

THE JOURNEY

BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS



UNIT ONE – TO KNOW HIM

LEADER'S GUIDE

THE JOURNEY

DEAR LEADER,

Thank you for your willingness to invest in the discipleship of your people. We hope that The Journey will be a valuable resource for you. Just a reminder, we need your feedback to help make improvements. Please submit your feedback to thejourney@iphc.org.

In this document, you will find:

1. An opening Journey exercise: “Before You Can Start a Journey”
 - We suggest using this in your first meeting
 - This exercise will help participants find their starting place on The Journey. Encourage them not to rush their responses but to be thoughtful.
2. Unit 1 Commitment Forms
 - Hold your people accountable to their commitments to show up, participate, and care for others in the group.
3. Eight lessons of Unit 1: To Know Him
 - Each lesson contains scripture, discussion, content, conversation starters, and At-Home scriptures and exercises.
 - We suggest devoting 15-20 minutes to teaching the content, which allows for 20-25 minutes of discussion among the group. The conversation starters will be great at the end of class.
 - For some of the discussions, we included possible answers that may help you start the conversation. Otherwise, scan the content of that section for helpful leads.
 - In each lesson, there are At-Home scriptures and exercises. These are included to help participants carry the lesson into their week.
 - Some of these exercises are simple and some may require more thoughtful scheduling, but please encourage your people to commit to the At-Home section. It is during this time At-Home that you will see the greatest growth in their lives with Jesus.

THE JOURNEY

- Don't feel obligated to use all of the At-Home exercises. These are suggestions. You know your group and what they need better than we do. If these exercises fit your needs then please use them.
 - With any of the content or At-Home components, please feel free to alter, add to, and take away what doesn't fit your particular group.
4. At-Home Exercise worksheets and description sheets
 - At the end of this document, there are supporting documents for the At-Home component.
 - The worksheet can be completed each week. This allows the participants to make commitments and hold each other accountable.
 - Some of the At-Home exercises teach spiritual disciplines which might need more explanation. For those, we have included printable description sheets and worksheets.
 5. Be sure to also download the Participant Guides for your group as well!
 - The Participant Guide is a simplified front-and-back document that allows your people to stay engaged in the lesson, while also providing them with a take-home component.
 - Encourage them to bring a notebook and a Bible.
 6. For additional resources, check out our website at iphc.org/thejourney

We want to help you in any way that we can. If you have questions, feel free to contact us. We want you to have success in discipling your people. Our prayer is that The Journey can play a small part in that.

In Christ,

YOUR DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES FAMILY

Email us: thejourney@iphc.org

Call us: 405-792-7171

BEFORE YOU CAN START A JOURNEY

IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A STARTING
POINT FOR YOUR JOURNEY.

HOW OFTEN ARE YOU CONSCIOUSLY AWARE OF GOD IN THESE SETTINGS?

RANK YOUR ANSWERS ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10.

WORK	HOME	CHURCH	RELATIONSHIPS
_____	_____	_____	_____

WHERE DO YOU MISS GOD THE MOST IN YOUR LIFE? WHY?

MY COMMITMENT

- 1) Will you commit to participating in The Journey the next eight weeks to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)? _____
- 2) Will you commit to set aside time so that you can do the At-Home Exercises? _____
- 3) Will you commit to check on a friend in the group each week to see how they are doing with The Journey? _____ Who will it be?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Please sign and date and hand in to your Journey leader.

MY COMMITMENT

- 1) Will you commit to participating in The Journey the next eight weeks to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)? _____
- 2) Will you commit to set aside time so that you can do the At-Home Exercises? _____
- 3) Will you commit to check on a friend in the group each week to see how they are doing with The Journey? _____ Who will it be?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Please sign and date and hand in to your Journey leader.

THE JOURNEY

DEAR FELLOW TRAVELER,

Welcome to The Journey. We are so glad you are here. We believe that discipleship is a journey of becoming more like Jesus, and we want to come alongside you on this adventure. Perhaps you are new to following Jesus. Or maybe you've been following Him for many years. Regardless of your place on the path, we believe The Journey is for you.

The Journey is a versatile resource designed with the church and home in mind. The content will contain foundational, biblical teaching presented in an interactive format. It's intended for use in community with other believers. We also have built At-Home Exercises into the content for you to engage in at home throughout the week. We hope that these exercises help to strengthen your understanding of Jesus and hold you accountable for meeting with Jesus daily.

Our lives are radically changed by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit through salvation, but our journey with the Lord shouldn't stop at our salvation experience. We must then embark on a journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. By digging deeper into this relationship, The Journey will help you extend discipleship beyond Sundays. By immersing yourself into God's Word, prayer, and worship, you will fall more in love with the One who loves you most. Remember, there is always more to learn, still room to grow, and always support available for you on the journey.

We have been praying for you. We have had you in mind as we have been preparing this study. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would work mightily in your life as you commit to this personal and communal discipleship journey with the Lord.

With you on The Journey,

YOUR DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES FAMILY

THE JOURNEY

Table of Contents

UNIT ONE: TO KNOW HIM

WHO IS JESUS?

1. Jesus, The God/Man
2. Jesus, The Messiah
3. Jesus, The Friend

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

4. Jesus, The Redeemer
5. Jesus, The Life-Giver

WHY FOLLOW JESUS?

6. Jesus, The Answer

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

7. Saying Yes to Jesus

WHO AM I?

8. What Does Jesus Call Me?

THE JOURNEY

Table of Contents

UNIT ONE: TO KNOW HIM CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

WHO IS JESUS?

1. Dr. Terry Tramel
2. Dr. Terry Tramel
3. Dr. Terry Tramel

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

4. Bishop Doug Beacham
5. Bishop Doug Beacham

WHY FOLLOW JESUS?

6. Dr. Terry Tramel

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

7. Jonathan Bland

WHO AM I?

8. Jonathan Bland

THE JOURNEY

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT BIBLE TRANSLATION ARE YOU USING?

All scriptures used in The Journey will be the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

HOW IS THE JOURNEY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BIBLE STUDIES?

The Journey is an invitation to say yes to Jesus in every part of your life. Centered around weekly class experiences, the focus of The Journey is on the 6 days you aren't with your group. We want you to grow in knowledge, as all Bible studies do, but we also want you to be transformed by the power of God and become more like Jesus. By connecting, growing in knowledge, daily intimacy with Jesus, and participation in community, we hope that you will experience transformation.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH DISCUSSION?

We believe that the discussion of the lesson with one another is a vital part of learning. It teaches us to think critically about what we are hearing, to be dependent on one another (someone else may have an insight that we need to hear), and to build trust and relationships in the group.

DOES THIS WORK FOR SMALL AND LARGE GROUPS?

Yes! We believe that the flexibility of this resource allows it to function in both settings. It can be easily adapted to fit the needs of any sized group!

THE JOURNEY

LESSON ONE: JESUS, THE GOD/MAN

INTRODUCTION: Two thousand years ago a Man rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. His presence stirred an entire city and left its people asking, “Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10). That Man became the most influential person in human history and that question remains the most important one ever posed. Who was Jesus? Who is this Man who never wrote a book, never held an office, never commanded an army, never owned a piece of land, never traveled far around the world, and yet millions of people have embraced Him as their Savior and Lord.

In future lessons, we will study why Jesus came and what He did, but first, we must be certain of His identity. Was He really the Son of God? Was He a real human being? Amazingly, the answer to those questions is “Yes, He was both.” According to the Bible, God became Man, but He never stopped being God! He was not half-God and half-Man, rather, He was very God and perfect Man. He did not have a “God button” and a “human button” that He would press from time to time. He was not a Clark Kent who would change into Superman, then back again after performing a miracle. On the contrary, He was 100% God and 100% Man at every moment.

As we begin this journey together, keep in mind that we have the supreme privilege of not only knowing about Jesus, but also knowing Him in a personal way that impacts every part of our lives.

I. JESUS WAS GOD

READ ALOUD: John 1:1-3: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made.



DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): This passage from the opening of John is often cited when explaining the divinity of Christ. Why do you think John refers to Jesus as “the Word”? How does Jesus’ relationship in the Trinity (and His pre-existence) confirm that He is indeed God?

Possible Answers:

- The Word ties back to the creation in Genesis 1.
- Calling Jesus the “Word” indicates that Jesus is the fullness of all that God could say to humanity, His revelation.
- These three verses tell us what’s coming in the rest of the Gospel.
- See 2nd paragraph below for more help.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): John’s Gospel traces Jesus as far back as our minds can comprehend. Just like the Book of Genesis, it begins with the three words: “In the beginning...” That first verse of the Old Testament continued by affirming that “God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). However, John 1:1 declares that even before He started creating, He simply “was.” Something (or Someone) had to exist before everything else. Evolutionists contend that matter existed before all other things. Yet, this position begs the question, “Where did the matter come from?” If one can have faith in the eternity of matter, is it so outrageous to express faith in the eternity of God?

The word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. However, the truth of that term is found throughout the Scriptures. It refers to the reality that God exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This does not mean there are three Gods, rather, there is one God, consisting of three distinct persons who are equal in every attribute. When John wrote his account of the story of Jesus, he identified Him first as “The Word” – a description that means He was the full expression of God. John tells his readers three things: 1) The Word was never created, He has always existed. 2) The Word was “with God” (that is, the Father and the Holy Spirit). 3) The Word “was God.” Every created thing in the universe may be traced back to the pre-existing Christ.

