

GROWING IN THE GROVE

Follow Me

A 90-Day Walk Through the Life of Jesus



PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

RONDA, NORTH CAROLINA



Follow Me

A 90-DAY WALK THROUGH THE LIFE OF JESUS

I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

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Welcome to Follow Me

Jesus' invitation to His first disciples was simple: "Follow me." If you have trusted Him as your Savior and Lord, that invitation is now yours.

Following Jesus starts with knowing Him. Over the next 90 days you will walk through His life in the Gospels, from the promises God made long before He was born to His death, His resurrection, and His promise to return. Each week is a stop along the way. Bring your Bible, your questions, and about fifteen minutes a day.

How this guide works



This Week — Each week starts here: an overview, the memory verse, and questions for when you meet with your pastor or mentor.



Read — Read the passage in your own Bible first. The key verse printed below it comes from that reading. For more, try the "Go further" reading.



Reflection — A short reflection on the passage and what it means for your life.



Respond — A question to answer in writing, or a step to take.



Key Truth — One truth to hold on to through the day.



Pray — A short prayer to start your own.



Talk It Over — Twice a week, a question to bring to your mentor or a Christian friend.



Going Deeper — A page at the end of each week for further study or reflection.

A few tips

Choose a regular time and place, and keep your Bible, a pen, and this guide together. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off. And don't do this alone: meet with your pastor or a mentor each week.

Walking Through This With Someone

Nobody grows alone. This guide works best when you meet regularly with Pastor James or another mature Christian: a mentor who can answer questions, pray with you, and encourage you. If you are that mentor, thank you. Your time and friendship will matter more than anything on these pages.

How it works

- Each of the 15 weeks is a stop in the life of Jesus, and each begins with a This Week page. Read it first. The When You Meet questions are for your conversation with your pastor or mentor.
- Six daily readings follow, two to a page, about 15 minutes each. Read the passage in your Bible, then the reflection, and write a short response.
- Twice a week, Talk It Over suggests a question to bring to your mentor or a Christian friend.
- Each week ends with a Going Deeper page. At the back you will find memory verse cards, sermon notes, Bible study pages, and a short gospel summary you can use to share your faith.

How you can help

- Meet weekly if you can, even for thirty minutes over coffee.
- Ask what they are learning about Jesus, and listen.
- Pray together, and keep praying between meetings.
- Share your own story, including your struggles.
- Missed days are normal. Help them pick back up without guilt.
- When they are ready, talk with Pastor James about baptism and church membership.

Don't have a mentor yet? Call the church, and we will help you find one. Call the church at (336) 984-3360 or email pastor@pgbcronda.com. We would love to hear from you.

My Story

Write down how your life with Christ began. One day you may want to share it.

My name: _____

I trusted Christ on:

Where I was:

People God used in my life:

I was baptized on: _____

My church: Pleasant Grove Baptist Church

I started this guide on: _____

How I came to trust Christ:

