

Jesus then shared a second illustration. He asked the disciples what human fathers are like. The rhetorical questions Jesus asked paint an exaggerated but helpful picture. No decent human father would give his children something that would harm them if they asked for food. Human fathers know how to give good and even basic gifts to their children. But God the Father cares for His children abundantly more because He is holy and good.

LEADER NOTE: When comparing human fathers to our heavenly Father, Jesus referred to our sinful state when He stated, "you then, who are evil" (v. 13). While sin warps and distorts our desires, even sinners, for the most part, know they must love and care for their children and provide for them. Even if sinful parents do not provide loving care for their children, they know they should. Comparing fallen humanity with God's goodness and holiness, Jesus called the disciples to think about how much more, abundantly more, God must care for His children.

Not only is God able and willing to provide for physical needs, He gives the free and ultimate gift of the Holy Spirit to those who trust in His Son. The Spirit provides all that is needed for a godly life. The children of God can boldly approach God with their prayers because they know God is loving, good, and He delights in giving to His children.

Why should we view the Holy Spirit as chief among God's good gifts to us?



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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

Key Concept: Jesus teaches us how to pray because He wants to give us good gifts.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 118 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Principles of Prayer.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with the Scripture text.

Principles of Prayer
Read Luke 11:1-13. Based on Jesus’s model prayer and His subsequent teaching, identify some principles of prayer we should follow.

JESUS’S MODEL PRAYER	JESUS’S TEACHING ON PRAYER

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Luke 11:1-4.

IDENTIFY: If your group is large, divide your group into smaller groups of 4-5 people. If not, feel free to discuss as a whole group. Instruct the groups or individuals to identify the parts of Jesus’s prayer and then to identify principles for prayer from these parts. After a few moments, call for the groups or individuals to share their insights, recording these on the board as they record them in their PSGs.

READ: Call on another volunteer to read aloud Luke 11:5-13.

DISCUSS: Look at Jesus’s two illustrations in this passage and identify more principles for prayer from His extended teaching.

ANALYZE: After a few moments, call on individuals to share insights from this passage. As needed for prompts or clarification, ask: “What might it mean for us to approach God with ‘shameless boldness’? // With His statements on ‘Ask,’ ‘Seek,’ and ‘Knock,” is Jesus giving us a blank check when it comes to prayer? Why or why not? // What does it mean for believers to ask in prayer for the Holy Spirit? Why should we view the Holy Spirit as one of God’s greatest gifts to us?”

DISCUSS: How do the insights from Jesus’s teaching on prayer relate to the parts of His model prayer?

DEBRIEF

How does your current practice of prayer compare to the way Jesus taught His disciples to pray?

How can you grow in your prayer life?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, who is holy, generous, and near. The Father not only provides for our needs but gives us the greatest gift of all—His Spirit. God is good and He knows how to give the best gifts to His children, so prayer isn’t about changing God’s mind but about being changed as we trust His goodness. Prayer reveals what we believe about God. If we think He is distant, we will pray hesitantly. If we believe He is our heavenly Father, we will come to Him boldly, humbly, and expectantly.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 119). 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: Understanding our holy heavenly Father is essential in our approach to prayer. Knowing who God is will change how we communicate with Him. If He is only a giving Father, we may not take sin seriously. If He is only holy, we may be afraid to come to Him with all our needs. Yet because He is both, we can approach Him with full confidence in His character.

What are some truths about God’s character that can give you more confidence to come to Him in prayer?



HEART: God desires to give His children good gifts. Yet the desires of our hearts can sometimes cause us to be dissatisfied with what God gives us. Praying for good gifts such as marriage, children, financial security, or a good job are not evil prayers, but when we ask God for these things, we must come

Key Concept: Jesus teaches us how to pray because He wants to give us good gifts.

to Him trusting that He has our best in mind. Even if we do not get exactly what we want, God will never give us a snake if we ask for a fish.

What desires in your heart do you need to align with God's will?



HANDS: When we recognize how graciously and greatly we are forgiven by God, we can offer the same forgiveness to those who may have sinned against us. In the same way, because God is generous with us and gives good gifts, we also can be generous with others in need. Generosity is not always giving money to someone, but it can be giving of your time, your prayer, your encouragement, and even your forgiveness.

