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# With Jesus



## With Jesus One-on-One

A LUKE STUDY





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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Luke's gospel account presents Jesus as the "bearer of burdens." Whether it's one-on-one with individuals or in his teaching, the Rabbi from Nazareth is seen as not only a profound teacher, but also as God in the flesh who cares for the poor, the downtrodden, the brokenhearted, and the oppressed.

This devotional book is intended to help you get all you can out of both this sermon series and what Luke's gospel has to say about Jesus and his mission. This book contains some introductory material on Luke, journal pages for sermon notes, weekly reflection questions to help synthesize the content into your heart, mind, and body, a Rule of Life, and additional resources if you want to engage with Luke in a deeper way.

The key is to be intentional and slow. Like a teabag in hot water, we want to allow the words of Scripture and what they teach us about Jesus to seep into the very core of who we are!

Ideally, you will utilize this book on the weekend and in your personal devotional time. Use the pages to take sermon notes and to write down questions, feelings, difficulties, things that encourage you, things that strike you, and things that challenge you.

To get the most out of this book and this sermon series on Luke's gospel, we suggest that you:

- Start out with the Rule of Life found on page 24. You'll want to finish this before your group meets on Week 1 or 2 of this series.

- Fill out the participant covenant.
- Commit to engaging the devotionals slowly and intentionally each week.
- Take notes on the sermon each week.
- Journal your thoughts on the reflection questions for each week.
- Bring your book to life group each week.
- Use your thoughts and notes from the book to engage in group discussion.
- Find time as a group to go through your personal Rule of Life.
- Schedule a day and time to (either as a group or individually) practice the solitude experience to get "one-on-one" with Jesus in **Appendix I**.

As individuals and as a group, be sure to plan and prepare for your experiences, commit to meeting regularly, think through group logistics (childcare, hosting, etc.), and pray!



# WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH LUKE

There are multiple ways one can engage with the Bible. Followers of Jesus throughout history have been reading, meditating, re-reading the Scriptures and have found several ways to meet God in His Word. Below are several ways you can engage the Bible individually, as a family, or even as a community.

## READ SCRIPTURE ALOUD AS COMMUNITY

Many different people engage with Scripture in many different ways today – some people read it first thing in the morning, other people read it at their favorite local coffee shop, and still others listen on an app. When the early church first started engaging with the Scriptures, they didn't even have individual copies of the Bible. Instead, in postures of humility and surrender, they would listen to large portions of the text being read aloud in community. To practice this way of engaging the text...

### 1. GET COMFORTABLE

You'll be reading for the next 20 or so minutes, so make sure you're in a place, position, and posture to be still, attentive, and open to God.

### 2. ESTABLISH THE READER(S)

Decide who will read it. One person can read the whole thing, a few of you can split it, or (what we would recommend) each person can read some of it until the whole passage is read. Spend a moment to decide how you will break up the text and who will read.

### 3. INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Take a deep breath and settle in. Have one person invite the Holy Spirit to help you all to listen in a posture of surrender and to form you by what is read.

### 4. READ

In one sitting, spend time reading the entire text aloud together.

### 5. SILENCE & PRAYER

After the last verse is read, don't rush onto the next part. Take a moment in silence and stillness, letting the words reverberate inside your mind and soul. After a bit, have someone pray to thank God for the experience of this practice.

### 6. DEBRIEF

When you have finished in prayer, discuss what stood out, what your experience was like, what new thoughts and insights you have from this practice.

## LECTIO DIVINA

Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night." Meditating on Scripture is different than studying Scripture. In studying, we're coming to the text to learn. In meditating, we are coming to meet with Jesus.

To do this, followers of Jesus have been practicing a discipline called Lectio Divina for many years. In Lectio Divina, the Jesus followers allow the Scriptures (in cooperation with the Spirit) to lead them into further intimacy with God as they move slowly, carefully, and repeatedly through the same text. Here's how to do it:

### 1. PREPARE

Before beginning, be sure to turn your phone off and leave it another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.

### 2. LISTEN

Read the passage. Sit quietly for a moment before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak and show you what the Lord wants for you in this passage. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read.

### 3. LINGER

Read the passage again out loud. Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out?

Write them down. How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

### 4. LEARN

As you read the text for a third time, ask yourself, "How is God inviting me to respond? What does He want me to be learning from this?" Write out what comes to mind.

### 5. LIVE

Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:

- Why is God showing me this now?
- What does this mean for my life?
- What needs to change in my life?
- How do I need to live differently?



**IMAGINATIVE PRAYER**

Another way Jesus followers have been engaging with the Scriptures is through a practice called Imaginative Prayer. In this discipline, readers of the text actually imagine themselves in its story, encountering what is being written through their senses and creativity. Here’s how to engage with James this way:

**Read a portion of Luke.**

Visualize what is happening in the story. Take some time to imagine what the scene was like. Listen to the words spoken in the text again as if you were one of the first hearers of them.

Now begin to imagine the scene as if you were right in the middle of it.

- *Who are you in the story?*
- *What do you see?*
- *What do you hear?*
- *What do you smell?*
- *What’s your position?*
- *Who else is there with you?*
- *What are you feeling?*
- *What’s the mood of the crowd?*
- *What is your response to all you experience?*
- *What questions do you have?*
- *What fears do you have?*

Don’t worry about historical accuracy. Just allow God to bring the story to life. The people we read about in Scripture were real people who walked the earth and had feelings and thoughts much like ours.

What are you noticing from your responses?

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As you listen again, notice how you sense God inviting you to respond. What are His invitations from this story for you today?

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**PRAYING SCRIPTURE**

A fourth way you can engage with Luke’s gospel is by praying it. To engage with the Scriptures this way, slowly read a text multiple times. Then, after finishing that section of Scripture, write out a prayer that expresses what that portion of Scripture prompted within you.

For example, if you were to read **Mark 10:13-16**, where Jesus says “Let the children come to me...” you might wind up writing a prayer like the following:

*Father, you are indeed father to all the children of the world. Your kingdom was made for people such as these. Help me to become like a child – trusting, surrendered, and dependent on you, O God. For you are my Provider, my Deliverer, my Help, and my Refuge.*

Your prayer could be longer than that or shorter. There’s not right or wrong way to go about it! The key is to engage the text slowly and prayerfully and to be real and honest before God.



**STUDY**

Another way you can engage with Luke is through the practice of study. This is the practice where we primarily like to land as Westerners, which has both positives and negatives. But this practice is intended to help the learner engage their mind and focus their attention on the scriptures to help them understand and apply biblical truth to the entirety of their lives.

There are three main steps to Bible Study:

**1. OBSERVATION**

In this step of study we're asking, "What do I see in this text?" This might involve asking questions like...

- Who is involved in this text?
- What is actually happening in this text?
- What places or buildings are present in this text?
- What time period is this text?
- What metaphors, analogies, or commands are present in this text?

**2. INTERPRETATION**

In this step of study we are asking, "What does this mean?" This might involve asking questions like...

- What is the author who wrote this text trying to convey?
- What would the hearers of this text have thought upon reading this text?
- What does the historical/cultural background of this text have to do with its interpretation?
- What kind of literature is this text? How does that shape how this text should be read?
- What does this text mean in its literary context?
- What do these individual words or phrases mean?

**3. APPLICATION**

In this step of study we are asking, "What do I do?" This might involve asking questions like...

- Is there an example to follow? Or *not* to follow?
- Is there a command to adhere to?
- How does this shape my current reality practically?
- What do I do because of this story?

**TO HELP STUDY THE BIBLE, HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTED RESOURCES TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT IT**

- Check out Bible Project: [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com)
- A helpful online tool: [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org)
- N.T. Wright's *For Everyone* Commentary Series: Choose a book of the New Testament and pick up one of NT Wright's short *For Everyone* commentaries on that book. These commentaries are short, accessible, and could be read in small sections each day.
- Find a good study Bible. A couple good ones are the *ESV Study Bible* and the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Commentary*.
- You could also buy a Bible Dictionary, other Bible commentaries, or other Bible background books such as *The New Testament in its World* by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird.



# THE CREEK

A life group is a community of disciples intent on loving God, loving others, and making disciples in order to connect people to Jesus.

**We are a community:** As the family of God, we meet regularly to eat, pray, and share life together. Community is the place where transformation into Jesus' likeness happens best.

**We are disciples:** As disciples of Jesus, we make it our aim to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did. Through practice, teaching, community, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are learning what it means to love God, love others, and make disciples as apprentices of Jesus.

**We want to connect people to Jesus:** As people with a purpose in the Kingdom of God, we seek to proclaim and manifest the good news of Jesus and do justice in our community so that our message is grounded in words and deeds. We partner with God by giving our time, talents, and resources to see the Kingdom of God come in Indianapolis as it is in heaven.

Knowing that there are seasons and times for flexibility, in order to accomplish our goal of transformation into Christlikeness we are asking every life group participant to commit to:

- Attending your life group weekly (even when it gets tough!)
- Reflecting on the devotional material to enhance group time and contributing to group discussion based on the sermons
- Practice being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did
- Live and champion the seven rhythms of Rooted
- Being vulnerable and authentic
- Caring for your group members
- Speak the truth in love and humbly receive loving accountability
- Pursue unity with other group members

## CONFIDENTIALITY

It is our desire to promote a safe environment for sharing the most important things in life. We want to provide a place where people can reveal openly and confidently the broken areas of their lives without judgment or condemnation. We are not here to "fix" one another. We encourage openness, vulnerability and intimacy during discussion, accountability, and prayer times. In order to ensure a safe haven for personal sharing, we ask that each life group member enter into an agreement of confidentiality.

Everything in this group is confidential, but according to Indiana law, we do have a duty to report abuse or neglect of a person whether they are a child or an adult. In addition, information may be shared for the express purpose of resource recommendations, accountability, discipleship, or for legal and safety reasons.

I agree to uphold the above commitments, to show up consistently both physically and mentally, and to keep all things shared by my group members confidential at all times unless what is shared falls under the aforementioned exceptions.

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>11</sup> Indiana Code 31-33-5-1, Indiana Code 12-10-3-9(a) and 12-10-3-2(a)



# INTRODUCTION

Though they were now living in the promised land and no longer exiled, the people of God lived in what might be considered a 'metaphorical exile.' With the Roman military and government loiding their power over Israel, the question that kept reverberating through the minds of the Jews was most likely something like this: "Will God come through and fulfill His promises?"

Luke, with his gospel account, answers this question with a resounding, "YES." God is faithful. He will come through. He will make good on fulfilling His promises. He's going to do it through Jesus and then He's going to send out His Church to be witnesses to this truth.