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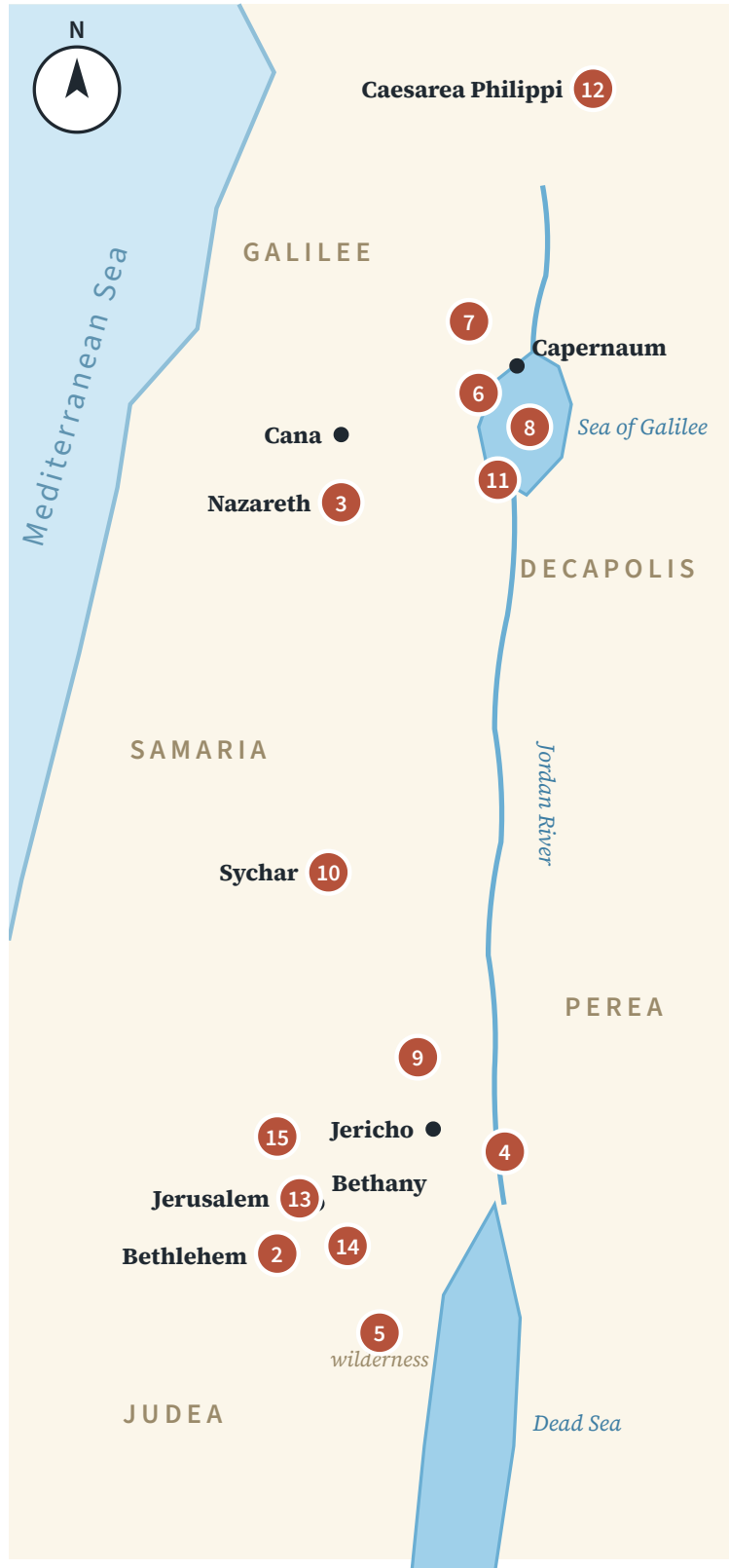
90-Day Tracker

Check off each reading when you finish it. If you miss a day, do not start over. Just pick up where you left off.

	THIS WEEK	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DEEPER
1 Every Promise Points to Him	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 Born for You	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 God in a Small Town	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 Pointing to the Lamb	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 Tested in the Wilderness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 The Call to Follow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 A Life Built on Rock	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 Who Is This Man?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 Jesus Stops for the Hurting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Welcome at His Table	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 Ears to Hear	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 Jesus in His Own Words	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 The Servant King	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 Crucified for Us	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15 Death Could Not Hold Him	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Where Jesus Walked

Jesus grew up and served in a small land beside the Mediterranean Sea. The numbered circles mark the stops along the way, one for each week. (The first stop has no place on the map: before the world began, the Son was with the Father.)



