

50 Life Studies

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***"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.
My Father will love him, and we will come to him
and make our home with him." John 14:23 (NIV)***

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Dear Believer in Jesus,

When you put your faith in Jesus the Messiah, you trusted Him to forgive your sin and give you eternal life. This is a priceless gift that no one can take away from you. Throughout our lives, we believers will rejoice in the amazing grace that God gives us through the death and resurrection of His Son.

But your new life in Jesus is not just for going to heaven. You made a courageous step to leave your old life of sin and live for him today in this dark world. This is why God has given us two other amazing gifts – His Holy Word and His Holy Spirit. His word helps us learn what God wants, and His Holy Spirit gives us the power to live for Him. We become His lights, helping others to see. We ask: What must we do NOW to follow Jesus? He is our Lord, isn't He? We have new lives, don't we? So, how can we honor God with our lives today?

If we are serious about living for Jesus we need to ask ourselves some difficult questions:

- **Do I know the teachings and commands of Jesus?**
- **Am I willing to study them carefully? Am I following them each day?**
- **Am I willing, with His help, to teach them to others?**

FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS OBEYING HIS COMMANDS

Jesus said in Luke 6:46, ***“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46)***

How can we, in the 21st Century, obey Jesus if we have not carefully studied His teachings? Here are three reasons, from Jesus' own words, why we should learn and obey His commands.

- 1) **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** (Matthew 28:18) Jesus said this after he had risen from the dead. When we obey Him, we can know that we are not following the words of man, but the words of God. Jesus said before He went to the cross **“The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”** (John 14:10)
- 2) **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with**

him.” (John 14:23) Many in this world say with their lips that they love Jesus, but they don’t obey Him. In this verse Jesus helps us see that if we truly love Him, obeying Him will naturally flow from our lives. He then explains that the result will be that we will have the honor and joy of fellowship with God!

- 3) **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.** (John 15:5) How can we say we are remaining in Jesus if we don’t remember and follow His teachings? “Remaining in Jesus” means we are not working independently, but submitting to His Spirit and His way. As we do, we are assured that good and abundant “fruit” will come from our lives.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book has 50 studies from the life and teachings of Jesus. It has been written to help you learn His way, or if you already know His way, to help you teach others. To use this book, you will need a New Testament. You may want to use these studies for private devotions. If possible, however, study with others. This book was especially designed for home fellowships. Group discussion and prayer is important to help us grow with other believers. All over the world communities of believers are studying the commands of Jesus. Each week they are seeing Jesus transform their own lives and the lives of others.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. Matthew 7:24-25

May God’s kingdom grow through you as you follow Jesus and help others see the beauty of His ways.

Bible Study Principles and Guidelines for Leaders

Learning from God's Word, the Bible, is a great privilege! We must understand, however, the type of learning that God requires. If we study God's word like a history student who is learning facts in order to pass an exam, we will miss what God wants. His teaching is not for our heads but for our hearts. He wants us to *obey* what we learn.

These studies on the life and teachings of Jesus the Messiah (the Christ) are designed to help you consider carefully His words and obey them. Here are three important ways to do that:

- 1) **OBSERVE THE STORY CLOSELY.** – Some questions in each study will ask you to *look closely at certain verses* to see what really happened and what really was said. Set your opinion aside at this stage and think: "What does it actually say?"
- 2) **THINK ABOUT THE MEANING.** – Every word of Jesus is important. Some of the questions will ask you to *think about what Jesus was trying to teach us by His words or actions*. We need to understand His meaning before we obey.
- 3) **APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE** – Toward the end of the study you will see questions that make you pause and think about *how to put His words to practice in your life* in a way that honors Him. Don't rush over these questions. Your world will change as you submit to His way.

GROUP LEADERS – Here are some guidelines to make these studies meaningful to every group member:

- **As the group leader, study the passage and questions alone, before you meet with the group.** You will be better prepared to help the group members if you yourself are acquainted with the study beforehand.
- **Begin your group study with prayer and faith that He will be with you to help you understand and obey His word.**
- **The most important part of these studies is the Bible passage itself.** As a group, make sure you read the assigned passage at least once.

- **Make sure group members look carefully at the verses before they give their answers.** The studies are designed to discover what Jesus actually taught, not to guess about what we think he said.
- **Be sure to have the group answer each question, one by one.** There are sometimes 3 or 4 questions under each item. Don't read the questions all at once. Give an answer to each question before going on to the next.
- **These studies are made for group discussion, not for anyone to preach or teach the whole lesson.** If the group is large, not everyone will be able to comment on every question because of limited time. However, try to give everyone in the group the opportunity to briefly share his thoughts on a few questions. Encourage all to participate and none to dominate the discussion.
- **If possible, sit in a circle so group members can see each other.** This will feel more informal than a "classroom" style, with chairs in rows and a leader doing all the teaching up at the front. A circle will help the group members feel more free to participate in the discussion.
- **As much as possible, make sure that everyone has their own copy of the lesson and a Bible.** Encourage group members to take the study home and do it again with their family or friends.

Introductory Studies

THE HEART OF A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

He began to teach them... (Matthew 5:2)

Jesus taught the people many things in the three years of his ministry. But what were the first things he taught them? What did he think we needed to know from the beginning?

The very first words of Jesus' teachings in the New Testament are found in Matthew 5. He begins his teaching ministry by telling us who the truly happy people in the world are. He knew that all people seek happiness. But he also knew that humans usually seek happiness in the wrong ways. Our focus is often on the wrong things.

The two studies in this section help us look at our own lives with honest hearts and ask: "Do I know the way to find true happiness? Do I really want it?"

1. Discover The Way Of True Happiness

Part 1

Opening discussion:

What types of people do we normally think are "blessed" or "happy" in this world? What type of people are usually envied?

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

1. Look quickly at each verse (vs. 3-12). In every verse, what main word is repeated?

2. According to Jesus, who is "blessed" in verse 3?

To be "poor in spirit" means to admit that we are spiritually poor people... in other words, not to be proud or arrogant, but to admit we need God in our lives.

3. Why is it so difficult for us to admit our spiritual poverty?

Why does Jesus say the poor in spirit are blessed? (v. 3)

4. What will those who mourn receive? (v. 4) Do you think that the poor in spirit feel a need to mourn?

Often we think that mourning happens only at funerals. But followers of Jesus who want to see God's kingdom come to this world will mourn over other things, too. For example, if we follow Jesus we will grieve over our sin because we see that it dishonors God and hurts other people. We will also grieve over the selfishness in the world.

Do you mourn over your own sin? What in this country or around the world causes you to mourn?

5. Who will inherit the earth? (v. 5)

To be "meek" means to be able to control yourself, so that you treat others with gentleness and humility. If we realize that we need God, how will that help us to become meek people?

6. How do you think meek people will inherit the earth when selfish, violent men often take control?

Does this verse help meek people to be patient and trust that God will fulfill his promise in this verse?

7. Read verse 6 again.

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Have you ever felt an intense "thirst" to know God and to be righteous before him? If so, have you ever told him of your desire?

Do you believe that God will fulfill this desire?

8. What did Jesus promise in this verse to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

9. **Read John 7:37-38.**

Again Jesus is talking about people who are thirsty. Jesus said that if we are thirsty we can come to him and drink. What does that mean to you?

How did Jesus, in verse 38 and 39, explain the meaning of verse 37?

Have you begun to drink the living water that comes from Jesus?
Can you tell the group about it?

10. Which of the verses that we have studied today especially touched your heart? Can you tell the group about it?

Take time as a group to ask the Lord to plant these godly attitudes like a seed in your heart, so that you will become more like Jesus.

2. Discover The Way Of True Happiness

Part 2

Opening Discussion:

We looked at the first four special characteristics of Jesus' followers [for English speakers: they are called "Beattitudes"] in the last study. Can you repeat them by memory? These first 12 verses of Matthew 5 teach all followers of Jesus some of the proper attitudes we should have toward God and others. Do you believe these attitudes are what people around the world should have? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

1. How would you define mercy? (v. 7) Can you think of someone in the past who was merciful to you when you didn't deserve it?
2. If you are merciful, what will you receive? (v. 7) Why do you think that the way we treat others will affect the way God treats us?

Read Matthew 18:21-35. What's the main message of this story?

3. Read Matt. 5:8. Who will see God?
Have you ever thought what it would be like to see God?
Why do you think only the pure in heart will see God?
4. Do you think you are one who will see God? Why or why not?
5. Read verse 9. If peacemakers are called "sons of God," what does that tell us about God Himself?
6. Is there a need in this world for peacemakers? How can we be peacemakers in our homes and in our society? Can you think of a particular situation in your life where you need to be a peacemaker?
7. Will people always accept our efforts to make peace in society?
8. These verses we have studied talk about righteous people...people whose attitudes are right before God. From memory, can you name the qualities given in verses 3-9?
9. Read verses 10-12 again. What does Jesus say may happen to those who are righteous before God? Why are some people hostile to God's people?
10. Jesus speaks directly to his followers in verse 11. What does he say will happen to them? Why should they rejoice?

11. Is it easy to be a follower of Jesus the Messiah? Jesus says such people are blessed, meaning fortunate or truly happy. Does this happiness come from material things or spiritual wealth?
12. Does the world get its happiness in the same way as a follower of Jesus the Messiah? Has this study challenged you to be different from the world? In what way?

***"Then they asked him,
'What must we do to do the works God requires?'***

***Jesus answered,
'The work of God is this:
to believe in the one he has sent'."***
John 6:28-29

REPENT AND BELIEVE

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:14,15

Followers of Jesus know they are commanded to repent. But how do we repent? What does God want us to do? (Do we sometimes misunderstand what it means to repent?)

And what does it mean to “believe the good news”?

The words “repent” and “believe” are used throughout the New Testament. We begin our walk with Jesus through repentance and faith. And we continue our walk with God throughout our whole lives in an attitude of repentance and faith.

The studies in this section help us better understand these concepts which are foundational for all disciples of Jesus.

3. Don't Trust In Your Own Righteousness

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

(James 4:6)

Opening Discussion:

Do you think God weighs our good deeds with our bad deeds on a scale, like fruit is weighed at a bazaar? Explain your thoughts to the group.

Read Luke 18:9-14

1. To whom did Jesus speak this parable? (v. 9)
2. Two men went to the temple to pray. (v. 10) Before looking at the box below, can you tell who the Pharisees and the tax collectors were?

Who were the Pharisees & the tax collectors in Jesus' day?

The Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders. The people respected them but Jesus said they wore a religious mask. In truth their hearts were far from God. Jesus rebuked them because they were hypocrites, and he commanded his disciples not to become like them. The tax collectors were corrupt men who cheated the people. The Jews hated the tax collectors. In this parable, both of these men were praying in the temple.

3. The Pharisee in Jesus' parable was very confident when he prayed. What did he say to God? (vs. 11-12) In your opinion, why did the Pharisee think he needed to remind God of all his good deeds?
4. Do you detect any pride in the Pharisee's prayer about his own righteousness before God? (Look at v. 11 again.) Did the Pharisee ask forgiveness for any of his sins?
5. Read the tax collector's prayer again (v. 13). Did he remind God of his good deeds, like the Pharisee? What did he desperately ask God for? Did the tax collector put any confidence in his own righteousness before God?
6. According to Jesus, WHO went home justified (or made right) before God (v. 14)?

The Bible teaches that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). We have no hope of being right with God if we trust in

our good deeds, like the Pharisee. We are all unclean and need God's cleansing. But there is hope in Jesus Christ. He commanded that we repent and believe in him.

7. Many years after Jesus ascended to the Father, John the apostle explained the importance of confessing our sins and trusting in Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins.

Read 1 John 1:8- 2:2.

Do these verses encourage you to be honest with God about your sins? Explain in your own words what these verses teach us.

THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN LIFE.

8. Do you need to repent of sins that you have done?

Are there things you are ashamed about?

Jesus taught that sin is not just terrible criminal acts (like murder) or shameful social sins (like adultery). He taught that sin begins in the heart of every person. If we lust, we have committed adultery in our hearts. If we speak angry words, we have murdered people. If we hate and curse others, we are not like our Father in heaven who loves all people. Do you know that you need forgiveness from God for the wrong things you have done?

9. The New Testament teaches that God's mercy is a free gift to all who have faith in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ died, like a lamb sacrifice, for the sins of the world. Like the tax collector, do you see your need for God's mercy? Be careful that you do not trust in your righteousness, like the Pharisee who deceived himself. Are you aware that honesty and confession of your sin before God are necessary to receive forgiveness?

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER:

Now gently lead the group in prayer to confess their sins to the Lord. Be sure to assure them that Jesus died that they might know God's forgiveness of their sins. Teach them to trust in Jesus as the one who took away their sins.

4. Believe In Jesus' Death For Your Sin

Part 1

Introduction: The purpose of this series is to learn about **the teachings of Jesus and his commandments** for all who follow him. Jesus taught his followers to believe in him. Why? Today and in the next study, we will read about his death which happened approximately 2,000 years ago. Millions believe he is the Savior of the world. We must understand the purpose of his death in order to believe in Him. The New Testament teaches that He obeyed His Father and came to the earth to die as a sacrifice for our sins.

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever made a promise to God or to yourself that you will never do a certain thing, and then you found yourself doing that same thing? What should we do when we see that we are weak?

Read Mark 14:27-31.

1. In verse 27, what did Jesus say would happen at his death?
Then, in verse 28, he predicted an amazing thing that would happen after his death. What did He predict?
2. In verse 29 Peter said he would not fall away. What was Jesus' answer to Peter? (v. 30)
Peter thought he was strong enough to go to death with Jesus (v. 31). If you were Peter at that moment, would you be offended if Jesus told you that you were going to deny Him?

Read Mark 14:32-42.

3. When Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to pray, what did he tell them about his inner feelings? (vs. 33-34)
4. The disciples slept through Jesus' time of deep sadness and prayer. Why was it important to Jesus that they "watch and pray" (vs. 37-38)
5. Jesus went back to pray, and then returned again to see his disciples sleeping. On the third time, what did he say to his disciples? (vs. 41-42)

When dark times come upon us, we often find our spirit is willing to pray, but our flesh is weak. How can we find strength from God to pray so that we do not fall into temptation?

Read Mark 14:43-65.

6. How did Judas betray Jesus? (vs. 44-46) What happened when Jesus was arrested? (v. 50)

Jesus had told his disciples that one of them would betray him (Mark 14:18-21) and that all the disciples would fall away. Nevertheless, what do you think Jesus felt when these things began to happen?

7. The Jewish religious leaders were jealous of Jesus. They didn't like his teachings that revealed their hypocrisy. What type of people did they bring in to testify against Jesus? (vs. 55-59)
8. What question did the high priest ask Jesus? (v. 61) What was Jesus' answer? (v. 62)

After Jesus gave that answer, what did they say? What did they decide? (vs. 63,64)

Read Mark 14:66-72.

9. Peter's denial of Jesus became much stronger on the third time. How? (v. 71) When Peter remembered that Jesus had predicted his denial, what did he do?

Surely Peter also remembered what Jesus had said to people who followed him. He said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven, but whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33).

How can we grow in our faith so that we are not ashamed of following Jesus?

The next time we gather, we will finish looking at the death of Jesus.

Pray for each other, that you may grow in your faith and not be ashamed of following Jesus the Messiah.

5. Believe In Jesus' Death For Your Sin

Part 2

Opening Discussion:

In the first part of this study on our Lord's death, we looked at some of the things that happened on the night Jesus was arrested. Do you remember what the disciples did when Jesus asked them to "watch and pray" with Him? What did Judas do? What did Peter do?

Now let's look at the rest of the story.

Read Mark 15:1-15.

1. What did Pilate do every Passover? (v. 6)
2. Who was Barabbas? (v. 7) Who incited the crowd to ask that Barabbas be released at this Passover? (v. 11)
3. For what reason did the chief priests deliver Jesus over to Pilate? (vs. 9-10)
4. When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, what did the crowd shout? (vs. 13-15)

Read Mark 15:16-20.

5. Describe how the soldiers mocked and beat Jesus. (vs. 16-20)

Read Mark 15:21-32.

6. Where did they take Jesus to be crucified? (v. 22)
What did the soldiers give Jesus to drink? (v. 23)
Why do you think that Jesus would not drink it?
7. Who was Jesus crucified with? (vs. 27-28)
8. How did the crowd around Jesus mock Him? (vs. 29-32)

Let's look at how they misunderstood what Jesus had said and why He really went to the cross:

- a) They quoted His saying that he would tear down the temple and raise it up in 3 days. Turn to John 2:18-22 to see what Jesus meant by it.
- b) They mocked him by saying that he had saved others but he could not save himself. Read the following verses to see why he did not save himself from the cross.

Matthew 20:17-19: What did Jesus prophesy would happen to Him?

Mark 10:44-45: What did Jesus tell His disciples He came to do?

John 10:14-18: What did Jesus say He had the power to do? (v. 17-18)

John 12:23-33: Jesus, predicting His death in verse 23 and 24, explains that His heart is troubled. But He prays an unusual prayer in verse 27 and 28. What does He ask from the Father?

Read Mark 15:33-41.

9. When Jesus died, what happened in the Jewish temple nearby in Jerusalem? (vs. 37-38)

It is important to know Jewish culture and history to understand what happened here. The Jewish temple was where the priests sacrificed animals for the people's sins. Once a year the high priest would take the blood of a lamb into a certain room of the temple – the Holy of Holies-- to offer that sacrifice to God for the sins of the people. No one else could enter that room where the Holy Presence of God was. The priest passed into that room through a huge, thick curtain. The curtain represented separation from God. Now on the cross, Jesus, the lamb of God, gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. At the moment He died, the curtain, as with powerful invisible hands, was split in two, from top to bottom. It was as if God opened the curtain to show people that they are now reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah. Through repentance and faith in Jesus the Messiah, we may have confidence that our sins are forgiven and we are washed clean.

Read Mark 15:42-47.

10. What was done with Jesus' body?

But this is not the end of the story. The next study will look at the amazing events that happened after Jesus' death and burial.

How has this story of the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah affected you? Share with the group your thoughts and your emotions.

How does this story affect your faith in the love of God for you?

Thank God together for His great love and the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah for our sins.`

6. Believe In Jesus' Resurrection And Receive Eternal Life

Opening Discussion:

In our last two studies we looked at Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. What do you remember about Jesus' death? Try to recall as many details as you can.

It is now the third day since Jesus died—Sunday morning, very early. Let's read about the amazing events that happened.

Read John 20:1-18.