Biblical scholar Richard B. Hays notes, "From the opening words of his narrative, Luke seeks to provide assurance for his readers that Israel's story has come to its true consummation in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in the outpouring of the Spirit on the community of Jesus' followers."

No fewer than *fifteen times* (which is a lot of literary real estate!) in the first FOUR chapters of Luke's gospel do we read words having to do with the "fulfillment" of something. And it's no secret as to what it is that is being fulfilled in Jesus – the story of Israel. We can see this culminated in Jesus' famous quotation of Isaiah in **Luke 4:14-21**. It says,

*<sup>14</sup> Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*

*<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is **fulfilled** in your hearing."*

Jesus' mission, as stated here, his bringing the Kingdom of God to bear on earth, wasn't something totally, uniquely new. In some ways it was old. It was something that lined up with the old stories of God's faithfulness and the old promises of God to His people. This had been God's plan all along – to come in the likeness of human flesh and save His people and His good world from the oppressive forces of evil. To bless *all* people through his *chosen* people.

But he wouldn't do it through military might and prowess like Rome. He would do it through bearing the burdens of all mankind, caring for those who are themselves burdened or suffering and through being the once for all sacrifice for sin.

## FOUR GOSPELS, ONE JESUS?

Many times, people look at the four different gospel accounts in the New Testament and wonder how we can trust their representations of Jesus since they are different (especially John!).

In his book *Four Gospels, One Jesus?*, Richard Burridge lays out how the four gospels of the New Testament should actually enrich our overall picture of Jesus, rather than sown any concern or doubt about who Jesus was and what Jesus did.

As an example of how these four portraits of Jesus' life and teachings should enliven our view of the carpenter from Nazareth, Burridge tells us about the time he visited Chartwell (the then-country home of Sir Winston Churchill). Dotted along the walls of this house were many paintings and photographs of the man who helped Allied forces overcome the Nazi regime in WW2, each "attempting to catch something of the character of this great man."

Though Burridge describes the first painting he saw – Churchill the statesman. "His face is grim and determined, for the fate of the world rests upon those shoulders," he writes. In the picture, Churchill dons a dark suit and tie. In the background, colleagues and assistants are busy at work.

Running a country in the throes of war takes a serious man.

The second painting Burridge saw was a self-portrait. This one of Churchill the family man. "Churchill is casually dressed, smiling at friends and family around the table" in a painting called "Tea-time at Chartwell, 29 August 1927." Here Churchill is calm, serene, and ostensibly unperturbed by any outside force whatsoever.

A third painting comes into Burridge's view as he walks the halls of Chartwell. This one depicts Churchill in military garb. With a cigar in his mouth and two fingers stretched out in "V" formation saluting "V for victory!", Burridge sees Churchill, a man of war.

In the final noted painting, Burridge steps forward to a painting with Churchill in a chair, paintbrush in hand, calmly filling in trees and water with touches of blue here and green there. This is Churchill the artist. He had lost his bid for reelection in the mid to late 1940s, and here he is on holiday attempting to match one hue with another to depict a scene that inevitably means something to him.

Burridge writes,

*"Four pictures, all different each with its own story evoking its own atmosphere and provoking its own response in the viewer - yet all are of one and the same man. This is the skill of the portrait painter, or the clever photographer. Each intends to communicate an image to us and to make us respond. It varies according to the setting, people or objects which are included or excluded, and there is scope for the creativity and inspiration of the artist. So we are introduced to the statesman, the family man, the man of war, or the solitary painter, yet all are recognizably Churchill, and some things (the cigar perhaps) are common to all four pictures. Nevertheless, there are constraints upon the artist and not all images will work equally well: Churchill the monster, with blood dripping from his jaws, killing women and children, for example, would not be recognized - except perhaps as an enemy propaganda cartoon. So, in these simple portraits we have*

*diversity and continuity, inspiration and selectivity, artistic license within limits."*

When we come the four gospel accounts, we encounter much the same thing as Burridge did in these portraits of Churchill. Each gospel depiction in the New Testament is a unique perspective into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, yet each gospel depiction has certain constraints on it.

So, while Jesus as Teacher may come across more in Matthew's gospel, or Jesus as King in Mark's gospel, the Jesus we read about in each account is still definitively the same Jesus. There are no contradictions or concerns. Though there is diversity in the accounts, there is a beautiful continuity.

And this is a gift. Just as looking at four different portraits of the same Winston Churchill gives one the opportunity to get a deeper glimpse into the man deemed the British Bulldog, so too do the four different gospels give us a deeper glimpse into the same Jesus!

#### LUKE'S UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

Luke, in some ways, was much like you and me. He was not a direct eyewitness to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Unlike Matthew or Mark or John, Luke relied on the traditions and reports of what Jesus said and did from people who did, in fact, see and hear Jesus.

Scholar N.T. Wright notes that,

*"Luke opens his gospel with a long, formal sentence, like a huge stone entrance welcoming you impressively to a large building. Here, he is saying, is something solid, something you can trust. Writers in the first-century Mediterranean world quite often wrote opening sentences like this; readers would know they were beginning a serious, well-researched piece of work. This wasn't a fly-by-night or casual account. It would hold its head up in the world at large...Luke isn't asking us simply to take it on trust; he is appealing to a wide base of evidence...He has been in touch with eyewitnesses who*



*have told him what they saw and heard. And, perhaps most important, he has listened to accredited teachers within local communities."*

That should be cause for comfort. In a day and age where it can be hard to trust what we see on TV or read on the internet or hear on radio or podcasts, Luke's admission that he talked to "eyewitnesses" (**Luke 1:2**), that he "carefully investigated everything" (**1:3**), and that he "decided to write an orderly account" (**1:3**) should bring us peace. As N.T. Wright notes above, this gospel story is not just a "casual account." This is well-researched, peer-reviewed, historically reliable information about the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth.

Another way in which Luke's gospel portrait of Jesus is unique is that he showcases the image of Jesus as the bearer of burdens, taking the burdens and sufferings of those around him. All throughout Luke's gospel, we read an emphasis on the poor, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. Jesus says that it's the "poor," not just the "poor in spirit" who are the ones who will receive the kingdom of God (**Luke 6:20**). Luke portrays Jesus as preaching "good news to the poor" (**Luke 4:18-21**), Luke portrays Jesus as taking on one burden after another as he slowly marches his way to the cross at Jerusalem, and Luke shows Jesus repeatedly welcome the socially oppressed and downtrodden (women, sinners, lepers, the blind, non-Jews, etc.).

In addition to showcasing Jesus as the bearer of burdens in his gospel, Luke also showcases a Jesus who brings harsh words for the powerful, the wealthy, and the elite. For example, Luke has much to say about money and possessions. We see this in stories like the rich fool (**12:13-21**), the rich young ruler (**18:18-30**), Jesus' description of the Pharisees as "lovers of money" (**16:14**), and in the life of Zacchaeus who was described as being "rich" but found salvation when he returned four times the amount to those he had extorted (**19:1-10**). We also see that it's the powerful and elite who are chastised throughout Luke's account.

For example, it's people like the chief priests and elders have set themselves up as an enemy of Jesus, plotting his death (**19:47-48; 20:19; 22:2, 52, 66**), rather than the lowly and poor and exploited.

Luke is unique in his presentation of Jesus because Luke shows Jesus usually going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal. Meals are central to Luke's picture of Jesus. Whether it be the banquet at Levi's house with tax

collectors or sinners in **Luke 5** or the dinner at a Pharisee's home in **Luke 11** with Pharisees and lawyers, Jesus is always engaging people around a table, sharing his life with others. Other mealtime passages include **Luke 7:36-50, 9:10-17, 10:38-42, 14:1-24, 19:1-10, 22:14-38, 24:28-32, and 24:36-43**.

Lastly, Luke portrays Jesus, not only as the bearer of our temporary burdens, but also of our eternal burden (sin and evil and injustice). It's a divine necessity (the Son of Man "must") for Luke's Jesus to bear the sins of the world and the sins of the lowly (**Luke 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44**). In fact, even on his way to do so, when Jesus nears the very end, he lifts a burden (the burden of the man who had his ear lopped off by Peter in **Luke 22:51**). As he hangs, from the cross, he picks up burdens – he advises the women (**23:27-31**), he prays for the ordinary soldiers and onlookers (**23:34**), and finally, only in Luke, does Jesus forgive the criminal crucified beside him (**23:39-43**). Luke shows Jesus offering up his Spirit to God, dying, and then resurrecting. In his resurrection, Jesus is seen as fulfilling the passion predictions he made throughout his ministry (**9:22, 44; 18:31-33**). What was necessary to be accomplished has now, indeed, been accomplished as indicated by Jesus' use of the past tense in the phrase "it was necessary" (**24:7, 26, 44**).

Although the story of the Jesus, the bearer of burdens, doesn't end just here. As Richard Burridge notes,

*"The final section draws all the threads together: after vanishing at the bread course, Jesus now turns up for some fish with his friends (**24:41-42**), reminding us of his first miraculous catch which made them his disciples, so long ago back in Galilee (**5:1-11**). There is joy (**24:41**) and divine necessity (**24:44**); history and geography start to run the other way, as the remote past (Moses and the prophets, **24:44**) and recent events (his suffering and resurrection, **24:46**) come together for a new future, beginning from Jerusalem' and going away 'to all nations' (**24:47**). The universal Saviour, Christ the Lord (**2:11**), is now a revelation to the Gentiles as Simeon sang (**2:32**); he pours out the power of the Holy Spirit (**24:49**) as John the Baptist prophesied (**3:16**). As the gospel*

*began, so it ends, 'in Jerusalem with great joy, continually in the Temple blessing God' (24:52-53)."*

Luke provides his readers with a literary masterpiece on the life of Jesus. Historically and spiritually nourishing, Luke provides a reliable composition of eyewitness accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus.

And, fortunately for us, it doesn't end just with the last page of Luke's gospel. Luke also wrote the book of Acts. It's often advised by biblical scholars that one should always read Luke in conjunction with Acts, for while in Luke Jesus himself is the bearer of burdens, in Acts it becomes Christ's church as his hands and feet to the unbelieving world.