What are some ways you will practice forgiveness and generosity toward others for God's honor?

NEXT STEPS

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

- This week, begin each prayer by praising God for who He is before asking for anything. Meditate on God's goodness and holiness.
- Ask God specifically for the Spirit's work in your life, in convicting, guiding, and empowering you to obey Him and spread His gospel.
- Keep a written list of prayers and note where you see God's faithful provision. Share with someone how you have seen God answer your heartfelt prayers.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 119 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray Psalm 138:1-3 with your group. Thank God for His faithfulness and love for His people and that He hears and answers the prayers of His people.

Notes



HE TEACHES ON WORRY

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 12:22-34

CONTEXT

After teaching His disciples about prayer, which included a request to God for daily bread, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their pride, hypocrisy, persecution, and greed. He then was drawn into a conversation on money by a man who had an issue with his brother over their family inheritance. In response, Jesus taught a parable that warned against storing up treasure for yourself here on earth and not being “rich toward God” (12:21). He then added to this conclusion for His disciples, cautioning them not to worry about their needs in life but to entrust them to God while seeking His kingdom.

KEY CONCEPT

We need not worry because God takes care of us and provides for our needs.

As you examine Luke 12:22-34:

- Identify the reasons Jesus commanded us not to worry about our daily needs.
- Reflect on the fact that as kingdom people, we invest in eternal treasures.



TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11)

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

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Teaches About Worry (Luke 12:12-34)

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

Jesus Teaches About Prayer (Luke 11:1-13)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 11:14-28
- Day 2:** Luke 11:29-54
- Day 3:** Luke 12:1-12
- Day 4:** Luke 12:13-34
- Day 5:** Luke 12:35-59
- Day 6:** Psalm 23



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

GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER ALL AND PROVIDES FOR HIS CREATION (LUKE 12:22-28).

Circle what God can do, and underline what worry cannot do.

22 Then he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. **23** For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: They don’t sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? **25** Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? **26** If then you’re not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest? **27** Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. **28** If that’s how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you—you of little faith?”

After speaking to the thousands who gathered to hear Him, warning them against the practice of storing up earthly wealth (vv. 13-21), Jesus turned to speak directly to the disciples, the ones He had chosen and invested in the most. He took His warning to the crowd one step further and warned the disciples about their heart posture as well—followers of Jesus must be “rich toward God” (v. 21) and also guard their hearts against worry.

LEADER NOTE: This sidebar with the disciples flows directly from the parable of the rich fool, who was condemned because he believed his stored wealth, his temporary possessions, would produce security, but he failed to recognize that every aspect of life belongs to God (see Luke 12:13-21). Jesus warned His disciples that whether they were wealthy or poor, they could fall into a similar trap of worry. At their root, greed and worry are both misplaced trust.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Nothing is more common than an anxious and troubled spirit, and nothing mars a believer’s usefulness and attacks his inner peace so much. The person who can say boldly, ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ is the person who will be able to add, ‘I shall not want’ (Psalm 23:1).”¹

–J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)

Key Concept: We need not worry because God takes care of us and provides for our needs.

Notes

How are greed and worry connected?

Jesus rooted His command for His disciples not to worry in God's care for His creation. Birds do not put seeds into the ground or harvest crops, yet God feeds them. Lilies do not weave fabric and adorn themselves, yet God clothes them. Jesus did not say food and clothing are not needed; rather, He stated that worrying about how to get these needs does not accomplish anything. To emphasize His point, Jesus declared that His disciples were worth far more to God than grass that perishes, so they could trust Him to provide for them.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus pointed to ravens and lilies, commonplace features of the land. Like us, the disciples likely never stopped to consider what sustained the birds or made the lilies beautiful. Jesus reminded the disciples that God does not care in a selective way or only care for the most important things in life. Even that which is ordinary and overlooked falls under His control and provision. Worry makes us look only at ourselves and our needs, but understanding how God cares for His creation reframes our perspective.