1. What surprised and upset Mary Magdalene when she arrived at the tomb? (Look at vs. 1-2.) Who did she immediately go to tell?
2. Read verses 3-9 again. What did Peter and John (the "disciple Jesus loved") do? Describe their actions.

According to verse 8, when John saw the empty tomb, what was his response? At this time, did either Peter or John fully understand what had happened?

3. Read verses 10-13. What did Mary see this time when she looked into the tomb?

Try to imagine the grief that Mary is feeling. She believed that Jesus was the Messiah. She loved and served Him. She watched Him die a terrible death. Now she has come to the place of his burial and even His body is gone!

4. Now read verses 14-18. Who came and stood next to Mary? When did she recognize who it was? How do you think she felt now?

Imagine how Mary's grief must have turned to joy and amazement. The impossible has happened!

5. Several times during His ministry Jesus raised others from the dead. When His close friend Lazarus died, Jesus spoke this to his grieving sisters: **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."** (John 11:25-26) According to these verses, what does Jesus' resurrection mean for you and me?
6. **Read verses 19-20.** Who else did Jesus appear to on the day of His resurrection? How did He prove to them that He was Jesus who had been crucified? How did the disciples respond? Can you imagine how excited they must have been?

7. **Now read verses 24-29.** What did Thomas say when the disciples told him they had seen the Lord (v. 25)?

How did Thomas respond when Jesus showed Himself to him? (v. 28)
Who does Jesus say is blessed in verse 29?

8. How can we know that Jesus really rose from the dead? Did He appear to others? **Read I Corinthians 15:3-7.** Name the people that the writer (Paul) says Jesus appeared to after His resurrection.

Read also Acts 1:1-3. How many days after His resurrection was Jesus on earth before He returned to heaven? During this time, what did He show to his disciples? (v. 3)

9. Do you think the disciples were convinced that Jesus truly was alive? Historians believe that ten of Jesus' twelve disciples were killed for their faith in Jesus. Would they have died for something that they thought might be a lie?
10. **Now turn back to John 20 and read verses 30-31.** Why did John write about Jesus' life on earth? What does He want us to have? (v. 31)

What do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus came into the world and died as God's sacrifice for your sin? Do you believe that He rose again from the dead and conquered the power of death? If so, tell Him now. Think about how wonderful it is that you never need to fear death again!

Read John 11:25-26 again. Thank and praise Jesus for His indescribable gift of eternal life.

7. Understand Why Messiah Had To Die And Believe In Him

Opening Discussion:

Can you tell about a dark time in your life when you could not find any hope? What kept you from going into total despair?

This story takes place on the same day that Jesus rose from the dead.

Read Luke 24:13-53.

1. Read verses 13-16 again. As the disciples were walking and talking, who came up and walked with them? Did they know who it was?
2. Read verses 17-24. What were the two disciples discussing?
Read Jesus' response to them in verses 25-26. Jesus is surprised that they don't understand why He had to die. How did He then explain this to them in verse 27?
3. What title did Jesus use for Himself in verse 26?

WHAT DID THE WORD "MESSIAH" MEAN TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Jewish prophets had prophesied for hundreds of years before Jesus came that the "Messiah" would come. The prophesies spoke of someone whom God would send who would be their Savior. They usually thought that this meant that a warrior would come. He would save the Jewish people from their oppressors. Now Jesus was helping them to understand that He *was* the Messiah. But their greatest enemy was not the Romans who ruled them. It was sin which kept them in bondage. They needed the Messiah to take their sin away.

When Jesus explained that the Messiah had to die, these words helped the disciples to understand that Jesus' death was not a hopeless tragedy. God was in control and he used the plans of evil men to fulfill His purposes. God had told the prophets hundreds of years before that the Messiah would die as a savior. Jesus Himself had told the disciples several times that He would be crucified and rise again, but their minds were darkened and they could not understand.

4. Isaiah was an important prophet who lived about 600 years before Jesus. **Read Isaiah 52:12-15 and 53:1-12.** Notice how many things

Isaiah prophesied that were fulfilled in Jesus death, resurrection, and exaltation.

5. Turn back to Luke 24 and read verses 28-35 again. When did they recognize who Jesus was? (v. 31) How had His talk with them on the road affected them? (v. 32)
6. What did they do immediately? When they arrived back in Jerusalem, what news had the disciples already heard? (v. 34) Imagine how their darkest day is now turning into the most glorious day ever!
7. What happened in verse 36? Why were the disciples frightened? (v. 37)

The disciples had been mourning the death of Jesus and now he is standing before them. What do you think your response would have been if you had been one of the disciples?

8. Jesus had to convince them that he was not a ghost. How did he do that? (vs. 38-42)

The disciples were not only afraid, they were also confused. Jesus had died, but now he was alive. Surely they were wondering why this terrible thing had happened.

9. After He tried to convince them that He was not a ghost, what did Jesus explain to his disciples of the reason why he had to die? (vs. 44-47)

Notice that as He did for the two disciples on the road, Jesus again explains how His death and resurrection fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. His suffering for our sin was God's plan from the beginning of time.

10. What did Jesus say was to be preached to all nations? (v. 47) In whose name (authority) was it to be preached?
11. Notice that Jesus says that his sacrifice of death was for the forgiveness of all people, not just for the Jewish people. (See again v. 47)

Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again for **you** also? Do you believe that your sins are forgiven when you turn from your old way of life? When you trust in Jesus to wash away the past do you believe He gives you a new life in Him?

12. At the end of the chapter, what happened to Jesus? (v. 51) What did the disciples do when they saw him going into heaven? (v. 52)
13. **Turn to Philippians 2 and read verses 9-11.** Where is Jesus now? These verses tell us that everyone will eventually bow and worship Him. Will you bow and worship Jesus now as your Savior and Lord? If you have not done so before, tell Jesus now that you are trusting in Him to take away your sin and give you new life. Thank Him for His wonderful gift of love for you!

8. Be Born Of God's Spirit

Opening Discussion:

Of all the things we do in our lifetime, what do you think are the most important things?

Read John 3: 1-21.

1. Who was Nicodemus? (v. 1) He came at night to talk with Jesus (v. 2) and it seems he came alone. Could there be a reason for this?
2. What did Nicodemus say to Jesus? (v. 2)
What was Jesus' response? (v. 3)
3. Nicodemus was confused by Jesus' statement that a man must be born twice.

Read verses 4 - 8 again carefully.

In your own words, tell how Jesus explains this idea to Nicodemus?

4. Nicodemus was still amazed at this new thought. (v.9)
How does Jesus respond to his confusion? (v. 10)
Jesus then calls the new birth an "earthly thing" (v.12).
Why would a spiritual birth be called an earthly thing?
5. Read verses 13-15 again. Do you know the story of Moses lifting up the snake in the desert? (You can read this story in Numbers 21:4-9.)
Jesus compares something to Moses lifting up the snake. What comparison does Jesus make?
6. Verses 16 and 17 in a few words clearly explain the message of the Bible. In your own words, what are these verses saying?

Now let's look at these verses part by part:

- What motivated God to send the Son into the world?
- God sent the Son for a purpose. What was that purpose?
- Who can obtain eternal life from the Son?
- What was NOT the reason that God sent His Son into the world?

Read again verses 18-21.

7. What do you think "light" means in verses 19 – 21?

Think about your own life. How have you hidden from God's light?

Verse 19 says that **“light has come into the world.”** Many people run from the light of Christ. They refuse to allow His Spirit to cleanse them and give them new life. But they don’t know that they are actually running from God’s love. If they will stop running away from Him and turn and come to Christ, then they will be born again, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus. This is called repentance and faith. In other words, they will discover a brand new life that comes from the Holy Spirit. They will find forgiveness and mercy.

Read John 12: 44-50.

8. Why did Jesus come into the world? (v. 46)

When we believe in Jesus Christ, what does that mean? (vs. 44-45)

Who commanded Christ to speak these things? (vs. 49-50).

9. Jesus explains in this study that we must be born again if we are to see God’s kingdom. God in His great love is commanding all people to turn from their sins and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of their sins. Then they will experience the Holy Spirit coming into their lives and giving them a new birth.

Have you experienced that new birth that happens when God’s Holy Spirit comes to live within you? Are you ready now?

9. Receive The Word In A Good And Noble Heart

The Parable Of The Sower And The Seed

Opening Discussion:

Why do you think God is invisible? Why doesn't He reveal Himself and His truths openly to all the world?

Read Matthew 13: 1-17.

1. Jesus got into a boat to teach. Why? (See v. 2)
2. Look again at verses 4-9. The farmer is sowing seed. Name the 4 places where the seeds fell. What happened to the seeds in each type of soil?
3. What do you think Jesus was trying to teach in this story?
4. Study verses 13-15. Why did Jesus speak to the people in parables?
5. If people really used their eyes and ears, and if they tried to understand the things of God, what would happen? (See v. 15)

Now, read Jesus' explanation of the parable: Matthew 13: 18-23.

6. What does the seed represent in this story? (See v. 19)
Jesus uses the illustration of birds eating seed along the path to draw a picture of Satan carrying spiritual truths away from our hearts. When we hear God's word, what must we have to prevent Satan from stealing it away from us? Why is this important?
7. The hot sun scorched the little plant in verse 6. What does the sun represent? (See v. 21) Why did the plant wither?
How deep is your root in Christ?
What can you do to push your roots deeper?
8. What did the thorns do in this story? (v. 7) What do the thorns represent? (v. 22)
9. Jesus said that worry crowds out the message. How?
Do you have worries that keep you from trusting God? How can you defeat them, so they don't crowd out your faith? (See **Philippians 4:6-7.**)
10. Jesus says in verse 22 that wealth is deceitful. How does wealth "lie" to us? Do only the rich listen to those lies? Are you listening to those lies?

11. What is “good soil?” (v. 23) This parable is also found in Mark 4 and Luke 8. Perhaps Jesus told this parable many times in his travels. Mark and Luke record other important ingredients of “good soil.” What are they? (Read Mark 4:20 and Luke 8:15.) Do you desire to grow in these qualities?
12. What does it mean to “**produce a crop**” for Jesus? Many claim to be followers of Jesus, but their lives don’t show it. Is our faith genuine if we never produce good fruit for Christ?
13. If you had to pick one soil that represents you which would you pick? Why? What keeps your faith from growing? What can you do about it? Take some time to pray about this now.

10. Repent And Make Restitution

Opening Discussion:

Think back to when you first heard about Jesus the Messiah. What did you find most attractive about Him?

Read Luke 19:1-10.

1. What do we learn about Zacchaeus before he met Jesus from verses 2-4?
2. Verse 3 tells us that Zacchaeus was eager to see Jesus. Probably he had heard about the great man who did miracles and taught wonderful truth. Have you ever met someone who has learned some things about Jesus and is eager to know more? How can you help them to learn more about Him?
3. Do you think Zacchaeus was expecting Jesus to want to come to his home? Why or why not?

Note: Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Romans who controlled the Jewish nation. The Jews called them "sinners" because they became wealthy by taking more taxes than Rome required. They kept the extra for themselves. In general, they were hated by other Jews.

4. How did Jesus risk His reputation when He entered Zacchaeus' home? What did the people say when Jesus entered the home? (v. 7)
5. Gossip is a powerful force that Satan uses in society to put fear in our hearts. Did the people's gossip prevent Jesus from going into Zacchaeus' home?
Did Jesus fear what people said or thought? Do you let gossip hinder you from helping a needy person?
6. The Jewish people saw Jesus as a holy teacher. They thought He wouldn't go into a "sinner's" home. What wrong concept about God and his concern for sinners did they have? **(See what the Apostle Paul said about this in I Timothy 1:15.)**
7. Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus, but he discovered that Jesus was also seeking him. When you share about Jesus Christ with others, does it help you to know that Jesus is still seeking people?

How can you become more like Christ in seeking all lost people—even the ones society looks down on?

8. Now read what Zacchaeus says in verse 8. How did he show that he had truly turned away from his sin and wanted to live a new life?

What was more important to him—his money, or having a right relationship with God?

Note: In the Old Testament, there was a law that said if a man had stolen from another man or taken money from him in an unrighteous way (by extortion, by lying, etc.), he must repay what he took in full and add an extra twenty percent to it. This is called restitution.

9. Why do you think God gave this law? What would happen in society if people made restitution for sins they have done?

How can restitution help to restore the sinner? Do you think that it might also restore the broken relationship with the person sinned against? How?

How do you think the people felt who received money back from Zacchaeus?

10. Read verses 9 and 10 again. What did Jesus say? How did salvation come to Zacchaeus' house?

11. Sometimes we think repentance is only between the sinner and God. But this story shows that repentance is also between the sinner and the people he has hurt by his sin. If we have true sorrow for our sin, we will want to do everything we can to make it right.

Have you hurt anyone by your past sins? Have you wrongly taken money or something else from someone? Have you destroyed something that you need to pay for? If so, how can you show them that you have truly repented of your sin? Ask God to show you what you need to do to make restitution.

11. Honor The Son Just As You Honor The Father

What Did Jesus Say About Himself? What Did Others Say About Him? Part 1

Opening Discussion:

Are you confident that your faith in Jesus is the right way? If someone asks you why you believe in Jesus the Messiah, what will you tell them?

Read John 5:1-15.

1. Describe the wonderful miracle that Jesus performed in verses 1-9. Were the Jewish leaders glad that the man had been healed? What were they upset about? (Read also v. 16.)

Now read verses 16-30.

2. Look again at verses 17 & 18. Why were the Jewish leaders trying to kill Jesus?
3. Read again verses 19 – 23. According to Jesus, where did He get His ability (authority) to do the miracles that He did? (v. 19)
4. What two things does Jesus do that the Father has given him to do? (v. 21 & 22) Why has the Father given Jesus these things to do? (v. 23)
5. Do you honor God your heavenly Father? Do you believe He wants you to also honor His Son, Jesus? Can we truly honor God if we don't honor Jesus? (v. 23)

God does not condemn our honest questions and doubts about who Jesus is. That is why Jesus talked about these things to his disciples. He even tried to help the unbelieving, hypocritical Pharisees to believe in Him. The rest of this study will help us to understand why we can trust in Jesus in the same way we trust in God the Father.

6. Read verses 24 – 30. What will happen to those who hear Jesus' words and believe the One who sent Him? (vs. 24-26)
In verses 26-27 Jesus repeats the two things the Father has given Him. What are they?

So far, we see three things that Jesus is saying about Himself to the unbelieving Jews: 1) God is His Father, that is, He is equal with God; 2) He has life in Himself and gives it to those who believe in Him; and 3) He has been given authority to judge all people.

Jesus now begins to speak of other testimonies about who He is.

Read verses 31 - 35.

7. Most of the Jews believed John the Baptist was a mighty prophet. He led many of the Jewish people back to God by his powerful preaching. What does Jesus say about John's testimony? (v. 33)
8. Let's look at John's testimony about Jesus. **Turn to John 1 and read verses 29-34.** What did John call Jesus in v. 29?
Jesus was born after John. What is John saying in verse 30?
9. Read verses 32 - 34. What did God tell John about Jesus? (v. 33) What is John's final testimony about Jesus? (v. 34)
10. Now that you have studied these two passages about who Jesus is, what do you say about Him? If you have honest questions about who Jesus is, tell them to God. Ask Him to help you to know the truth.

Next time we will study the second part of John 5. Here we will see more testimonies about Jesus.

12. Honor The Son Just As You Honor The Father

What Did Jesus Say About Himself? What Did Others Say About Him? Part 2

Opening Discussion:

In Part 1 of this study we read John 5:1-35 and John 1:29-34. Read these two passages again. In John 5, what did Jesus say to the people about who He was? In John 1, what did John the Baptist say about Jesus?

Read John 5:36-47.

1. Verses 36- 40 speak of three other testimonies of who Jesus is. Read these verses. According to verse 36, what is the testimony that is greater than John's?
2. Name some of the miraculous works that Jesus did that you have read about in the New Testament. How did these works show that He was the Son of God?

Think about it: People might say that John was ignorant or crazy to say that Jesus was the Son of God. But how could they ignore these amazing miracles that were obviously a sign from God?

3. What are the other two testimonies of who Jesus is? (See vs. 37 and 39. Also look at Matthew 3:16-17)

Note: Many Old Testament stories and prophecies refer to Jesus. That is why the writers of the New Testament often say words like, "As the prophet said..." Jesus is saying that He fulfills those prophecies. The Jews say that they believe the Scriptures, but what do they refuse to do? (v. 40)

4. Read verses 41-47. What were some things that were hindering the Jews from believing in Jesus? (vs. 42 & 44)

What is more important to you—the praise of other people, or the praise of God?

5. Take some time to think back over the various testimonies about Jesus:
 - Jesus own words about Himself (Read John 5:17, 19-23)
 - John the Baptist's words (Read John 1:29 & 34)

- Jesus' miraculous works (Read John 5:36)
- God the Father (Read John 5:37 and Matthew 3:16-17)
- The Scripture; Old Testament prophecies (Read John 5:39)

How has this study helped you to see who Jesus really is?

6. What do you believe about Jesus? Do you believe He is the Son of God who came into the world to give His life as a sacrifice for our sin? Pray and ask Him today to help you overcome your doubts. Tell Him you want to honor both the Father and the Son with your life.

Below are some other Scriptures where Jesus speaks about Himself. Take time to read and think about them on your own or as a group. Consider what they tell us about Jesus the Messiah. And remember, He calls us to BELIEVE in Him. This is not an intellectual belief, but it means that we surrender our whole lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. It would be good to memorize some of these passages.

John 10:37-38

John 6:48-51

John 7:37-39

John 8:12

John 8:48-59

John 11:25-26

John 14:6-10

***“I baptize you with water for repentance.
But after me will come one who is more powerful
than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”
John the Baptist, Matthew 3:11***

BE BAPTIZED WITH WATER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38

Every year around the world millions of new followers of Jesus the Messiah are baptized. Jesus commanded all who believe to enter the waters of baptism.

But why? What does baptism in water mean?

This section has several studies on water baptism and several studies on a more amazing baptism: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is very important for believers to understand what has happened to them as they believe in Jesus.

The New Testament explains these things to believers so that they not be ignorant. Jesus wants you to understand the powerful new life he is bringing you into. You will never be the same!

13. Be Baptized In Water And Live A New Life!

Part 1: John's Baptism Of Repentance

Opening Discussion:

Jesus commanded all of His disciples around the world to be baptized. Have you ever seen a baptism? If so, tell the group your thoughts about it.