#### OUTLINE OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

- I. Introduction to Jesus' Ministry • **1:1-4:13**
  - A. Preface • **1:1-4**
  - B. Introduction to John the Baptist and Jesus • **1:5-2:52**
  - C. Preparation for Jesus' Ministry • **3:1-4:13**
- II. Ministry in and around Galilee • **4:14-9:50**
  - A. Preaching in Nazareth • **4:14-30**
  - B. An Introduction to Jesus' Healing Ministry • **4:31-44**
  - C. Calling the First Disciples • **5:1-11**
  - D. A Series of Controversies with the Jewish Leaders • **5:12-6:11**
  - E. The Call to Discipleship Formalized • **6:12-49**
  - F. Focusing on the Question of Jesus' Identity • **7:1-8:3**
  - G. Hearing the Word of God Correctly • **8:4-21**
  - H. Illustrations of Jesus' Authoritative Word • **8:22-56**
  - I. The Christological Climax • **9:1-50**
- III. Jesus' Teaching "En Route" to Jerusalem • **9:51-18:34**
  - A. Discipleship Eyeing the Cross • **9:51-62**
  - B. The Mission of the Seventy-two • **10:1-24**
  - C. The Double Love Command • **10:25-42**
  - D. Teaching about Prayer • **11:1-13**
  - E. Controversy with Pharisees • **11:14-54**
  - F. Preparation for Judgment • **12:1-13:9**
  - G. Kingdom Reversals • **13:10-14:24**
  - H. Cost of Discipleship • **14:25-35**
  - I. Seeking and Saving the Lost • **15:1-32**
  - J. The Use and Abuse of Riches • **16:1-31**
  - K. Teachings on Faith • **17:1-19**
  - L. How the Kingdom Will Come • **17:20-18:8**
  - M. How to Enter the Kingdom • **18:9-30**
  - N. Conclusion and Transition • **18:31-34**
- IV. Jesus in Judea: Ministry Near and in Jerusalem • **18:35-21:38**
  - A. From Jericho to Jerusalem • **18:35-19:27**
  - B. Entry into Jerusalem • **19:28-48**
  - C. Jesus' Teaching: The Final Week • **20:1-21:38**
- V. Jesus in Judea: Ministry Near and in Jerusalem • **18:35-21:38**
  - A. Passover • **22:1-71**
  - B. Crucifixion • **23:1-56**
  - C. Resurrection • **24:1-53**

This outline is taken from Craig L. Blomberg's book *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*



## CENTRAL INDIA CHRISTIAN MISSION

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." - Luke 2:10*

Ajai Lall, founder of Central India Christian Mission (CICM), shares a story regarding Shepherds. As you may be aware, India has operated on a social caste system for centuries. Shepherds are a part of the lowest two castes in Indian society.

Without going into much detail, these people and their job are not favored. Many shepherds, and others in this caste, are leaving Hinduism in large numbers and embracing Christianity. It's no wonder why. Their very existence makes them feel relegated to a low place in society by Hindu teachings and leaders. However, the Gospel proclaims great honor on this group.

The first public announcement of the Messiah's birth was to a group of shepherds.

**Luke 2:8-10** says,

*"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

This good news was actually great news, for all people. ***This news meant the whole world now has great hope.*** From shepherds to kings, the good news of the Messiah would ring loud for centuries, into eternity.

Additionally, beyond the pronouncement to these shepherds, Jesus was born in a manger, where shepherds would have access and be welcome. In **John 10** we also see Jesus refer to himself as the Great Shepherd. He elevates and honors this role in society.

Ajai has used this message to proclaim Good News of Great Joy for All People to thousands in India who feel overlooked and hopeless. The Creek has partnered with the great work of CICM for over 20 years. To learn more or get involved, visit [IndiaMission.org](http://IndiaMission.org)



# RULE OF LIFE

Taking time to review where you've been the past twelve months is an important step before moving forward. So much of the time, we move so fast that we don't know where we've been or what God has really done. In a season like this, we may just want to skip the review altogether. But we believe God wants us to see where he's been working in our lives in this last year.

We want to slow down a bit and take a longer look at 2021, inviting God to show us where we've been.

Developed 400 years ago, the Ignatian Prayer of Examen is a simple prayer practice that allows you to look with God back over your last twenty-four hours.

In the Examen, we slow down, spending a few moments asking God to speak about where we've been and how we've lived. Where have we seen God move? Did we love him well? Did we love others well? Did we move closer to him? Farther away?

In this version of the Prayer of Examen, we'll look over the last year at four major categories: physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health. There isn't a right or wrong way to do it. The important thing is that you do it and remember God's love for you.

There's nothing you've done or experienced that he's not aware of. He's been present for it all. Regardless of what your year held, he still loves you and he's still with you.

Shame has no place in this prayer. It's the language of the enemy, not of our God. There may be some conviction and a reminder of the ways God wants us to live, but shame won't be a part of that equation.

Find a quiet place where you can sit with each category, working through the questions slowly. This isn't an exercise where the first response is the right response—moving slow is the key. In fact, thinking deeply about each question, you'll probably find that a longer look and lingering reflection will allow issues and concerns to rise that a quick response would have simply missed. Take your time and allow God to speak. Let his grace surround you as you begin.

## SECTION 1: BE STILL AND INVITE GOD TO HELP

Find a quiet place where you can be alone with God. Remove as many distractions as possible (silence or turn off your cell phone, turn down the noise, remove yourself from crowded spaces, etc.). Before you begin, take a few moments to be still before God. Quiet your heart, mind, and body.

**Read through Psalm 139** as you begin.

Say an honest prayer to God, voicing any fears you have. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts as you reflect on your year. Invite God's love to lead you.

## SECTION 2: GRATITUDE

Gratitude cultivates our hearts and minds, orienting them toward the good things of God. When we spend time saying, "thank you," it really does change us.

Take a moment to reflect on your gratitude for the past year. Make a list. Be specific. Take some time to thank him for the good things from your year.

In the past 12 months:

- What were the most important events that happened to you or in you?
- What were the greatest breakthroughs in any of the following categories: physical, emotional, relational, vocational, spiritual, interpersonal, etc.?
- What was your greatest struggle?
- What was your greatest and deepest loss?
- What was the area that consumed your thinking and attention?
- Where did you feel most vulnerable?





**My Emotional Health**

What are three FEELINGS (positive or negative) that dominated my life this past year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When was I the most joyful this past year? What was I doing, who was I with, and where was I?

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When was I the saddest this past year? What was I doing, who was I with, and where was I?

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What area of my life gave me the greatest sense of internal stress?  
Internal joy?

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How do I feel about my emotional well-being this past year?

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What specific changes do I desire to make this year to honor God in my emotions?

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**My Relational Health**

List the people who have been life-giving to me this past year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What letter grade would I give for my overall sense of community?

A - Excellent    B - Very good    C - Average    D - Really lacking in friends

How have I felt isolated? How have I felt connected?

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Are my lifestyle, work schedule, and present reality conducive to having the relationships I want and desire? If not, what needs to be different?

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What invitations in my relational health is God presenting for the coming year?

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**My Spiritual Health**

What three words describe my spiritual health over the past year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How has my relationship with God grown over the last year?

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The three most important spiritual take-a-ways that I never want to forget from this past year are:

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What was my deepest spiritual struggle—the place of wrestling with God or the place of my deep lament?

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**My Spiritual Health (continued)**

What people do I feel the most spiritually connected to in my life?

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What Scriptures or prayers have played an important role in this past year?  
How have they shaped me?

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What invitations in my spiritual health is God presenting for the coming year?

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**SECTION 5: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE**

Scripture says all of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s best for us (**Romans 3:23**).

Scripture also says that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us (**1 John 1:9**).

Confession simply means that we would “agree with God.” We agree that what we’ve chosen isn’t in line with his best for us. Maybe you’ve struggled with pride or selfishness. Maybe you’ve struggled with a stronghold you need God’s help to break. Maybe you’ve just not made time for him the way you want. Whatever it is, take some time to tell God about it.

**SECTION 6: LOOKING TOWARD TOMORROW**

Take a moment as you begin to pray through your upcoming year.

- Where do you need God’s loving presence?
- Where do you need Him to carry you?
- Where do you want to see and hear Him more?

You might even use this prayer written by Thomas Merton:

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*







Based on your answers, use the chart on the next page to start filling in your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms. Choose some categories where you want to focus and allow for a holistic approach. Write them across the top as you begin.

**RULE OF LIFE EXAMPLE**

**Daily Rhythms**

- 15 minutes reading the Bible every morning before work Prayer each morning
- Practice the examen each night
- Pray for and with my kids before school
- Exercise at the gym at least 30 minutes
- Limit phone usage/social media to 30 minutes

**Weekly Rhythms**

- Worship in Church every Sunday with my family
- Take communion every Sunday
- Attend my life group fully engaged every Wednesday
- Participate in Sabbath for a 24-hour period once a week
- Serve at church

**Monthly Rhythms**

- Read one book
- Invite a neighbor or friend over for dinner
- Serve with my church in an area of need
- Go over budget with my spouse
- Spend time in nature
- Date night with my spouse 2-3x per month
- See a therapist once a month

**Yearly Rhythms**

- Go on a weekend retreat 2x to rest, play, and be with the Lord Read through the entire Bible
- Go on vacation to rest
- Assess my rule of life for adjustments

MY 2022 RULE OF LIFE	
<b>DAILY</b>	
<b>WEEKLY</b>	
<b>MONTHLY</b>	
<b>YEARLY</b>	





# Week One

JESUS AND SATAN









Put yourself in Jesus' shoes. He has just come from the Jordan River where his cousin, John, had baptized him, kicking off his ministry on earth. During the baptism, he sees the Holy Spirit physically descend on him like a dove and hears his Father bless him, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Then, still dripping with the water from the river, he heads off into the wilderness for some intense ministry preparation: 40 days of fasting and prayer.

Imagine the pain and weakness he must've felt at the end of that month and a half. Imagine how hungry he must've been. Maybe if you were there, you would have done *anything* for a bite of bread. Now imagine what it must've been like when Satan arrived, offering the very thing Jesus might have wanted most of all: that piece of bread. Now, Jesus would have to do the baking using a stone for his recipe, but Satan wasn't concerned about that. He knew Jesus could not only make bread, he could turn that stone into a loaf better than the best French baguette or San Francisco sourdough. So, Jesus is faced with a choice. And I don't know about you, but when I'm tired or stressed, lonely, or hungry, I tend to make bad choices. Not Jesus though; he survived that test and a couple others, finished his fast, headed into town, and got to work.

**Read Luke 4:1-13.**

Satan stood no chance in this one-on-one encounter with Jesus, and there are a few things we can learn from it. How was Jesus able to overcome such physical suffering and triumph over evil during intense temptation?