The opening verses of Hebrews echo the same truth, only that writer describes the pre-existent Jesus as “The Son” by whom God made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus expressed that sacred relationship that existed from eternity past by saying to the Father, “You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:5).

II. JESUS WAS MAN

READ ALOUD: John 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Was Jesus a real human being or did He only appear to be while on earth? Why does this question matter?

Possible Answers:

- It is imperative that Jesus was fully man. This way, He can identify with us in our weaknesses, but He can show us how to live triumphantly. As Hebrews says, “but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet He did not sin.”

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Someone reading the opening passage of John might ask how we can know that “the Word” refers to Jesus. Fortunately, our answer arrives just a few verses later: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (v. 14). God became a Man and came to live with us! The rest of John’s Gospel flows out of his statement, “We beheld His glory...” The glory of Jesus was clear as He performed seven astonishing miracles that John describes in detail. John contended that these “signs” were enough for people to believe that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31).

Today, millions of people deny that the historical Jesus was truly divine. However, in the first few centuries of church history, it was the humanity of Jesus that was called into question. Many could not comprehend a God who would condescend to the status of lowly human beings. It is ironic that John’s book, which places the greatest emphasis on Jesus’ deity of the four Gospels, also repeatedly highlights His humanity.

For example, in John, Jesus is born, attends a wedding, walks, thirsts, rides a boat, cries, washes others' feet, dies, and is buried. Only a human being can experience all those things. Perhaps the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) demonstrates His humanity in the clearest way.

III. JESUS IS THE GOD / MAN

READ ALOUD: Isaiah 9:6: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): This phenomenon of God becoming Man and yet remaining God is called the "Incarnation." Like "Trinity," this word is not in the Bible, yet it is the best way we can theologically describe God taking on human form. The question is not if it happened, rather, how and why would a God so lower Himself to become a mere mortal?

Possible Answers:

- Love, Sacrifice, Relationship.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): The biblical answer is love. The most well-known verse in the New Testament attests, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Note that Jesus was identified as "the Son of God" even before His birth. Seven hundred years before that epoch event, Isaiah described the Incarnation this way: first, he said, "a Child is born." This was the birth of Jesus outside of an inn in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. We can understand that part of the story.

Second, Isaiah states: "a Son is given." This is the divine side of the story that requires faith on our part. How did it happen? Jesus was evidently born like all other children in human history. However, it was His conception that was miraculous. The Bible declares that the Holy Spirit overshadowed a young Virgin to allow God's Son to dwell within Her womb. This biological impossibility became possible through God's Spirit.

Philip Yancey wrote about feeding his fish every day. He said that every time he approached the aquarium the fish would swim away from him in fear. He tried to talk to the tiny creatures, telling them how much he cared for them, yet all they could see was the giant figure so different from themselves, hovering over their watery environment. He would tell them how much he loved and cared for them, yet they always swam away.

One day it dawned on Yancey that there was only one way his fish could ever really know what he was like. He said to himself, "If only I could become a fish...If I could become a fish, I could swim alongside them, I could communicate with them in their own language, I could tell them, "I am one of you now."

And for thousands of years during the Old Testament days, God in Heaven used various methods to reveal Himself to the inhabitants of the earth. He repeatedly exclaimed, "I created you, I love you, I care for you, I am here for you." Yet most of humanity retreated from the Invisible One who seemed so different and distant from themselves. There was only one way that the fallen human race could ever know what God was like and how much He loved them.

Philip Yancey could not become a fish, but God did become a Man. And the Christmas story is that Jesus Christ came along side of humanity and said: "I made you...I love you...I am here for you...I am one of you now."

CALL TO ACTION: Commit to participating in The Journey the next eight weeks to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Be sure to fill out your commitment form for this eight-week unit.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Before today's lesson, how would you have defined Jesus the God/Man?
- 2) What still seems confusing to you about Jesus the God/Man?
- 3) Identify one or more ways that Jesus relates to you as a human, knowing he was fully man?

4) How does knowing and understanding Jesus as God/Man impact your daily living?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES: John 1:1-14; Isaiah 9:1-7

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's At-Home Scriptures. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.

2) The Son of God became the Son of Man so we, who were sons and daughters of men, could become sons and daughters of God. He came down so we could go up. He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. He was tempted so we could overcome. He suffered so we could be healed. And He died so we could live. Having learned this wonderful truth, begin reading through the four Gospels with an open heart and eyes to see further evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ.

3) Reflect on what it means that Jesus is called the Word. The lesson defined it as being the full expression of God. Take a few moments and write down the ways that this truth connects to your life with God.

4) Since Jesus is God and we are not, we are called into submission to Him. Go for a walk and think about all the ways that you try to be in control of your life, instead of turning them over to Jesus. Ask Jesus to help you submit every part of your life to Him.

THE JOURNEY

LESSON TWO:

JESUS, THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION: The story of the Bible is framed within the portrait of the Hebrew nation, the chosen people of God. The writer of Genesis covered some two thousand years of human history in the first eleven chapters of that book. It seems the author intended to hit “fast forward” to get us to Abraham as quickly as possible. In Genesis 12:1-3 we are, indeed, introduced to Abram and the beginning of the Jewish people. This passage is called the “Abrahamic Covenant” and is one of the most important texts in the Bible.

The “bottom line” of this covenant reads: “...in you shall all peoples of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). This is the first of many prophecies of a Jewish Messiah who would come and redeem Israel. In this lesson, we will see that the Hebrew Messiah and the Savior of the whole world are one and the same – Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. THE MESSIAH PROMISED

READ ALOUD: Matthew 1:22-23: So, all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How do we know Jesus Christ is the long-expected Savior of the world?

Possible Answers:

- The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus is the fulfillment of OT prophecies about the Messiah.



CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Each of the New Testament Gospel writers focused on a different aspect of the person of Jesus. In the previous study, we learned that John wrote to convince his readers that Jesus was the Son of God (John 20:30-31). In this lesson, we will see that Matthew is writing to declare that Jesus is the promised Messiah-King for Israel.

Someone said that in the Old Testament the New Testament is contained, and in the New Testament the Old Testament is explained. What we have in the first 39 books of the Bible is a promise – a promise of a Redeemer who would come deliver and reign over His people. The first hint of such a coming Rescuer was given to Adam and Eve before they left the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). Later, the promised Messiah was narrowed to come from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-3; Numbers 24:17), as well as from King David (Psalm 132:11).

If the entire Old Testament could be shortened to just two words, it would be these: “He’s Coming!” And the New Testament could accordingly be summarized by: “He Came!” It is no accident that Matthew was placed first in the New Testament and among the four Gospels. After reading the “He’s Coming” message over and over in the Old Testament, the page is finally turned to Matthew, who announces: “He Came!” The keyword in Matthew is “fulfilled,” which he uses 13 times to show that Jesus Christ is the One whom the Old Testament writers foresaw (Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4; 26:54; 27:9, 35). In this first passage, we learn that Jesus had to be born of a virgin in order to fulfill the Scriptures (see Isaiah 7:14). Matthew’s pen shows us this pattern in the life of Jesus all the way to the cross.

II. THE MESSIAH PROFESSED

READ ALOUD: Mark 8:27-29: Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”

So, they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Consider the people in your life (those you know personally and those you listen to from afar). Who do they say Jesus is? Is it necessary for us to be dogmatic in proclaiming that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Mark wrote his Gospel in a most unusual way. In the opening verse, he states that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 1:1). He then goes back and composes a narrative that shows how long it took for Christ’s disciples to recognize who He was and why He came. In the first eight chapters, Mark describes how the demons (Mark 1:24) and the winds and waves (Mark 4:41) knew who Jesus was. Yet the twelve disciples remained slow to come to such faith. They knew there was something different about this man. They saw Him do things they had never seen and heard Him teach things they had never heard, yet their verbal confessions acknowledging that Christ is the Messiah did not come quickly. Even in this eighth chapter, Jesus asked, “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?” (Mark 8:18) and “How is it you do not understand?” (Mark 8:21)

Finally, Jesus led His disciples to Caesarea Philippi (a city in Galilee near Mount Hermon). He drew them to a remote location and asked who others were saying He was. His followers were kind. They could have echoed some of the horrible things being said about Jesus (i.e. “a winebibber,” “a devil,” “Beelzebub,” “a sinner”). Instead, they listed more favorable assessments: John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets.

Jesus then asked them directly: “But who do you say that I am?” In the final analysis, this remains the ultimate question we all must answer. Despite what other churches’ or leaders’ opinions are about Him, who do we personally believe Him to be? Nothing less than the eternal destiny of our immortal souls is at stake.

We read that Peter spoke up. This should be no surprise to Bible readers. He was impulsive, impetuous, and often functioned as the spokesman for the group. He often got it wrong, but this time he got it right. "You are the Christ," he declared. "Christ" is the Greek word for the Old Testament word "Messiah." Thus, Jesus was His name and Christ was His title. Peter was saying that at last, they recognized that Jesus was the promised Messiah they (and all of Israel) had longed for. Jesus was so pleased with his response, He indicated that He would build His Church upon Peter's bedrock confession that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16-18).

III. THE MESSIAH PROCLAIMED

READ ALOUD: John 14:4-6: "And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How should we, as Christians, respond to charges that we are narrow-minded when we claim that Jesus is the only way to Heaven?