Introduction: Baptism is a very important part of the life of the Church. It is the way in which a new believer in Jesus shows to witnesses that he is leaving his past life of sin and beginning a new life in Jesus. When we first read about baptism in the New Testament, John the Baptist is baptizing people who repent of (turn from) their sin. After Jesus' death and resurrection, those who put their faith in Him were baptized in the name of the Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. Part I of this study looks at John's baptism. Part II will look at baptism as commanded by Jesus and described by the Apostle Paul. Together, these studies will help you understand the symbolism and importance of this spiritual act.

Read Luke 3:1-20.

1. Verse 4 says that John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. How did he do that? (See v. 3.) What does "a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins" mean to you?
2. **In Mark 1:4-5**, it says that the crowds who were going to John were confessing their sins as they were baptized. Most people don't want to confess their sins but to hide them, like Adam and Eve did. Why do you think confession of our sins is important?
3. Did John preach soft words or hard words to the people of Israel? What did he call the people? (Read v. 7 again.) What did he say was coming? (v. 7)

Do you think most people in the world are aware that God's wrath is coming?

In your opinion, what things in this world should God be angry about?

4. The people of Israel were descendants of Abraham, and they were proud of this fact. They thought that being Jews would make them right with God. What did John say to them about this? (Read v. 8 again.) According to John, did their nationality make them special in God's eyes?

Does our nationality or what religion we were born into make us right with God? Explain your thoughts.

5. John talked about trees that did not produce good fruit. What will happen to those trees? (See v. 9.)
6. Read verses 10-14 again. What advice did John give to those who asked what they should do to produce good fruit? What would happen in today's society if people produced the good fruit that John spoke of in these verses?
7. Read verse 15 again. The people thought that John might be the Messiah. The Messiah was the Savior that the Jewish people were waiting for. God had promised through the prophets that he would come.

Read again verse 16. John said that someone more powerful than himself would come. He would have a different kind of baptism. Who was he speaking of? What kind of baptism would this person come with? Do you know who John was talking about? (In another study, we will look more deeply into this baptism in the Holy Spirit.)

8. Read verses 17-18 again. What do you think is the "wheat" John is talking about? What is the "chaff"? How does verse 17 give a picture of judgment?

Look at verse 18. In what way were John's words "good news"?

9. Now turn back to Mark 1, and read verses 4-5 again. Large crowds of people were going out to hear the good news that John preached, and many were being baptized. This baptism was a public sign of repentance and faith in God's forgiveness, and it marked the beginning of a new way of life.

But John's baptism was only the beginning. About this same time, Jesus began his three years of ministry that ended in His death, resurrection, and return to heaven. After these events, baptism was no longer only a sign of repentance. It also became a sign of faith in Jesus' sacrifice for our sin. Part II of this study will look more at this.

Have you been baptized? If not, are you ready to take this important step of obedience to Jesus? Set aside some time to pray about this between now and the time you study Part II.

14. Be Baptized In Water And Live A New Life!

Part 2: Be Baptized In Jesus' Name

Opening Discussion:

What do you remember about John the Baptist from Part I of this study? How did he prepare the way for the coming Messiah?

In this study, we will look at why we need to be baptized, and what it means.

WHY DO I NEED TO BE BAPTIZED?

Those who put their faith in Jesus need to be baptized because Jesus commanded it.

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

1. This is the last thing that Jesus told His disciples before He returned to heaven.

Read verses 19-20 again. What did Jesus tell His disciples they were to do after He was gone? As they made disciples, what were they to do with them? (See v. 19 first, then v. 20.)

In whose name were the new believers to be baptized?

Read Acts 2:37-41.

2. On the Day of Pentecost—an important Jewish feast day—Peter preached about Jesus to a large crowd. What did Peter tell the crowd they needed to do? (See v. 38.) How many obeyed and were added to the Church that day?

Some people think that they need to be a believer for a long time and be very strong in their faith before they are ready to be baptized. In this passage in Acts, how soon after they believed were people baptized?

Baptism is not a sign that we have reached maturity or that we are perfect and will never sin again. Rather, it is a sign that we are BEGINNING to live a new life. We are saying before witnesses, "This day, I have decided that I will stop living for myself. I am putting my faith in Jesus to forgive my sin. He is my Lord and Savior. From this day forward, I will honor and obey Him." Baptism is the outward sign that we have entered into a new relationship with God through Jesus.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Read Romans 6:1-14.

3. The Apostle Paul is writing to the believers in Rome. He wants them to understand what happened when they were baptized.

Read verses 3-4 again and study them carefully. How is our baptism a picture of our union with Jesus in His death and resurrection?

4. When we go down into the water, what does it symbolize? When we come up out of the water, what does it symbolize?

Baptism is an outward picture of something that is happening inside of us in our spirit by the work of the Spirit of God.

5. Read verses 5-7. What two ways are we united with Christ when we are baptized? (v. 5)
6. According to verse 6, what is it that is crucified with Christ? How does this set us free to live a new life?
7. Read verses 8-11. What wonderful news does Paul give to those who want to be free from their sin? What does it mean that we are “alive to God in Christ Jesus”?
8. Does this mean that once we are baptized and have identified with Christ we will never be tempted to sin again? Read verses 11-14.

Notice that it does not say that we will never struggle with sin again. We must daily choose NOT to offer ourselves to sin, but instead to offer ourselves to God. But the power of sin has been broken and the Holy Spirit will help us. (To learn more about this, you can read the rest of chapter 6 of Romans, as well as chapters 7 and 8)

Read Ephesians 4:4-6.

9. How does baptism unite us with all followers of Jesus all over the world?

Still today, all over the world new Christians show their faith and love for Jesus Christ by obeying His command to be baptized. They show that they are trusting completely in the sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and they enter fellowship with all followers of Jesus Christ.

10. Have you obeyed the Lord's command to be baptized in water? Do you see from this study that baptism symbolizes the beginning of your new life in Christ? It will be an event that you can remember all throughout your life as the time when you publicly declared that you belong to Him.

If you have not been baptized, discuss it with your fellowship leaders or other older believers. They can answer your questions and plan a time for you to be baptized. Pray that the Lord would prepare your heart for this important event.

For Extra Study:

Throughout the book of Acts we read of Jesus' disciples baptizing those who put their trust in Him. Here are some passages that you can read now or later on your own:

Acts 8:12

Acts 16:14-15

Acts 8:26-38

Acts 16:22-34

Acts 9:17-19

Acts 18:7-8

Acts 10:44-48

Acts 19:4-7

15. Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

Part 1: Walk In God's Power

Opening Discussion:

Most people think God is very far away from man. Before you trusted in Jesus the Messiah to be your Savior, did you feel God was close to you or far away? Describe what your idea of God was.

The following story took place after Jesus rose from the dead. Take time as a group to read and enjoy this story from the book of Acts.

Read Acts 1:1-14; and Chapter 2 (entire chapter)

1. How many days did Jesus show himself after his resurrection? (v. 3)
What did Jesus talk about during His times with them? (v. 3)
2. Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem for something. What was it? (vs. 4-5)
Why do you think the Father gives the valuable gift of the Holy Spirit to those who trust in Him?
3. What will the disciples receive when the Holy Spirit comes? (v. 8)
Jesus tells them they will be his witnesses. Where will they go to tell others about Jesus? (v. 8)
4. What did the disciples do while they waited for the Holy Spirit? (v. 14)

Acts 2

5. When the Holy Spirit came, what did the disciples hear? (v. 2) What did they see? (v. 3) Does that remind you of anything that John the Baptist had said about the baptism of the Holy Spirit? (See Luke 3:15-16)
6. On what day did this happen? (v. 1) Who was in Jerusalem at the time? (v. 5)
Pentecost was a Jewish Holiday. Jews from many nations came to Jerusalem to celebrate and offer sacrifices for God's blessings.
7. When the disciples spoke in "other tongues," what languages were they speaking in? (vs. 6-11) As they spoke, what were they talking about? (v. 11)

How would you feel if you went to another country and heard Africans, for example, giving thanks and praise to God for his love in your own language?!

Did everyone in the crowd take seriously what happened? (v. 13)

8. What did Peter say to those who did not believe? (vs. 14-16)
9. Read v.17-18. The prophet Joel lived hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth.

When the Holy Spirit comes, God's supernatural gifts are given and many secret things are revealed. Why do you think God wants to give his Spirit-filled people dreams, visions, and prophecies?

10. Peter begins to explain to the crowd things about Jesus. What does he tell them about Jesus in v. 22-24?

Read verses 32 & 33 again. Peter explains to the crowd that all that is happening is because of the Holy Spirit. According to Peter, who is pouring out the Holy Spirit upon the people? (v. 33)

11. Peter then tells the people that God exalted Jesus to what position? (v. 36)

Read verse 37. Discuss in your group the shock and fear the Jewish people must have felt to hear that they had crucified the Messiah, the Savior that God had sent. How would you have felt if you had been there?

Peter gives the people hope in verse 38. What do the people need to do? (v. 38)

Who else can receive the Holy Spirit? (v. 39)

Do you think that promise applies to all followers of Jesus today?

Explain why it is important for followers of Jesus to believe the promise in verse 38.

12. What was the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? (vs. 40-41)

Imagine: At the arrest of Jesus, Peter was full of fear and three times denied that he even knew Jesus. After he rose from the dead, Jesus showed kindness and mercy to Peter. He restored him to minister in Jesus' name.

Now, after Jesus has ascended to heaven, Peter is baptized in the Holy Spirit and preaches boldly about Jesus in the streets of

Jerusalem. Would you agree that when the Holy Spirit came upon him that he received power to be a witness for Jesus?

13. Think of what happened in society when 3,000 people sincerely repented of sin, trusted the Messiah for salvation, and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't you think there were changes in families, schools, and businesses?

When people today turn from their sins and are filled with God's holiness, how should that change things in their relationships with other people?

Do you see a need for yourself and all who believe in Jesus Christ to be daily filled with the Holy Spirit? Will you pray for this?

Take time now to thank the Lord for the Holy Spirit Who is given to all believers. Welcome His presence in your life. Ask for His power to renew you daily in your walk with Jesus. If you have never turned from your sin and put your trust in Jesus the Messiah, why don't you do that now?

16. Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

Part 2: Drink Continually Of The Living Water

Introduction: The New Testament teaches that all who trust in Jesus the Messiah are born into a new life by the Holy Spirit. The last study focused on God's promise to give us the Holy Spirit. In this study, we will look at **our** responsibility to be **continually filled** with the Holy Spirit

Opening Discussion:

Are you sometimes embarrassed to ask a big favor of a friend? Why are we at times afraid to ask for things?

Read Luke 11:5-13.

1. What time of day did the person go to his friend to ask for help? (v. 5) Was it a convenient time to go to ask a favor of someone?
2. What did the man ask of his friend? (v. 5) What did he want to do with this gift? (v. 6)
3. Jesus said that the friend did not give the bread because of their friendship. Why did he give the bread? (v. 8)
4. What was Jesus' point in telling this parable? (v. 9) What did Jesus mean when he said to ask, seek, and knock?

What happens when people ask or seek or knock? (v. 10) Why are we afraid to go to God when we need something?

Can you tell of a time you asked the Lord with boldness to help you with a problem?

5. What kind of gifts do earthly fathers give their children? (vs. 11-12) What does Jesus say about the character of earthly fathers? (v. 13)

Read v. 13 again slowly. Why do you think Jesus wanted us to know that God cares about us much more than even the best human father?

6. What good gift does the Father give? (v. 13) To whom does He give it?

Is the gift of the Holy Spirit a priceless gift to you? Why?

Now read John 4:4-15 together.

7. Jesus asks the woman at the well for some water. Look again at v. 10. If the woman had known who Jesus was, what would she have done?
8. What will the water that Jesus gives become in a person? (v. 14)

Why do people stop along a road to get fresh water from a spring?

How is cool spring water like the Holy Spirit?

Read John 7:37-39.

9. Jesus uses the same picture here. Verse 39 explains clearly what Jesus is talking about. What does He mean when He talks about living water?

What should the person who is thirsty do? (v. 37)

Are you thirsty to walk with God daily? Do you desire to find a spring of hope and joy that continues forever? Different members of this group may want to share their honest desires to walk with God in the freshness of his Holy Spirit.

Read Ephesians 5:15-20.

10. Read v. 18 again. What are some reasons that people get drunk? Why does God want us to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of depending on alcohol or drugs, for example, to give us happiness?
11. Paul was speaking to believers who already had the Holy Spirit. Yet he commanded them to **“be filled with the Holy Spirit.”** (v.18) Is it possible to live our Christian lives in such a way that the living water does not fill us and flow out of us? How can we continually be filled with the Holy Spirit?
12. Verses 19-20 talk about singing, worshiping and thanking God in our hearts always. How can continual worship and thanksgiving to God help us to always be filled with the Holy Spirit?

As a group, pray that you will be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

17. Welcome The Holy Spirit As Your Helper

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever wished that you had lived in the time when Jesus was on earth and you could see Him and talk with Him face to face? What do you think it would be like?

Read John14:15-18.

1. Read these verses again. If we love and obey Jesus, what does He say He will do for us? (v. 16)

What two names are used in these verses for the Holy Spirit? What do those two names tell you about what the Holy Spirit will do for you?

2. Why can the world not accept the Holy Spirit? How were the disciples different from the world?

Jesus said the Holy Spirit was with them now (before His death and resurrection). How would that be different after Jesus returned to the Father? (v. 17)

3. Read verse 18 again. How does this comfort and strengthen you?

Now read John14: 25-26.

4. Verse 26 helps us to understand a little of how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together. Who sends the Holy Spirit? In whose name is He sent? What does the Holy Spirit do, according to this verse?

Have you ever wondered how the disciples could possibly remember all the things that Jesus taught them after He left the earth? How did the Holy Spirit help them in this? (v. 26)

Do you believe the Holy Spirit will help you, also, to know and understand the truths of God?

Read John 16:5-15.

5. Read verses 5-7 again. Why were the disciples filled with grief? Why did Jesus say it was good for Him to go away? (v. 7)

6. Read verses 8-11 again. What three things does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will expose when He comes?

Think about why it might be better to have the Holy Spirit poured out on the earth rather than to have Jesus here in a fleshly body. Jesus was limited to one time and place. How does the work of the Holy Spirit compare to this?

7. According to verse 12, why did Jesus not tell his disciples everything that He wanted to tell them?
8. Look at verse 13. How can they understand truth after Jesus is gone? How will this protect them from being deceived?
What else will the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth) do? (vs. 13 and 14)
9. Notice that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all three mentioned again in verses 14 and 15. Take some time to look at and discuss the beautiful way in which these “Three in One” work together.
How is the Spirit dependent on the Father and Son? How does He bring glory to them? How does the Father honor the Son? (v. 15) How do we get to share in this wonderful relationship? (vs. 14-15)
Do you think that God wants us to work for this same kind of fellowship with one another? How could our relationships be better if we lived in dependence on the Holy Spirit every day?
10. Take some time to thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is freely given to all who put their faith in Jesus. Think about what it means that we have the Spirit of God living inside of us! Are you daily inviting Him to be your guide, your helper, your comforter, and your source of life? If not, begin to do so today. He can make all the resources of God available to you!

***“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says,
‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar.
For anyone who does not love his brother,
whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.
And he has given us this command:
Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”
1 John 4:19 – 21***

LOVE

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ‘ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
Matthew 22:37-40

From the beginning of time, men and women have sung love songs. We usually think of love in a romantic way, or perhaps we think of the love we have for family members or friends.

Jesus taught us about a different kind of love. First, God must be the center of our affection. That means we make Him first in our lives. In other words, we love God unashamedly and with everything He has given us: our hearts, our strength, our minds.

Second, Jesus taught us to love people as we love ourselves. True love sincerely cares about all people, even enemies. God made all people and He loves them equally. Love means we humbly serve others, building bridges, not tearing them down.

Jesus said that the world would know we are His disciples if we have this kind of love for each other.

These studies on love can change your life, and then change your world. As you meditate on Jesus’ teachings and do them, your heart will be filled with God’s love. You will begin to understand the meaning of life.

Note: The studies in this section focus on the second part of Jesus’ command to love our neighbor as ourselves. The first part of His command, to love God with our whole being, cannot be put into a few studies. All of Jesus’ commands, and His holy example in life and death, teach us what it means to love God with all our heart, mind and strength. So we can say that all of the studies in this book will start you on the road to loving God wholeheartedly.

18. Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

The Parable Of The Good Samaritan

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever wondered why the world is so cruel? Why do we humans not care for other human beings like we should?

Read Luke 10:25-37.

1. How did the expert in the Jewish law summarize all of the Jewish laws? (v. 27)
2. Did Jesus agree with his answer? According to Jesus, what would be the results of doing these things? (v. 28)
3. According to the text, why did the man ask “who is my neighbor?” (v. 29)
4. In the story, what was the occupation of the two men who did not help the hurting man? (vs. 31-32)

Jewish **priests** (v. 31) and the **Levites** (v. 32 - people who worked in the Jewish Temple helping the priests) were people who knew the Jewish law. Many times they had read the law of Moses which said the Jewish people were to love their neighbors as themselves. But they chose to ignore the law and avoid helping their fellow Jew who was dying on the road. However, the Samaritan, an enemy of Jews, chose to show compassion to the hurting Jewish man.

In this parable, Jesus was trying to teach us the importance of loving all people, not just our family, our friends, or people from our own nation.

5. Who was the true “**neighbor**” in this story? (verses 36-37) What kind of sacrifices did the Samaritan make (with his money, his time, perhaps his reputation) to help the beaten Jewish man? Talk about the things he did in verses 34-35.
6. What were Jesus’ instructions to the expert in the law when the story was over? (vs. 36-37)
7. **Turn to Matthew 5. Read verses 43-48.** What do these verses teach us about God? Who are the **true “sons of the Father?”** (vs. 44-45)

8. How can we apply this to our lives today? Think ahead. What are some sacrifices you may need to make in your daily life to show this kind of love to others?

Is Jesus talking only about helping someone on the road who has a need? In what other situations can we show God's love to people who have needs?

9. **Now read Matthew 7:12.** This verse is sometimes called, "**The Golden Rule.**" It would be very good to memorize this verse.

Read this verse again and think about what it means. How would the world be a different place if we all learned to live by this rule? How would it be different if we all showed love to everyone as Jesus taught us to in the story of the Good Samaritan?

Take time to pray for yourselves and all followers of Jesus in this land to truly be a light to the world, by loving people like Jesus, the Messiah did.