First, and perhaps most obvious, was his use of scripture to repel Satan's attacks. It was very important Jesus knew scripture well enough to quote it, apply it, and not be fooled by it when it was used inappropriately against him. He didn't try to stand on his own two feet and outwit Satan. He refused to play along, relying on the word.

Second, was his security in knowing who he was. Do you notice how Satan started his temptations? "If you are the Son of God..." He attacked Jesus' identity and offered him power—the same dirty trick he's used since the beginning. He tried to make Jesus question who he was and convince him to want what wasn't yet his. But flip back a page; what had Jesus just heard proclaimed over him? "This is my beloved Son, whom I love." His identity was attacked, but his identity was also the very thing that allowed him to stand.

As we navigate this week, it's important to remember a couple things. This will not be like other weeks: we'll look at Jesus' encounter with an adversary, not a beloved son or daughter. We'll learn from him to better understand his methods. But we'll also be reminded that our hope isn't in doing battle on our own; it's by being with God and allowing Him to battle for us.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

When have you tried to outwit Satan, beating him at his own game?

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When have you had your identity questioned? What did it feel like? What was your reaction?

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What do you want God to reveal to you this week about Jesus' one-on-one with Satan?

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Let's dive deeper into Jesus' confrontation with Satan in the wilderness in **Luke 4**.

First of all, let's learn more about Satan from this Bible Project video so we can have a more accurate picture of who our adversary is: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CamYtVpoTNk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CamYtVpoTNk).

*What did this video teach you about the Satan?*

Now with a bit of a clearer picture of the Satan—the adversary—let's look at the details of the encounter.

Let's start with *when*. Jesus went into the wilderness immediately after his baptism (**Mark 1:12**). The timing is important to notice for a couple reasons. Satan isn't all-knowing; it took a proclamation from God about who Jesus was (the voice from heaven during the baptism) for Satan to know who his enemy was. Jesus had to be identified, and as we saw yesterday, it was that identity that he attacked. If he could make Jesus blink—make him question who he was for just a moment, Satan could have ruined the plan. So, he went when Jesus was weakened physically.

Now let's look at *where*. The word for wilderness is *eremos*, a Greek word meaning solitary place, quiet place, desert place. This word, *eremos*, doesn't just show up here. In fact, many times when the Gospels mention Jesus going to a solitary place to be with His Father, it uses the word *eremos*. This sticks out because it indicates Jesus' pattern for doing ministry. He didn't do anything outside His Father's will, and he spent countless hours praying to him in solitary places. It's no surprise that he spent 40 whole days there as he began his ministry.

Last, let's look at *who*. Who was there? Obviously, Jesus and Satan play the main roles, but who else? Mark 1 says wild animals were there; good to know. Matthew and Mark both mention that angels attended to Jesus once the tempting was done; also important to know. But it's important to look at those present who we don't see physically—the ones you've probably already guessed: God the Father and the Holy Spirit. But there's one group of people you might have missed.

**Luke 4:5** says, "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world." That's us. People around the world through history, and Satan was offering to hand it all over to Jesus if he would just bow to him.

When we put these details together, a couple things emerge. It seems on the surface that Satan picked an opportune time to tempt Jesus as he was hungry and physically weakened. But the fatal flaw he made was thinking that Jesus was weakened spiritually. Forty days spent in the *eremos*, the very place he always went to get away with his Father. It had given Jesus all the strength he needed to withstand. He had been reminded of his identity, and he was commissioned to start his ministry.

Satan promised him all the kingdoms of the world and all he had to do was bow down to him, but it was staying true to his identity and his calling that would eventually bring all those kingdoms to him.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Where is your *eremos*, your quiet place where you get away from distraction and seek God? How often do you go there? What changes can help you get there more often?

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It's harder for Satan to make us question our identity when we remember it. Take time to remember your identity. Write down who God says you are.

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Compare Jesus' physical weakness from fasting and his strength from spending time with his Father. Have you experienced physical weakness (tired, hungry, lonely, etc) that made you prone to falling for Satan's questions? When have you experienced spiritual strength that has allowed you to withstand Satan's temptings?

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Let's see what the Bible has to say about Satan. Circle the things that describe him.

*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **John 8:44***

*The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **1 John 3:8a***

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. **John 10:10***

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **1 Peter 5:8***

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" **Genesis 3:1***

*The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." **Job 1:7***

*Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. **Revelation 12:7-9***

What did you notice about Satan's power and tactics? What thoughts and emotions do you experience when thinking about him?

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Now let's look at God's power and authority over Satan. Circle the words that describe it.

*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. **1 John 3:8b***

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **Romans 16:20***

*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. **1 John 4:4***

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me..." **Matthew 28:18***

*...who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him. **1 Peter 3:22***

What did you notice about God’s power and authority? What thoughts and emotions do you experience when thinking about his authority?

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Thirdly, look at the power we have been given over Satan and the game plan that has been given to us to withstanding his attacks. Circle the words that describe it. Underline the ways you receive that power (identify where our power comes from).

*“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* **Luke 10:19-20**

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* **James 4:7**

*They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* **Revelation 12:11**

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.* **Ephesians 6:10-11**

How do these verses change your perspective or confidence about your power over Satan?

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When you reflect on where this power comes from, how does that change your perspective or grow your confidence?

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We have looked at how Jesus was able to withstand the Satan's temptations by spending extended time with God. We've looked at Satan's tactics, questioning God's goodness, casting doubt on our identity, and using lies to kill, steal, and destroy. And we've been reminded that God has given us authority and supernatural power through the Holy Spirit to overcome him. Before you answer the reflection questions below, sit in silence for a few minutes and then pray to invite God to speak to you through this exercise.

Can you name a time when you or someone you love was attacked (or maybe felt attacked) by Satan? What was the experience like, what thoughts or emotions accompanied it?

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When you think about Jesus' one-on-one with Satan, how does his power reframe that experience? How does it bring healing or trust? What questions does it raise?

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We looked at **Revelation 12:11**, "They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." It clearly shows two ways of triumphing over Satan: the blood of the Lamb (aka the Gospel, the way God saved us) and the power of their testimony.

How did the blood of the lamb save you in your experience?

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What power lies in your testimony?

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# Week Two

JESUS AND PETER









Can you think back to a time you'd rather forget, a time you weren't the best version of yourself? Can you imagine someone using your past character defects and missteps as a reason to discredit you? Perhaps you do it to yourself? Conversely, can you think of someone who invested in you, despite your lack of qualification? This week, we're going to look at how Jesus calls all of us to the task of evangelism, specifically through the lens of one of his disciples – Peter.

It wasn't unusual for a rabbi to have a group of students they would invest in and teach. True to his counter cultural approach, Jesus's choice of disciples was unconventional in that he invited ordinary men, not religious students or theologians into his close circle.

The gospel writers didn't mince words when they described the eclectic group of Jesus' disciples. Their portrayal of Peter could lead us to remember him as the guy who didn't think before speaking, the disciple who sank as he walked on the water with Jesus, the one who couldn't stay awake in the garden, or the disciple who chopped off the ear of Caiaphas's servant. Forget all those failures, imagine being known as the close friend who denied Jesus THREE times before his crucifixion.

Why is it helpful for us to know these things about Peter? It seems that Peter's blunders would kill his credibility and disqualify him from service. Let's look at how Jesus extended an invitation to Peter and the others to follow him while on their turf.

**READ LUKE 5:1-11.**

*(To prevent confusion, it's helpful to know that Peter is referred to as Simon, Simon Peter, and Peter interchangeably throughout scripture)*

Jesus asks Peter, an *experienced* fisherman, to cast his nets into the water. Peter knows there are no fish in the water. He and his crew have been fishing all night with no success. Peter could have responded with several excuses, but he didn't. He obeys and puts out the nets again. The nets are soon overflowing with fish. Jesus uses this miracle to demonstrate the mission he is inviting Peter and the others into. Peter is overcome by the demonstration of God's presence and power.

In his commentary on Luke, Darrell Bock says:

*A genuine meeting with Jesus alters one's perspective. An encounter with God's power is no reason to draw back from him,*

*but an opportunity to approach him on the right basis, in faith and dependence. In catching fish, Jesus has caught Simon Peter. The response is instantaneous and total. When the boats come in, the former fishermen leave everything behind and follow Jesus. The call had gone to Peter in verse 10, but all those who experience the catch follow Jesus. The fishing expedition has brought in its first great catch. Sinners are transformed into servants of God. That is how great God's holiness and grace can be.*

One of the most daunting tasks we're called to as Christians is to share the gospel with others, especially with friends or family members who might have known the less favorable chapters of our stories. We can believe that we're not compelling witnesses because of our lack of experience or sinful pasts. This is the lie the enemy would like us to believe.

Over this week, we're going to look at some defining moments in Peter's time with Jesus, take time to reflect on our own lives, and consider where God might be inviting us to take a small step in obedience.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

Who is someone in your life who spent one-on-one time helping you develop a skillset, hobby, or professional trade?

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In our study of scripture, it can be helpful to consult different translations of the bible as well as different gospel accounts of the same event. Various translations can help us gain a deeper understanding of biblical truths and equip us to share the good news with others. We can only invite people into what we ourselves understand.

Today we are going to start by looking at **Luke 5:1-11** in two different translations and three different gospel accounts. Pay attention to similarities and differences. Circle or underline any that you see.

### LUKE 5:1-11 (NIV)

*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. <sup>2</sup> He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

*<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."*

*<sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.*

*<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.*

*Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." <sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

### LUKE 5:1-11 (MSG)

*<sup>1-3</sup> Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.*

*<sup>4</sup> When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch."*

*<sup>5-7</sup> Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.*

*<sup>8-10</sup> Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon.*

*<sup>10-11</sup> Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.*

**MARK 1:16-20 (NIV)**

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>19</sup> When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup> Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**MARK 1:16-20 (MSG)**

<sup>16-18</sup> Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions. They dropped their nets and followed.

<sup>19-20</sup> A dozen yards or so down the beach, he saw the brothers James and John, Zebedee’s sons. They were in the boat, mending their fishnets. Right off, he made the same offer. Immediately, they left their father Zebedee, the boat, and the hired hands, and followed.

**MATTHEW 4:18-22 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” <sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>21</sup> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, <sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**MATTHEW 4:18-22 (MSG)**

<sup>18-20</sup> Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed.

<sup>21-22</sup> A short distance down the beach they came upon another pair of brothers, James and John, Zebedee’s sons. These two were sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishnets. Jesus made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father.





Today we're going to look at some defining moments in Peter's life in the other gospels. These moments with Jesus shaped his faith and character and prepared him to be an apostle.