- 1 **Long Before Bethlehem**
Every Promise Points to Him
- 2 **Bethlehem**
Born for You
- 3 **Nazareth**
God in a Small Town
- 4 **The Jordan River**
Pointing to the Lamb
- 5 **The Wilderness**
Tested in the Wilderness
- 6 **The Sea of Galilee**
The Call to Follow
- 7 **The Mountainside**
A Life Built on Rock
- 8 **A Boat on the Lake**
Who Is This Man?
- 9 **Village Roads**
Jesus Stops for the Hurting
- 10 **Around the Table**
Welcome at His Table
- 11 **Along the Lakeshore**
Ears to Hear
- 12 **Caesarea Philippi**
Jesus in His Own Words
- 13 **Jerusalem**
The Servant King
- 14 **The Garden and the Cross**
Crucified for Us
- 15 **The Empty Tomb and Beyond**
Death Could Not Hold Him

Every Promise Points to Him

Long before Bethlehem, God promised a Savior, and Jesus is God's Yes to every promise He has made.

THIS WEEK

Light for a Dark World

READ FIRST: [Isaiah 9:2, 6-7](#)

Welcome to Follow Me. Over the next ninety days you will walk through the life of Jesus one stop at a time, from His birth in Bethlehem to His empty tomb and His promise to return. Jesus once called Himself the light of the world and promised that those who follow Him will not walk in darkness. That is the invitation behind every page of this guide.

Our first stop comes long before Bethlehem. About seven hundred years before Jesus was born, God spoke through Isaiah, a prophet (someone who speaks God's message). It was a dark time. Enemy armies threatened the land, and many people had turned away from God. Into that darkness Isaiah announced a great light: the birth of a royal child who would carry names no ordinary king could wear, like Mighty God and Prince of Peace. He would reign on David's throne, and His kingdom would never end.

This week you will trace promises like that one through the Old Testament, the part of the Bible written before Jesus was born. God promised that a descendant of Eve would defeat the serpent. He promised Abraham that his family would bless the world, and He promised David a King who would reign forever. Micah named Bethlehem as the birthplace, and Isaiah described a Servant who would suffer for the sins of others. Many writers over many centuries, all pointing to one Person.

The memory verse says every one of God's promises finds its Yes in Jesus. That matters for you. If God kept promises He made thousands of years ago, you can trust what He has promised you: forgiveness, His presence, and a future with Him. Bring your questions along the trail. God's Word can handle them.

Put It Into Practice

Write the memory verse on an index card and put it where you will see it every day, like a mirror or a dashboard. Each time you read it, thank God for one promise He has already kept in your life.

Memory Verse

For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him.

2 Corinthians 1:20

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

This first stop explores Old Testament promises, which may be unfamiliar ground. Help your friend find these books in their Bible, and don't assume they know the Bible's big story. Ask what they believed about Jesus before now, and listen for questions they may be shy to ask.

When You Meet

- 1 Before you trusted Christ, what did you think the Bible was about? What surprises you about how its promises fit together?
- 2 Isaiah promised a great light for people living in darkness. Where has Jesus brought light into a dark place in your life?
- 3 Which of God's promises is hardest for you to believe right now, and why?

Prayer

Father, You have kept every promise You ever made. Thank You for sending Jesus, the light I needed. Open my eyes to see Him clearly, and help me follow Him one step at a time. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 1

Older Than Abraham

Read: John 8:56-59 Go further: John 1:1-5

| *Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.”* **John 8:58**

Jesus was debating people in the temple who were proud to be Abraham’s descendants. Abraham, the father of their nation, had lived about two thousand years earlier. Jesus said Abraham had looked forward to His day with joy. His listeners scoffed, since He wasn’t even fifty. Then Jesus answered with the name God gave Moses at the burning bush: I AM. They understood the claim and picked up stones to throw at Him. Jesus did not begin in a manger. He has always existed. The One you are learning to follow is more than a good teacher. He is God.

RESPOND *Before now, who did you think Jesus was? What changes if He really is God?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus has always existed. The One I follow is God Himself.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You were here before Abraham, before the world, and before me. I worship You as God. Teach me to know You as You really are. Amen.

DAY 2

Where Are You?