Possible Answers:

- Truly, the argument of narrow-mindedness is against Jesus himself. John 14 is exclusive language.
- When someone says Christians are narrow-minded, they are being narrow-minded. How can we be gracious to them?
- There is a difference between tolerance and truth. They are often confused. We should hold to what we believe with integrity but also support the rights of others to disagree with our viewpoint.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): One of the most common alternatives to embracing Jesus as God and Messiah is to dismiss Him as just a "great teacher." While this sounds like a viable concession, it must be observed that being just a great teacher is the one thing Jesus could NOT be. The simple reason is that in His own teaching He claimed to be divine. Years ago, C.S. Lewis deduced that Jesus Christ could only be "a liar, a lunatic, or Lord." Here was his reasoning: If Jesus claimed to be God and He knew that

He wasn't, that would make Him a liar. If He only thought that He was God, yet wasn't, that would make Him a lunatic. Lewis surmised if Jesus wasn't a liar or a lunatic, He, therefore, had to be God.

Many decades later, a fourth option began to circulate concerning the identity of Jesus. This view suggests that the Christ of the four Gospels is simply a legend. Proponents of this idea contend that there was a historical Jesus, who was a great teacher, who may have had some unexplainable things happen in His life, but He certainly was not born of a virgin and He did not rise from the dead. They maintain that the Gospels were written much later than the first century and that they contain sensationalized accounts of Jesus' life composed long after He lived. However, the evidence is quite strong that the four Gospels were written within 30-60 years of Jesus' life on earth. That means there were people still living who could have refuted false claims if they would have been recorded. History is silent about any such deceptions.

When the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush, He identified Himself as "I AM Who I AM" (Exodus 3:14). On the night before His death, Jesus spoke in the clearest language possible when He answered Thomas' questions, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Please note the number of "I AM" statements that Jesus uttered in John's Gospel: I AM the Messiah (4:25-26); the Bread of Life (6:35); from Above (8:23); before Abraham (8:58); the Light of the world (9:5); the Door (10:7); the Good Shepherd (10:11); the Son of God (10:36); the Resurrection and the Life (11:25); the Master (13:13); the True Vine (15:1). Jesus was not a drifter searching for the meaning of life. He knew who He was and why He came, and He invites us to make those same discoveries.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) It took time for Christ's disciples to recognize who He was and why He came (Mark 1). In what ways in your life do you struggle or fail to recognize who Jesus is?
- 2) Peter declared, "You are the Christ," a statement proclaiming that Jesus was the promised Messiah that all of Israel had been longing for. It was a

promise fulfilled for them. Have you had any long-awaited promises fulfilled in your life?

3) What may have kept you from having boldness to give a defense and declare Jesus as Messiah?

4) What hope does grasping the fulfillment of the Promised Messiah give you?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: John 14:1-14

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Do you ever feel like God is unreachable or not paying attention to you? In the story of Jesus, we see God's plan of redemption come to a climax. With Old Testament prophecies of His coming and New Testament stories of fulfillment, we can be encouraged that God cares for us because Jesus came and demonstrated that care. This week, when challenging thoughts arise, remind yourself that Jesus came to earth because He loves you, and He wants to be known by you.

2) Not only did Jesus keep God's promise by coming, but He has also promised to come again. Always be ready to give a defense when asked for a reason of the hope that is within you (1 Peter 3:15). Pray that the Lord will give you boldness to proclaim His name in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to Him.

3) Who do you say that Jesus is? This is the question that every person must answer. Take a few moments to reflect on your response. Why did you answer the way you did? Consider whether or not your daily life reflects that answer, and then discuss this exercise with a friend.

4) Read through the seven primary "I AM" sayings from John's gospel. Each one offers a different perspective of Jesus. Which one do you need to rest in today? Spend some time praying about your answer (John 6:35, 9:5, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6 and 15:1).

THE JOURNEY

LESSON THREE: JESUS, THE FRIEND

INTRODUCTION: In the past two lessons, we have focused on Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Messiah. We now consider the equally compelling truth that He was and is a “friend that is closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). How big is our God? He is great enough to fill the mighty universe, yet small enough to dwell within a single human heart.

One of the most unique features of the Christian life is that God seeks a personal relationship with individuals. Jesus expressed this in the most practical terms when He said: “I have called you friends” (John 15:15). This is truly amazing grace!

I. JESUS, THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

READ ALOUD: Luke 15:1-2: Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 19:10: For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Why do we have trouble believing that anyone can be saved by God’s grace? In what ways can religious people be as lost as those who appear to be a million miles from God?

Possible Answers:

- Grace is a radical concept that we struggle to believe is big enough and good enough for us.
- We think God needs our help to save us.
- Religion does not save us. It can help us to live a better, healthier life, but without Jesus, it will only lead to death.



CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): In Luke's Gospel account, Jesus is pictured as the Son of Man who has come to save the last, the least, and the lost. Jesus dramatically rescued individuals like an adulterous woman (7:36-50), a crooked tax collector (19:1-10), and a dying thief (23:39-43). They all could attest to the truth of His birth announcement: Jesus brings "good tidings of great joy to all people" (2:10).

The adversaries of Jesus said some horrible things about Him. They called Him a drunk, a devil-possessed man, a blasphemer, and a sinner, yet none of these vicious accusations were based on fact. However, there is one disparaging term they used that was true. With great contempt, they said: "He is a friend of sinners." They meant it as an insult. Instead, it became the ultimate compliment.

On this occasion, Jesus was speaking near two groups. On one side were the "obvious sinners" like tax collectors, prostitutes, and thieves. On the other were the religious leaders: the Pharisees and the scribes. The latter group expressed their disgust that such a teacher as Jesus would even associate and eat with people of such immoral conduct. Rather than answer them directly, Jesus told three short, consecutive stories about a lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7), a lost coin (15:8-10), and a lost son (15:11-32).

In each of these parables, the lost were found and there was great rejoicing. Clearly, the lost sheep represented the tax collectors and sinners whom Christ deemed worthy to pursue and save. Note that the coin was not lost out in the field where the sheep were, it was lost in the house. Jesus was saying that the Pharisees were just as lost as the other sinners, even while being present in the Jewish temple. Finally, the prodigal represented the sinners, while the elder brother who would not join the celebration is understood to be the scribes and Pharisees. Yes, we all need this Friend of sinners.

II. JESUS, THE FRIEND OF SUFFERERS

READ ALOUD: Luke 17:11-19: Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as

He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Who are the marginalized, the "untouchables," in our society who need the Body of Christ to reach out to them with compassion?

Possible Answers:

- Immigrants, Refugees, Homeless, etc.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Does Jesus Care? Is God There? Is Life Fair? Those and at least a dozen similar sentiments are often the closest companions to those who live in pain. And yet, the Scriptures introduce us to a Friend of Sufferers who promises to either remove our misery or walk through it with us for His glory.

In both the Old and New Testaments, leprosy is portrayed as one of the most hideous diseases to plague the human experience. The physical pain itself was excruciating to the point that affected body parts fell off as they decayed. The psychological and emotional agony compounded the malady because lepers were banished from the community, forced to live among themselves outside the city gates. Relationships with spouses, siblings, children, and grandchildren ceased when one was diagnosed with leprosy. If anyone came close to such a person or colony, the infected one had to shout the warning: "unclean, unclean!" Yet Jesus did not back away. Instead, He healed various lepers during His ministry and even physically touched one (Matthew 8:3).

In this passage, Jesus came into a certain village and was met with cries for mercy from ten lepers. This time He instructed them to go and show

themselves to the priest. As they went in obedience, they were healed. Luke tells us that only one returned to give Jesus thanks and that “he was a Samaritan” (17:16). Remember that Samaritans were half-Jews, people in Israel who had intermarried with Gentiles. They were held in low regard by Jewish people who viewed them as second-class or worse. Can you imagine having all the symptoms of leprosy AND being a Samaritan? It is possible, if not likely, that this man was even shunned by his fellow-lepers. No one in Israel could have been deemed lower than a Samaritan leper, yet Jesus not only healed him, but He also welcomed him into His presence making him completely whole – physically and spiritually (17:19).

III. JESUS, THE FRIEND OF SAINTS

READ ALOUD: John 11:1-7: Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this, He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How can Jesus’ response to Lazarus’ sickness and death serve as a pattern for us when we face suffering?

Possible Answers:

- Jesus may not respond on our timetable.
- Things may appear to be terrible, but Jesus is working on our behalf.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): We are told in this text that Jesus had a special relationship with these three siblings from Bethany: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Some may ask how this could be. God doesn’t prefer one over another, but we must remember that as a real man, Jesus had many of the relationships common to us all. Just as we have friendships that are deeper than others, so it was with Jesus while He was on earth. In this passage, the sisters sent Jesus a message that their brother was very sick. The Lord

announced that this sickness was for the glory of God (11:4), and then He did an unusual thing. Jesus did nothing. He intentionally waited two more days. Lazarus grew worse and finally died. The Savior then said to His disciples, “now let us go to Judea.” The disciples surely did not understand why Jesus responded with delay.

When He arrived at the family home in Bethany, he was greeted first by Martha outside, then Mary inside, who both questioned why He had not come earlier. They said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21, 32). The longest and most difficult days in human existence are spent in the “waiting room” of life. They knew He could have come earlier and healed their brother, or even spoken the word from a distance. Jesus could have healed Lazarus. But now it was too late. They did not understand why Jesus waited. It was not until after Lazarus’ resurrection that they saw that their Friend, Jesus, had something greater in mind. We, too, will not fully comprehend all the ways of the Lord, but because of His supreme friendship, we will also look back one day and know He was working everything for our greater good (Romans 8:28).