As you read the passages, reflect on these questions:

- What do you learn about Peter and living by faith – either from his failures or successes?
- How do these interactions with Jesus help to prepare Peter to share the teachings of Jesus with others?

Try reading the passages aloud or listening to them on the YouVersion Bible app or website. *Biblegateway.com* has a feature that allows you to listen to scripture.

**MATTHEW 14:28-29, JOHN 6:19-20**

*The apostles and Simon Peter see Jesus walking on water, Peter asks Jesus to command him to walk to Him. Peter tries to walk on water, but he fails.*

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**MATTHEW 16:13-20**

*Jesus tells Peter that he will build his church on him.*

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**MATTHEW 17:1-3, MARK 9:2-3**

*Peter, James, and John witness the transfiguration of Jesus.*

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**MATTHEW 26:34, MARK 14:30, JOHN 13:38**

*Jesus makes a prediction that Peter will deny Him three times before a rooster crows.*

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**MATTHEW 26:69-75, MARK 14:66-72, JOHN 18:16-27**

*The prediction of Jesus comes true when Peter denies Him three times.*

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Yesterday we looked at some of the experiences in Peter's life that shaped his faith and prepared him to spread the gospel. Examining Peter's failings is not meant to criticize his character. Rather, we can look to them for hope when we feel inadequate to serve in the way God has called us.

Before you answer the reflection questions below, sit in silence for a few minutes and then pray to invite God to speak to you through this exercise and reveal what he sees in you.

Do you have a past experience that you feel disqualifies you from sharing the gospel?

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Can you think of a time God asked you to do something you felt unqualified to do? What was your response?

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Is God asking you to do something right now?

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What is your attitude and response to what He's potentially inviting you into? What does your response say about your heart motivations?

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Sometimes we completely miss out on God's invitation because we never enter into one-on-one time with him. We avoid silence and solitude.

As you wrap up your time today, spend an extended time in silence. Meditate on Jesus' words in **Matthew 4:19** through a breath prayer. Situate yourself so your feet are flat on the floor. Set a timer on your phone for 5 minutes or 10 minutes - whichever you choose. Once you hit start on your timer, prayerfully sit in silence. As you breathe, breathe in Jesus' words, "Come, follow me." As your exhale, breathe out the response, "I will follow you." As you do this, notice your body's response to the practice.







# Week Three

JESUS AND MARY









As you begin reading today, take a few moments to check in. Where is your current level of distraction these days? How is your mind wandering? What emotions is your heart holding? What stress are you carrying? How is that stress showing up in your body?

Take a few moments to slow down and be quiet. Share with God the state you find yourself in before you begin.

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In the beginning, there was God. Through Him all things were made. Light, sky, oceans, rivers, seas, mountains, plants, trees, stars, the moon, the sun. Every living creature. All moving in perfect rhythm to the heartbeat of God.

Somewhere in that rhythm, as time went on, **you were created**. At first, hearing God's rhythm was easy, like breathing. But as you grew older and, as some say, wiser, more and more distractions entered the picture, covering up the rhythm of God's heartbeat.

### Relationships

With our parents, our siblings, our extended family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers.

### Goals, Dreams, and Expectations

All the questions we began to ask, "What do I want to be when I grow up? What will my life be like? What could be in store for me?" Wonderful dreams of the possibilities of a hopeful future.

And then reality hit us with...

### Responsibility

Work, deadlines, bills, chores, more work, alarm clocks, endless lists. You know, the churning of life all around us. Pulling us in every direction.

Over time, these begin to drown out the rhythm of the heartbeat of God—sometimes so much that it becomes a faint whisper. Maybe even to the point where we can barely hear it at all.

And in the middle of the chaos those distractions bring, God's voice says, *Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly* (**Matthew 11:28-30 MSG**).

*Be still.  
Listen to My voice.  
Hold fast to me.  
Sit at My feet.  
Be still and know that I am God.*

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What is your current level of distraction when it comes to your relationship with God? What is distracting you from Jesus? How present have you been with Him lately?

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What would it be like for you to carve out time to sit at the feet of Jesus?  
Does that seem appealing to you?

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Read through **Matthew 11:28-30** in the Message translation above. What invitations that Jesus gives in this passage resonate with you? Write a prayer in response to God, asking Him to show you how to say yes to that invitation.

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Is being still in God's presence easy or hard for you? What fruit comes from spending time at the feet of Jesus? How have you seen this in your life?

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As you begin reading today, take a few moments to check in. Where is your current level of distraction today? How is your mind wandering? What emotions is your heart holding? What stress are you carrying? How is that stress showing up in your body?

Take a few moments to slow down and be quiet. Share with God the state you find yourself in before you begin.

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Genetics is an interesting thing. You can have two siblings who grow up in the same family, share the same biological parents, and are nothing alike. Today we're going to dig deeper into this week's Scripture as we look at the responses of two sisters to the presence of Jesus in their home. While our focus this week is on Mary's encounter with Jesus, it's important to look through the lens of Martha's experience to fully understand how Mary was attentive to the presence of Christ.

Read through **Luke 10:38-42** in The Passion Translation below. Circle any words or phrases that stand out to you as you read.

*As Jesus and the disciples continued on their journey, they came to a village where a woman welcomed Jesus into her home. Her name was Martha and she had a sister named Mary. Mary sat down attentively before the Master, absorbing every revelation he shared. But Martha became exasperated with finishing the numerous household chores in preparation for her guests, so she interrupted Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you think it's unfair that my sister left me to do all the work by myself? You should tell her to get up and help me."*

*The Lord answered her, "Martha, my beloved Martha. Why are you upset and troubled, pulled away by all these many distractions? Mary has discovered the one thing most important by choosing to sit at my feet. She is undistracted, and I won't take this privilege from her."*

These two sisters were both in the presence of Jesus and responded very differently. Jesus found rest in the home of Mary and Martha. Martha was a hostess who was serving Jesus and his disciples. The ESV says,

*Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving.*

#### **Luke 10:38-39 (ESV)**

**Martha experienced distraction.** The Greek word for "serving" in this passage is *latrueo*, meaning service or duties. It's the same word for "ministry." Martha was ministering to Jesus, which wasn't a problem at all. The problem was that she was *distracted* in her serving.

The Greek word for "distracted" in this passage is *perispao*—"to be drawn off from around; to be so overburdened by various distractions as to be worried and anxious."<sup>2</sup> Martha was distracted—drawn away—by doing actual ministry. She was *serving Jesus* and was *drawn away from him*. Martha was in the presence of Jesus and was drawn away from him. Her focus was on what she had to do instead of who she was doing it for.

Not only was Martha distracted, **Luke 10:40** also shows her discouragement and her doubt.

*And she went up to [Jesus] and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."*

#### **Luke 10:40 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition, V 1, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 313–314.







This week, we're going to see how Jesus' invitation to abide in or dwell with him is found throughout Scripture. As you read through the passages today, take time to reflect on the specific questions and quotes for each one. Take your time as you read and reflect. See what God might want to show you about your relationship with him today. Slow down and savor his Word.

As you begin today, read through **Luke 10:38-42**.

Mary was abiding in Jesus. She took time to dwell in his presence and listen to his voice. Alan Fadling shares what happens as we do the same:

*As I abide in Jesus, I have the same access to the Father's ear that he does. I am able to interact with the Father in prayer and seek the good of those I care about, knowing that my prayer mysteriously opens a door to a greater experience of God's measureless love...Jesus withdrew from the crowds for the sake of the crowds. When Jesus was in prayer, he remembered that the Father's words matter far more than the words of the crowds, whether they were shouting "Hosanna!" or "Crucify Him!" It was a though the father said to Jesus as he prayed, "When you are in the wilderness, you are my beloved Son. When the crowds cheer for you and praise you, you are my beloved Son. When the crowds turn on you and cry out for your execution, you are my beloved Son"...Prayer really is someone we are with more than something we do.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup>Fadling, 143.

As you read those words and think of this week's text from **Luke 10:38-42**, what do you notice? How does it feel to know you have access to the Father's words in the same way Jesus did? What would it look like to lean into that truth? How might your life be different if you did?

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**Read Matthew 6:33.**

What does "seeking first the Kingdom of God" mean to you? How do you practically "seek first his kingdom"? How do you think that will bring righteousness (right standing with God) in your life?

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In this series we're looking at people who were one-on-one with Jesus and how these interactions changed them and can change us. When we spend time one-on-one with Jesus, we are changed too. Today we'll look at how our own stories intersect with the story of Mary and Martha in **Luke 10**.

Read **Luke 10:38-42** in the New Living Translation below:

*<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."*

*<sup>41</sup> But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!" <sup>42</sup> There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Think of a time when you were distracted by serving God. What was that like? How did it affect your serving? How did it affect your relationship with God? How did it affect your relationship with others?

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Think of a time when you were focused solely on God's presence. What was that like? How did it affect your serving? How did it affect your relationship with God? How did it affect your relationship with others?

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What are the current distractions that keep you from God's presence? What would it look like to eliminate those?

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Think of the times you feel most connected to God. What does that look like? Where are you? What is needed for you to really be in his presence without distractions?

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If you struggle to stay at his feet, ask the Lord to reveal to what's hindering you. There is no need to lay aside your intellect or your personality when you sit at the feet of Jesus. Just come as you are as a child of God.



As we wrap up this week's look at the one-on-one relationship Mary had with Jesus, consider these words from Joanna Weaver:

*Martha opened her home to Jesus, but that doesn't automatically mean she opened her heart. In her eagerness to serve Jesus, she almost missed the opportunity to know Jesus...The kingdom of God, you see, is a paradox. While the world applauds achievement, God desires companionship. The world clamors, "Do more! Be all that you can be!" But our Father whispers, "Be still and know that I am God."*

*He isn't looking as much for workers as he is looking for sons and daughters—a people to pour his life into...When we put work before worship, we put the cart before the horse. The cart is important; so is the horse. But the horse must come first, or we end up pulling the cart ourselves. Frustrated and weary, we can nearly break under the pressure of service, for there is always something that needs to be done. When we first spend time in his presence—when we take time to hear his voice—God provides the horsepower we need to pull the heaviest load. He saddles up Grace and invites us to take a ride.<sup>7</sup>*

Jesus invites us to take the ride of a lifetime with him. He's looking for sons and daughters to pour his love into.

<sup>7</sup>Weaver, 9-10.