Read: Genesis 3:8-15 Go further: Hebrews 2:14-15

| *I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.* **Genesis 3:15**

Adam and Eve had just disobeyed God, and their first move was to hide. Their second was to blame. The man blamed the woman and even hinted it was God’s fault for giving her to him. The woman blamed the serpent. We still handle guilt this way. But notice what God did. He came looking for them and called out, “Where are you?” He already knew. He was inviting them out of hiding. Then, before spelling out the consequences of their sin, He promised that one of Eve’s descendants would defeat the serpent. God’s rescue plan began the same day sin did.

RESPOND *When you’ve done wrong, do you tend to hide or to blame? What would coming out of hiding look like?*

KEY TRUTH

God comes looking for sinners, not to shame them but to rescue them.

PRAY: Father, I have hidden from You and blamed others too. Thank You for coming to find me. Help me stop hiding and walk with You in the open. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: How did God draw you out of hiding when you first came to Him?

DAY 3

A Blessing for Every Nation

Read: Genesis 12:1-3 Go further: Galatians 3:6-9

*...all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. **Genesis 12:3***

Abram (later renamed Abraham) was about seventy-five when God told him to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's household. God didn't give him a destination, only a direction: go "to the land that I will show you." With the call came promises. God would make Abram into a great nation, bless him, and bless the whole world through his family. Abram went. That blessing reached the world through Jesus, Abraham's descendant, who opened the way to God for people of every nation, including you. Following God often starts before you can see the whole road. Sometimes He shows only the next step.

RESPOND *What step is God asking you to take, even though you can't see where it leads?*

KEY TRUTH

I don't need the whole map. I need to follow the One who leads.

PRAY: God, You kept Your promise to Abraham and blessed the nations through Jesus. Help me trust You with the next step, even when I can't see the whole road. Amen.

DAY 4

A Throne That Lasts Forever

Read: 2 Samuel 7:12-16 Go further: Luke 1:30-33

Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.

2 Samuel 7:16

King David was settled in his palace and wanted to build God a temple, a permanent house of worship. God answered with a surprise. David would not build God a house; God would build David a house, a family line of kings, and establish one descendant's kingdom forever. David's heirs often failed. The kingdom split, and centuries later the royal line lost its throne. The promise looked dead. Then an angel told a young woman in Nazareth that her son would reign on David's throne forever. Jesus is the King that promise was waiting for.

RESPOND *Where do you most need to let Jesus rule as King right now? Name one thing in each area.*

My home and family: _____

My work and days: _____

My money and time: _____

KEY TRUTH

Leaders fail and kingdoms fall, but Jesus' reign will never end.

PRAY: Jesus, You are the King God promised David, and Your kingdom will never end. I give You my home, my work, and my plans. Rule every part of my life. Amen.

DAY 5

Out of Little Bethlehem

Read: Micah 5:2 Go further: Micah 5:4-5

Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. **Micah 5:2**

Micah came from a small town in Judah and preached around the same time as Isaiah. Seven hundred years ahead of time, he named the birthplace of Israel's coming ruler. Bethlehem was a village a few miles from Jerusalem, known mostly as King David's hometown. Yet Micah's words about ancient origins hint that this ruler would exist long before His birth. John's Gospel says it plainly: the Son existed with God from the very beginning. God keeps choosing small, overlooked places and people. Your hometown, background, or past does not limit what He can do with a life handed over to Him.

RESPOND *God works through small beginnings. What feels small in your life, and how might God use it?*

What feels small or overlooked	How God might use it

KEY TRUTH

God is not limited by small beginnings, and He plans every detail ahead.

PRAY: God, You chose little Bethlehem and planned Jesus' birth centuries ahead. You know my story and my future. Use my ordinary life for Your great purposes. Amen.

DAY 6

He Took Our Place

Read: Isaiah 53:4-6 Go further: 1 Peter 2:21-25

We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all. **Isaiah 53:6**

Isaiah describes a Servant who suffers. People watching Him would assume God was punishing Him for His own sins. They would be wrong. The pain He carried was ours, and so was the guilt. The punishment that brings us peace with God fell on Him, and "we are healed by his wounds." Seven centuries later, Jesus was pierced on a Roman cross, and Isaiah's words came true. This is the heart of the good news. Jesus took the penalty your sins deserved so you could be forgiven and made right with God. You cannot add to what He did. You can only receive it.