Worry does nothing to benefit life. In fact, it makes life less enjoyable. The Christian life is full of difficulty and hardship, but worry cannot change that or make it better. What makes life possible to endure is faith and trust in God, who knows more about our needs than we do. This does not imply we ought to sit around and do nothing. Jesus did not advocate for a passive and lazy life but a life grounded in faith. It is a certainty that God will supply our needs, so we can live faithfully while resting assured that God will do what He says.

Where in creation do you see reminders of God's daily provision?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD'S PROVIDENCE: Providence refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes, in various degrees, God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Gen. 8:21-22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Christians believe the world, and even the cosmos itself, is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the natural order but also the individuals and events within human history.

WE MUST SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST AND STORE TREASURES IN HEAVEN (LUKE 12:29-34).

Underline every instance of “don’t,” and circle what Jesus tells us to do.

29 “Don’t strive for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don’t be anxious. **30** For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. **31** But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. **32** Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won’t grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Jesus continued His teaching on worry by stating that the daily needs of life were not something the disciples should strive to gain. In this, they were to be different from the world. The Gentiles, worldly people who did not know and love God, sought such things, thinking their provision was all on their shoulders. But God knows exactly what we need. Worry, at its core, is misplaced trust. Material possessions, status, and security are what the world desires, but those who know God seek God’s kingdom first. The spiritual needs of disciples surpass their physical needs.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Two conflicting forces cannot exist in one human heart. . . .
When worry is present, trust cannot crowd its way in.”²

–Billy Graham (1918–2018)

Jesus emphasized the connection between treasure and the heart. Whatever a person values most will shape their attention and effort. Jesus instructed His followers to lay up treasure in heaven rather than on earth. To be “rich toward God” (v. 21) means to invest in God’s kingdom instead of worldly gain.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus contrasted treasures on earth, which can rust, decay, or be stolen, with heavenly treasures that are imperishable. The disciples were then called to evaluate not just what they owned but where their heart was invested. Earthly wealth can provide a false sense of security, leading people to believe they do not need God, but this will lead to feeling empty and unfulfilled. Only investment in eternal things provides fulfillment and security.

Key Concept: We need not worry because God takes care of us and provides for our needs.

Notes

What are some areas of your life where worry is taking the place of faith?

Jesus shared that investing in eternal goods requires sacrifice and generosity. In the same way that God is generous to His children and provides what they need, they also should prioritize caring for and providing for others for the treasure promised by God. True treasure is not like food, drink, or earthly trinkets, which spoil, decay, and are at risk of theft. Kingdom treasure is imperishable and impossible to be taken away.

LEADER NOTE: Jesus linked treasure in heaven with kingdom-oriented actions here on earth. To store up treasure in heaven involves tangible practices such as generosity, service, and prioritizing God's work over personal gain. Our time, money, talents, and influence are investments in eternal treasures. This challenges disciples of Jesus to examine their priorities. We must use our resources for the good of others, not just for our own good.

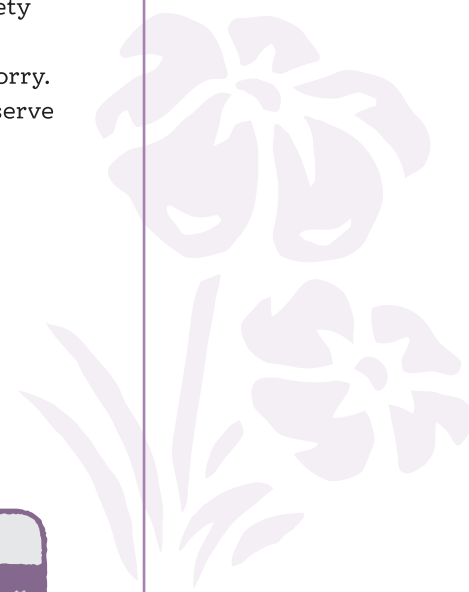
How does generosity combat worry and cultivate trust in God's provision?