At the cemetery setting in the story, we are told that “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). Some have speculated that Jesus wept tears of joy in anticipation of what He was getting ready to do. However, the text indicates that Jesus cried because He saw Mary’s tears and He entered into the suffering of these sisters (11:33). Since Jesus Christ is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), that means if He wept with those friends then, He weeps with us now. Of course, His words, “Lazarus, come forth” provide us with the hope of our own future resurrection (11:43). No wonder Christians continue to sing such songs as “What a Friend We have in Jesus, All Our Sins and Grievs to Bear.”

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Have you disqualified yourself or distanced yourself from Jesus based on your actions, attitudes, or beliefs about yourself? Considering this, what does it mean to you that Jesus is a friend to sinners?
- 2) Jesus is a personal God that wants relationship with you. What might this look like practically in your life?

3) Do you intentionally look to be a friend to the marginalized or suffering? How can you be more active in being a friend to sinners like Jesus?

4) Describe how Jesus is a friend to you and how you can reciprocate that friendship.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: Luke 15:1-32

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's suggested passage. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word. Don't rush as you read.

2) We love spending time with our friends. If Jesus is indeed such a friend, let us make space for Him through daily prayer and Bible reading. Rather than trying to "find the time," make time for fellowship with our beloved Friend. If this is a struggle for you, schedule it into your calendar or have a friend check in with you for accountability.

3) Choose an activity you really enjoy: walking, running, swimming, reading, listening to music, etc. Before you begin, stop and pray. Invite Jesus, your Friend, to join you. Become more aware of Jesus' presence in every part of your life, not just the "spiritual" things.

4) In John 11:6, we read that Jesus delays getting to Lazarus, and as a result, Lazarus dies. Imagine how Mary and Martha must have felt; they didn't know Jesus would raise their brother from the dead. Consider your own life. Have you ever felt like Jesus hasn't heard your prayer or isn't giving an answer? How has that experience affected you? Be honest. Now, what truth do you need to remind yourself of if you find you are discouraged by seemingly unanswered prayers?

THE JOURNEY

LESSON FOUR: JESUS, THE REDEEMER

INTRODUCTION: This unit began with a study of Jesus as the God/Man. That topic is particularly important as we now consider what it means that Jesus is our redeemer. To redeem something or someone is the language of financial/legal transactions. It implies that something once held has been lost, and someone must step forward to retrieve (or redeem) it so it can be returned to its original owner.

The late Bishop J.H. King wrote, “We are insolvent, utterly bankrupt, and have nothing to pay. Humanity is absolutely impoverished, nothing to pay, and so we are enslaved.” If we end there we are done, for if we are utterly bankrupt how can we be redeemed? The answer is we can because Jesus accomplished it, “He was the God-man, and this fact evidences His ability to redeem.” This lesson, and the next (Jesus, The Life-Giver) will help us comprehend, appreciate, and appropriate by faith what Jesus has done for us as “the Redeemer.”

I. WHO NEEDS REDEMPTION?

READ ALOUD: Romans 5:12: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned.

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 7:14: For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): What do you think Bishop King meant by the statement, “Humanity is absolutely impoverished, nothing to pay, and so we are enslaved”? In what ways are we impoverished and enslaved?



Possible Answers:

- Humanity's own efforts will not lead to an abundant life. We are totally reliant on God.
- In ourselves, there is nothing that we can do to overcome sin. It is only in relationship with Jesus, that we can overcome death and sin.
- See below for more help.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): It is important to remember that God's Old Testament dealings with Israel and mankind in general stand as the backdrop to the New Testament. First, from the Old Testament, we learn of our need for redemption. We initially encounter this in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve's sin and expulsion from Eden. These events are the basis for the sinful condition of all humanity. We are all living East of Eden, to use the title from John Steinbeck's 1952 novel. In numerous ways, sin is manifested and continues to display its destructive intent: murder, rebellion, sexual immorality and perversion, abandonment of wisdom and truth, idolatry, greed, corruption.

All of this, and more, is what J.H. King meant when he said we are "absolutely bankrupt and enslaved" to sin. Like Adam and Eve, we attempt to hide our sinful shame through the "leaves" of our own making. But our efforts at self-justification always fail. Our self-made cover always dries up and withers.

The Israelite prophet Elijah confronted the ungodly King Ahab with this dire warning, "You have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21:20). The Apostle Paul described us as those who are "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). Paul continued using the language of transaction by declaring "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Secondly, the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:23-55) describes the need for redemption through God's response to those oppressed by poverty. The Law of Moses provided that an impoverished person could find refuge in the care and employment of another, but in doing so the poor person had to give up their rights to the one who purchased them. However, this was not a permanent condition. The needy person could recover financially and "redeem" themselves. More importantly, a family member, and that is very

important, not just anyone but a family member, a “kinsman-redeemer,” could also redeem his or her family member. Thus, the Old Testament teaches that whether it is a result of unfortunate circumstances or of our sinful condition, someone paying the redemption price is necessary.

II. WHO CAN PAY THE PRICE FOR OUR REDEMPTION?

READ ALOUD: Isaiah 47:4: As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is His name, the Holy One of Israel.

1 Corinthians 1:30: But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Why is Jesus Christ the only One who can pay the price for sin?

Possible Answers:

- Jesus was perfect and sinless. He was the spotless lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Have you ever faced staggering debt? Maybe you owe more on your credit cards than you can manage or have an overwhelming monthly payment on a necessity like a car. That kind of debt causes personal stress and often family stress. You may find yourself daydreaming about receiving a huge inheritance from a rich relative, or the arrival of a “miracle check” in the mail. What you have is a desperate need for someone to help you. While that help may come in the form of a disciplined budget, something has to change and usually someone has to step in and break the cycle of debt.

Ancient Israel found herself “sold into sin and slavery.” Someone had to step in and bring deliverance. The Isaiah passage quoted above refers to the period of the Babylonian Captivity (586-516 B.C.). Judah was under righteous judgment for her rebellion against God. But God did not forsake her. He revealed Himself as a faithful “husband” and “redeemer” to His undeserving but much-loved bride (Isaiah 41:14; 44:6; 54:5).

While God’s redemption of Israel was significant, it was a foretaste of the redemption He was bringing to the whole world. That redemption was found

in the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. A godly woman named Anna, a prophetess who was in Jerusalem when Jesus came in as a child, was the first to publicly announce Jesus as redeemer: “she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

Jesus is the only One who can pay the price for our redemption. The reason is because Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16). Jesus alone can address the sin and corruption of the world because He alone is righteous and holy. As One with the Father, Jesus came to redeem us from our sins. As Titus 2:14 tells us, Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed.”

III. WHAT OUR REDEEMER ACCOMPLISHED

READ ALOUD: Ephesians 1:7: In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Galatians 4:4-5: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): What two key things did Jesus accomplish for us through His death on the cross?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): I remember the old hymn, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.” Jesus paid the price for our sins. The New Testament affirms that it was through His death and the shedding of His blood, that Jesus bought our redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19). This fulfilled what was practiced in the Temple when lambs had to be sacrificed for our deliverance (Exodus 12:1-28). The Law of Moses required the shedding of blood for remission of sins (redemption from sins, Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). Jesus shed His holy blood when the Romans crucified him. The sins of the whole world were placed on Him. This was prophesied in Isaiah 53:5, 12 and fulfilled in the Lord’s death, as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

The second thing that was accomplished when Jesus redeemed us was that we were adopted into the family of God. The connection with Jesus' suffering and our adoption is made clear in Hebrews 2:10-18. We have a new identity, and Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters (Romans 8:12-17)! Through faith in what Jesus has accomplished for us, we are redeemed back into the relationship with God. The relationship we were created for as far back as the garden of Eden.

How are we to respond to our redemption? We are to live a life of holy faith in Christ. Titus 2:14 tells us that Jesus "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." Instead of being slaves to sin, we are now entrusted into a life of righteousness (Romans 6:15-23).


CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Why do you think people needed to be redeemed by Jesus?
- 2) When thoughts of your past remind you of who you once were and how you lived before Christ, how should you counsel and encourage yourself?
- 3) How should the Church respond to broken and sinful people that don't know about redemption yet?
- 4) Through His sacrifice, Jesus paid the price for our sins, and we were adopted into the family of God. It is important to spend time remembering and reflecting on this awesome truth—Jesus paid it all. Share in your own words what the sacrifice Jesus made for our redemption means to you.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: Galatians 3:26-4:7

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Titus 2:14 tells us that Jesus "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." Instead of being slaves to sin, we are entrusted into a life of righteousness (Romans 6:15-23). Life can feel overwhelming, barely offering us time to breathe, but it is in quiet moments that we can see our lives as Jesus sees them and better understand what it means to live a holy life. This week, say no to one activity you usually do. Instead, spend that time in prayer or Bible reading.



2) This week, set two alarms: one in the morning and one at night. At the morning alarm, take five minutes and prayerfully ask Jesus to be with you throughout your day, empowering you to live a holy life (you could even do this as you drive to work). At the evening alarm, take 10-15 minutes and think back through your day. Where did you see Jesus? Where did you not see Jesus? When were you like Him? When were you not like Him? If you have moments that you need to repent of, do it, but then rest in the knowledge that Jesus' grace is sufficient for you. End your prayer by asking Jesus to make you more aware of His presence during the next day.

3) This lesson says, "Like Adam and Eve, we attempt to hide our sinful shame through the 'leaves' of our own making; but our efforts at self-justification always fail. Our self-made cover always dries up and withers." Do you struggle with self-justification? Do you live by the grace of Jesus alone or do you try to live on your own strength? Evaluate your motivations this week. Be honest and, even better, write down the areas where you are most prone to self-justify. Share those temptations with someone you trust, and ask God to help you live by His strength.