RESPOND *Isaiah wrote this seven centuries before the cross. What does that tell you about God's plan and His Word?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus took the punishment I deserved. My peace with God has been paid for.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You were wounded for my rebellion and crushed for my sins. I can't repay You, but I can trust You. Thank You for taking my place. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: How does knowing Jesus paid for your sins change the way you deal with guilt?

The Road to Bethlehem

The Bible's promises about Jesus stretch across thousands of years. Here are some key stops on the road to Bethlehem, with approximate dates. Look up a few of the references, and notice how each promise builds on the one before it.



Born for You

God kept His promise: the Savior was born in Bethlehem, and the good news is for ordinary people like you.

THIS WEEK

Good News for the Night Shift

READ FIRST: **Luke 2:8-14**

Our second stop is Bethlehem, a hilltop village a few miles south of Jerusalem. Last week we traced God's promises across the centuries. This week we watch Him keep them, and He does it in the most unexpected way.

The first people to hear the news weren't priests or kings. They were shepherds working the night shift, a rough, low-status job out in the fields. Suddenly an angel stood before them, and the glory of the Lord blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel began with "Don't be afraid" and then announced news that would bring great joy to everyone. The Savior had been born in David's town. A Savior is someone who rescues. This One was also the Messiah, the anointed King God had promised, and the Lord Himself.

Then the sky filled with angels praising God and announcing peace on earth. Heaven was celebrating, and the audience was a handful of tired workers in a field. That tells you something about God. He does not wait for people to clean up or move up before He comes to them. And the sign the angel gave was not a palace. It was a baby wrapped in cloth, lying in a feeding trough.

Look closely at the memory verse. The angel said a Savior "was born for you," and he meant it. Not only for good people, church people, or people with tidy pasts. For you, wherever you are coming from. This week, let the news that sent those shepherds running become personal again.

Put It Into Practice

This week, tell one person how you came to trust Jesus. Keep it short and honest: what your life was like before, how you came to Him, and what is changing now. If you feel nervous, practice with your mentor first.

Memory Verse

Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:11

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

The Christmas story may feel so familiar that your friend skims it, or so new that it raises questions, such as the virgin birth. Either is fine. Ask what stands out to them this week. Share what it meant to you when this story first became personal.

When You Meet

- 1 Why do you think God announced Jesus' birth first to shepherds on the night shift? What does that say to you?
- 2 The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid. What fears come up when you think about God or your future?
- 3 When did the good news about Jesus first feel personal to you, not just a story you had heard?

Prayer

God, thank You for sending a Savior for ordinary people like me. Give me the joy those shepherds felt and the courage to tell others what You have done. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 1

Mary's Yes

Read: Luke 1:26-38 Go further: Luke 1:46-55

For nothing will be impossible with God. **Luke 1:37**

Mary was a young woman in Nazareth, engaged to Joseph. Then the angel Gabriel appeared with news that would turn her life upside down. She would conceive a son while still a virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He would be called the Son of God. Mary asked an honest question: how could this be? She must also have known what it could cost her: whispers, suspicion, maybe her engagement. Still she said, "I am the Lord's servant," and placed her life in God's hands. Faith doesn't mean having every answer. It means trusting God enough to say yes.

RESPOND *What is God asking you to trust Him with before you can see how it will work out?*

KEY TRUTH

Faith says yes to God before it sees how everything will work out.

PRAY: Lord, nothing is impossible for You. Like Mary, I want to be Your servant. Give me faith to say yes to You, even when I don't understand. Amen.