As the heart desires various treasures, disciples of Jesus are challenged to cultivate a heart set on God instead of a heart set on possessions. Anxiety arises when we prioritize perishable things above the imperishable. By focusing on the eternal, God's children can experience freedom from worry. God will always care for His children, so they can step out in faith and serve God with their whole hearts.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

x ————— x

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



ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: Before the group arrives, gather several small items that can be held easily, such as small books, water bottles, or light dumbbells. As your group arrives, encourage them to test the weight of each item. Ask: "How long could you hold this weight on your own?" Note that even a lightweight object could become a burden if you had to hold it for an indefinite period of time.

TRANSITION: Worry feels manageable at first but quickly becomes a problem, especially if we try to hold onto worry while striving to live as God calls us to live.

CONTEXT

SAY: In Luke 12, Jesus taught His disciples not to worry after warning them and the gathered crowd against greed (vv. 13-21). He told the parable of the rich fool to show that life does not consist in possessions. If greed looks to possessions for security, then worry looks to circumstances for control. In both greed and worry, we fail to trust God's providence.

TRANSITION: Today we'll see that because of God's providence, we can live free from worry and devoted fully to His kingdom.

RECAP

ASK: In your personal preparation this week, what verse stood out to you in this passage about worrying, and why?

SAY: Jesus reminded His followers that the God who feeds ravens and clothes wildflowers will certainly provide for His children. In this, Jesus contrasted anxious striving with confident trust in the Father. Worry cannot add a single hour to life, but seeking God's kingdom leads to eternal treasure. And where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. The call is clear: Do not live consumed by anxiety but seek first the kingdom of God.



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Key Concept: We need not worry because God takes care of us and provides for our needs.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 126 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Where Is Your Treasure?” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Where Is Your Treasure?	
Read Luke 12:22-34. Consider what it means to have treasure on earth or in heaven. Then identify barriers and means to storing treasure in heaven.	
IN HEAVEN	
BARRIERS TO STORING YOUR TREASURE IN HEAVEN	WAYS YOU CAN STORE YOUR TREASURE IN HEAVEN
ON EARTH	

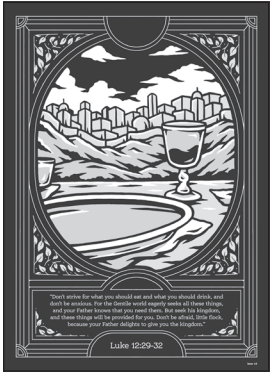
READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 12:22-28.

IDENTIFY: Call for the group to identify earthly concerns that garner our attention and can cause us to worry in our pursuit of them. These can come from the passage and beyond. Write these on the chart under “On Earth.” Discuss: “What are some commonalities among these earthly concerns? Are any of them inherently sinful in and of themselves? Why or why not? Why does Jesus connect worry over food and clothing with having ‘little faith’ (v. 28)?”

READ: Invite another volunteer to read aloud Luke 12:29-34.

DEFINE: Lead your group to define in terms of the heart what it means to store your treasure in heaven (see v. 34). (Example: *Storing treasure in heaven means believing and acting in such a way that your heart is focused first and foremost on God’s will and God’s heavenly reward.*) Record the group’s definition on the chart under “In Heaven.” Ask: “Why does Jesus encourage His followers not to worry about our physical needs and instead to store up treasure in heaven?”

Notes



DISCUSS: Lead your group in a discussion for the remaining two spaces on the chart, regarding barriers to and ways of storing your treasure in heaven. (*Display Paclr Item 14: Seelr His Kingdom to help the group visualize our potential barriers and the proper goals for our treasure.*) From the passage, make sure to point out the barriers of anxiety (v. 29), ignorance (v. 30), fear (v. 31), and inconvenience (v. 33), allowing the group to add more from Scripture and/or experience. For the discussion on ways to store up treasure in heaven, highlight the principle of holding loosely to earthly possessions in favor of heavenly investments by giving to those in need on earth. We should avoid laying down “laws” here about what believers are required to do as we generate ideas about ways believers might be led by God to store treasure in heaven.

DEBRIEF

How do the promises and character of God help us battle against worry and focus our hearts on what matters in eternity?