19. Love One Another And Live In Unity

Opening Discussion:

Jesus said, “**A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**” (John 13:34)

Think about this verse. How did Jesus give a new and greater example of love than they had seen before?

Discuss some of the ways Jesus showed love to his disciples. (See John 10:14; John 13:12-15) How does this help us to know how we should love each other?

Read John 17:20-23.

1. John 17 contains the prayer that Jesus prayed the night before his crucifixion. In verses 20-23, He prays for everyone in all places and throughout all times who will believe in Him. That includes us! What is the main thing that He desires for all believers?
2. Read again verse 21. What example does Jesus give to illustrate the type of unity He desires among believers? (He repeats this with similar words in vs. 22 and 23.)

Name some characteristics of the Father and Son’s unity that we also need in our relationships with one another. (See John 5:20; John 8:29 & 49-50)

3. In verses 21 and 23 Jesus gives two important reasons why we should also desire and pray for unity. What are these two reasons?
Why is our unity with all believers a powerful testimony that Jesus was sent from God?
4. Now let’s look at a beautiful example of a humble attitude that can help to build unity among believers.

Read John 3:22-30. John’s disciples came to him with a concern. What were they concerned about? (v. 26)

5. What does John mean by verse 27? How do these words apply to us as believers and any ministry we may be involved in?
Can any true ministry for God’s Kingdom come from ourselves, or must it be God-given? Explain
6. Look closely at verses 28-29. Who is the bride? Who is the Bridegroom? To whom does the bride belong?

Why does John say he is full of joy now?

7. Read verse 30. Do you think John is more concerned with building his own kingdom? For example, does he want people to always praise and follow him? Or does he want to build God's Kingdom, where people praise and follow Jesus? Discuss how this humble attitude can help God's Kingdom grow.

Why are we sometimes jealous when we see someone else's ministry or fellowship thriving while our own is struggling? If we have the same attitude of humility as John, how will this help to build unity with other groups of believers?

8. **Read II Corinthians 12:20.** When Paul wrote this second letter to the believers in Corinth, he was planning to visit them. He was worried that he might find bad, divisive attitudes in some of them. What sins was Paul afraid he would find there? How do these things hinder unity?
9. Think about your own life. Are you guilty of any of these sins that cause division? If so, confess it to God and ask Him to cleanse you. Ask Him to empower you to live in love and unity with others.

Pray for a spirit of true love and unity within your group and in the whole Body of Christ in this land.

**“How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.”**

Psalm 133:1&3b

20. Forgive Each Other From The Heart

Opening Discussion:

How do most people respond when someone offends or wrongs them?
What do you think about this?

Read Matthew 18:21– 35.

1. Read again verses 21-22. Do you think Jesus meant that we should keep count each time we forgive someone? What does Jesus mean?
2. When we keep count of the times we have forgiven someone, what does that reveal about our attitude? In our heart, do we really want to forgive them? Or are we just saying we forgive them because we know we should?

3. How much did the servant owe the king? (v. 24)

4. The king wanted to sell the man and his family in order to pay back the debt. What did the servant do? (v. 26)

Do you think he could ever pay it all back?

How did the king respond to his pleading? (v. 27)

5. What did the servant do after he was forgiven and released? (v. 28)

How much did his fellow servant owe him?

6. When the king heard what happened, what did he do? (vs. 32 – 34).

Do you think the king's actions were right? Why?

7. What did Jesus say at the end of this parable? (v. 35)

Jesus makes a very serious statement here. In other places of the New Testament, Jesus teaches the same principle. **Turn to Matthew 5:7 and read.** What does this verse teach us?

Now read Matthew 6: 9 –15. Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray. What does Jesus say about forgiveness here?

Why do you think it is so important to God that we learn to forgive?

8. The heart of this parable is found in verse 33. Read it again. We can't truly forgive others unless we really believe that God has forgiven our sins. Do you believe that God loves you so much that He gave his own son to take your sin?
9. When God forgives our sins through Christ, it is just like the king forgiving the servant's debt. We can never repay it, but it is completely forgiven. Like the servant, we are free. The burden of debt (our sin) is taken from our shoulders.

But God forgives us so that we can change and become like Him. When He is merciful to us, how does He expect us to treat others? (v. 33)

10. If we trust in God's forgiveness through Christ, and if we learn to forgive others, including our spouses and family members, what changes will happen in our families and in our communities?

Can you think of anyone whom you have not forgiven? If it is difficult to forgive them, remember that God has forgiven you a far greater debt. Ask Him to help you to forgive anyone who has wronged or offended you. Then tell Him in prayer that you choose now to forgive that person. If you need help with this, ask a leader or mature believer to pray with you.

21. Love One Another Through Humble Service

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever seen someone who was a leader doing a very lowly job, such as sweeping the floor or washing the dishes? How did it make you feel?

Culture Note: In Jesus' day, people wore sandals and their feet would get very dusty. In a home with servants, it would be the job of the lowest slave to wash the feet of guests when they came in the door. Probably there were no servants taking care of the disciples on this Passover night. Obviously, none of the disciples had offered to wash the others' feet. So, Jesus Himself does the job of the lowest slave.

Read John 13:1-17.

1. Look at verse 1. When did this event take place? What do you think was on Jesus' mind at this time?
What was his motive in what He was about to do?
2. Read verse 2. What work of the devil had already taken place?
3. Read verses 3-5. What three things was Jesus confident about?(v. 3)
What did He then begin to do in verses 4-5?
Do you think that Jesus felt any need to prove to them who He was?
4. Now look at verses 6-8. What does Peter say very strongly to Jesus in verse 8?
Why do you think Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet?
Is it sometimes hard for you to allow others to serve you in a humble way?
5. What made Peter change his mind in verse 9? (See v. 8)
6. Verses 10-11 show us that Jesus even washed Judas' feet. **Look briefly back at Matthew 5:43-48.** How does this show us an example of Jesus' words to love even our enemies?
7. Read verses 12-17. Jesus asks his disciples if they understand what He has done. What is it that He wants them to understand?
8. In verse 13, what does Jesus say is his position among them?
Now read verses 14-15. Why does Jesus say He did what He did?

Would you normally expect a “teacher” or “lord” to do the job of the lowest slave?

9. Jesus is showing his disciples (and us) how very different we are to be from the world. Do you think his example was only about washing feet, or do you think he was saying something about serving others in general? Explain your answer.

Many times throughout history, it has been the followers of Jesus who have offered themselves to do the least desirable, dirtiest jobs. During the times of the plague in Europe, Christians often cared for the sick when no one else would. Frequently they also died because they caught the illness of those they cared for. Many people believed in Jesus because of this example of love.

In the 1980's, many refugees were coming out of Cambodia and Viet Nam and crowding into camps in Thailand. It was the Christians who volunteered to go in and clean up the human filth and make the camps livable. Many pagans were deeply touched by this.

10. What does Jesus' example say to you? Read verses 16-17 again. Are you greater than your Master? How is He asking you to serve others? Are you ready to do humiliating or dirty jobs to serve others?

As you go about your work this week, keep Jesus' example of humble service in your mind. Look for ways that you can be like Him.

22. Love Your Enemies

Opening Discussion:

Can you tell about a situation where someone took revenge and it caused anger and bitterness to grow? Did the problem continue on and get worse?

Read Matthew 5: 38 – 48.

These verses are perhaps some of the hardest verses of Jesus' teachings. None of us find these words easy to obey!

Culture Note: Look again at verse 38. The expression: “**Eye for eye, tooth for tooth**” was taken from Leviticus 24:19-20. “**If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.**” This was used to help the courts of Israel make just decisions. The punishment was to be equal to the crime. It taught judges to make decisions fairly and equally. God’s Holy Word teaches that it is the state’s responsibility to punish evildoers, but that judges must treat all people the same.

But some people in Jesus’ day were using this law to justify taking revenge when they were wronged.

1. In verses 39-42, what does Jesus say should be our response to someone who does wrong to us? How would you summarize Jesus’ words?
2. Some people think these verses mean that if someone hits us, we should just stand there and let them keep hitting us. Do you think this is the true meaning of Jesus’ words here? What do you think He means?
What should our heart attitude be toward someone who wrongs us? (See the first part of verse 39.)
3. Read verses 43-48 again. How are Jesus’ instructions to us in verse 44 the opposite of what is usually said? (v. 43)
4. How does God treat both evil people and good people? (v. 45)
If we love our enemies, how does that make us true sons of our heavenly Father?

5. Read verses 46-48. How is Jesus challenging us to be different from the tax collectors and pagans? Who is our example? (v. 48)
6. **Read Romans 12:17-21.** If someone does evil to us, does that give us the right to do evil to them?

According to verse 17, should followers of Jesus ever do evil?

7. Read verse 18 again. What is our responsibility as peacemakers?
8. Read verse 19 again. Whose responsibility is it to repay someone who has done evil to us? Why is it important that we not take revenge ourselves, but leave it to God to do?

Think about it: As humans, is it possible that we are not seeing the event clearly? Can we know the motives of the other person's heart?

When you take revenge, what does the other person do in response? How can it ever end?

Do you believe that God is just and that He will eventually make all things right?

9. Look at verses 20-21. Instead of taking revenge, what are we to do? If we take revenge, which one wins—evil or good? How do we overcome evil?
10. When someone hurts or offends you, do you allow a desire for revenge to live in your heart?

Look back at Jesus' instructions in Matthew 5:43-48. How would society change if people obeyed Jesus' teachings?

Take time now to pray. Do you have any "enemies"—people who have wronged you? Ask Jesus to help you to choose to love and forgive them instead of desiring revenge.

***“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer,
believe that you have received it,
and it will be yours.”
Mark 11:24***

PRAY

This, then, is how you should pray... Matthew 6:9

People all over the world pray. Primitive people pray and chant to the spirits that they fear. Every religion has its rituals of prayer. Even atheists find themselves calling out desperately in a disaster: **“If there is a God, please help me!”** Man knows that his power is limited and he needs help from something or someone beyond himself. But most of us know that we don’t understand prayer. We also know we don’t pray very well.

The disciples saw Jesus praying with confidence and authority. They also saw Him leave them often to be alone with the Father. They saw His spiritual power every day. Jesus knew His Father and He knew His prayers were heard. So, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. And he did! He taught them many important things about prayer.

Believers in Jesus should pray with confidence. But we, like the early disciples, need to ask Jesus to teach us to pray. Let’s learn from His words and from His example as a man of prayer.

The following studies will help us. Let’s become people who pray as followers of Jesus.

23. Don't Pray Like Hypocrites And Pagans

Opening Discussion:

At times when life is hard, have you ever wondered if God was hearing your prayers? How can we pray with more faith that God is hearing our prayers and will answer them in His love, His wisdom, and His time?

Read Matthew 6:1-8.

1. Jesus tells us not to be like the hypocrites when we pray. What is it that they did that we must beware of? (v. 5)
2. The hypocrites wanted the praises of men. How did this hinder their prayers and their fellowship with God?
3. How does Jesus say we are to be different from the hypocrites when we pray? (v.6)
4. Is Jesus commanding that His followers must always pray alone in their rooms and that they can never pray with others?

Remember that Jesus Himself prayed in front of His disciples. The disciples also prayed together as believers many times. What is the principle that Jesus is teaching his disciples in verses 5 and 6?

5. Hypocrites (religious people who pretend to know God) are described in verses 5 and 6. As we learned, they wrongly focus their attention on being seen by men when they pray. Now look at another type of people in v. 7. Who are the other type of people?
6. What is it that the pagans do when they pray? (v. 7)

Why is it wrong thinking to believe that we must fill our prayers with many words in order for God to hear us?

7. Pagans often use prayer as a type of magic. They think that if they say certain words over and over, they can manipulate the gods to do what they want. That is not the meaning of prayer as found in the gospels. Jesus teaches us that God is our Father and that He hears our prayers and cares about our needs.

Why is it wrong to try to manipulate God when we pray?

8. Some people pray by saying words in such a way as to gain power over a situation. That really is just a form of "magic," trusting in the power of the words more than trusting in God. Prayer as a follower of Jesus is much different. Prayer as Jesus taught does not try to control situations and people. But we should pray boldly and in faith for God's will to be done in the earth. In prayer, we should trust in a

loving God who is all-powerful and has defeated Satan's power through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some people hang up ornaments to protect their home, business, or car from the evil eye. How is prayer different than trusting in these ornaments?

In the next study, we will look at how Jesus taught his disciples to pray.

9. To close this time of group study, ask the Lord to teach you in the months ahead how to pray in a way that is pleasing to him.

24. “Pray In This Way”

Opening Discussion:

One time the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Most of us also feel that we need help in learning to pray. Why is prayer difficult for you?

Read Matthew 6: 9-15.

1. What word does Jesus use for God when he prays (v.9)?

Jesus prayed to God as One whom he had a relationship with. He called God “Father” all the time.

If we understand that God is our heavenly Father who really loves us, how will that strengthen our faith when we pray?

2. Jesus starts this prayer with intimacy by calling God “Father.” In his next words, he shows great respect. What does he say (v.9)?

The prophet Moses received from God the 10 commandments about 1500 years before Jesus the Messiah was born. The third commandment, found in the Torah, is this: **“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. (Exodus 20:7)**

In your own life, is God’s name honored as holy? How can we change in our speech and actions so that God’s name is always honored?

3. Read again v. 10. Before you read the box below, discuss what it means for God’s kingdom to come on this earth.

Can we participate in the growth of God’s Kingdom?

The kingdom of God grows on earth each time a person allows God to rule in his heart. When we pray for God’s will to be done on earth, we are not just praying for changes in the world but we are confessing that we want God to change our own lives, too. We understand that if we don’t allow God to establish his rule in our own hearts, we will be the kings of our selfish little kingdoms. But we actually don’t become kings, we become slaves. Whether we know it or not, we give the keys of our lives to Satan. When man thinks he is ruling his own life, he really is opening the door to darkness and evil to control him. But when we pray for God’s

kingdom to come, we are asking God to change our hearts and make us humble servants of His purposes on the earth.

Read the box above again. Then discuss what you think would happen if this group prayed often that God bring His kingdom rule into your lives, your families and your neighborhoods.

4. Read again v. 11. Some people live their lives as if God does not exist. They try to solve all their problems without God. How does it encourage you to know that God wants you to tell Him your daily needs (such as “daily bread”) and trust Him to help you?
5. Many years after Jesus ascended to heaven, his disciple Peter wrote this: “**Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.**” (**1 Peter 5:7**) What does this verse mean to you?
6. Read again verse 12 and verses 14 and 15.

Jesus spoke some very difficult words here. Human beings find it very hard to forgive. It is important for all of us to know that forgiveness is something we all must learn in life.

When we pray and ask forgiveness for our sins, why did Jesus teach us that we must at the same time forgive others?

As a group, be silent for a moment for each person to consider: Who do I need to forgive today?

7. Why is it important for us to pray that we not go into temptation? (v. 13)

The New Testament teaches that **God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)**

Why is being honest with God about our need for his help against temptation important?

8. The last part of the prayer affirms that God’s kingdom, and power and glory will last forever. (v. 13)

Do those words strengthen your faith in God? Why?

9. Some people use the words of this prayer as if they are a good luck charm. They think there is power in just saying the words in order to get protection or a blessing for their lives. As a result, they pray the words very quickly and don’t think about the meaning.

Is that the way Jesus wanted us to pray this prayer? Explain your thoughts.

10. How can this prayer be a guide to help us to learn to pray better?

As you close in prayer, use Jesus' prayer as a model for your group. You can also use your own words to express the same ideas that Jesus was teaching.

25. Pray Always And Don't Lose Heart

Opening Discussion:

Why do you think our faith is important to God?

Read Luke 18:1-8.

1. Why did Jesus tell this parable? (v. 1)

Do you sometimes lose heart if you don't see your prayers answered quickly?

2. This story is about a judge and a widow. How does Jesus describe the judge? (v. 2)
3. What did the widow want from the judge? (v. 3)

In Jesus' day, widows did not have any power. Evil people could easily take advantage of them. In this story the powerless widow was going to a judge that did not care about people, nor did he fear God. If you saw this happen today, would you have much hope that the judge would help the widow?

4. At first the judge didn't pay attention to her, but finally he gave in to her request. Why? (v. 4, 5)
5. Read verse 6-8 again. Jesus changes from talking about the unjust judge to talking about God. Is God like the unjust judge or different from the unjust judge?

From your knowledge of God, describe how He is different from the unjust judge.

6. Who is bringing their requests to God (v. 7). How often do they bring their requests?
What will God do for them? (v. 8) How quickly will he give them justice?
7. At the end of this parable, Jesus asks a question. What is that question (v. 8)?

Why do you think Jesus asks that question?

8. Let's return to v. 1. What was the reason Jesus told the parable?
Does this parable help you to pray with more confidence?
9. To finish up our study, **read Hebrews 4:14-16**. Then quietly meditate on the verses and tell the group what these verses mean to you.

Read the following words slowly and think about the great gift God has given us in Jesus the Messiah:

We who believe in Jesus as our Savior know that He has taken away our shame and reconciled us with God through His life that he gave as a sacrifice for sin. Remember this when you pray. No one comes near to God because of their own righteousness. We are able to come near to God by trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah. We can now pray with strong faith that God really loves us and hears our prayers. He is not like the unjust judge. He wants us to pray with confidence and courage because He is very good!

What do you need to pray about now with the group?

26. Make Time To Get To Know God

Opening Discussion:

What are some things that you pray about?

Read Luke 10:38-42.

1. Look at verse 38 again. What did Martha do? Do you think hospitality is one way to show love for someone?

What was her sister Mary doing? (v. 39)

2. Read verse 40 again. What was Martha's attitude? What was she concerned about?

What did she say to Jesus? How do you think she was feeling toward her sister Mary?

3. Now read verses 41-42. Jesus points out to Martha that she is worried about many things. How many things does He say are necessary?

What is it that is necessary?

Which do you think was more important to Jesus: that He have a nice meal to eat, or that He share the words of eternal life with a hungry heart?

4. **Read Matthew 5:6.** How is Mary showing that she is hungry and thirsty for righteousness? What will she receive, according to this verse?
5. Which of these two women are you most like? Do you find yourself easily distracted and upset by the many demands of life? Or do you often put other things aside to spend time with Jesus? Are you hungry to talk with Him and learn from His Word?
6. Jesus Himself often spent time alone in prayer with His Father. **Read Mark 1:35-39.** When did Jesus pray? Where did He pray?
Why do you think He chose this time and place? How important is it that we find a way to shut the world out so that we can be alone with God?
7. Who came looking for Jesus? (v. 36) What did they say to Him? (v. 37)

Jesus was continually surrounded by large crowds. Do you think it was easy for Him to find a way to spend time alone with God?