DAY 2

Joseph's Hard Choice

Read: Matthew 1:18-25 Go further: Isaiah 7:14

See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us." **Matthew 1:23**

Joseph was engaged to Mary when he learned she was pregnant, and he knew the child was not his. In that culture an engagement was as binding as marriage, and ending it required a divorce. Joseph could have exposed her to public disgrace. Because he was a good man, he planned to end things quietly instead. Then an angel spoke to him in a dream. The child was from the Holy Spirit, and Joseph was to name Him Jesus, which means the Lord saves. Joseph woke up and obeyed, even though people would talk. Obeying God often costs something. Joseph paid it willingly.

RESPOND *Where might obeying God cost you something right now? What would help you obey anyway?*

KEY TRUTH

**Jesus came to save me from my sins.
Obeying Him is worth the cost.**

PRAY: Jesus, You came to save Your people from their sins, and that includes me. Give me Joseph's courage to obey You, whatever it costs. Amen.

DAY 3

The King Who Came Low

Read: Luke 2:1-7 Go further: Philippians 2:5-11

Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2:7

The most powerful man in the world, Caesar Augustus, ordered a census. So Joseph made a trip of about ninety miles, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, with Mary, who was expecting. God used an emperor's paperwork to bring about Micah's promise. The manger in the verse above was a feeding trough for animals. The Son of God entered the world without status, comfort, or special treatment. He knows what it is like to be pushed around by forces bigger than you: governments, bills, bosses, and systems that don't seem to care. He came low on purpose. No pressure you carry is beneath His notice.

RESPOND Which of these pressures weigh on you right now? Check them, and bring each one to Jesus.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Money and bills | ☐ Work, or finding work |
| ☐ Health problems | ☐ Family conflict |
| ☐ Loneliness | ☐ Legal trouble or paperwork |
| ☐ _____ | |

KEY TRUTH

Jesus came low on purpose, so no one is too low for Him to reach.

PRAY: Jesus, You left heaven's glory and were laid in a feeding trough. Thank You for coming low enough to reach me. I bring You every pressure I carry. Amen.

DAY 4

Too Good to Keep Quiet

Read: Luke 2:15-20 Go further: Mark 5:18-20

After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Luke 2:17-18

The shepherds didn't wait for morning. They hurried to Bethlehem to see for themselves and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby, just as the angel had said. Then they went back to the same fields and the same sheep, but they were not the same men. They were praising God all the way back. Mary responded more quietly. She held on to all these things and kept turning them over in her heart. Both responses belong in a new believer's life: quiet reflection and open joy. You don't need a polished speech to share your faith. Just tell what you have seen God do.

RESPOND Who could you tell about what Jesus is doing in your life? Write a name beside each.

Someone in my family: _____

A friend or neighbor: _____

Someone I see often: _____

KEY TRUTH

My story of what Jesus has done is worth telling.

PRAY: God, thank You for the good news that changed those shepherds and is changing me. Give me a quiet heart to treasure it and a bold voice to share it. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor to tell their story of coming to Christ in three minutes. Then try telling yours.

DAY 5

Faithful in the Long Wait

Read: Luke 2:25-38 Go further: Galatians 4:4-7

Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. For my eyes have seen your salvation.

Luke 2:29-30

Simeon and Anna had waited most of their lives. The Holy Spirit had told Simeon he would not die before seeing the Messiah. Anna, a widow for decades, spent her days at the temple, God's house in Jerusalem, worshiping, fasting, and praying. Then one ordinary day a young couple brought in their baby, and both of them knew. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. Anna began telling everyone who was waiting for God's rescue. Maybe you have waited or grieved for years and wonder if it's too late. It is never too late to meet God and be used by Him.

RESPOND *What have you been waiting on God for? How do Simeon and Anna encourage you?*

KEY TRUTH

God's timing is not mine, but He is never late.

PRAY: Father, waiting is hard. Like Simeon and Anna, help me keep hoping, praying, and watching. Thank You that it's never too late to meet You and serve You. Amen.