SUMMARIZE

Worry cannot be removed by willpower; it is displaced by faith. God’s providence frees us to rest in His care and seek His kingdom first. Jesus doesn’t just tell us to stop worrying; He gives us reasons to trust. If the Father cares for the birds and the flowers, how much more does He care for His children? The antidote to worry is seeking His kingdom and treasuring Him above all.

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 **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Jesus called His followers to think differently about what is valuable. Disciples must evaluate what they pursue and recognize that faithful obedience involves prioritizing God’s kingdom over material accumulation. Our minds are often flooded with the worries of life, but reorienting our thoughts to focus on kingdom truths will combat any worries.

How can you reorient your thoughts to be more kingdom-focused?



HEART: The heart follows our ideas about treasure—what we value most will shape our desires and emotions. When we treasure what is earthly, we open ourselves up to worry. By loving what God values, we experience joy, contentment, and trust. We must examine the priorities in our heart.

What does your pursuit of treasures, whether on earth or in heaven, reveal about the focus of your heart?

Key Concept: We need not worry because God takes care of us and provides for our needs.



HANDS: Disciples are called to align their work, finances, and relationships with what God declares is most valuable. Jesus told His disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor in order to store up treasure in heaven (v. 33). While Jesus was not calling us to become destitute or irresponsible with our finances, He is calling us to sacrifice for those who have needs greater than our own so we can honor our Father who gives to us all that we need.

What are some habits or practices you can develop to serve others and so store treasure in heaven?

NEXT STEPS

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

- Each time worry rises this week, turn it into prayer by naming the concern and asking God to provide according to His will (Phil. 4:6-7).
- Choose contentment. Instead of striving for more, intentionally thank God for three specific ways He has already provided for you today.
- Seek God's kingdom first! Take one step this week to share Christ, serve someone in need, or prioritize worship, reflecting kingdom values over worldly concerns.

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

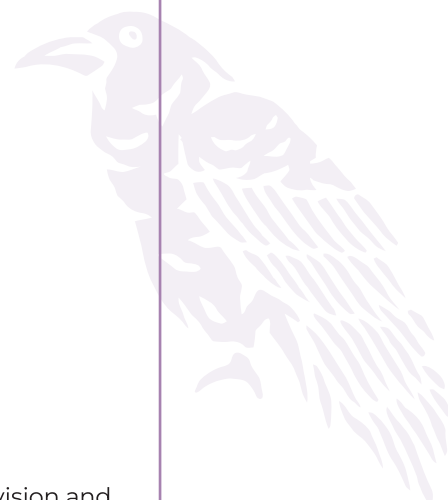
PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 23 with your group, focusing on God's provision and our call to trust Him. Thank God that in Jesus we lack no good thing.

References

1. J. C. Ryle, Luke, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), Lk 12:22-31.
2. Billy Graham, Hope for Each Day: Morning and Evening Devotions (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2012), 110.

Notes



6 WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF SUNDAY SCHOOL THIS SUMMER

By Ken Braddy



Summer—it comes around every year! How will you and your Bible study group spend your summer? Chances are your group's attendance will become more erratic as summer vacations take place and people get away to the mountains or the beach. Perhaps your group doesn't meet during summer months. Don't maintain the status quo. Instead, do one or more of the following things to squeeze the most out of summer and avoid those summer slumps.

1. REACH OUT TO ABSENTEES.

Set a goal of contacting all your absentee group members during June and July. Some may have joined other churches. Others may have gotten out of the habit of attending your group. Still more may have experienced a crisis and didn't want people to know. As you discover the ministry needs of your absentees, mobilize your group and meet those needs.

Remember that the goal of your Bible teaching ministry isn't to have the largest group. The real goal is to help your church in its mission of making disciples.

2. ENCOURAGE GROUP MEMBERS TO LEAVE YOUR GROUP.

What? Leave your group? Summer is when church staff are searching for new group leaders in all age groups. Remember that the goal of your Bible teaching ministry isn't to have the largest group. The real goal is to help your church in its mission of making disciples. The preschool, children, and student ministries of your church will need new group leaders to serve the youngest members of your congregation. Encourage people in your group to leave and serve others as group leaders themselves.