4) Scripture memorization is a spiritually-grounding discipline. Memorized information fills our minds: birthdates, phone numbers, addresses, sports stats, TV quotes, etc. But are they also filled with God's Word? Being able to bring scripture back to our minds provides strength and comfort when we need it most. This week, memorize Galatians 4:4-5.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON FIVE: JESUS, THE LIFE - GIVER

INTRODUCTION: We are alive because of God. We live on an inhabitable planet because of God. We are surrounded by living animals, plants, and microbes because of God. Even more significantly, we are invited into spiritual life—abundant life—because of God. And, because of God, we have the promise of eternal life. In contrast, without God, there would be no life.

This lesson examines what the Bible tells us about the life God gives through His Son Jesus, the Messiah. Life is incredibly important to God. The word “life” appears 495 times in 449 verses of the New King James Version of the Bible. From these passages, we learn that in Jesus, our Father God has revealed Himself as “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20; see also 1 John 1:1, 2).

Life and death. Is there anything more important, more significant than that? So as we begin this lesson, pause. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through this lesson. In Christ, there is life, but apart from Him, there is only death. If you have never accepted Christ as your personal Savior, or you are rebelling against Him, turn your life over to Jesus. He will forgive you of your sins and restore you in His love. If you are discouraged and depressed, recognize that your life is precious and that Jesus will give you hope. If you are weary, the Holy Spirit will provide you with the strength to fulfill the Father’s plans in your life.

I. JESUS GIVES LIFE

READ ALOUD: John 1:4: In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 5:26: For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.

John 14:6: Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the



Father except through Me.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How do you personally know Jesus as the “life-giver”? Do you find it challenging to make that connection in your daily life? Why or why not?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): You may have noticed that when we talk about Jesus, we regularly refer to the Triune nature of God. God is the Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Spirit. We also find ourselves returning to the Virgin Birth of Jesus and reflecting on the mystery and blessing of God humbling Himself and becoming one of us (the Incarnation).

We go back to these core beliefs because of another truth: we are completely lost without God. All humanity is lost in sin. We are under just condemnation and cannot save ourselves. But God, who is rich in mercy, has met us at our lowest point and provided a Redeemer - His own eternal Son Jesus. Now through Christ, we can receive forgiveness for our sins. Through Jesus, we can enter into abundant life — a life that fulfills what the Father intended for us from the beginning.

The Virgin Birth is so important in understanding why it had to be Jesus who would bring us life. Because He was born from a woman (Mary), Jesus receives the fullness of humanity (He is fully man). But because His conception is caused by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, He is also fully God, which means He never did anything wrong. Despite having lived through all the temptations we experience, He never gave into them. There has never been anyone like Him to walk the earth, and only His perfect life could pay the price for sin. Hebrews 5:9 speaks of Jesus as that One: “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...”

The Old Testament Torah (the law) was God’s revelation of life to Israel. Deuteronomy 30:19 records God speaking to Israel, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” The Torah revealed “the path of life” (Psalm 16:11). The precepts of the Lord gives life (Psalm 119:93).

However, the problem with the Torah was that it made us vulnerable in

two areas. First, it exposed our inability to keep the commandments, which results in our sinful condition. Second, it demonstrates how our rigid efforts to keep the law leads to self-righteousness and pride. Either way, the Torah could not satisfy what was needful for life.

There's good news, though. Jesus came to fulfill the Torah (Matthew 5:17). All the impossible challenges it presents, Jesus solves. He did this by taking upon Himself the curse of sin, and also by giving us the law of love, which is the fulfillment of all the other commandments (Romans 13:8, 10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

II. JESUS GIVES ABUNDANT LIFE

READ ALOUD: John 10:10: The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): What do you think Jesus means when He says He wants to give us abundant life? How does Satan work to distract you and steal abundant life from you?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Dr. Gary Moon, Christian psychologist and author, provided this illustration: Suppose you walk into a store and see a rack of fashionable, name-brand clothes standing beside another rack of old, worn clothes. Imagine that someone had come in before your visit and switched the price tags, making the more expensive ones, the old, worn-out clothes. Now, let's suppose that you are deceived by the misplaced value and buy the clothes that, in truth, were cheap and dirty.

That is what sin does to us. Sin deceives us through "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Like Esau, we sell our God-ordained birthright for things that are actually temporal, cheap, and worthless compared to Jesus (Genesis 25:31-34). The New Testament refers to this episode from Esau's life in Hebrews 12:16 by emphasizing two aspects of his foolishness. First, he was a fornicator; that is, he was sexually immoral. He took the God-given gift of intimacy and used it for his own gratification. Second, he was profane. That does not mean he cursed; instead, it means he didn't respect what was holy. Nothing was sacred to

Esau, and he made himself “god” over what was valuable.

Esau lived life in pursuit of his agenda and the fulfillment of his desires. If you’ve been there, you know that that type of life isn’t beautiful or satisfying long-term. It’s empty. However, Jesus came to bring abundant life. That life is described in the Beatitudes as the blessed life (Matthew 5:3-12). As God’s children, we are presented with a brand-new life full of the same promises given to Abraham and Israel. God makes us His own. He redeems us and then provides us with a life full of the love, truth, and holiness of God. This new life, which may or may not include an abundance of material wealth, increasingly becomes what we want as we move from selfishness to a focus on displaying the glory of God in all we do.

This abundant life consists of genuine love, the love of God that flows through us in Christ: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). When you genuinely pray for help to forgive those who have offended you or to love those you formerly despised and then you see your heart change, that is the work of Christ. He is giving you abundant life (Romans 8:2b).

III. JESUS GIVES ETERNAL LIFE

READ ALOUD: Romans 6:22: But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Galatians 6:8: For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

1 John 2:25: And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How does knowing we have received eternal life affect how we live now?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): The power of everlasting life begins now, while we are alive on this earth. We recognize it in ourselves and others as we are transformed into the loving and holy image of Jesus. But this transformation extends beyond our life on earth. Because of Jesus, when we die, we will overcome death and go to be present with Him (2

Corinthians 5:8). But even that is not the end of the story! Our spirit will be reunited with our resurrected body when Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15). In the resurrection, we will be like Jesus (1 John 3:2). While we do not know exactly all that this entails, we do know that we will finally be made perfectly holy like Jesus. The struggle against evil will be finished. God's abundant life Kingdom will be restored to this earth, and sin will no longer interfere with the Father's purposes for us (Revelation 21:9-23).


CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Define in your own words being "fully alive."
- 2) If Jesus has given you abundant life, how should that be reflected in your daily living?
- 3) Since we are made alive in Christ, what do you struggle with that may contradict that truth at times?
- 4) When you face difficulties in the future, what is one truth you can hold onto from knowing Jesus as the "life-giver"?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: John 10:1-21

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) This lesson began with a recognition that every person makes a decision between life and death when they choose to accept or deny Christ. Those who accept Christ will die only once. Those who reject Christ will die twice, and the second death will be eternal torment (Revelation 20:12-15). From that truth, we are faced with two overarching action steps. First, we must decide to accept Christ and live for Him. Second, if we decide to trust in Jesus, we are then called to make disciples of others. Spend time in prayer this week, considering how you can do these two things each day.
- 2) Evangelism is not the work of a few. It is the calling of all believers. When we have discovered the life that Jesus gives, we should be propelled into sharing that life with others. Spend some time this week reading about Jesus, the Life-Giver. Reflect on how this truth impacts your desire to share the good news of Jesus with others. Does evangelism come easy to you? Or is it hard?



3) This week, share some of the things God has been teaching you in The Journey with others. This kind of personal sharing is always helpful. Don't worry about it being wise or intellectual. Simply share what God is doing in your life and watch others warm up to the Good News.

4) Knowing where we have been is helpful in our Journey with Jesus. Sometime over this next week, take a few moments to compose a brief letter to God where you will write about the first time you sensed God's presence. Then, note some of the ways God has made Himself real to you since then. End the letter by giving thanks for all God has taught you about who He is, and for the promise that He will continue to reveal Himself in the future.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON SIX: JESUS, THE ANSWER

INTRODUCTION: For several weeks, we have engaged in a study on the most marvelous person: Jesus Christ. He remains the ultimate paradox. He is both the Alpha and the Omega (the A and the Z), the beginning and the ending (Revelation 1:11). He is both the Author of our Faith and the very Word of God (Hebrews 12:2; John 1:1,14). He is both the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd (John 1:29; 10:1). He is both the Builder of the Church, and it's Foundation (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). To all of these, we may add that Jesus remains both the Question and the Answer.

Pontius Pilate asked: "What then shall I do with Jesus?" (Matthew 27:22). Two thousand years later, this remains the most important of all decisions. Once we hear the Gospel, we cannot stay neutral, indifferent, or silent. The crucified and risen Jesus lives as the great Question with whom all humanity must deal.

During the past few weeks, we have explored other questions like "Who is Jesus?" and "What did He do?" In this lesson, we respond to Pilate's inquiry, "What should we do with Jesus?" The answer is that we follow Him, and we follow Him because He is the Answer. Jesus is the answer to hundreds of issues that plague us, and specifically, He is the answer to the three great concerns: Where did we come from? What is our purpose? Where are we going? Philosophers concoct dozens of theories in response, but only Christ provides definitive explanations to all three quests.

I. WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

READ ALOUD: Psalm 100:3: Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Genesis 3:8: And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the



LORD God among the trees of the garden.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Do you believe God created you? How does that belief impact your daily life?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Atheists contend that God is an invention of men. However, the Bible powerfully asserts that humanity is the direct creation of God. The 100th Psalm is a call to praise the Lord, and verse three begins to list the reasons why. First and foremost is because He is God! Next is the assertion that we belong to Him because He made us! Why should we praise Him with our lips and follow Him with our lives? Because He created us and therefore knows what is best for us.

Genesis chapter one explains that God made Adam and Eve; chapter two tells us how He did it (1:26-27; 2:7). Chapter three implies that God created people to share unique fellowship with them. Verse eight infers that the Lord regularly came to the garden and walked with His creation. Until one day – when the man and woman did not show up. At this moment, we are drawn into the consequences of their sin as we watch them try to avoid the presence of their Creator. However, gratefully we also see immediate proof of God’s redemptive plan as the Lord goes looking for His lost creation (3:9).

Yes, we are His sheep, but we, like Adam and Eve, wander away when we sin (Isaiah 53:6). Yet our Creator announces, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Do you see that the One you shamefully hide from pursues you and comes to redeem you?

II. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

READ ALOUD: Mark 3:13-15: And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

John 10:10: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How have spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, and worship helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus? How would you describe “the good life”?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Mark records Jesus appointing twelve disciples in the early stage of His ministry (3:13-15). These disciples (followers) eventually become the apostles (sent ones). When reading this passage, it is easy to miss the key reason for their appointment. One might say He called them to preach and cast out devils. However, before He announced their assignment, Jesus appointed them to be with Him. We must not miss this! Christ’s highest priority for His disciples was that they would be with Him. (And for the better part of three years, they did precisely that.) Spending time with Jesus was the focus and foundation for their ministry and their life.

In a previous lesson, we focused on the “abundant life” that Jesus spoke about in John 10:10. When the Lord said, “I am come that you might have life,” He was not referring to physical life. The Greek word for physical life is “bios” from where we get the term biology. However, Jesus used a different word for life, “zoe,” in John 10:10. This version of the word refers to both “quality of life” and “eternal life.” The Savior, then, was saying that He has come to offer more than just human existence. His promise was for life with purpose, and they could only know that “abundant life” in relationship with Him.

So what are we doing here? Does our life have meaning? Saint Augustine answers us with his famous quote: “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” There is a “God-shaped” piece missing in the puzzle of every one of us until we enter into a relationship with Jesus. Nothing else will fit into that space because He is our purpose. We are here, on earth, to know God.

Some contend that we have to choose which world we will “win” in. By following Christ, you miss out on the best of the present life, but at least you will spend eternity in Heaven. Consequently, if you reject Jesus, you will spend eternity without Him in torment, but at least you experience life now on your terms. There is nothing true about this line of thinking. The Bible proves that followers of Jesus are double winners. Not only do they get to

be with Him forever in Heaven, but they also receive “abundant life” in the present. Living “in Christ” means we live for His glory, but that always means for it’s for our good.

III. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

READ ALOUD: John 6:66-68: After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

John 14:1-6: Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): We all worship something. What are the common idols of our time and culture? Do our idols signify where we are going?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): The day after Jesus multiplied loaves and fishes and fed thousands of people, He began to teach plainly about the cost of discipleship (John 6:22-65). Because of His demanding message, many who had followed Jesus up to this point returned to their old lives. After this mini-exodus, Jesus asked the Twelve if they also were going to leave. Simon Peter spoke up: “Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life” (6:66-68). This man’s straightforward response explains why we follow Jesus. There is no other right option once we have seen the truth of Christ.

On the evening before Christ’s death, the disciples were in crisis. For the first time, despite Jesus’ preparation, the realization was sinking in that their Master was going to die (Luke 5:35; John 2:19, 10:11, 12:24). To add to their plight, Jesus said one of their leaders would deny Him, and their treasurer would betray Him (Mark 14:30; John 13:21). I imagine tears filling their eyes

as confusion seized their souls. Their entire world was turning upside-down. And so, Jesus faced a significant challenge; He was counting on this small disheartened group to launch the spread of His Gospel after His ascension. What could He possibly say to give them hope?

It was at this moment that Jesus spoke, “Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). He also promised that He would go and prepare a place for them, and would return for them so they could be together forever (14:2-3). That promise is for us too! Where are we headed? God’s people are on a journey to Heaven, where we will experience Jesus the way He designed: perfectly, and completely!

But can we be sure that we can find our way to Heaven and eternal life? Yes! In that same passage from John 14, the Lord makes a surprising claim that His disciples already know the way to where He was going. Dumbfounded, Thomas spoke for the group when he argued that no, they had no idea where He was going or how to get there. Jesus’ response was direct: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me” (14:6). Jesus did not say He would show them the way, or tell them the truth, or give them life; instead, He declared that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

As Christians, we live in what some call the “already, but not yet” phase of our lives. This means that even though we have not made it “home” to Heaven, we know Jesus provides unmatched significance, fulfillment, and joy now. Our journey has begun, and while it will be full of mountains and valleys, we do not walk alone (see Psalm 139:7-12). Our journey, where we are going, is not as much a place as it is a person: Jesus Christ.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) What does it mean to you that we were not first created to do things for Christ, but instead we were created to be with Him?
- 2) We learned from this lesson that Jesus gives “zoe” life, not just physical life but an abundant quality of life. Talk about ways you may need adjust your outlook or attitude in life to truly walk in abundance.
- 3) Jesus teaches plainly about the cost of discipleship (or following Him). In what ways has following Jesus cost you or been a sacrifice?

4) This lesson referred to the “God-shaped piece” that is missing in all of us. When you found Jesus as the answer of your life, the God-shaped piece that was missing, what did He fill in you that was empty?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:1-11

AT-HOME EXERCISES

1) All the lessons on The Journey may be summarized by this assertion from the Savior: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). It is one thing to know about a person; it is quite another thing to know that individual in a personal relationship. Each person shares a common condition: they all have a past, a present, and a future. We should follow Jesus because He offers redemption for our past, relationship for our present, and resurrection for our future. What is one activity you can do this week to help deepen your personal relationship with Jesus?

2) Write the question, “What am I missing in my life?” on several notecards and stick them all over your house, your car, your desk, etc. (any place you will frequently stop and notice). Each time you see a card, pause and recognize Jesus, the Answer, is there with you. How can Jesus fill the missing parts of your life?

3) Jesus deserves our very best—our worship. Set aside time this week to focus on Jesus’ power and glory. On Saturday evening, begin preparing your heart to worship on Sunday. Go early to church expecting to experience God. Worship and thank God for all the ways that He is the Answer in your life. Pray for those around you to also experience God during the service.

4) Simon Peter spoke up and replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life?” (John 6:68). If Jesus has answered the questions of your life, how are you sharing this with others? This could be a child, a friend, a co-worker, a spouse, etc. Discipleship is something happening in us and something we are doing with others. We are disciples, and we are disciple-makers. Ask yourself these questions this week: Who is discipling me on my journey of becoming more like Jesus? Who am I discipling on their journey?

THE JOURNEY

LESSON SEVEN: SAYING YES TO JESUS

INTRODUCTION: For several weeks, we have engaged in a study on the most marvelous person: Jesus Christ. He remains the ultimate paradox. He is both the Alpha and the Omega (the A and the Z), the beginning and the ending (Revelation 1:11). He is both the Author of our Faith and the very Word of God (Hebrews 12:2; John 1:1,14). He is both the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd (John 1:29; 10:1). He is both the Builder of the Church, and it's Foundation (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). To all of these, we may add that Jesus remains both the Question and the Answer.

Pontius Pilate asked: "What then shall I do with Jesus?" (Matthew 27:22). Two thousand years later, this remains the most important of all decisions. Once we hear the Gospel, we cannot stay neutral, indifferent, or silent. The crucified and risen Jesus lives as the great Question with whom all humanity must deal.

During the past few weeks, we have explored other questions like "Who is Jesus?" and "What did He do?" In this lesson, we respond to Pilate's inquiry, "What should we do with Jesus?" The answer is that we follow Him, and we follow Him because He is the Answer. Jesus is the answer to hundreds of issues that plague us, and specifically, He is the answer to the three great concerns: Where did we come from? What is our purpose? Where are we going? Philosophers concoct dozens of theories in response, but only Christ provides definitive explanations to all three quests.

I. WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

READ ALOUD: Psalm 100:3: Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Genesis 3:8: And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the



LORD God among the trees of the garden.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Do you believe God created you? How does that belief impact your daily life?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Atheists contend that God is an invention of men. However, the Bible powerfully asserts that humanity is the direct creation of God. The 100th Psalm is a call to praise the Lord, and verse three begins to list the reasons why. First and foremost is because He is God! Next is the assertion that we belong to Him because He made us! Why should we praise Him with our lips and follow Him with our lives? Because He created us and therefore knows what is best for us.

Genesis chapter one explains that God made Adam and Eve; chapter two tells us how He did it (1:26-27; 2:7). Chapter three implies that God created people to share unique fellowship with them. Verse eight infers that the Lord regularly came to the garden and walked with His creation. Until one day – when the man and woman did not show up. At this moment, we are drawn into the consequences of their sin as we watch them try to avoid the presence of their Creator. However, gratefully we also see immediate proof of God’s redemptive plan as the Lord goes looking for His lost creation (3:9).

Yes, we are His sheep, but we, like Adam and Eve, wander away when we sin (Isaiah 53:6). Yet our Creator announces, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Do you see that the One you shamefully hide from pursues you and comes to redeem you?

II. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

READ ALOUD: Mark 3:13-15: And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

John 10:10: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How have spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, and worship helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus? How would you describe “the good life”?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Mark records Jesus appointing twelve disciples in the early stage of His ministry (3:13-15). These disciples (followers) eventually become the apostles (sent ones). When reading this passage, it is easy to miss the key reason for their appointment. One might say He called them to preach and cast out devils. However, before He announced their assignment, Jesus appointed them to be with Him. We must not miss this! Christ’s highest priority for His disciples was that they would be with Him. (And for the better part of three years, they did precisely that.) Spending time with Jesus was the focus and foundation for their ministry and their life.

In a previous lesson, we focused on the “abundant life” that Jesus spoke about in John 10:10. When the Lord said, “I am come that you might have life,” He was not referring to physical life. The Greek word for physical life is “bios” from where we get the term biology. However, Jesus used a different word for life, “zoe,” in John 10:10. This version of the word refers to both “quality of life” and “eternal life.” The Savior, then, was saying that He has come to offer more than just human existence. His promise was for life with purpose, and they could only know that “abundant life” in relationship with Him.

So what are we doing here? Does our life have meaning? Saint Augustine answers us with his famous quote: “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” There is a “God-shaped” piece missing in the puzzle of every one of us until we enter into a relationship with Jesus. Nothing else will fit into that space because He is our purpose. We are here, on earth, to know God.

Some contend that we have to choose which world we will “win” in. By following Christ, you miss out on the best of the present life, but at least you will spend eternity in Heaven. Consequently, if you reject Jesus, you will spend eternity without Him in torment, but at least you experience life now on your terms. There is nothing true about this line of thinking. The Bible proves that followers of Jesus are double winners. Not only do they get to

be with Him forever in Heaven, but they also receive “abundant life” in the present. Living “in Christ” means we live for His glory, but that always means for it’s for our good.

III. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

READ ALOUD: John 6:66-68: After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

John 14:1-6: Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): We all worship something. What are the common idols of our time and culture? Do our idols signify where we are going?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): The day after Jesus multiplied loaves and fishes and fed thousands of people, He began to teach plainly about the cost of discipleship (John 6:22-65). Because of His demanding message, many who had followed Jesus up to this point returned to their old lives. After this mini-exodus, Jesus asked the Twelve if they also were going to leave. Simon Peter spoke up: “Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life” (6:66-68). This man’s straightforward response explains why we follow Jesus. There is no other right option once we have seen the truth of Christ.

On the evening before Christ’s death, the disciples were in crisis. For the first time, despite Jesus’ preparation, the realization was sinking in that their Master was going to die (Luke 5:35; John 2:19, 10:11, 12:24). To add to their plight, Jesus said one of their leaders would deny Him, and their treasurer would betray Him (Mark 14:30; John 13:21). I imagine tears filling their eyes

as confusion seized their souls. Their entire world was turning upside-down. And so, Jesus faced a significant challenge; He was counting on this small disheartened group to launch the spread of His Gospel after His ascension. What could He possibly say to give them hope?

It was at this moment that Jesus spoke, “Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). He also promised that He would go and prepare a place for them, and would return for them so they could be together forever (14:2-3). That promise is for us too! Where are we headed? God’s people are on a journey to Heaven, where we will experience Jesus the way He designed: perfectly, and completely!

But can we be sure that we can find our way to Heaven and eternal life? Yes! In that same passage from John 14, the Lord makes a surprising claim that His disciples already know the way to where He was going. Dumbfounded, Thomas spoke for the group when he argued that no, they had no idea where He was going or how to get there. Jesus’ response was direct: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me” (14:6). Jesus did not say He would show them the way, or tell them the truth, or give them life; instead, He declared that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

As Christians, we live in what some call the “already, but not yet” phase of our lives. This means that even though we have not made it “home” to Heaven, we know Jesus provides unmatched significance, fulfillment, and joy now. Our journey has begun, and while it will be full of mountains and valleys, we do not walk alone (see Psalm 139:7-12). Our journey, where we are going, is not as much a place as it is a person: Jesus Christ.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) What does it mean to you that we were not first created to do things for Christ, but instead we were created to be with Him?
- 2) We learned from this lesson that Jesus gives “zoe” life, not just physical life but an abundant quality of life. Talk about ways you may need adjust your outlook or attitude in life to truly walk in abundance.
- 3) Jesus teaches plainly about the cost of discipleship (or following Him). In what ways has following Jesus cost you or been a sacrifice?

4) This lesson referred to the “God-shaped piece” that is missing in all of us. When you found Jesus as the answer of your life, the God-shaped piece that was missing, what did He fill in you that was empty?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:1-11

AT-HOME EXERCISES

1) All the lessons on The Journey may be summarized by this assertion from the Savior: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). It is one thing to know about a person; it is quite another thing to know that individual in a personal relationship. Each person shares a common condition: they all have a past, a present, and a future. We should follow Jesus because He offers redemption for our past, relationship for our present, and resurrection for our future. What is one activity you can do this week to help deepen your personal relationship with Jesus?

2) Write the question, “What am I missing in my life?” on several notecards and stick them all over your house, your car, your desk, etc. (any place you will frequently stop and notice). Each time you see a card, pause and recognize Jesus, the Answer, is there with you. How can Jesus fill the missing parts of your life?

3) Jesus deserves our very best—our worship. Set aside time this week to focus on Jesus’ power and glory. On Saturday evening, begin preparing your heart to worship on Sunday. Go early to church expecting to experience God. Worship and thank God for all the ways that He is the Answer in your life. Pray for those around you to also experience God during the service.

4) Simon Peter spoke up and replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life?” (John 6:68). If Jesus has answered the questions of your life, how are you sharing this with others? This could be a child, a friend, a co-worker, a spouse, etc. Discipleship is something happening in us and something we are doing with others. We are disciples, and we are disciple-makers. Ask yourself these questions this week: Who is discipling me on my journey of becoming more like Jesus? Who am I discipling on their journey?

THE JOURNEY

LESSON EIGHT:

WHAT DOES JESUS CALL ME?

INTRODUCTION: St. Francis of Assisi famously prayed, “Who are you, Lord my God, and who am I?” These crucial questions are fundamental to our Christian lives. In the first six lessons of this unit, we tried to answer the first question: “Who are you, Lord my God?” Pursuing a better understanding of who God is matters because our love for Him grows as we better know Him and understand how much He loves us.

As we develop a clearer picture of Jesus, the Revelation of God, and what He has done, we find the answer to the second question: “Who am I?” In a world that overwhelmingly preaches self-discovery and self-actualization, Christians believe that it is only as we find and discover Jesus that we can honestly know who we are.

I. WHAT’S IN A NAME?

READ ALOUD: John 15:15-17: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): What is the significance of Jesus telling the disciples they are no longer servants but friends?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): One great struggle we face is consistently choosing and saying yes to Jesus. The next challenge is believing, living, and acting



like Jesus has truly changed us. For example, do you live like you are Jesus' friend, or do you see yourself as His servant? We hear verses like these and understand them on at least a surface level, but we struggle to live as if our lives are wholly secure in Jesus. We justify ourselves. We get offended when things don't go our way. We spend our lives building our identity around three primary idols (*Adapted from a sermon by Henri Nouwen).

- 1) Vocation (what we do)
- 2) Perception (what others think or say about us)
- 3) Possession (what we have)

One way to know if you are finding your identity in one of these idols (instead of Jesus) is if you feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster, moving up and down as life ebbs and flows. You may also detect a general uncertainty, unsettledness, or unhappiness. When circumstances dictate how we feel about ourselves, we aren't living out of the truth of Christ's Gospel. And that's a miserable place to be, always wondering if we've done enough to please Him.

All three of these areas (vocation, perception, and possession), though they may satisfy for a time, will inevitably leave us looking for more. The more we expect them to fill us up, the emptier we become.

To remedy the vicious cycle mentioned above, we must believe the truths the Bible says about us. Security in Jesus is the only anchor. Ultimately, we need a name change. The Bible is full of individuals who had their names changed to indicate significant spiritual transitions (Abraham, Peter, Paul, etc.). Though we don't actually change our names, this principle still serves us today.

- When life calls us rejected, Jesus names us Chosen.
- When life calls us orphaned, Jesus names us Adopted.
- When relationships fail, and we feel alone and unloved, Jesus names us Beloved.

The task before us is to live in this knowledge. Moving it from our heads to our hearts may be the work of a lifetime, but faithfully seeking Jesus and saying yes to knowing Him a little better each day will enable us to believe what He says about us.

II. JESUS CALLS ME “CHOSEN”

READ ALOUD: Ephesians 1:3-4: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): Have you ever been rejected? What are the lasting effects of rejection?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): If you've ever been chosen for something, you likely enjoyed the feelings of acceptance and validation that went along with it. But if you've known rejection, you probably have also experienced its accompanying pangs of embarrassment and insecurity.

Most of us go through seasons that feel like we're receiving one rejection after another. Overlooked for promotions, underappreciated...those kinds of things can leave us plagued by fear: fighting and scrapping to do enough for someone to choose us. Not all of us battle this fear the same way or to the same intensity, but at some point, every human faces rejection. How we cope with that rejection is what makes the difference.

One way many people attempt to avoid rejection is to focus on “what they do” or their vocation. They tell themselves if they can find the right job, the best role, the fulfilling position, then life will be good. They won't have to worry about facing rejection.