DAY 6

Seekers and Schemers

Read: Matthew 2:1-12 Go further: Isaiah 60:1-6

*...falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **Matthew 2:11***

Wise men from the east traveled far to worship a child they had never seen. King Herod heard the news and felt threatened. The religious experts knew the prophecy and told Herod where to look. Yet as far as we know, none of them made the short trip to Bethlehem. People still respond to Jesus these three ways: seek Him, resist Him, or know all about Him and never come. The wise men were outsiders, and they were the ones who knelt. What you knew before matters less than what you do with Jesus now.

RESPOND *What would it look like to worship Jesus this week with your time, your money, or your abilities?*

KEY TRUTH

Knowing about Jesus is not enough. He is worth coming to and worshipping.

PRAY: Jesus, the wise men traveled far to kneel before You. I don't want to just know about You. I want to worship You with my whole life. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Before trusting Christ, were you more like the wise men, Herod, or the religious experts? Talk it through with your mentor.

What His Names Tell Us

At His birth, Jesus was called by many names and titles. Each one tells you something true about the One you now follow. Look up the verses. Then use the lines to write what that name means to you.

Jesus

Matthew 1:21

Means the Lord saves. The angel chose it because this child would rescue His people from their sins.

Immanuel

Matthew 1:23

Means God with us. In Jesus, God did not just send help from a distance. He came Himself.

Savior

Luke 2:11

One who rescues. The angel announced a Savior born for you, not only for people with tidy lives.

Messiah (Christ)

Luke 2:26

The Anointed One, the King God promised to David's family. Christ is the Greek form of the same title.

Lord

Luke 2:9-11

The angel gave the baby this title two verses after Luke uses it for God Himself.

Son of the Most High

Luke 1:32-33

Gabriel's name for Him. He is God's own Son, and He will reign on David's throne forever.

King of the Jews

Matthew 2:2

What the wise men called Him. Herod feared this title, and years later it was posted above His cross.

A Light for the Nations

Luke 2:32

Simeon's words over the baby. Jesus came for the Gentiles, people who aren't Jewish, as well as for Israel.

God in a Small Town

The eternal Son of God became fully human, grew up in a small town, and knows ordinary life from the inside.

THIS WEEK

God Became One of Us

READ FIRST: **John 1:14-18**

Our trail now heads north to Nazareth, a farming village in the hills of Galilee. It was small and easy to overlook. This is where Jesus grew up and lived until He was about thirty. To His neighbors, He was simply the carpenter, Mary's son.

John, one of Jesus' closest friends, wrote one of the four Gospels, the Bible's accounts of Jesus' life. He tells us who that carpenter really was. John calls Jesus the Word, because Jesus shows us exactly what God is like. Then John writes one of the most astonishing sentences ever written: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The eternal Son of God took on a real human body and a real human life, and lived among the very people He had made.

Becoming a man did not make Him any less God. He is fully God and fully human at once, a truth we can believe even where we cannot fully explain it. As a boy He grew and learned the way every child does. He knew hunger and tiredness, and He worked with His hands. Yet He never sinned, not once. John says "we have all received grace upon grace" from Him, gift after gift of God's kindness that we could never earn.

Why does it matter? Only God could save us, and only a human could take our place. Jesus is both. And because He lived an ordinary life, He understands yours: the work, the family pressures, the small-town talk, and the long years when nothing seems to happen.

Put It Into Practice

Pay attention to your ordinary work this week, whether it's a job, caring for family, or daily chores. Each morning pray a simple prayer: Lord, help me do this for You today. At week's end, write down one way that prayer changed how you worked.

Memory Verse

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

This week touches a mystery at the heart of the faith: Jesus is fully God and fully human. You don't need to explain it perfectly. Day 1 includes Herod's killing of the boys of Bethlehem, which may stir up grief, especially for anyone who has lost a child. Listen gently.

When You Meet

- 1 Jesus lived quietly in Nazareth for most of His first thirty years. What does that say about the ordinary seasons of your life?
- 2 Jesus is fully God and fully human. Which of those truths is harder for you to grasp, and why?
- 3 John says Jesus has shown us what God is like. What has Jesus shown you about God so far?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You became one of us and lived an ordinary life in a small town. Thank You for understanding my life from the inside. Help me see Your glory and follow You in my everyday work. Amen.