Adele Calhoun writes, "We all live our lives in the presence of God. In fact, we cannot *not* live our lives in the presence of God...Yet we become so preoccupied with the to-do list and so overwhelmed by the pace of life that we forget to look for God sightings in our day."<sup>8</sup> As you learn to live in the loving presence of God, like Mary did, consider these practices to help you intentionally live with a heart turned toward Jesus:

- In his book, *Sacred Pathways*, Gary Thomas writes about nine distinct sacred pathways to the presence of God. You can check out more information by scanning the QR code to take an assessment to see how you best connect with God. Once you've discovered your preferred pathway, schedule a specific time to connect with God in that way.
- Take some time to DTR (define the relationship) with Jesus. Take an honest assessment of the ways you've been spending time at his feet, in his Word, in prayer. Have you been operating more like Mary or more like Martha? Be honest and receive God's grace. Talk with God about what needs to change and what can be celebrated and then take the next step towards doing both.
- Decide to stop several times throughout the day to pay attention to God and practice being in his presence. Set an alarm to remind you. Spend five minutes reading Scripture, praying, or just simply being with Jesus. Pay attention to what it's like for you.



<sup>8</sup>Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 72.





# Week Four

JESUS AND JOHN  
THE BAPTIST







Have you ever gotten to a point in your life where you wondered, “Was it worth it? What was it all for? Did I truly make an impact? Was it all a waste of time?”

We heard a message on John the Baptist where he was struggling with some of these big questions because he wasn’t sure if all that he had done in life was worth it or if he had been mistaken about who Jesus was. We’re going to dive deeper into this story, looking at John the Baptist’s miraculous conception, his effective and unorthodox ministry, his imprisonment, his doubt of who Jesus is, and an execution as a result of petty political maneuvering.

John the Baptist found himself in bleak circumstances. He had numerous followers coming to listen to his teachings and to be baptized. Yet, John spoke out against Herod, a puppet king of the Romans in Galilee, who had taken his sister-in-law as his own wife. As a result of John speaking against a ruler’s sexual immorality, he was imprisoned and eventually executed.

Tomorrow we’ll focus our time in **Luke 7**, where John sends messengers to Jesus, but for today, let’s imagine ourselves in John’s shoes. He’s been faithful since birth to what he was set apart to do. He’s followed all the rules, baptized many, including Jesus himself, and Jesus is even recorded saying, “Among those born of women, there is no one greater than John” (**Luke 7:28**). So, imagine yourself imprisoned, alone and waiting on what you assume is death. You’ve done no wrong, and you’ve been faithful to God all the days of your life. Doubt begins to creep in. *What if I was wrong? Did I put my faith in the wrong person? Was this all just a big waste of time and I am about to die for this? For what?!*

We have all been deceived at some point in our lives. Broken promises, unmet expectations, betrayal. Unfortunately, these all seem to be dependable realities of the human experience. But this situation is unique in that John is doubting if Jesus was who he said he was. I think we all can agree that, at some point, we’ve all had doubts about our faith and what we believe.

Just like Jesus doesn’t berate John’s disciples in this week’s text, or Thomas who famously doubted the resurrection, Jesus invites us to “come and see” and consider the implications of what we’ve seen.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How should followers of Jesus think about doubt? Is it good or bad or neither? What are your thoughts about it?

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Have you ever experienced doubt regarding your faith? What did your doubt surround? What precipitated that doubt? If you’re still in it, what questions do you still need answered? If you’ve come out of your doubt, what helped you overcome it?

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If you were to ask Jesus, “Are you really the One??” How do you think he’d answer you based on his response to John the Baptist?

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What are the implications of Jesus’ “come and see” approach to doubt? How does that approach impact you when you have questions?

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Pray for openness to learn from John the Baptist this week. Pray for the ability to express your doubts, frustrations, and feelings honestly to God.



Today, let's read about how John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask if he was the Messiah. There are some questions embedded within the reading below, asking you to consider what you just read. Take your time with these questions. There are also some final reflection questions after your reading.

**Read Luke 7:1-10.**

*<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this,"<sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> So Jesus went with them.*

*He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

*<sup>9</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.*

Imagine yourself as one of John's disciples who's seeing what Jesus is doing as he heals. Knowing you're following a man who's pointing to Jesus as Messiah, yet who is in jail, how does this affect your perspective on Jesus and his miracles?

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**Read Luke 7:18-28.**

*<sup>18</sup> John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, <sup>19</sup> he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

What do you think these disciples are thinking after they leave their master in jail and go to Jesus?

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*20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"*

*21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.*

*22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."*

How does Jesus' response in these verses sit with you? He doesn't answer the question directly but tells the disciples to report back what they've seen and heard.

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*24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 6 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.*

*27 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Since we don't see it, what do you think John's reaction to Jesus' words was?

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How does Jesus' response show his ideas about his Kingdom as opposed to the expectations of others?

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Like Jesus listed the good things he had done among the people, what can you point to in your life or in the life of others that show this same power working today?

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# Week Five

JESUS AND THE RICH  
YOUNG RULER







If you've ever been to the circus, then you know one of the main events is seeing trapeze artists grab on to the trapeze bar, jump off their platform, swing out, and then let go *hoping* to be caught by their partner as they momentarily fall 25 feet from the floor.

What's really inspiring about a trapeze artist isn't just the external logistics associated with the feat. The internal disposition of the jumper and the catcher are just as impressive – courage, fortitude, trust, and surrender.

The trapeze artist has been an apt illustration for the idea of surrender for some time. To "surrender" carries with it this idea of "letting go," "giving up," and "abandoning oneself entirely to something else." And that's exactly what a trapeze artist does. They "let go," they "give up" their grip on the trapeze bar, and they "abandon themselves entirely to something (or someone) else."

I wonder if the Rich Ruler in **Luke 18** couldn't have taken some pointers from the trapeze artist.

**Read Luke 18:18-30.**

In this story, the Rich Ruler appears so confident, so self-reliant. No pleasantries before his question to Jesus, no moment of reflection when Jesus reminds him of the commandments of God: "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.

"All these I have kept from my youth," he replies. So, Jesus goes a layer deeper.

In **verse 22**, Jesus says, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Ah, here's the heart of the issue. This man, the Rich Ruler, was obviously religious. And obviously obedient. But perhaps even more obvious to us in reading is the fact he wasn't *surrendered* to God.

So long as obedience to God didn't interfere with his life's plans, his budget, his dreams, and his goals, he was good to go! But Jesus immediately confronts this man's heart. Jesus knew that the Rich Ruler wasn't fully surrendered to God (which is the key to living an eternal kind of life, by the way), and he helped him to see it. This is probably why we read the Rich Ruler's reaction in the text: "When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy."

His heart was tied to his possessions and his wealth, not his God.

Scholar N.T. Wright says this about the Rich Ruler,

*"That was why the rich ruler became sad. In order to inherit the life of the new age, he had to abandon the values of the old and **trust himself totally** to the new, like a diver throwing himself forwards into the water. He couldn't seriously be seeking for the new age if he couldn't abandon the symbols of the old. The commandments were good and important; but if he was wedded to possessions...then he would never be able to accept God's kingdom like a child, with the humble **trust** that allowed God to be God.*

The Rich Ruler missed out on the Kingdom of God and eternal life ("the life of the new age") because he hadn't surrendered his all to God. He couldn't yet totally trust.

And perhaps there were all kinds of reasons for that...

- Perhaps he simply loved his wealth too much
- Perhaps he couldn't let go of his need for control
- Perhaps he had a stronghold of fear that he couldn't overcome
- Perhaps he didn't have an internalization that God is sovereign and loving and good

Whatever the reason, his lack of surrender was exposed and he walked away sad.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

If Jesus came up to you and said, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me." Would you do it? What does your response indicate about your total trust and surrender to God?

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Maybe you're not very materialistic and could "sell it all." Here's a hard question: Is there anything in your life (experiences, a hobby, relationships) that if Jesus asked you to give it up, you'd hesitate and "walk away sad?" What is it?

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What do you think was the main reason for the Rich Ruler's hesitation in surrendering everything to follow Jesus? What hesitations do you often feel when it comes to fully surrendering to God?

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What are Jesus and His Kingdom worth to you compared to the things of this world?

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For today's devotional work, let's not only look at Luke's account of the Rich Ruler's story, but Matthew and Mark's accounts as well. Both Matthew and Mark also recorded renditions of this story. Reading all three stories together, noting their similarities and dissimilarities, can help give us a fuller picture of the person of Jesus and of this story.

For today, read through the account of this story in **Luke 18:18-30**. Once finished, go through these Scriptures again slowly. Only, as you go through it this time, using your pen or pencil (it'd be helpful to have a couple different colors), go through and mark what similarities and differences you see in each account.

If there are words that are unique to only one of the gospel accounts of this story, notate that. If there are words that are similar between two accounts but not a third, notate that. If there are words similar in all three accounts, notate that too.

#### **Matthew 19:16-30**

<sup>16</sup> Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

<sup>17</sup> "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

<sup>18</sup> "Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, <sup>19</sup> honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>20</sup> "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

<sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

<sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

<sup>27</sup> Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup> And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup> But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

#### **Mark 10:17-31**

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>18</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

<sup>20</sup> “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

<sup>22</sup> At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” <sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

<sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

<sup>29</sup> “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

### Luke 18:18-30

<sup>18</sup> A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>19</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

<sup>21</sup> “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

<sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

<sup>23</sup> When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. <sup>24</sup> Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>26</sup> Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”





For today, let's take some time to look at the context of the Rich Ruler passage. Whenever we're reading the Bible, we want to always be the kind of people who read the Bible with good interpretation principles. One of the principles is the idea that "Context is King."

What do we mean by this? Well, just like we don't jump into a movie without the beginning or the ending in mind, we also don't want to jump into a passage of Scripture without looking at its surroundings.

To give us some context, read the following Scriptures below and answer the associated questions in the space provided.

**Read Luke 18:15-17.**

Why do you think Luke places this story of Jesus and the little children right before telling us about the Rich Ruler? How do the children and the Rich Ruler differ?

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**Read Luke 19:1-9**

Why do you think Luke places this story of Jesus and Zacchaeus right after telling us about the Rich Ruler? How are Zacchaeus and the Rich Ruler the same? How do they differ?

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One of the main themes in Luke's gospel is his emphasis on the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God into the life of the world through the person of Jesus. We see this in all kinds of passages. Look up the following verses and note how they showcase the inbreaking of God's Kingdom. Then, re-read **Luke 18:18-30** and jot down how you think that passage contributes to this overall theme.

**Luke 4:14-21**

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**Luke 5:17-20**

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**Luke 6:1-5**

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**Luke 8:43-48**

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**Luke 9:1-6**

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**Luke 18:18-30** - How does this passage contribute to Luke's overall demonstration of the inbreaking of God's kingdom through Jesus?