8. If you live in a big city or in a house with many other people, it may not be easy for you either to find a time and place to be alone with God.

Is time with Him important enough for you to make some sacrifices for it?

9. There are many other Scriptures that speak of Jesus praying both alone and with His disciples.

Read Luke 6: 12-13. What important part of His work did Jesus do in verse 13? Before He made those choices, what did He do? (v. 12)

Before you make important decisions, do you set aside time to seek God alone and ask Him for His wisdom?

10. **Read Luke 5:15-16.** What were the crowds of people coming to Jesus for?

Imagine how exhausting it must have been for Jesus to be ministering to the peoples' needs day after day. What did He do during these times to renew Himself? (v. 16)

If Jesus, who was without sin, needed these times of prayer alone with God, do you think we need them also?

11. Think about your life. How important to you is time spent alone with God? Do you need to turn off the TV and your cell phone at times so you can pray and meditate on His Word in peace and quiet?
12. You will notice as you study the teachings of Jesus that He did not give us rules about how long we should pray or how often. Do you come into His presence because you love Him and want to know Him? Do you come because you know you need Him? Are you hungry for Him?

Take time now to think and pray about changes you need to make in your life so you can know God better.

27. Be People Of Faith

Believe Jesus To Set People Free From Sickness And Demonic Bondage

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever prayed for someone to be healed? Or have you been present where others were praying for someone to be healed? Tell about your experience.

Introduction: When Jesus was on earth, a big part of his ministry was healing the sick and casting out demons. Read the following verses: **Matthew 4:23-25; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 10:5-8; and Matthew 15:29-31.**

Throughout the gospels, there are many stories of Jesus healing people. Each story is different, just as the individuals who were healed were different. This study will look at one event which is told in Matthew and also in Mark.

Read Matthew 17:14-21.

1. Describe the condition of the man's son. (v. 15) What did the father do to try to get his son healed? (v. 16) Was the son healed? Why not?
2. Look at verse 17. What did Jesus call the people of that society? Why do you think He called them that?
3. What did Jesus do in verse 18?
4. In verse 19, the disciples privately asked Jesus why they couldn't cast out the demon. What is Jesus answer in verse 20?

How much faith does Jesus say is needed to move mountains?

5. Now look at verse 21. (This verse may be written as a footnote.) What does Jesus say is needed in some situations?
6. **Now read this same story in Mark 9:17-29.** Mark's account includes a conversation between Jesus and the father of the boy.
Read again verses 20-24. What is the father's request in verse 22? Do you think he has a lot of faith?
7. Now read Jesus' response in verse 23. How is Jesus' statement here similar to his words to the disciples in Matthew 17:20? (Look back at that verse.)
8. What does the father immediately say? (v. 24) How do you think Jesus' words in verse 23 helped him go from doubt to belief?
9. Read verse 24 again and notice how the father humbly admits his need for help.

Have you ever had times in your life when you wanted to believe but you struggled with doubts? Did Jesus rebuke the man for his doubts, or did he honor his faith, even though it was weak? (See vs. 25-27)

What can we learn from this?

10. Read again verses 28-29, including the footnote to verse 29. Compare this with verse 21 (the footnote) in Matthew 17.

Now let's review some things we learn about healing from these passages.

- How is healing linked to faith? (**Read also, Hebrews 11:6**)
- How much faith is necessary to see God do the impossible through us? (**Matthew 17:20**)
- Why do you think some healings might be more difficult than others? Why is it important that we persevere in prayer and even fasting if we don't see an immediate answer? (**Matthew 17:21 (footnote)**)
- What should we do if we have doubts? (**Mark 9:24**)

What should we do if we pray for people and they are not healed?

Let us not give up praying for the sick just because someone is not healed. Many sick people have been made well through prayer. There are many, many Scriptures that encourage us to pray for the sick and those oppressed by demons. Often we do not see miracles because we do not pray for them. Pray the prayer of the father in Mark 9:24. Then begin to pray in faith for the healing and deliverance of those you know who have needs. Review often Jesus' words in Matthew 17:20 and Mark 9:23.

In your fellowship, set aside time often to pray for these needs.

***“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech,
in knowledge, in complete earnestness
and in your love for us – see that you also excel
in this grace of giving.”
2 Cor. 8:7***

GIVE

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35

Jesus taught us not to worry about tomorrow. He also taught His followers to be generous givers.

There is great blessing in giving. People who learn to give are demonstrating two things. First they show that they really care about other peoples' needs. Second, they show that they trust God more than their possessions.

We can expect the Holy Spirit to remind us often of the teachings of Jesus on giving. We are followers of Jesus. He is the One who gave His life to save us. God wants us to learn Jesus' ways. He showed us what the Father is like. And now we are His children.

When Jesus returns, will he find His people to be hoarding their possessions and worrying about the future? Or will he find them generous, helping those in need? Jesus made it clear: either money is our master, or God is. We cannot serve both.

The following studies will teach us to be like our Father in heaven.

28. When You Give, Consider The Generous Widow

Opening Discussion:

Sometimes we think that if we become rich (for example, if we win the lottery) we will become generous people. If we are not generous when we are poor, do you think we will automatically become generous if we become rich? Explain your reasons.

Read Mark 12:41-44.

1. Who was watching as the crowds put their offering into the temple treasury?(v. 41)
2. Who gave the large amounts of money?
3. Who gave the small amount? (Note: These 2 coins were worth less than 1 cent.)
4. Do you think this amount helped significantly in the upkeep of the temple?

Would this small offering be honored and praised in the eyes of men? Which offerings that day were most likely noticed by men?

5. Who did Jesus call to him to show them what he saw?(v. 43)
6. According to Jesus, who gave the biggest offering that day? (vs. 43-44) Why?
7. In this passage does Jesus say that we must each give away our last penny? As believers in Jesus, are we accepted by God because of the amount of money we give to Him?

Remember...

The New Testament teaches that no person can buy their salvation with money. We cannot bribe God. We are all lost without his salvation. We receive God's free gift of mercy and eternal life through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. He is the lamb of God, the eternal sacrifice for our sins.

If we cannot buy our salvation, then what is Jesus trying to teach his disciples in this story?

Do you think a gift has greater value if we must sacrifice to give it?

8. God made the universe without money, so a million dollars does not impress God. **Look at Mark 12:30** to discover what God is wanting from those who follow him.

How is generous giving one way that we show that we love God with all of our heart?

9. To read another example of those who gave wholeheartedly, read **II Corinthians 8:1-5**. What was the situation of the Macedonians when they gave? (Read again v. 2.)
10. What emotions were they experiencing when they gave? (v. 2) What does verse 3 say about how much they gave and how they gave it?
How does this kind of giving show that they trusted God to take care of them?
11. Read verse 4 again. What was their attitude toward giving to help other believers in need?
12. What else did they give along with their money? (v. 5) What do you think it means to **“give yourself”** along with your gift?
13. Imagine that you are one of the believers who received this gift. How would you feel when you heard about how it was given? How would a gift like this unite the hearts of the givers and the receivers?
14. Compare your giving to that of the widow and that of the Macedonians. Do you give freely and joyfully? Do you give from whatever you have, whether it is extra, or whether you need all that you have to live on?
15. Do you only give money, or do you give yourself with your gift? Do you pray for the people or projects you are giving to? How do you think this might help to encourage a spirit of love and caring for one another in the Body of Christ?

Ask God to help you to grow in your giving. Begin today to experience the joy and freedom that comes from having open hands and an open heart toward God and others.

Here are some verses about giving that would be good to memorize:

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” II Corinthians 9:6-8

29. Love God, Not Money

Opening Discussion:

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)
Do you believe this? Why or why not?

Read Mark 10:17-31.

1. Read verse 17 again. What question did the man ask Jesus? Notice *how* he came to Jesus. What do you think this shows?
2. Read verses 18-20. What is Jesus suggesting the man means when he calls Him “**good**”?

Jesus then lists several of the commands given to Moses in the Old Testament. This isn’t all of the commands, but rather a sampling of what He’s talking about. What is the man’s response?

3. Now read verse 21. How did Jesus feel toward him? Why was he lacking something, if he had kept all of the commands since he was a boy?

Why would Jesus tell him he needed to sell everything and give to the poor? If we cannot buy eternal life and it is the free gift of God, then what does this mean?

4. What did Jesus say he would have if he sold and gave away everything? (v. 21) What else did Jesus tell him to do in verse 21?
Read verse 22. How did the man respond to Jesus’ words?
5. **Turn to Matthew 6 and read verses 19-21.** If his treasure was in heaven, where would his heart be? If his heart were in heaven, would it be hard to let go of his worldly possessions? Where do you think this man’s heart was?

6. Read again Jesus’ conversation with his disciples in verses 23-27 of Mark 10. Why do you think Jesus says it is hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God? (v. 23)

7. Jesus uses exaggeration to make a very strong statement in verses 24 and 25. If your Bible has a footnote with verse 24, read that also.

Now read Matthew 6:24 to help you understand His words better. How does having a lot of money often keep people from wholeheartedly serving God?

8. Look at verses 26-27 of Mark 10 again. The disciples become very discouraged. Perhaps they are thinking that if the rich and important cannot be saved, it may be that no one can be saved.

How does Jesus answer them in verse 27? Can any of us—whether we are rich or poor—save ourselves?

9. Do you think it's possible for a person to have very little money, and still serve money rather than God?

Turn to I Timothy 6:6-10. What does verse 6 say is “great gain”? What happens to those who seek to get rich? (v. 9)

10. According to verse 10, what is the root of all kinds of evil? Does this mean that it is bad to have money? Is the money the problem, or is the problem in the heart of the person who has or wants to have the money?

Note: We must be careful that we don't judge others. Just because a person has a lot of money does not mean that they love or trust in their money. Also, just because a person is very poor does not mean their heart is free from the love of money. We must each ask God to examine our own hearts and show us if we are loving Him and putting Him first.

11. **Turn to Philippians 4:10-13.** In verse 12, what secret does the Apostle Paul say he has learned? Where did He find the strength to live this way? (v. 13)
12. Turn back to Mark 10 and read verses 28-31. What does Peter say to Jesus?
What does Jesus tell Peter they will gain in exchange for all they've given up?
13. As you've studied these Scriptures, has God spoken anything to your heart about your own life? Is your life free from the love of money? Do you know the secret of being content in all circumstances?
14. Jesus told the rich man to sell and give away all that he had. How do you think giving helps us to keep our lives free from the love of money?

What is God showing you to do?

Take time to pray now about it.

Here are some good verses to memorize: Hebrews 13:5-6

30. Store Up For Yourself Treasures In Heaven

Opening Discussion:

Do you ever worry about the future and how you will provide for yourself or your family? What can help you to keep from worrying?

Read Luke 12: 13-34.

1. What did the man in the crowd ask Jesus? (v. 13) Did Jesus do what he asked? (v. 14)
2. Jesus gave a strong warning against something in verse 15. What was it? What did Jesus say life does not consist of? (v. 15)

How do we know if we have greed in our lives? Is it possible to be controlled by greed but be blind to it?

3. Jesus tells a parable about a rich man. What were the rich man's plans? (v. 16-19) What did God say would happen to him? (v. 20)

Consider...

The rich man assumed that God had blessed him so that he could serve only himself. He never thought that God may have blessed his crop so that he could help others who didn't have anything. He spent God's blessings only on himself.

God taught the Jews in the Old Testament that they were to share their food with the hungry, to provide the homeless with shelter, and to clothe the naked. (Isaiah 58:7) Why do you think this rich man forgot these commands? Was he guarding his heart against greed?

When God blesses you with extra, do you ever ask Him why he gave you extra?

4. Jesus gives another warning in verse 21. Say this verse in your own words. Then discuss how believers in this country can show God's love by sharing God's blessings with others.
5. Read again verses 22-34. Who did Jesus say worries about clothing, food and drink? (v. 30) Why should followers of Jesus NOT worry about these things? (verses 27-28) What does he call his followers who worry? (v. 28)
6. In verse 32, what does Jesus call His followers? Why do you think He uses this term? When God gives to us, is it a bother to Him? (v. 32)

7. Jesus said we should provide purses for ourselves. What kind of purses? (v. 33) He then says that if we have a “treasure in heaven” it is secure from two things. What are they?

Jesus tells us to do something practical. How can we provide purses in heaven for ourselves? (v. 33)

8. Read verse 34 again. Tell in your own words what this means.
9. Do you sometimes worry about the future, about what will happen to you? What have these verses taught you about God and His care for you?
10. Think about your own life. Do you want to be **“rich toward God?”** How can you begin to store up treasures in heaven?

Pray as a group to be people who are rich in God’s eyes.

***“Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10***

SERVE GOD WITH A CLEAN HEART

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, hated Jesus because he exposed their hypocrisy. They put on a religious mask to deceive the people, but their hearts were unclean. They pretended to know God but in reality did not know what God really wanted.

If we do not understand that God looks at the heart, we will become just like the Pharisees. Following Jesus does not begin by doing external religious things. It begins deep within us. What is happening in our thoughts each day? Do we live with lust, or anger and hatred, or jealousy and covetousness? Are we wanting people to notice us and praise us? Do we use people to serve our needs? Is money our secret idol? What do we think about all the time?

How can we become pure in heart? Thanks be to God for the good news of Jesus Christ. He forgives our sins. He gives us the Holy Spirit. And He teaches us His ways. By living in His grace, each day is a new day. We learn to love like He loves. As we do we become “salt and light” in the world. We bring God’s love and beauty into every situation.

The following studies will help us on the journey to holiness.

31. Be Pure In Heart

What Really Makes A Person Unclean Before God?

Opening Discussion:

What do you think might contaminate a person or make him unclean?

Read Mark 7:1-23.

Note: Pharisees were religious leaders of Jesus day. They were very strict in keeping the Law of Moses and many other rules and were highly respected in the community. But Jesus saw through their outward show and He knew what was really in their hearts.

1. What were the Pharisees upset about? (vs. 1-5) Why do you think this upset them?

Note: The Pharisees were not talking about normal washing of hands to get the dirt off. They did not know anything about germs in those days! They were talking about a tradition—a religious ritual that made them “clean” in a religious way.

In verse 6, what does Jesus call the Pharisees?

Why do you think He called them that?

2. Read again verses 9-13. In these verses Jesus gives an example of how the Pharisees put their traditions above God’s commands. What did Moses (in the Ten Commandments) tell the people to do?

How did the Pharisees' traditions prevent people from truly loving and honoring their parents?

3. Read again verses 14-20. To the Jewish leaders, being clean meant being careful not to eat anything or touch anything the Law of Moses forbade. It also meant following all the rules the Law required. In these verses, Jesus gives them an entirely new way of thinking about clean and unclean.

What does Jesus say does NOT make a person unclean? (vs.15 & 18-19)

According to Jesus, where do the things come from that DO make a person unclean?

4. Read verses 20-23. Which of the things listed in these verses are attitudes of the heart? Which are actions? Where does ALL evil begin?
Let's look at some other Scripture where Jesus talks about sin and the attitudes of our heart.
5. **Read Matthew 5:21-22.** What was said to the people long ago? (That is, what did Moses' Law say?) What does Jesus say is similar to murder?
Think about this for a minute. Why would anger and harsh words be similar to murder?
6. **Now read Matthew 5:27-28.** What does the Law say? (v. 27) What does Jesus say is adultery? (v. 28)
7. Jesus taught that sin is not just the outward actions we do, or even the words that we say. It is also the wrong thoughts, attitudes, and motivations of our hearts. In fact, it always begins in our hearts. Maybe you've never killed anyone, but have you hated anyone? Maybe you've never stolen anything, but have you ever been jealous or coveted what someone else had?
8. **Read again Mark 7:21-22.** Ask God to search your heart and show you any wrong attitudes that may be hiding there. Confess these to Him and ask Him to cleanse you and make you clean—inside and out.

32. Beware Of The Leaven Of The Pharisees

Opening Discussion:

How would you define hypocrisy? Can you respect someone who is a hypocrite?

Read Luke 12:1-3.

1. What does Jesus say is the “leaven of the Pharisees”?

Note: The Pharisees were religious leaders of Jesus’ day. They were strict in keeping the Jewish rules and were highly respected in the community. But Jesus had some very strong words to say to them because He knew what was really in their hearts.

Leaven is often used in the Bible as a symbol. Sometimes it is a symbol of something good and sometimes of something evil. However, it is a picture of how a very small amount of something can have a very big effect. Think of how a small spoonful of yeast can cause a large amount of dough to greatly increase in size.

How do you think hypocrisy might act like leaven in a fellowship or in society?

2. Jesus gives a fearful warning to hypocrites in verses 2-3. Read these warnings again. Why would these warnings be scary to a hypocrite?

Read all of Matthew 23, paying careful attention as you read.

3. What do you think Jesus is feeling as he speaks this rebuke?
4. Read verses 2-3 again. Why is it so important that we ourselves do the things that we teach others to do? Which do people more often follow—our teaching, or our example?

How valuable is it to know a lot about the Bible if we don’t live according to what we know?

5. In verse 5 Jesus tells us the motive behind the Pharisees every action. What was it?

Now think about your own life. Are there things that you do “to be seen by men”? How much of your life is controlled by the fear of what others think about you?

6. The Pharisees wanted to be recognized as knowledgeable and authoritative and faultless. Look at verses 8-12. How can these words

of Jesus help us overcome a desire to look important? How can they help us be content to be equals in the family of God?

7. Read again verses 23-24. Think about yourself and your fellowship. Is there any way you are neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness for much smaller matters? In other words, is truly loving and caring for one another more important to you than legalistically following religious practices?
8. Read again verses 27-28. The Pharisees were hiding hypocrisy and wickedness behind a good outward appearance. What are some practical ways we can “guard against the yeast of the Pharisees”?
9. **See I John 1:5-10.** (This is the first letter of John—not the Gospel of John.) How can “**walking in the light**” and confessing our sins to God and others keep us clean inside and out?
10. Now return to Matthew 23. From verse 29 to the end Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for killing the prophets. Prophets were sent to bring correction to God’s people and their word was often painful to receive — painful to pride and to reputation.

What would be the consequences of the Pharisees killing the prophets? (v. 35)

Is it important for us today to receive words of correction that come into our lives through godly brothers and sisters? Why?