Unfortunately, how many joyful workaholics do you know? Maybe they're successful. Perhaps they're wealthy or influential, but are they a delight to be around? Do they exude peace? Does their family like them? It's a bitter irony that in trying to do enough to be accepted and chosen, many people unintentionally reject those closest to them until the rejecter becomes the rejected. Is this you?

Ephesians illustrates a significant truth to us. God has blessed us and chosen us in Jesus. Let that sink in. You are chosen. You are wanted. You are enough. Your performance, success, and abilities do not condition God's choosing of you. Through Jesus, we are named Chosen One. Take a deep breath.

Release the years of built-up pressure that say your performance is the most important thing about you.

III. JESUS CALLS ME “ADOPTED”

READ ALOUD: Ephesians 1:5-9: Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.

Galatians 4:4-7: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): How important is family? Once we become a Christian, in what ways does the Church become our family?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): Loneliness. Disconnectedness. Today, despite our access to communication and connectivity, research indicates we feel increasingly left-out and alone. Friend lists grow larger, but our sense of belonging shrinks. A study by the University of Pennsylvania made a direct connection between depression/anxiety and social media use among college students. Other studies have drawn similar conclusions among all age ranges. There is still nothing like face-to-face interaction to foster a sense of belonging.

And yet, how often do we keep our relationship with God at a distance? We treat church like we are scrolling through God’s timeline. We hear of His faithfulness for others. We watch and see what He is doing. We are touched for a moment, but then we return to our regular lives convinced that God is unavailable, unreachable, and absent to us.

This passage from Ephesians tells us that in Jesus, we are adopted into God's family. As children in His family, we can now live out of a sense of place and belonging. Galatians 4 helps us understand this new identity by calling us "heirs of God through Christ." We can enjoy the security of home, the delight of a Father, and the knowledge that we are loved and have a future.

IV. JESUS CALLS ME "BELOVED"

READ ALOUD: Ephesians 2:4-10: But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

DISCUSSION (TALK ABOUT IT): When does God's love for us begin? Do you ever wonder if God changes His mind about how He feels about you?

CONTENT (THINK ABOUT IT): The foundational truth of your life is that you are loved. Before you could do anything, own anything, or offer anything, you were and are loved by God. The Bible states that God has numbered the hairs on our heads (Lk 12:7). God tells Jeremiah that He knew him before he was formed in his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5). Indeed, the most famous Bible verse, John 3:16, re-enforces this truth. We are loved.

Not only do we need to be reminded that we are loved, we must also remember this: God's love for us does not start at the moment of our salvation. His love is not conditional, and it is not contingent on our actions. God does not love us more when we pursue righteousness, and He does not love us less when we sin. He loves every heart and soul the same, and He does it with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3). God is not seated in a swivel chair, turning His back to us when we fail. Instead, the Bible tells us that He is moved with compassion for us, and He made that position clear

when He sacrificed His Son on the cross (Rom 5:8).

Now this love does not give us the freedom to do whatever we desire with no thought to sin. The love of God loves us unto purity. This love is always moving us towards spiritual wholeness, freedom from sin, and deeper intimacy with Him. And while we are on this journey of becoming more like Jesus, God is generous, faithful, grace-filled, kind, compassionate, and patient with us in our weakness. Nothing can separate us from God's love (Rom 8:31-39).

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Since Jesus calls us friend, how should we interact with him? Do you struggle to grasp that He would call you friend?
- 2) How should the knowledge that Jesus has chosen you impact your life?
- 3) In Jesus, we are adopted into God's family. We have a place of belonging. Considering this knowledge, how should we embrace and serve our church family?
- 4) The Bible says that Jesus is moved with compassion for us with an unconditional love. Because we know this, how then should we love others?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE: John 15:1-27

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Take a few moments at the start and end of each day to remind yourself of these three truths: I am chosen, I am adopted, and I am loved. If these three things are real, how will your life be different each day? Each evening, jot down a few things that have changed.
- 2) The lesson listed three areas that people center their identity around: what they do, what other people say about them, and what they have. Which of these affects you the most? How has the truth of this lesson changed that?
- 3) Talking about loneliness, the lesson says, "We are touched for the moment by His availability to us, but then we leave and go back to our normal lives where we are convinced that God is unavailable and unreachable by us."

He feels absent from our day to day life.” Have you ever felt this absence? Spend some time reading Galatians 4 and rest in the truth that you are now part of God’s family, and He is always with you.

4) Do you struggle to believe that you are the Beloved of God? Choose a color. Make it very specific, not just blue or green. Make it a color that will stand out to you. Every time you see that color, tell yourself, “I am the one that Jesus loves.” This simple practice is intended to be a gentle reminder of God’s great and gracious love for you. We can never remind ourselves too much of His love.



AT-HOME EXERCISES

WEEKLY WORKSHEET

COMMITMENT: Setting an expectation and commitment will help in holding yourself accountable to follow through on The Journey. Share this with someone else in the group.

- I commit to do an At-Home Exercise _____ days this week for _____ minutes.
The best time of the day for me to do this is: (circle one) **Morning Noon Night**
- I commit to check on _____ to see how they are doing and to share about my own experiences.

1ST DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

2ND DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

3RD DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

AT-HOME EXERCISES

WEEKLY WORKSHEET

4TH DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

5TH DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

6TH DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

7TH DAY: _____

- I have completed my commitment for this day.
- Describe what your experience was like today.

- What takeaway do you have from today?

AT-HOME EXERCISES

BIBLE STUDY DESCRIPTION

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

S.O.A.P. METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY:

S.O.A.P. stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer.

FOUR STEPS:

1) SCRIPTURE

Choose a passage of scripture to do a focused reading of. Start by reading the passage and by physically writing it out. This simple act adds to your focus on the passage. As you write, ask the Lord to speak to you through His Word. Pay attention to anything that catches your eye.

2) OBSERVATION

Write down what you see in the verses. Who is the audience? Is there any repetition in the passage? What words stand out to you?

3) APPLICATION

This is when God's Word becomes life-giving and alive in our lives. Ask yourself, "What is God saying to me today? How can I apply what I just read to my personal life? What is Jesus asking me to change or give up? Is there an action I need to take?"

4) PRAYER

Pray God's Word back to Him. If you sense that God is speaking to you or has revealed something to you, take this time to pray about it. Ask Him to keep it on your mind throughout the day. Humble yourself and confess anything that needs to be confessed.

When we study God's Word with a focused approach like the S.O.A.P method, it can take as little or as long as you have time to give. You may notice that some days take a shorter time while others take a longer time. The most important thing is that you are consistently exposing yourself to the truth of God's Word with humility and surrender.

AT-HOME EXERCISES

BIBLE STUDY DESCRIPTION

FOUR STEPS

Bible Study works best if you intentionally carve out time to be alone with God. It's important to find a place that is quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions. Then, begin by asking God to speak to you through His Word and to help you notice what He has for you in this moment. Don't forget to use the Bible Study description sheet for help with the S.O.A.P. method.

1) SCRIPTURE

- Write down the passage you will be reading: _____
 - Start with silence. Quiet your thoughts and wait patiently to let distractions go by. Ask Jesus (The WORD) to speak to you in His written Word.
 - Read the passage. Don't forget to read a few verses before and after for context.
 - Write the verses down as you read.
 - Pause here. Think about what you just read. Did anything jump out at you?

2) OBSERVATION

- Ask yourself these questions:
 - What do you see in these verses?
 - Who is the audience?
 - Is there any repetition?
 - What word(s) stand out to you?
 - What do I learn about God in these verses?
- Making a bullet-point list is also a good way to write down your observations.

3) APPLICATION

- After you have reflected on the passage, prayerfully respond to what God has shown you in His Word.
- Ask yourself these questions:
 - What is God saying to me today in His Word?
 - What is the Holy Spirit inviting me to pray after what I've just read?
 - How can I apply what I just read to my personal life?
 - What secrets of my heart has this passage exposed? Is Jesus asking me to give something up?
 - Are there any actions I am being called to take?

4) PRAYER

- Give yourself a few moments to sit with what you just read.
- Pray God's Word back to Him.
- Thank God for speaking to you in His Word.
- Ask God to keep these truths in your mind throughout the day.
- Confess what needs to be confessed.

Don't forget to complete the At-Home Exercises Worksheet as well!

AT-HOME EXERCISES

BIBLE MEMORIZATION DESCRIPTION

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

While it's common to think of scripture memory as something reserved for children, the book of Psalms gives all of us a compelling reason to make this practice a personal habit: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you...I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word" (See Psalm 119:11-16).

When we take the time to memorize scripture, we are filling our minds and our hearts with God's truth. When we need encouragement, these memorized passages will come back to us as a source of strength. Storing God's truth in our hearts will boost our confidence in God, help us follow Him more closely, and draw us closer to His Son. Memorized scripture can also be used to evangelize and disciple others around us. This is truly being a ready witness.

HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE:

1. Select a passage.
2. Give yourself a time frame to memorize it.
 - a. It's a good idea to have someone you can share your memory practice with.
3. Choose the method that works best for you.
 - a. Not everyone memorizes things the same way. It's important to use what works for you!
 - b. There are many Bible memory apps and websites.
 - c. Use a dry erase marker, and write it on your bathroom mirror.
 - d. Write the verse(s) on notecards and stick it in various places around your house, job, and car for easy practice.
 - f. Repetition will be helpful.
4. Once you have memorized your scripture passage, try to use it often. As much work as it takes to remember things, it's far easier to forget them.

Don't forget to complete the Weekly At-Home Exercises Worksheet as well!