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# Week Six

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS







**Read Luke 19:1-10.**

This week we're looking at Jesus' one-on-one encounter with a man named Zacchaeus. This encounter is loaded with moments of honesty, compassion, purpose, shame, and redemption... and we're going to explore it all this week. But today, let's focus on the initial encounter itself.

**Re-read Luke 19:1-4.**

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but something was in his way... people! Zacchaeus was short! He didn't let excuses keep him from doing what he knew he should do, he did whatever it took to get a glimpse of the man from Nazareth.

It's amazing that Jesus intrigued Zacchaeus so much, isn't it? Zacchaeus is a Jewish man, yes, but he lived life based on the exploitation of others and was estranged from his kin for doing so. Jesus, in contrast, was a mysterious man known for both rebuking those in power for taking advantage of others and abusing their authority, while also calling others to grace, redemption, love, and healing.

Obviously, Zacchaeus was curious. Obviously, something ached within him. Obviously, something in him, said, "I've got to get a look at Jesus."

He could have utilized every excuse at his disposal to not draw near to Jesus that day – what he had done that morning, what he was planning on doing later that day. He perhaps had insecurities – about his height, his past, his present, and his future. He could have rationalized his way out of ever even getting close to Jesus. But he didn't.

What hinders you from seeing Jesus? There may be some legitimate excuses you could use: "I'm super busy," or "I feel shame from past mistakes," or "I doubt God cares," or "I've been hurt before and I don't want to be let down again," or "I want to see Jesus, I just don't know how."

Friend, you're reading this devotional, so it's safe to assume you want *some kind* of encounter with Jesus. What's standing in your way of growing in your walk with God? What "tree" are you willing to climb to see the one who can help you find meaning and purpose?

Today, we'll end with this: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (**James 4:8**).

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

Write down any excuses you use for not encountering Jesus more often in your day-to-day life.

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Write down ways these hindrances might be overcome based on what you know of God in scripture.

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Spend some time confessing any past excuses that have kept you from walking daily with God. Thank him for his presence with you and ask for strength and courage to do whatever you can to grow with Jesus today.

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As you finish, take 5-10 minutes of prayerful communion with the Lord. Clear away any distractions. Find a place of solitude. Set a timer on your phone and then put it away. Quiet yourself. And set your mind and heart upon the Lord.



Let's begin today by continuing to consider Zacchaeus' one-on-one encounter with Jesus.

**Re-read Luke 19:1-10.**

Yesterday we met Zacchaeus, a man who wanted so desperately to see Jesus, he climbed into a tree to watch as Jesus passed through a town called Jericho.

Let's get a bit of context of this man and where he lived.

If you met someone who worked for the IRS, you might have some questions as to how they got into that line of work and what exactly they do for the government. But unless you're currently being audited, meeting them wouldn't illicit the negative visceral response that encountering a tax collector in Jesus' day would have caused.

Frankly, tax collectors in Jesus' day were considered thieves and scum. Tax collectors often acted with no mercy or consideration, taking more money than was required by law to pad their own pockets. What's worse is that tax collectors were often Jews who worked for the ruling Roman government. They were cheating their own people – making them financially comfortable but outcasts from society.

Can you imagine the sort of vitriol Zacchaeus faced from his own kin? Certainly, a man who betrayed his own people and extorted them would understandably be an outcast, a social exile.

Yesterday we read that Zacchaeus was not just a tax collector, but rather a "chief tax collector". He had climbed some ranks. He was good at his job. He was in upper management, leading other men in robbing and cheating their own people. Not good.

This is a man who, looked down upon by his old friends and family, probably padded his heart with money and power. He overcame his shame and guilt by distracting himself with his position and prominence.

Because not only was he doing well himself, but he was excelling in a city like Jericho. Jericho was a major trade center on the route between Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Syria. It was centrally located and in prime position to be a city of influence.

But despite Zacchaeus' padded wallet and calloused heart, there was still an ache. Something was missing. There was a God-shaped hole so big that he did all that he could to be one-on-one with Jesus, the itinerant, poor Rabbi from Nazareth. Zacchaeus surely wondered, "Would Jesus have time for me?"

Here's one of the many things I love about this story: **verse 5 of Luke 19** says, "When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.'"

Did you notice Jesus called Zacchaeus by *his name*? Sure, this could indicate Jesus' familiarity with the high officials of Jericho, but more likely, this is an example of Jesus' divine knowledge. Jesus knew what kind of life Zacchaeus lived but still saw him as a person of value.

"So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly."

That's what the text says of Zacchaeus' reaction. Of course, the people grumbled. But once Jesus got to Zacchaeus' home, a change occurred. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus saw him, was attentive to him, and loved him.

"Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham'" (**Luke 19:8-9**).

Jesus initiates a relationship with the seeking Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus' experience with Jesus changes everything *in an instant*. He repents. He changes his life and priorities. He gives back to those he extorted four times the amount (which if you read **Numbers 5:7** was astronomically higher than what he owed!).

But that's what being one-on-one with Jesus does to a person. It changes them. Jesus restores your identity ("This man, too, is a son of Abraham"), and we give up everything to live life in conjunction with the Kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What similarities do you see between Zacchaeus' life and your own life?

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If Jesus asked to come into your home, how would you want to spend that time? How would it make you feel? What sort of changes to your life, like Zacchaeus, would you make if Jesus was hanging out with you every day?

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Why do you think Zacchaeus went above and beyond in paying back the people he extorted? What does that restitution have to do with his restored identity and new life in the Kingdom of God? What areas of your own life have been radically changed because of your restored identity in Christ and life in the Kingdom of God?

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Jesus' one-on-one interaction with Zacchaeus caused him to be outrageously generous to the poor.

For today's Scripture Survey, we're looking at some of the ways Jesus talks about wealth, generosity, and giving to the poor. One aspect of Zacchaeus' story that is often overlooked is how he did more than just pay back those he wronged. As the text says in **Luke 19:8**, Zacchaeus said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give **half of my possessions** to the **poor**."

Read the following texts from Luke and ask yourself these two questions:

- What does this say about God's heart for the poor and lowly?
- What does this warn me about money and wealth?

**Luke 4:16-21**

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**Luke 6:17-26**

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**Luke 12:32-34**

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**Luke 16:19-31**

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**Luke 18:18-25**

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Once you've finished reading and reflecting on these questions, ask yourself, "What is God perhaps inviting me to do as a result of this passage?" Share your response.

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We've heard the story: Jesus was passing through the influential town of Jericho. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so he ran ahead and climbed a tree.

**Read Luke 19:5.**

Imagine the shame Zacchaeus felt as people began to whisper to each other, "Jesus wants to hang out with HIM?" Remember, Zacchaeus was a crook and a thief. He extorted his friends and family for his own financial gain. No wonder people disliked him and shamed him!

Have you ever experienced a time when, like Zacchaeus, you did something you knew was wrong and people found out? Think back and write out how you felt and what you experienced.

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Ed Welch, author of a book called "Shame Interrupted" has an interesting insight. He wrote:

*There's a difference between shame and guilt. Guilt's message is, "I did something bad," and I need forgiveness. Shame's message is, "I am bad," which requires an identity shift and relational connection. Sin leaves both guilt and shame in its wake, and shame is what lingers even after forgiveness has been sought and granted. Shame feels like it's welded onto you, but guilt feels like something outside of you.*

This is what makes Jesus inviting himself to Zacchaeus' home so special. Jesus makes the relational connection with Zacchaeus *first*. He doesn't start by forgiving Zacchaeus of his sin. Instead, Jesus says, "I want to be in relationship with you." Jesus jumps right through the guilt and begins to help heal the deep wound of Zacchaeus' shame.

It's one thing to believe your sins have been forgiven. It's another thing to believe there is a divine love that wants to break through the shame and linger in your heart. Scientific research in the last 15 years has found a direct link between shame and reoccurring cycles of depression and anxiety.

If you struggle with shame from past choices, how does this encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus give you hope?

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What's your biggest area fear when it comes to Jesus' desire and ability to remove your shame?

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Meditate on **Romans 5:1-5**. Read this passage as a prayer of thanks to God for what he has done for those who have put their faith in Him.

We left off yesterday with Jesus breaking through the guilt and shame Zacchaeus felt as the crowd whispered around him. Knowing Zacchaeus' past, Jesus essentially said, "Come down from that tree, I'm coming over and we're going to hang out!"

Look at how Zacchaeus responds. **Read Luke 19:8-10.**

As a father, I've encountered something I call, "I'm sorry, but not really." This is when a child says they're sorry because they think that's what you want to hear, but they're not genuinely sorry. Sometimes "I'm sorry" is said half-heartedly, or even sarcastically, but as a parent you know it's not sincere. It takes time to teach your children that parents appreciate a sincere apology, but what they want even more is to see a decision to live differently.

The Bible has a word for this: repentance. To repent means to stop walking in a particular direction (in this case, away from God's moral design for our lives) and literally turn and walk towards him.

Isn't it amazing that Zacchaeus, overcome by divine love, does a complete 180 and decides to give away half his wealth and make restitutions for anyone he's wronged? That, my friend, is life transformation that only happens when we come face to face with God's love.

There's an astounding revelation about God made in Romans 2:4 where the apostle Paul writes, "...God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance." The reason God shows us mercy and kindness is that we would see it and it would cause us to make a change.

Are there actions and attitudes you've asked God to forgive, but have little to no intention of changing?

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What actions and attitudes do you need to repent of? Not just ask forgiveness for, but actually stop doing.

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What are you willing to do (seek help, intentional accountability, share your struggle with a trusted friend) to change the direction of your life to walk towards God?

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As a result of your reading and reflection this week, what's God inviting you into as a tangible representation of walking towards Him?

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Spend time asking God for courage to show you next steps, and thanking him for his kindness, forgiveness, and love.

## WITH JESUS ONE-ON-ONE PRACTICE

*"We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*"The person I'm most uncomfortable being alone with is myself. And that's okay, because I've become very good at avoiding myself...Self-avoidance is probably my most advanced skill set. I've developed it over the years in response to the burden of being alone, which can bring up so many unsettling truths."*

Alan Noble

As we've seen throughout this series, Jesus intentionally spent time one-on-one with those he encountered. As he welcomed them into his presence, they were faced with a choice to go their own way or to walk with him.

Jesus wants to intentionally spend time with us, too. We have a choice as to whether we accept his invitation to solitude. Ruth Haley Barton defines it this way: "Solitude, at its most basic and profound level, is simply an opportunity to be ourselves with God." When we spend time with God, he invites us to let go of any pretense and simply be with him as we are.