11. Read verses 37-39. What was Jesus’ deep heart desire for his people? How do these last words of Jesus motivate you to get rid of all hypocrisy from your life?
12. Pray and ask God to search your heart and show you any hypocrisy that is hiding there. Confess it to Him and ask Him to cleanse you. Then ask for the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh and empower you to live a clean life before God and others.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

33. Take Up Your Cross And Follow Jesus

Count The Cost Of Following Jesus

Opening Discussion:

Have you ever heard anyone say, **“If you give your life to Jesus, everything will be easy and you won’t have any more problems”**? Do you believe that’s true? Explain.

Let’s look at what Jesus said about being His disciple.

Read Luke 14:25-35.

1. Read verse 25 again. Imagine the large crowds following Jesus. Most teachers would rejoice to see crowds following them. But Jesus speaks a discouraging word to the people. (vs. 26 and 27) What does he say? Do you think He knew that some of them were following Him only for what He could give them? Explain.
2. Read verse 26 again. If there is a footnote at the bottom of the page that goes with that verse, read that also. The original language says, **“If anyone does not hate his mother or father...”** Obviously, God does not want us to hate our parents. We know that in other places Jesus teaches us to honor our parents, as Moses taught. He also teaches us to love everyone. What do you think Jesus is saying here when He uses the word **“hate”**?
3. Notice each relationship mentioned in this verse. These are usually the people who are closest to us and most loved by us. Why must Jesus be first in our lives, even before those we love the most?
4. Do you sometimes find yourself holding back from following Jesus wholeheartedly because you’re afraid of what family members might say or do? Or maybe you’re afraid it might mean separation from them? What would Jesus say to you about this?
5. Read verse 27 again. The words **“carry a cross”** had a frightening meaning for people in Jesus’ day. It meant someone was going to his death. Jesus tells his followers they must carry a cross as they follow him .
What do you think the first century followers of Jesus felt when they first heard these hard words? What do you feel as you read them?
6. Look back at verse 26 again. What is the last thing mentioned that we are to **“hate,”** or count less than our love for Jesus? What does this mean to you?

Think of all the martyrs throughout the centuries who have given their lives for Jesus' sake. How have they been examples for us of true disciples?

7. **Turn to Matthew 16:24-26.** How is **“denying yourself”** the same as **“hating your own life”**?
8. What does Jesus say will happen to the person who tries to save his life? What will happen to the one who loses his life for Jesus' sake? Which do you think is wiser?
9. Now turn back to Luke 14 and read verses 28-35. Jesus gives two examples of people in the world who count the cost before they begin something. What are the two examples?
How must we be like them if we want to be followers of Jesus?
10. Read verse 33 again. What is the cost to be a disciple of Jesus?
Are you willing to pay that price?
11. Not many people are called to be martyrs for Jesus, but we are all called to carry our cross. We are all called to lose our lives for Jesus' sake. What do you think this means for most of us?

Pray and ask God to show you if there is anything that you are holding back from Him. Then give it all to Him. Find the joy and true life that come from being His disciple.

34. Worship The Father In Spirit And Truth

Opening Discussion:

Think of a worship service or a time when you were worshipping alone when you felt God's presence. Tell about that time, **OR** tell how you most enjoy worshipping God.

Read John 4:1-26.

1. Read again verses 7-12. After the woman questioned how a Jew could ask a Samaritan woman for a drink, Jesus told her something very important. What was it? (v. 10)
2. Then he explains more fully what he meant. Look carefully again at verses 13 and 14. What do you think Jesus meant by this?
What did the Samaritan woman think he meant? (v. 15)
3. Like the Samaritan woman's answer in verse 15, do we sometimes follow Jesus just so our lives will be easier? When we do this, how do we miss the spiritual life that Jesus wants to give us?

4. Read again verses 16-18. Jesus begins to talk about a deeper need in her life. What is it?
5. After Jesus reveals secret things about her life, does the woman want to talk about her sinful life? (vs. 19 & 20) When she changes the conversation, what does she want to talk about?

Look carefully at verse 20 again. What is this woman's main thought about what is most important in worship?

6. How does Jesus' response (v. 21) show the error of the woman's thinking?
7. Jesus explains that the Samaritans don't really know what they are worshipping. (v. 22) What are some ways that many people around the world worship in ignorance? How do they try to find God through rituals?
8. Jesus explains that Jewish worship is different (v. 22). Notice that Jesus says that salvation is "**from the Jews**"; He does not say it is "**for the Jews.**" (v. 22) Why is it important that He said "**from**" the Jews and not "**for**" the Jews?
9. Read verses 23 and 24 again. Jesus says that a new day is dawning—it **is** coming, and has **already** begun—when there will be true worshipers on the earth. How does Jesus describe these true worshipers? (v. 24)

The Samaritan woman thought that she might be worshipping in the wrong place (Should she go to Samaria's mountain? Or were the Jews right in saying that Jerusalem was the place she must go to worship?) Jesus told her in verse 21: **“Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain or Jerusalem.”** He then explained to her the Father was seeking true worshipers who worshiped in spirit and truth.

10. Like this woman, sometimes we think that the geographic location of our worship is the most important thing to God. How can this hinder us from worshipping Him in spirit and truth?
11. What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth? In other words, what is worship that really pleases God? Take some time to think about and discuss this important question.
12. Take a few moments to examine your own private worship of God. Would you call yourself a “true worshiper” of God? Or are you, like the Samaritan woman, confused about what true worship is?

In churches and home fellowships, we usually take time to “worship.” We do this by singing together, praying, and sometimes reading portions of Scripture. Some people think it is better to worship in small groups while some love places where hundreds or thousands of believers gather (like in stadiums).

Though it is wonderful to be with other believers to worship, let's think about what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth.” The number of people in the meeting, the beauty of the singing, etc. are not as important as offering our hearts to God in sincerity. It is most important to remember the truth about who God is and the salvation He has given to us in Jesus Christ.

13. About 35 to 40 years after Jesus ascended to heaven, the apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans. **Turn to Romans and read chapter 12, verse 1.** In that verse, what does Paul say that worship is?

Is it possible to have a wonderful gathering with beautiful singing and hundreds of people, but not please God because we are not offering our lives sincerely to Him?

How can your private worship, and your worship with other believers change to better please God?

14. End this study with a time of worship to God. Thank Him that He teaches us what truly pleases Him in worship. Ask Him to help you to become a true worshiper. Reading and praying the Psalms, and also reading and meditating on Jesus' death and resurrection can help you.

35. Honor and Protect Marriage

And Respect Those Who Choose Singleness For Jesus' Sake

Opening Discussion:

One of the commands that God gave Moses was “Do not commit adultery.” How does adultery hurt families, children, and society in general?

Read Matthew 19:1-12.

1. The Pharisees were experts in the law that Moses gave to the Jewish people. Here it says that they wanted to test Jesus. In other words, they wanted to trap Jesus. Perhaps he might give a wrong answer. What did they ask him? (v. 3)
2. Have you ever thought about where marriage came from? Let’s read the box below to consider the origins of the two sexes and marriage:

MARRIAGE: A Beautiful and Holy Gift from God

Read verses 4 – 6 again. In verses 4 and 5, Jesus was quoting from Genesis 1 and 2, the first chapters of the Holy Book. In those chapters God created His beautiful world. He created all the plants and animals. Then He created man and woman and said it was all very good.

Jesus was reminding them that it was God’s beautiful plan that people be created as male and female. God created the two sexes (v. 4) and He designed marriage (v. 5).

Marriage ceremonies around the world differ because cultures differ. Some ceremonies are very expensive. Some are very simple. Some cultures have customs that seem strange to us. Regardless of the ceremony, the joining of a man and woman in marriage is always a beautiful gift from the hand of God. When something is designed by God, it should be honored in the eyes of all people. It also should be counted as holy, very valuable, and worth protecting.

3. Read again verse 6. When a couple is married, who does Jesus say joins them together?

What do the words “**let no man separate**” (v. 6) mean?

4. The Pharisees knew that Jesus was saying that divorce was wrong. So they asked him another question. Read verse 7 again. What did they ask Jesus?

What was Jesus' answer in verse 8?

5. According to Jesus, why did Moses allow divorce? Is a hard heart pleasing to God? From verses 4-6 and verse 8, what is God's desire for those who are married?
6. Jesus says a difficult word in verse 9. What does he say?
Why do you think he says this?
7. Do you value marriage as a precious gift from God? Do you believe that the marriage covenant is a serious commitment not to be easily broken?
8. Read again verse 10. What did the disciples say to Jesus' difficult word?

The disciples recognized that getting married was a serious commitment. So they responded to Jesus' words with amazement. Perhaps they had seen many marriages where husbands and wives had been unfaithful to each other. Perhaps they had seen fighting and selfishness between their own parents. They probably had seen many families break apart. Therefore they decided quickly that it would be better for men and women not to marry because they might divorce and break God's law against adultery.

Yet, we must remember what Jesus taught a few verses before. God made us male and female. He designed and blessed marriage. He wants us to learn to protect it. We must remember that it is sinful attitudes and actions that destroy marriage. But when unselfish love, as Jesus taught, is in a marriage, it can be beautiful. The children will be blessed and all of society will be blessed because of healthy and pure marriages.

9. How does Jesus respond in verses 11 and 12?
What does Jesus mean in verse 11?
Is Jesus saying that everyone should choose singleness?
10. In verse 12, Jesus says that some choose to be single because of the kingdom of heaven? What does He mean?
11. Sometimes a man or woman does not marry because they want to serve God wholeheartedly. Other times they don't marry because they

are waiting for a godly person to be their spouse. In either situation, should we criticize or pressure them? How can we encourage them?

12. Let's apply these ancient truths to our day. Talk about the following questions in your group:

Satan is constantly trying to destroy marriages. Do you pray for the marriages in your fellowship to be strong and protected from his evil strategies?

How can we help singles who are followers of Jesus to choose life partners who are also devoted to Him?

How can we encourage one another to honor marriage and strengthen it?

Take time to thank God for the gift of marriage. Also, thank Him for His faithful love and guidance for singles.

36. Overcome Temptation By The Word Of God

Opening Discussion:

How important do you think it is to memorize God's Word? Why do you think that?

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

1. Read verses 1-2 again. Picture the setting. Where is Jesus? What has He been doing there? For how long?

What does the last part of verse 2 say about how He felt? How would you feel in this situation?

2. Read verse 3 again. Who is the “**tempter**”? What did he say to Jesus? How is he trying to plant doubt in Jesus' mind about who he is? (Notice the word “**if.**”)

Satan often comes to us in times of weakness and tempts us where we are especially vulnerable. In what ways was Jesus vulnerable at this time?

3. Read verse 4. How did Jesus respond to Satan? Where did His answer come from? (Most New Testaments have footnotes at the bottom of the page that tell where the Scriptures Jesus quoted can be found in the Old Testament. You can look them up if you like.)

What did Jesus say was more important than bread?

Note: Jesus could have turned stones to bread, but He did not take instructions from Satan. He listened only to God.

4. Read about the second temptation in verses 5-7. Where did the devil take Jesus? What did he tell Him to do? (Notice that Satan again uses the word, “if.”)
5. In this temptation, Satan also uses Scripture. Read the quote from verse 6 again. **Now turn to Psalm 91:9-12 and read** these verses in context. Do you think the Psalmist is suggesting we should deliberately put ourselves in dangerous situations so we can see God miraculously deliver us?
6. Read Jesus' answer in verse 7. Where did this answer come from? How did this truth show how Satan was misusing Scripture?
7. Read verses 8-9 again. What does Satan offer Jesus? What must Jesus do to get it?

8. Does Jesus consider Satan's offer even for a moment? How does He respond? (v. 10) How is this response especially strong?
9. When it was clear that Jesus would not listen to him, what did the devil do? (v. 11)
10. **Turn to Hebrews 4 and read verses 15-16.** Why can Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses? What does He offer to us when we come to Him for help? (v. 16)

How do these verses give you great encouragement when you are tempted?
11. In all three of Jesus' temptations that are recorded in Matthew 4, where do Jesus' answers to Satan come from? What authority did He rely on?
12. **Read Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17.** What is our best weapon against the enemy?
13. Jesus called Satan, "**a liar and the father of lies.**" (John 8:44) His method for getting us to sin is to deceive us. If we know the truth well, we will not be easily deceived. In Jesus' day, the Old Testament was the only Scripture people had. Yet Jesus knew it so well that He could immediately use the truth like sharp sword thrusts against the enemy.

How well do you know the truths found in the Word of God? Do you read and meditate on the Word daily? Are you memorizing important verses and even whole chapters and/or books—especially those that speak directly about the things that tempt you? Will you commit now to studying and memorizing more of the Word of God? If so, you, too, can learn to stand firm against temptation.

Here is a good verse to memorize: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, **He will also provide a way out so that you can stand under it.**" I Corinthians 10:13.

37. In Love, Help One Another Overcome Sin

Opening Discussion:

How does gossip destroy relationships in the fellowship of believers?
Do you think gossip can ever help to restore someone who has sinned?

Read Matthew 18:15-17.

1. Read verse 15 again. If someone has sinned against you, what is the first thing you should do? Do you think this refers to sisters as well as brothers?
Why should you keep the problem just between the two of you?
2. **Turn to Galatians 6 and read verses 1-2.** What should we try to do for the person who has sinned? (v. 1)
3. What should our attitude be when we confront someone who has sinned? How do you think an attitude of humility (showing kindness and mercy) might help the other person to humble himself and turn from his sin?
If you are self righteous when you go to him, how might that be a hindrance?
4. Why does verse 1 say we should “**watch ourselves**” when we go to restore someone else? (**See also I Corinthians 10:12.**)
5. Now go back to Matthew 18 and read verse 15 again. If he listens, what will the end result be?
If believers followed Jesus’ instructions in this verse, how might this keep small problems from becoming big?
6. Read verse 16 again. If your brother or sister does not listen to you, what should you do next?
Why is it important to take one or two others with you at this time? (See the last part of verse 16.)
7. If he still refuses to listen, what does Jesus say to do next? Why would it be good for the whole church to know about his sin if he refuses to turn from it?
8. How is this different from gossiping about him behind his back?

Note: If a believer confesses and forsakes his sin when he is first confronted, there is usually no need to expose it publicly. But if he refuses to repent, it is important that the whole church know the truth. In this way, he cannot continue to be in the fellowship as a hypocrite and perhaps deceive others to sin.

9. Read verse 17 again. After the truth about him is told to the entire fellowship, if he refuses to listen to them, how should they treat (consider) him?

Think about what this means. How are we as believers to treat “pagans” (unbelievers)?

If he is outside the fellowship of believers, he needs to be restored to relationship with Jesus. We should pray for him just as we would our unsaved family and friends and do everything we can for his restoration.

10. Now think about yourself. When a fellow believer has wronged you or has fallen into sin, what do you do? Do you go to him alone first? Or do you talk about it with others first?

Is your greatest desire for him to be restored to right relationship with God and others, or do you want to see him humiliated before others? Do you realize that you, also, are a sinner who needs God's grace and forgiveness?

In the past, if you have gossiped rather than going alone to your brother or sister, ask God's forgiveness for not following Jesus' way. In your heart, commit to do it His way in the future.

38. Let Your Light Shine Before Men

Opening Discussion:

In most people's opinion, what kind of person is a "sinner" in God's eyes?

Read Matthew 5:13-37.

1. In verses 13 – 16, Jesus tells his disciples that they are like salt and light in this world. Look over these verses quietly. Explain what you think it means today to "**let our lights shine**" so that God is praised.
2. Read again verses 17 -20.

After reading these verses, do you think Jesus wanted his followers to respect the law of the Old Testament?

As a group, **read together the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-21**. This is the central moral law that God gave to the people through the prophet Moses. Don't look at the verses now and see if your group can say them from memory.

Do you honor the Lord by practicing and teaching these commands?

3. Read again verse 20 of Matthew 5. The Pharisees followed the law in a superficial way. Jesus continually showed them that they, as "religious" people were not pleasing God. In the following verses, notice how Jesus explains what it means to truly follow God's law from the heart.
4. Read again verses 21 and 22. Have you ever felt hurt deeply by angry words that people have said to you? Have you ever hurt others by your angry, hateful words?

Jesus compares angry words to murder. How can our words be an evil force that is like killing people?

5. In verses 23 – 26, Jesus teaches us to work for reconciliation with people whom we have hurt. Read those verses again.
Are there people you know to whom you have spoken angry words? Will you obey Jesus and "be reconciled" to them?
6. Read v. 27-28. Do you think Jesus was only talking to men or does the same principle apply to women?
7. Read verses 29-30. Throughout the centuries, some believers have taken these words seriously and cut off various parts of their bodies. It's important to know that Jesus was not teaching that we should literally cut off a part of our bodies. Instead, He was saying that we

must make a radical moral decision not to follow a path of sin. We must be aware of our strong sinful desires, and we must consciously cut off every opportunity to sin before sin defeats us.

Where do you need to cut off sin's opportunity, so that you can follow God wholeheartedly? Think of your tongue and what you say. Also, your eyes and what you look at on television or on the computer. Also, think about your hands (what they do), your feet (where they take you), etc.

(Note: We are skipping verses 31-32 here because divorce is discussed in another study entitled "Honor and Protect Marriage.")

8. Read verses 33 – 37. People have made oaths for thousands of years. Why do you think people make oaths?
Moses taught that we should fulfill our oaths, but what does Jesus say? (v. 34)
9. What did Jesus say should replace our oaths? (v. 37). Why should **"yes"** or **"no"** be enough in our promises to people?
When you say that you will do something, do people know that you are a person who can be trusted?
10. Look back over this passage and review. What did Jesus teach about murder? About being reconciled to your brother? About adultery? About oaths?
11. Now examine your own heart. What do you need to change to be **"salt"** and **"light"** in this world? Thank Jesus that He died and rose again to give you the power to change on the inside. Pray now and ask Him to help you to live for Him from your heart.

***“Therefore keep watch,
because you do not know on what day
your Lord will come.” Matthew 24:42***

BE FRUITFUL AND READY FOR HIS COMING

“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” John 15:8

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” Matthew 24:45-47

Did you know that Jesus has work for you to do? Sadly, some who say they are followers of Jesus only want to go to heaven. They are glad to be saved, but they don't want the difficulties of serving the King of kings.

Yes, there are difficulties. But there are also rewards. Jesus honors us all by calling us into serving Him. As we serve Him, He sometimes allows us to see the fruit of our labors. But much of the fruit we will not see until He returns. Then He will show us how our faithfulness produced a harvest of good fruit! What a day of joy that will be.