3. TURN THE TEACHING OVER TO YOUR APPRENTICE.

Each adult Sunday School group needs one apprentice leader whose goal is to start a new group. Summer is a great time to give your apprentice the primary responsibility of teaching the group. Let them practice, and then coach and guide them to become more confident leading a group. With many people away on vacation, summer is a perfect time for people to spread their wings and teach during a time when it may feel safer—attendance is lower in summer months—and for the average person, a smaller group is a less intimidating group to teach.

4. RAMP UP YOUR GROUP'S FELLOWSHIPS.

Summer movies, barbecues, baseball games, golf outings, a day at the lake, and local day trips can be fun occasions to gather your members and prospects. Summer has a fun, relaxed feel and it is the perfect time to get creative—and busy.

Don't wait for a single occasion when everyone can get together. Instead, schedule multiple events. Having multiple opportunities for fellowship will ensure that at least one of the events fits the schedules of your group members.

5. SCHEDULE AN EXTRA BIBLE STUDY.

Why not use the summer months to explore a topic your group is interested in? There are plenty of Bible study options that come in 4, 6, 8, or 10-week sessions. Rotate the study by allowing a different member of the group to host it each week.

6. SERVE TOGETHER.

Summer presents plenty of opportunities for entire Bible study groups to serve together. Sharing an experience like Vacation Bible School or another community-centered ministry activity (soccer camp, day camp, etc.) is a great way to build the bond between your group members. Consider asking your group members to invest a week of vacation in serving kids from your community, knowing that they will grow in their relationships with one another too!

Ken Braddy is Lifeway's director of Sunday School and is a 30-year veteran of Sunday School ministry and author of *Breathing Life into Sunday School*. He serves as a Sunday School leader at his church in Tennessee.

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

By Rachel Myrick



Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the one that most Christians acknowledge we should do, but we might have varying ideas of what it means to pray or even why we pray. Prayer is simply communion and dialogue with God. Although many of us might pray before meals, at a loved one's sickbed, or in corporate worship, prayer is not confined to specific times or even specific words to say. Prayer is ongoing fellowship with God as we draw near to His presence. But how can we cultivate a habit of prayer?

PRAY WHEN YOU ARE ALONE WITH GOD

At its heart, prayer is spending time with God—alone with our thoughts, our praise, and our deepest needs. Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, has always existed with the Father and the Spirit (John 1:1-2; 10:30), yet He often withdrew from the crowds and His inner circle to be alone with God (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). As believers, we also should withdraw from the noisy living room, frenzied-to-do list, and doom-scrolling on social media to enjoy time with God, who wants to be with us (2 Cor. 6:16; Jas. 4:8). Although there is no Bible verse that prescribes a specific time to pray, the best times to seek God are usually in the morning before we begin our day or the evening when we are winding down. Scripture also doesn't prescribe a set number of prayers each day; instead, we are encouraged to "rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

Ask anyone on the street and they will heartily admit that our sense of shared community is

becoming more and more tribalized on political, socioeconomic, age, gender, and racial lines. The acceptable response to social strife in this day and age is to withdraw further into our safe bubbles and to side-eye the "others." This tendency to go "no contact" with those with whom we disagree is definitely not what Jesus modeled. Instead, He instructed His followers, "Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28). Don't view them as the sinister other and keep them at arm's length. Love them. Pray for them. Do good for them. This kind of mercy is a direct reflection of God's mercy toward us (v. 36). It radically alters our perceptions too. Can we really disdain or disregard the people who occupy our prayers? Surely not. Since we know we will receive anything we pray for within God's will, we could even witness the power of prayer working toward their salvation—making former enemies into brothers and sisters in Christ!

PRAY WITH PERSISTENCE

When I was praying for something with all my heart, a cynical friend said I probably wouldn't get it because "I wanted it too much." Ouch, friend. Thankfully, Jesus said God doesn't begrudge us when we persist in prayer. In fact, Jesus said that God delights to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). Comparing how human parents, flawed though we may be, respond to our children's requests, Jesus said, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (11:13). We can trust God to hear and respond to our heartfelt pleas for help, healing, guidance, wisdom, faith, and more according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Pray in all times and in all activities. Draw near, beloved.

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