### PREPARING FOR THE PRACTICE

As you plan out your time of solitude, consider the following:

- Where can you go where you'll be free of distractions or interruptions? Choose a place where you can linger freely without anyone disrupting your time with God. Can you rest in this space as well?
- What timeframe can you set aside for God? Choose a timeframe that won't cause you anxiety but will also stretch you. Determine what you can do and set a time to be with God.
- Invite others to pray for you. Ask a friend or spouse, your life group, or a mentor to cover you in prayer for the time you have set aside to spend with God in solitude.

When the time comes, turn off your phone notifications, get away from technology and gather your Bible, a journal, and a pen. You might also want some colored pencils and paper, a candle, or anything that will help you settle into spending time with God. Consider putting a basket or bag together that contains everything you need so it will be easy to engage with God.

### PRACTICING SOLITUDE (HALF DAY TO FULL DAY)

As you create space to be one-on-one with Jesus, know he delights in spending time with you. Whether you're a brand-new believer or have followed Jesus for a long time, he's happy to spend whatever time with you that you set aside for him.



The following outline should fit in a two-hour window of time but can be expanded easily to fit to a whole day of solitude simply by taking space between each movement to rest or take a nap, enjoy a walk in nature, or linger longer in prayer or in the Scriptures. Trust that God will meet with you in the time you set aside.

### As you begin...

Take some time to linger in God's Word. Choose one or more of the Scriptures below. Read through them slowly and more than once. Try reading multiple translations or even listening to the text on the Bible app. If the passage is narrative, place yourself in the story to see what God might have to say to you. If it's a Psalm, imagine you're the writer and use the words as a prayer to God.

- **I Kings 19:1-19**
- **Psalm 27**
- **Psalm 63:1-11**
- **Mark 10:46-52**
- **Colossians 3:1-17**

Spend some time looking for God's presence in your life through the Prayer of Examen...

### THE EXAMEN: A PRAYER TO PRACTICE NOTICING GOD'S PRESENCE

The prayer of Examen is a simple, five-step prayer practice that helps us notice the presence of God throughout our day. It helps us to discern how God might be calling us in big and small ways. You can look back at a single day, the entire week, or even a larger season. Take some time and use this prayer to look for God's presence throughout your day.

### BE STILL

Quiet your mind and heart. Ask God to help you see where he has been at work. Ask him to show you what he wants you to see and learn. With God's help, be attentive to how his Spirit was working in and through you, others, and creation. Let yourself see your day as God sees it.

### GIVE THANKS

Gratitude cultivates our hearts and minds to see God in all our lives. Go through your day, giving thanks for all of God's good gifts to you—the small gifts and the bigger ones, too.

### PRAY THROUGH YOUR WEEK

Ask God to walk through the past week with you. As you walk through the events of your week, ask these questions: Did this moment draw me closer to God? Did I sense his presence in this moment? Did I lean into his presence or withdraw from it? If I leaned in, why? If I withdrew, why?

### REJOICE & SEEK FORGIVENESS

Rejoice in the moments God brought you closer. Confess (agree with God) and ask for forgiveness for those times when you resisted God's presence in your life. Thank God for the gift of awareness. Put on God's grace for the entire situation.

### LOOK TO TOMORROW

Just as God was with you in this week, he'll be faithful and be with you tomorrow. Invite God to be a part of each moment in the coming day. What do you need God's help with? Ask him for it. Commit the upcoming week to him. Ask him for a greater awareness of his presence. Thank him for his grace.

*Choose one or more of the spiritual practices listed on [thecreek.org/devotionals](http://thecreek.org/devotionals) or scan the included QR code. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to find several different practices you can use for your time of solitude with God. If you want to be free of your phone during your solitude time, print out the guides in advance.*



Below you'll find a simple way to practice silence and solitude daily adapted from *PracticingTheWay.org*.

### **IDENTIFY A TIME AND PLACE THAT WORKS WELL FOR YOU.**

*Time* - For most people, first thing in the morning works best. You're rested, fresh, and the day is young. For others, a more optimal time slot is when kids are napping in the late morning, or on a lunch break, after work, or before you go to bed. Feel free to experiment until you find the right fit. It doesn't matter which time, just that you find the time that's best for you.

*Place* - Find a place that's quiet and as distraction-free as possible. A comfortable chair with a blanket and candle nearby works well for a lot of people. Weather permitting, a park or nature reserve could also be good bets.

### **SET A MODEST GOAL AND BEGIN WHEREVER YOU ARE.**

*Beginners* - It's better to start small and work your way up. We recommend you start with ten minutes, 3-5 days a week.

*Intermediate* - If you already practice silence and solitude a few times a week, consider upping it to every day.

*Advanced* - If you already practice silence and solitude daily, consider upping your time (to say, an hour), or just giving your time a high-level of focus.

### **THEN, FOR THE PRACTICE...**

#### **1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable.**

For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start. Others do better lying on their back in a relaxed position. Some of you may prefer to do this exercise while walking or doing something simple with your hands, like laundry or drawing, to begin.

#### **2. Begin with a breathing prayer.**

Close your eyes. Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count four seconds in, four seconds wait, four seconds out, repeat). Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just "watch" your breath come and go. Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing. Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to-dos, and distractions. That's okay. Don't judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind starting to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, "Father..." or "Be still and know..." and come back to your breathing.

In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and 10 minutes is a home run.

#### **3. Spend a few minutes "abiding in the vine."**

Transition from your breathing prayer to "the practice of the presence of God." Notice God's presence all around you, in you. For some people it's helpful to imagine the Father is sitting in the chair across from you or on a throne. Welcome his love, joy, and peace from the Holy Spirit. If you want, open your mind and imagination to listen for God's voice, or get something off your chest in prayer. But the main goal here is simply to be with Jesus. Don't feel like you have to do anything. Just relax and enjoy his presence.

#### **4. Close in a prayer of gratitude and commit the rest of your day to the Father.**

A few things to note: You can't "succeed" or "fail" at this practice. All you can do is show up. Be patient. This takes some people years to master. Resist the urge to say, "I'm bad at this" or "This isn't for me." Don't judge yourself, especially if you're an overachiever type! If you're more of an active person, and sitting still isn't your forte, you might want to begin by doing this while also completing a stretching exercise or going on a walk somewhere quiet and distraction-free. Apply the same idea to a walking prayer, and just focus on your walking instead of your breathing.



## ROOTED RHYTHMS



Daily  
Devotion



Prayer



Freedom from  
Strongholds



Serve the  
Community



Sacrificial  
Generosity



Share Your  
Story



Celebration

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS/COMMENTARIES

- *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations* by Darrell L. Bock
- *Luke for Everyone (The New Testament for Everyone)* by Tom Wright
- *Four Gospels, One Jesus?: A Symbolic Reading* by Richard Burridge
- *Luke (The NIV Application Commentary)* by Darrell L. Bock
- *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird
- *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* by Craig L. Blomberg

### OTHER

- [www.bibleproject.com](http://www.bibleproject.com)

### SUPPORT AND HELP

- **Deepen Groups** - Deepen groups will help you navigate obstacles that you encounter as you pursue loving God and loving others. We have groups that cover a wide variety of topics (addiction, codependence, divorce, financial stewardship, sexual brokenness, grief, sexual abuse). Visit [thecreek.org/next-steps/deepen](http://thecreek.org/next-steps/deepen) for more information.
- **Care Appointments** - Care appointments are a one-on-one, one-hour sit-down with a pastor on our staff where you can go to receive encouragement, prayer, and resource recommendations. Find out more at [thecreek.org/get-help/care-appointment](http://thecreek.org/get-help/care-appointment).
- **Generous Matching Grants** - As you and your life group are looking for ways to serve, we know cost can often be a hindrance. The Generosity and Outreach Team wants to support your ideas and make them possible by providing a matching fund and help alleviate financial burdens. To learn more about how this process works and to complete an application, go to [thecreek.org/outreach](http://thecreek.org/outreach) and select Life Group Projects.
- **Contact Us** - For any additional help, email us at [contact@thecreek.org](mailto:contact@thecreek.org).



## VOMO

VOMO is a one-stop shop to find all our serving opportunities. You, your family, and your group can find the volunteer needs from Generosity & Outreach at The Creek and our ministry partners. These opportunities are updated frequently, so you can have different serving experiences to find the right fit. If you'd like a member of our team to come to one of your meetings to help your group decide what's right for you, email [TerriKilgore@thecreek.org](mailto:TerriKilgore@thecreek.org).



## MISSION, VISION, PRIORITIES

### MISSION

Love God, Love People, Make Disciples

### VISION

Connecting people to Jesus

### PRIORITIES

Worship, Gospel, Kingdom, Scripture, Identity, Community, Generosity

#### **Worship** • "All for the glory of God"

We seek God's presence and honor in everything we do.

#### **Gospel** • "Jesus Christ is Lord"

We proclaim the good news of Jesus and center our lives on his teaching and example.

#### **Kingdom** • "As it is in heaven"

We desire to see the fame and deeds of God renewed in our day—in Indianapolis and around the world.

#### **Scripture** • "Inspired and alive"

We delight in God's Word and live it out on a daily basis.

#### **Identity** • "Children of God"

We receive God's love and embrace our adoption as sons and daughters.

#### **Community** • "Devoted to one another"

We value relationships and build our lives together as family.

#### **Generosity** • "More blessed to give"

We share our resources to enrich others and advance God's kingdom.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear reader,

There's a sort of proverb or wise saying that says, "Many hands make light a heavy load." But sometimes, when carrying a cumbersome object, it helps not only to have many hands, but also experienced ones.

That's the kind of help that a project like this one has had. This project has had not only all kinds of people contributing in various ways (ideating, writing, editing, designing, etc.), but people contributing in helpful, wise ways.

*Turn it like this. Let's try that. Lift up this end here. Lower your end there.*

Ah, finally! We made it through the door!

This is a shout out to all of you who have helped to carry this bulky devotional book through the proverbial door. Thank you so much for your time, energy, and thoughtfulness.

Special thanks (in no particular order, of course!) for the completion of this project goes out to Jake Tandy, Clare Rice, Laura Dingman, Kim Harvey, Brock Pickett, Caroline Lamkin, Leslie Huckstep, Chad Monahan, Dan Hamel, Jared Ensminger, Eric Denney, Parker Radecki, Rhett Morehouse, our graphic designer, our fabulous editors, and the entire Generosity & Outreach team at The Creek.

This project wouldn't have been possible without all of you! Thanks so much!

Grace and peace,  
Emerson



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