Until then, let's serve Him with hope always growing in our hearts. He promised He would return and He is always faithful to His word.

As you study the following lessons, be prepared for the Lord to show you new ways of serving Him in this dark world. Abide in Jesus each day. And take His light and love to people who desperately need Him. May your joy be full!

39. Abide (Remain) In Jesus and Bear Much Fruit

Opening Discussion:

What do you think it means for a Christian to “**bear good fruit**”?

What are some examples of “fruit” that you think should be seen in a Christian’s life?

Read John 15: 1-8.

1. According to verse 1, who is the “**true vine**”? Who is the “Gardener”? Who are the “branches”? (v. 5)

What is the job of the Gardener? (v. 2)

2. Think about the picture of a vine and a branch. Where does the branch get its nourishment from? What does this say to you about your relationship with Jesus?

If the branch does not produce fruit, what happens to it? (v. 2)

If it does produce fruit, what happens to it?

When a vine or tree is pruned, old or dead branches are cut off so the new branches will grow better and be more fruitful. What does the pruning represent in our daily lives? How does this pruning help us to be more fruitful?

3. Read verses 4-5 again. What does it mean to remain in Jesus and have Him remain in us?

What can we expect from our lives if we remain in Him? What can we expect if we don’t remain in Him?

What do you think it means to “**bear much fruit**”? How do you expect fruit to be seen in your life?

4. Read verse 6. What does Jesus say those who do not remain in Him are like? What happens to them?

5. What promise does Jesus make in verse 7? What must we do to receive the promise? What do you think this means?

6. Read verse 8 again. What is the result when we bear much fruit?

Take a minute to think about your own life. Are you growing in a close relationship with Jesus? Is his life flowing through you each day, just as the life-giving sap flows from the vine to the branches?

If it is, you can expect to produce two kinds of fruit. The first kind is in your own life.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Name the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in these verses. These character qualities should be growing more and more in your life.

The second kind of fruit will be produced in the lives of others. As they see his life in you and as you tell them about what He has done for you, some will put their trust in Jesus Christ. Both of these fruits bring glory to God.

Read John 15:9-17.

7. Look especially at verses 10 and 12. What things could keep us from remaining in Jesus?

Ask Him to show you any disobedience in your life. Is there anything that might hinder your fruitfulness? Confess it to Him. Be obedient to what He shows you.

8. Read verse 11. What does Jesus desire that our lives be full of?

Think about your life. Is it full of joy? Is it bearing good fruit? If it's not, what do you need to do? Pray about it now.

40. Invest Your Talents, Don't Bury Them

Opening Discussion:

Do you think that God has given some talent (gift or ability) to everyone? What talents do you think he has given you?

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

1. The servants in this parable are entrusted with some property. Whose property is it?

Read verse 15 again. It says he gave to each “according to his ability.” Do you think the master expected more of some servants than he did of others? Why do you think that?

2. In this passage, talents meant money. Each talent was approximately 1,000 dollars. Today we usually think of talents as something else. What do we usually think of as talents?

Do you think “**talents**” could mean both the abilities and the financial blessings God gives us?

Read verses 16-17. If we think of talents as gifts and abilities, how can these be invested for God's Kingdom?

3. After a long time, the master returns and calls for accountability of his property.

How many talents does the first servant bring to his master? (v. 20) How does the master describe the servant? (v. 21) How does the servant's new assignment compare with his first assignment?

4. Now read verses 22-23. How many talents did the second servant present to his master? Notice the master's response in verse 23. How does it compare to his response to the first servant in verse 21?

Which was more important to the master—the amount of money earned, or the faithful work of the servant?

What new level of relationship are both servants called into with the master? (vs. 21 & 23)

5. Read verses 24-25 again. How does the third servant describe his master? (v. 24) Why did he bury his talent?

If we think of God as harsh and angry, how can this cause us to be afraid and not get busy using what He's given us?

Scripture clearly states that God loves us and accepts us because of Jesus' death for us. If we don't believe this, how can our relationship to God become like that of the third servant? (**See I John 4:16-18**)

6. What words does the master use to describe the third servant in verses 26 and 30?

Why do you think this servant's punishment was so severe? (vs. 28-30)

7. This is a hard parable to accept. The master shows no mercy to the servant who knew what was expected of him but didn't do it. He lived in fear and not in faith.

At the beginning of this study, we talked about the gifts God has given each of us. What are you doing to use your God-given gifts for His Kingdom?

Take a few minutes to think quietly about specific things God may be asking you to do at this time. You may want to write them down and keep them in your Bible. Then pray. Ask God to forgive you where you have not been faithful in the past with what He has entrusted to you. Then ask Him to help you in the future to use all that He has given you for his glory.

41. Serve Jesus By Helping Needy People

Opening Discussion:

Do you think God cares about the poor? Do you think we have a responsibility to help the poor? Why or why not?

Read Matt. 25:31-46.

1. In these verses Jesus is telling a story to teach a truth. Read again verses 31-32.

When does this story take place? Describe the scene.

Who is present? (v. 32) What is the Son of Man (Jesus) doing? (v. 31)

2. Read again verse 34-36. What do those on Jesus' right receive? (v. 34) Why?

What have they done?

List the things Jesus says in verses 35-36 that they have done for Him.

3. What do those on the right (the righteous) answer in response to Jesus words? Do you think they are surprised at his words? (vs. 37-39)
4. Read Jesus' answer to them in verse 40. What do you think He means by this? How do we serve Jesus when we help those in need?

Mother Teresa was a well-known Catholic nun who served the very poor and dying who lived on the streets in India. She was inspired by this parable. She said that she saw the face of Jesus in each person that she helped. When you care for needy people, do you consider that you are helping Jesus Himself?

5. Jesus now turns to speak to those on his left. What does He say to them? Why do they receive this punishment? (vs. 42-43)
6. How is their answer in verse 44 similar to the answer of the righteous in verse 37-39? How does Jesus answer them? (v. 45)

Consider: If we read only this story by itself, we could think that we receive eternal life or eternal punishment based on whether or not we help other people. Other verses in the Bible help us to understand what Jesus is saying to us through this story of the sheep and the goats.

7. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** Read these verses through several times. What does verse 8 tell us about our salvation?

According to verse 9, are we saved by our works? Can any believer boast that he has earned his salvation through something he has done?

8. Now read again verse 10. Because of our faith, God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. As new creatures, what does it say we are created to do? What do you think these good works might include?
9. Turn back to Matthew 25, and read verse 40 again. When you see or hear of someone in need, do you think to yourself, **“How can I be Jesus’ hands reaching out to this person?”**

No one can meet all of the needs they see around them. But we can each reach out to the needy people that God brings across our path. Think about people that God may want you to help. Ask Him to give you His heart of compassion for them. Then obey Him by doing what He shows you to do.

42. Be Ready For The Second Coming Of Jesus

Part 1: Don't Be Deceived

Opening Discussion:

Do you think the world will continue to go on forever, or will there be an end to this world as we know it?

Read Matthew 24:1-36.

1. What did the disciples want Jesus to notice when they walked away from the temple? (v. 1) What was Jesus' answer? (v. 2)

Notice that the disciples asked in v. 3: **“When will this happen?”** The temple (called by historians as Herod's Temple) was destroyed in A.D. 70. This was approximately 40 years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected. The Romans attacked the city of Jerusalem and thoroughly destroyed the temple.

But the disciples also asked, “And what will be **the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?** This prophecy in Matthew 24 seems to be a combination of telling of the Roman attack on Jerusalem, and also of His second coming.

2. Jesus began his explanation of the days ahead with a warning in verse 4. What was that warning?

In verse 6 he gives them another warning: “See to it that you are not alarmed.” Look at v. 6-8 again. How can we as believers grow stronger so that we will “not be alarmed” when we see dangerous signs in the world?

3. How is Jesus' second coming like the birth of something? (v. 8)
4. Read again verses 9 and 10. Since the time of the apostles, Christians have been persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Most of us hope it will not happen to us!

Do you remember what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 5:11-12 about persecution? **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Mt. 5:11,12)

How does it strengthen us to remember that holy men and women of the past have suffered for their faith? Is it really possible to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for serving Jesus?

5. **Read also Matthew 10:28.** What encouragement for times of persecution do you find in this verse?
6. In verse 11-14 of Matthew 24, what are other “signs” of those difficult days? How can we as believers guard against our love growing cold? How can we keep from being deceived by false prophets?

How do you think Bible study, prayer, and meeting together often with other believers can help to protect us from these things?

According to verse 13, who will be saved?

7. In verse 14, Jesus says the good news will be preached in the entire world before He comes. How are you, and the believers of your fellowship, participating in this activity?
8. Read again verses 15 – 25. Many scholars have disagreed on what the “**abomination that causes desolation**” is (v. 15). Some say it happened in the past when Jerusalem was destroyed. Others say it will happen in the future. It is best for this Bible study to not spend much time discussing this question.

It is more important for us to beware of the widespread deception in the world. Look at verses 23-25. How will many people be deceived?

9. Look carefully at verses 26 – 31. How will all people know for sure that Jesus has returned?

Why do you think there will be deep mourning among all the nations of the earth when Jesus returns? (v. 30)

10. Look at verse 32 – 36. On one hand we must be ready for him at any time, on the other hand we must not set dates of His return.

How can that thought help you to live for Jesus each day?

11. Think about your life. What do you need to do to strengthen your faith so you can persevere through hard times? How can you guard against deception? Take some time to pray about these things.

43. Be Ready For The Second Coming Of Jesus

Part 2: Be Watchful And Faithful

Opening Discussion:

From the last study, what did Jesus say would be signs of His return? How can we be prepared for persecution and hard times? How can we keep from being deceived by false prophets?

In this study we will talk more about how to be ready for Jesus' second coming. We will look at what our attitude should be and what we should be doing as we wait.

Read **Matthew 24:36-51**.

1. Read again verse 36. Who alone knows the time of Jesus' return?
2. Read verses 37-41 again. How will the days of the coming of Jesus be like the days of Noah? What were the people busy doing?

For one hundred years the people watched Noah build the ark, yet none of them repented. Do you think that most people in the world today are like that—unaware that judgment is coming?

3. Read what the Apostle Paul wrote to his young disciple, Timothy, about the last days in **II Timothy 3:1-5**. Does this sound like many people today? How?
4. Turn back to Matthew 24. According to verses 42-44, since we don't know when Jesus will return, what should our attitude be?
5. Read again the parable in verses 45-51. What task is given to the servant in verse 45? If he is faithful and wise, what will he be doing when his Master returns?

What will his reward be?

6. If the servant is wicked, what does he do? (v. 49)
What is his attitude toward the master's return? (v. 48)
7. How will the Master surprise the wicked servant? (v. 50)
What will his reward be? (v. 51)

How can we be faithful and wise servants in the twenty-first century?

8. **In II Peter 3**, this apostle gives us some advice on how we should live as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Read the entire chapter.

Look again at verses 3-7. What will scoffers say in the last days? (vs. 3-4) What are they forgetting? (vs. 5-7)

9. How is God's counting of time different from ours? (vs. 8-9) Look at the last part of verse 9. What is God waiting for? What does this say about his love for all people?
10. Read verses 10-13 again. Describe what it will be like when the day of the Lord comes.
What can we do to be prepared for this day? (See vs. 11 and 14.)
11. In verses 17-18, what final instructions does Peter give to help us know how to live?

Now think about your own life. Are you ready for Jesus' return? What do you need to change to be ready? Take some time to pray about these things.

***“For if, when we were God's enemies,
we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son,
how much more, having been reconciled,
shall we be saved through his life!”
Romans 5:10***

TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:26-28

Jesus was a wonderful teacher. But Jesus didn't come just to teach us. He came to die for us. His death and resurrection is the focus our faith. His death means life for us.

It would be tragic for the Son of God to die for the sins of the world and for millions of believers to forget it. And isn't it sad when followers of Jesus lose the meaning of His death because of foolish arguments and selfishness? Jesus knew we needed to think often about His death. And we need to remember it in a way that has deep meaning. That's why He gave us the command to take the Lord's Supper.

Jesus' death can not be comprehended completely by our minds. Something happens deep in our spirits when we take the Lord's Supper. When we remember that it was **for us** he died, in a mysterious way we are fed by His life and sacrificial love. We joyfully welcome Him afresh as our Savior and Lord. Believers all around the world know that taking the bread and the cup gives them new courage and hope.

The following studies will help you and your group to **"taste and see that the Lord is good."** (Psalm 34:8)

44. Eat The Bread Of Life And Live Forever

*This study is an introduction to the next study
on taking the Lord's Supper.*

Opening Discussion:

Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) What do you think He meant by this?

Read John 6:25-70.

Note the context of this passage:

In the first part of chapter 6, Jesus multiplied the bread and fish to feed 5,000 people. After this amazing miracle, Jesus left, but the people searched for him.

1. Read verses 25-29 again.

Jesus tells the people they were not seeking him because of the miraculous sign that would help them to believe he was the Messiah. Instead, they sought Him because "they ate and were filled." They simply wanted another free meal!

If we only seek Jesus for the physical blessings He can give to us, what important thing about Him will we miss?

2. What do you think is the "**food which endures to eternal life**" that Jesus talks about in verse 27?
3. The people then wanted to know what they needed to do in order to do God's work (v. 28). What was Jesus' answer? (v. 29)
Why is believing in Jesus pleasing to God?
4. Read again verses 30-40.

Culture Note: When Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the land of Canaan, they were in the desert for forty years. During this time, God supernaturally provided bread from heaven (called "manna") for them to eat. (Exodus 16:4)

Who gives the true bread from heaven? (v. 32). What does this bread give to the world?

5. The people then ask to be given this bread. Jesus tells them clearly what this bread is in verse 35. What is the bread from heaven?
6. Read again verses 41-59. What did Jesus say was the difference between the bread that their fathers ate in the desert and the living bread?

How does He describe this living bread in verse 51? What does He say it is?

The people thought he was speaking literally. They asked the question you and I might ask: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v. 52)

7. Look over verses 53-59. How many times do you see the words "life" or "live?" Read each sentence that uses those words. Jesus is repeating an important truth in several different ways. Where does He say true life comes from?
8. Jesus says some very difficult things in these verses. What does He mean when He says, "**My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink**"? Why does He say, "**...the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me**"? (**Note:** Take a few minutes to think about these questions. Then, if you're not sure of the answers, continue on with the study. Number 11 below will help you to understand these words.)
9. Read verses 60-65 again.

In verses 61 and 62, Jesus tells the people that they would be even more offended if they saw him ascend to where he was before. Where do you think Jesus was before?

Why would it offend the Jews? Did they want to believe that this lowly carpenter could be God's Messiah?

10. In verse 63, Jesus begins to speak plainly to them instead of in the difficult symbolism of the past verses. Where does he say life comes from?
11. Jesus makes it clear in this verse that, even if we could literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, we would gain nothing from that. Life comes from the Spirit. According to verse 63, how does He say He has given them His life and Spirit?

How does this verse help you understand Jesus' difficult words about flesh and blood?

Do you daily "**feed on**" His life-giving words?

12. Read again verses 66-68. How did many people respond to Jesus' difficult words?

After some people stopped following Jesus, what did He ask His disciples? What was Peter's answer to Jesus? (v. 68)

13. Talk about Peter's words to Jesus. Do you believe that the words of eternal life are only found in Jesus? Do you "believe and know that he is the Holy One of God"?

If you have put your faith in Jesus, do you have confidence that you have everlasting life in him? Take time to thank Him for this wonderful gift. And don't forget to draw spiritual life from (i.e. feed on) Him often.

45. Remember Jesus' Death By Taking The Lord's Supper

Opening Discussion:

Why do we take the Lord's Supper?

Introduction:

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He celebrated an important Jewish feast with his disciples. At that time, He gave them a very simple but meaningful way they could remember His death. We call it "**The Lord's Supper.**" Let's study together what Jesus said and did on that night. Let's also think about what it means for us as we celebrate the Lord's Supper with other believers now, two thousand years later.

Read Luke 22:1-23.

1. Read verses 1-6 again. What were the Jewish leaders wanting to do with Jesus in verse 2? How did Satan use Judas to help them make a plan? (verses 3-6)
2. Read verses 7-8, and also look back at verse 1. What were the two names for the Jewish feast that was approaching?

Culture Note: About 1500 years before Jesus came to earth, the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. On the night they were delivered from slavery, God sent a terrible plague to every Egyptian household. The firstborn, both of men and animals, was killed by God's death angel. This plague finally convinced Pharaoh (king of Egypt) to let the Israelites leave. To protect themselves from the plague, God instructed every Israelite household to kill a lamb and put its blood over the doorway of their home. When the death angel saw the blood, he would pass over that home and no one would die.

God also instructed the Israelites to prepare unleavened bread (that is, bread without yeast) to take with them when they fled from Egypt. This was because they could not wait for yeast to rise. Every year, the Jewish people were to celebrate these feasts so that they would remember how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

To learn more about these feasts, you can read a short account in **Deuteronomy 16:1-8**, or you can read the whole story in **Exodus 12**. The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted seven days. The Passover was celebrated on the first day of that feast.

3. How was the Passover a picture of Jesus' death, which happened many years later?

Do you think it was significant that Jesus died at the time that the Passover was being celebrated? Explain. (What did John the Baptist call Jesus in **John 1:29**?)

4. Read verses 7-13 again. From what you know about the Passover Feast, what are some things the disciples might have done to prepare?
5. According to verse 14, who was with Jesus around the table? (**Matthew 26:20** tells more specifically who was with Him.)

Notice what Jesus says about this time in verse 15. Try to picture the scene in your mind. How might this have been a very personal and meaningful time for Jesus with his disciples?

6. Read verses 17-18. How did the Kingdom of God come with Jesus' death and resurrection?
7. Read verse 19. All of Jesus' actions and words in this verse are important. What three things did Jesus do with the bread? When He **broke** the bread and **gave** it to His disciples, how was this a picture of what would happen to His body?

What did He say the bread was? How did He describe His body?

8. Take a few minutes to read and meditate on verse 20. What did Jesus say the cup of wine was? What is this "**new covenant**" in His blood?

Read Hebrews 9:13-15. What was the effect of sprinkling the blood of goats and bulls on the people? (as the old covenant required: v. 13) What is the effect of Christ's death for us? (the new covenant: v. 14)

9. Why are we to eat the bread and drink the cup? (See Luke 22:19)
10. What is it that Jesus wants us to remember? (See v. 19; **also I Corinthians 11:26.**)

Why is it so important that we remember the Lord's death? Why is it important that we remember that His body was broken for us and His blood was poured out for us?

Note: It is only in the death of Christ that we have forgiveness of sins and a way to have right relationship with God the Father. This is the single most important truth that makes followers of Jesus different from followers of every other religion.

What Jesus started in that small room on the Passover night has become a tradition known by all followers of Jesus. For two thousand years, believers all over the world have joined together often to obey His command to take the bread and wine (or juice). As each one eats and drinks, they review the truth that all of their sins are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus. Through their trust in the new covenant, Satan's accusations against them are silenced. Their faith is strengthened and the joy of salvation is renewed.

11. This would be a good time to take The Lord's Supper together as a group. As you prepare, take time to read back over these Scriptures again. As Jesus instructed, remember His death for you because of His very great love for you. Thank Him for His sacrifice and the new life that you have in Christ. **Never** allow The Lord's Supper to become something you do as a meaningless ritual!

46. Examine Your Heart When You Take The Lord's Supper

Opening Discussion:

When you take the Lord's Supper in a group, what are some practices that are especially meaningful to you? (For example: serving it to one another, praying for one another as you partake, having a time of quiet prayer before partaking, etc.)

Read I Corinthians 11:17-34.

1. Read verse 18 again. What did Paul say about the Corinthian church gatherings?

2. What did he say was not good about the way they took the Lord's Supper? (Read vs. 20-22.) Was it really the Lord's Supper that they were eating?

How were they not being an example of love and caring for one another?

3. Read verse 23. Where did Paul say this practice of taking the Lord's Supper came from?

When did the Lord Jesus first give His disciples this way to remember His death?

4. Look again at verses 24-25. What did Jesus call the bread? What did he call the cup of wine?

When they partook of the bread and wine, what were they proclaiming according to verse 26? Who were they remembering?

5. In verses 17-22 we see the bad behavior of the Corinthian church. Then in verses 23-26 we notice the humble ways of Jesus on the same night that He was betrayed. This helps us to understand what Paul is saying next.

Read verses 27-34 again. What do you think Paul was talking about when he spoke of taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

6. What does he mean in verse 29 by "**without recognizing the body of the Lord**"? How did the Corinthian church's attitude during the Lord's Supper not recognize the body of the Lord?

Did they exhibit the humble attitude that Jesus showed on the night he was betrayed?

7. According to Paul (see vs. 28-31), is it good to examine and judge ourselves?

In this passage, what happens when we judge ourselves? (v. 31) What happens when the Lord judges us? (v. 32)

What should we do if we find that we have unloving or other sinful attitudes in our hearts? (**See I John 1:9**)

8. Read again Paul's summary statements in verses 33 and 34. What attitude was he trying to encourage in that body of believers?
9. When you partake of the Lord's Supper, what should you be focused on in your thoughts?
10. Notice that in this passage Paul says nothing about HOW the Lord's Supper is to be served, nor about WHO should serve it. But He does speak about what our heart attitude should be when we partake. Will you now take the Lord's Supper with a new attitude of "**recognizing the body of Christ**" and all He has done for you? Will you strive for unity in the body of Christ?

Before taking the Lord's Supper, take time to examine your heart, confess any sin to the Lord and receive His cleansing. Then receive the body and the blood of Christ with thanksgiving for His humble sacrifice for you.

***“... teaching them to obey everything
I have commanded you.”
Matthew 28:20***

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.
(Jesus to Peter and Andrew, Mark 1:17)*

*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many
witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach
others. (Paul to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:1, 2)*

Think about this: Jesus started his ministry by teaching 12 men to learn from Him, believe in Him and obey Him. Today in every country of the world there are followers of Jesus. The kingdom of God has grown for 2,000 years because disciples of Jesus have made more disciples of Jesus!

Now it is the 21st century. It is our turn to make disciples. Millions need to hear the life-giving message of the gospel. They need to hear that Jesus died for the sins of the world, and that He rose from the dead! They need to be taught that Jesus Christ is our hope of eternal salvation. They need to learn to obey His commands.

The studies in this section will help you learn how to make disciples who follow the way of Jesus.

47. Go And Make Disciples Of All Nations

Opening Discussion:

Do you think Jesus' disciples were "super" men, or were they people like us? What fears do you have in following Jesus completely?

Read Mark 1:14-20.

1. Where did Jesus go to call his first disciples? (v. 16) What was their occupation? Were they trained religious leaders?
2. After he told them to follow him, what did Jesus say he would make them? (v.17)

Before you read the box below, discuss how Jesus "**fished for men**" while he was on earth.

How did the disciples learn from Jesus to "fish for men?"

It is important to remember that even though the disciples were not trained as religious leaders, Jesus trained them for over three years as they traveled with him. They heard him teach about God's kingdom. They saw him perform miracles of healing and set people free from Satan's power. They watched him oppose religious hypocrites who pretended to follow God. They saw his compassion for sinners, as he taught them of God's mercy and called them to repentance and a new life. And, during those three years, he sent his disciples out to surrounding towns in Israel to do this same work. When Jesus left the earth, the disciples had learned to fish for men.

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

3. This event happened after Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead. He was about to go into heaven.
What did he say had been given to him? (v.18) What does Jesus' authority mean to you? How does it give you confidence?
4. In verse 19, Jesus told his disciples to go somewhere. Where were they to go and what were they to do?
In whose name were they to baptize people?
5. Look closely at verse 20. When we disciple people, what are we supposed to teach them?

If someone goes to church every week but does not obey Jesus' teachings, would you call that person a disciple of Jesus?

The purpose of these Bible studies is to teach us how to follow Jesus the Messiah. He said in **John 14:15**, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** Think about yourself now. Do you think you are becoming a disciple of Jesus?

6. Part of being a disciple of Jesus is teaching others to follow Him. It's another way of saying that we are **“fishing for men.”** We continue to do the work that Peter and John learned to do. For 2,000 years, disciples of Jesus have taught others to trust in Jesus for salvation. They also have taught people to learn to obey his wonderful teachings. This is how the good news has spread all over the world. It has come to you and me because people did what Jesus told them to do.

Have you begun to teach others to follow Jesus? Think about your friends and family or perhaps a new acquaintance. Who can you begin to teach about Jesus? Take time to talk about this now.

When you disciple people, don't forget to use the New Testament. Also, you may use these Bible studies.

7. What last promise did Jesus give His disciples before he left them? (v. 20) How does this promise give you comfort and courage?

End this time by praying for God to give you opportunities to teach others to follow Jesus.

48. Share The Good News With Those Close To You

Opening Discussion:

Who first introduced you to Jesus Christ and how?

Introduction: John the baptist was sent by God to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. He began preaching and baptizing shortly before Jesus began His ministry. Crowds of people came to him to be baptized and some stayed with him as disciples.

Read John 1: 29-34

1. How did John greet Jesus? (v. 29)

Who did John say that Jesus was in verse 34? How did John recognize him? (vs. 32-33)

Now read verses 35-51.

2. When two of John's disciples heard him call Jesus the "Lamb of God," what did they do? (vs. 36-37)

John had called people to turn from their sin because the Kingdom of God was coming. How do you think his preaching may have prepared these two disciples to become followers of Jesus?

3. Read Jesus' conversation with the two disciples in verses 37-39. What invitation did Jesus give them in verse 39?

How important do you think it is to spend time with non-believing friends and relatives, invite them into our homes, and let them see our lives up close? Explain.

Do people see Jesus when they look closely at your life?

4. Read verses 40-42. What was the first thing Andrew did after he decided to follow Jesus?

Note: Many prophets had prophesied that a Messiah would come. The Jewish people had been waiting hundreds of years for Him. For Simon (Peter) this would have been very exciting news! Many people today are not waiting for a Messiah, but we must remember that everyone has a very great need to be set free from their sin. They are living as dead people and need the life that only Jesus can give.

Are there family members that you can help to get to know Jesus?
What is holding you back from sharing this good news?

5. Read verses 43-46 again. What did Philip do immediately after Jesus called him? (v. 45) Who did Philip say Jesus was?

How did Nathanael respond? Do you get discouraged if you share about Jesus with someone and their first response is negative?

6. Philip invited Nathanael to **“come and see”** for himself. How can we, using the New Testament, also invite people to “come and see” who Jesus is?
7. Read verses 47-51 again. What changed Nathanael’s unbelief to belief?

When you share the good news with someone, do you believe that Jesus can truly enter their life and change them? Why is it important to believe this if we want to be effective evangelists?

8. Look at verse 44 again. What town were all four of Jesus’ first disciples from? What advantages are there in evangelizing natural groupings of people, like families or co-workers together?
9. In Mark 5:1-20, Jesus delivered a man from a legion of demons. After Jesus set him free, what did He tell the man to do? (**Read Mark 5:18-20.**)
10. Sometimes we think of evangelism as something we go away to another place to do with strangers. Do you have family members, neighbors, or friends that you have never shared the good news with? What holds you back?

Think of someone in particular whom you will commit to talk with this next week. Pray now and ask God to give you boldness, wisdom, and opportunities to share Jesus with this person.

49. Teach Children To Love and Serve Jesus

Opening Discussion:

At what age do you think children should be taught about Jesus? Can they understand spiritual truth at a young age, or should we wait until they're older?

Read Mark 10:13-16.

1. Read verse 13 again. When people brought little children to Jesus, how did the disciples respond?
Why do you think they responded this way?
2. How did Jesus feel about the disciples' attitude? (v. 14) Read Jesus' words to them in verses 14-15. How was Jesus' attitude toward the children different from the disciples' attitude?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, **“the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these?”** (See v. 14, also 15.)
What is there about little children that we need to copy if we want to be part of God's Kingdom?
4. What did Jesus do then? (Read v. 16.) How did He feel toward the children?
5. **Now read Mark 9:36-37.** How does Jesus show honor to little children in these verses?
6. **Turn to Matthew 21 and read verses 14-17.** What did the religious leaders hear the children shouting in the temple? How did they feel about this?

Note: Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, prophets had said that a Savior would come and He would be David's descendent. When someone spoke about the **“Son of David,”** the Jews all knew that this meant the Messiah, or Savior, that God would send. The religious leaders did not believe that Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, could be that Messiah. Therefore, they were angry that the children would call Him the **“Son of David.”** The children recognized who Jesus was, even though the religious leaders did not.

7. Read verse 16 again. Did Jesus try to stop the children from praising Him? How do you think He felt about what they were saying?

Do you think the children should have a part in worshiping Jesus? Are they welcome in your worship times?

8. Timothy was a disciple of the Apostle Paul. As a young man, he became a leader in the early church.

Read II Timothy 1:5. From whom did Timothy first learn the Scriptures?

9. **Read II Timothy 3:14-15.** At what age did Timothy begin to learn about God's ways? How did this prepare him to be a leader in the fellowship of believers?
10. If you are a parent, what are you doing to train your children in God's Word? Do you have daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer in your home?

If you have nieces or nephews, grandchildren, or other children who are close to you, do you look for ways to teach them the Word of God?

11. Are children welcomed in your fellowship, or do parents feel they should not bring their children? Are children being taught God's Word when you meet, or are they sent into another room to play? What are you doing to help the children learn about God? Do you welcome them and bless them as Jesus did, or are you bothered by them as the disciples were?

Take time to pray for the children you know. Ask God to give you ideas for how to help them grow in their love for Jesus.

50. Preach Boldly The Kingdom Of God and Trust Jesus For Miracles

Opening Discussion:

Do you think miracles show us God's love and compassion for people with spiritual or physical needs? How?

Introduction: When Jesus began His ministry here on earth, He chose twelve men to be His disciples. There were others who followed Him and obeyed His teachings, but these would be a special team. They would travel with Him and learn His teachings and His ways. After Jesus went back to be with the Father, they would lead the way in taking the Good News about Him into all the world. Many others would join with them in this work. Soon after He chose them, Jesus sent them out to the towns and villages of Judah. Let's look at His instructions to them as He sent them out:

Read Matthew 10:7-8.

1. According to verse 7, what were they to preach? What do you think this meant?

How did Jesus' coming bring the Kingdom of Heaven (also called the Kingdom of God) to earth?

2. What else did Jesus tell them to do in verse 8? How did these miracles show people that the Kingdom of God had come near? Imagine how these things would bring hope to people in hopeless situations.

How did the miracles show that Jesus was not just another religious teacher? How do miracles today show unbelievers that Jesus is different from every other religious leader throughout the centuries?

Note: During Jesus' three years of ministry on earth He performed many miracles. Many times He healed large crowds of sick people. He multiplied food to feed thousands. He even raised people from the dead. After Jesus went back to heaven, His disciples continued to do many miracles in His name.

3. **Read Acts 3:1-10.** Where were Peter and John going? Describe what happened with the crippled beggar. (vs. 2-8)
4. Read verses 9-10 again. How did the crowds of people in the temple respond when they saw that the lame man had been healed?

5. When Peter saw the crowds come running, he began to preach to them. **Read his sermon to them in verses 11-26.**

Read verse 16 again. How did Peter say the lame man had been made well?

6. How did this miracle open the peoples' hearts to hear Peter's message to them?

Read Acts 4:4. How many people believed Peter's message that day?

Note: Three thousand believed a short time earlier in **Acts 2**. Now there is a total of five thousand men who believe. This would mean that two thousand men believed at this time. Women and children were not usually counted, so the total number of people who believed was probably much higher.

The religious leaders did not like Peter and John preaching in Jesus' name. They had them arrested and put in prison. They wanted to punish them, but they didn't know what to do. Everyone in Jerusalem knew that a great miracle had been done through them. So, they threatened Peter and John and commanded them to never speak again in Jesus' name. But Peter and John were not frightened.

7. Read the prayer that they prayed in **Acts 4:23-30**.

Read again verses 29-30. What did they ask God to do through them in the name of Jesus? Name the things they asked for. How often do you ask God to do these things through you?

8. **Now read verse 31.** How did God answer their prayer?

To learn more about how God answered that prayer, read the following:

Acts 5:12-16

Acts 8:4-7

9. Think about your own life. Do you desire more boldness in speaking the Word of God? Do you long to see miracles happen to show the truth and power of the Word you are proclaiming? Do you want God to use YOU to bring both spiritual and physical healing to others?

You, too can pray the prayer of the apostles in Acts 4:29-30. The same Holy Spirit who empowered them can daily fill and empower you to bring the Kingdom of God to those around you. Will you ask Him for that now?

Guidelines for Translators

You will note that these studies have been written in simple English. It is our hope that speakers of many different languages will find them easy to translate into their own language. **It is not necessary to ask permission before translating them.** However, if you do translate them, we would like to know about it. It may be possible for us to include your translation on our website (www.learnhisways.com) in the future.

We also ask that you follow a few guidelines in translating. These will help to keep the studies as close as possible to the Scriptures and to the original design of the writer of the study. The suggestions for what words to use are especially important if these studies are to be used with those who are not yet believers or new believers. As much as possible, we want people to be drawn *to* Jesus, rather than become angry and turn away before they have even looked into what He taught. If you have questions as you translate, please feel free to contact us through the website.

Guidelines:

1. Use actual words from the Bible for direct quotes.

Anytime there is anything in quotes, if it is taken from the Bible, please go to the Bible in your own language and copy directly what is there. Do not translate from the English quote. Also, as you are translating a study, keep the Bible in your language open to the passage being studied, and try to use the same terms that are used in that passage as much as possible. For example, when translating the study from John 15 on abiding in Jesus, use the same words as the Bible in your language for “abiding” and for “bearing much fruit.”

2. Words to use for “Bible,” “Christian,” “God,” and “Christ.”

In some countries (especially Muslim countries), using these words or some form of these words can cause unnecessary anger and offense. Some people still think about religious wars when they hear these words, and they associate them with their enemies. Therefore, in your translating please think carefully about the words that you use.

For the word “Bible,” use words from your language for “Holy Book,” “The Word,” “God’s Word,” or “Old or New Testament.” In many Muslim countries, “Injil” is a good word to use for “New Testament.”

For the word “God,” you should choose the word that is most commonly used by believers in your country. Some Muslim countries

use the word “Allah,” other countries have other words that they prefer.

For “Christ,” it's best to use the word in your language for “Messiah,” or “Anointed One.” This is the meaning of the word “Christ.” For “Christian,” use words from your language for “follower of Jesus the Messiah,” “follower of Jesus,” or “believer”-- or whatever words are most commonly used and accepted by believers in your country.

If you are translating into a language with a Christian heritage, obviously you should use the words they are familiar with. In general, please try to choose words for these terms that are familiar, easily understood for their true meaning, and least likely to cause unnecessary offense.

3. Words to use for “church.”

In general, think carefully about the word or words that you use for “church.” Notice how it is being used in the study: Is it talking about believers in Jesus all over the world, that is, the Body of Christ worldwide? In this case, it will be written “Church,” with a capital “C.” Or is it talking about a local fellowship of believers? In this case, it will be written “church.” A local group of believers may also be referred to as a “fellowship” in these studies. In either of these situations, you will need to choose words that communicate the correct idea to speakers of your language.

It is important to think about what “church” or “fellowship” means for most of the speakers in your language who will use these studies. What word will best describe what they experience as a gathering of believers for worship and hearing the Word of God? In many countries, this will be a small home fellowship. For them, it's better for the word to carry the meaning of “fellowship,” “meeting,” or “worship service,” rather than the meaning of a big group that meets in a special building.

4. Use simple language.

We have tried to use simple sentences in the English to make these Bible studies easy to understand for anyone, including those who have no knowledge of the Bible and those who have limited education. We want them to be a help to ALL people—not just those who already know a lot. Many studies have been used successfully with those who are not yet believers, as well as with very mature believers.

Please keep this in mind in translating. Some languages commonly use very complex and formal language in writing. We would ask that these studies be translated into language that sounds just the way people talk

in normal, everyday life. They have been written for group discussion, therefore, it is important that everyone understand the questions and comments. Our goal is to help people understand the Bible, not to make them confused.

5. Have someone check the translation.

To make these studies as accurate as possible in your native language, have a native speaker who is also fluent in English do the first translation from the English. Then, have a native English speaker who is also fluent in your language check the translation. In the final step, the original translator and the English checker should discuss any questions in the translation and come to an agreement on the best wording.

Remember... As you go through the translation process, if there is anything in the studies that is unclear, feel free to contact us through our website. (www.learnhisways.com) God bless you as you translate. We trust the Lord will use these studies to strengthen the Body of Christ in many different language groups around the world.

***“Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will never pass away.”
Mark 13:31***