DAY 1

A Flight in the Night

Read: Matthew 2:13-23 Go further: Jeremiah 31:15-17

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. Matthew 2:14

After the wise men left, an angel warned Joseph in a dream that Herod wanted to kill the child. Herod, furious at being outwitted, ordered the killing of every boy two and under around Bethlehem. Matthew doesn't soften it. He records mothers weeping and refusing to be comforted. God protected Jesus that night, but He did not stop every evil. The world Jesus entered was violent and unfair, and ours still is. Yet God was at work. The child who escaped would one day die for sinners and rise again, and He will set all things right.

RESPOND *What loss or injustice are you carrying? Tell God honestly how it makes you feel.*

KEY TRUTH

God sees every tear. Evil is real, but it will not have the last word.

PRAY: Father, this world is full of grief and injustice, and some of it has touched me. Thank You that You see every tear. Help me trust You when I can't understand. Amen.

DAY 2

The Quiet Years

Read: Luke 2:39-40 Go further: Hebrews 2:17-18

The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him. Luke 2:40

Once Mary and Joseph had done everything the law required, they took Jesus home to Nazareth, and the Gospels go almost silent. Later, people invented stories of the boy Jesus performing flashy miracles, but the Bible contains none of them. John tells us Jesus' first miracle came at a wedding when He was a grown man. What we know is simple. He grew up the way children do, day by day. The Son of God spent most of His life in quiet, unrecorded years. Your quiet season isn't wasted either. Recovery, rebuilding, and faithful ordinary days are often where God does His deepest work.

RESPOND *What quiet, unseen season are you in right now? What might God be growing in you there?*

KEY TRUTH

Quiet seasons are not wasted seasons. God grows me in the unseen days.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You grew up quietly in Nazareth. Help me be faithful in my ordinary days, and trust that You are growing something good in me. Amen.

DAY 3

Found in His Father's House

Read: Luke 2:41-50 Go further: Psalm 27:4

After three days, they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Luke 2:46

Every year Jesus' family went to Jerusalem for Passover, the feast remembering how God rescued Israel from Egypt. When Jesus was twelve, His parents headed home and traveled a full day before realizing He wasn't with them. When they finally found Him in the temple, Mary told Him how worried they had been. Jesus seemed surprised they hadn't known where to look. He had to be in His Father's house. Even at twelve, He knew who His Father was. And look at what He was doing: listening and asking questions. Following Jesus doesn't mean you stop asking. It means you bring your questions to Him.

RESPOND What questions about God or the Bible would you like to bring to your mentor?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

KEY TRUTH

My questions are welcome. I can bring every one of them to God.

PRAY: Father, thank You that I can come to You with my questions. Give me a heart that loves to be near You and learn from Your Word. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor one of the questions you listed today. Where in the Bible would they send you?

DAY 4

Growth Takes Time

Read: Luke 2:51-52 Go further: 2 Peter 3:17-18

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. Luke 2:52

The boy who amazed the teachers went home to Nazareth and obeyed His parents. Think about that. The Son of God lived under the roof and the rules of a carpenter and a young mother for years. He was not too important to submit. Luke then sums up nearly two decades in a single sentence about how Jesus grew. Growth took time, even for Him. Many new believers wish their faith would fix everything overnight. It rarely works that way. God grows us steadily, through ordinary days, in every part of life. Be patient with yourself. He is patient with you.

RESPOND Jesus grew in four ways. Where are you growing in each, and where do you need to grow?

	Where I'm growing	Where I need to grow
In wisdom		
In body and health		
With God		
With people		

KEY TRUTH

Growth takes time, even for Jesus. I can be patient with the process.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You grew in wisdom and in favor with God and people. Grow me in every part of my life, and give me patience with the process. Amen.

DAY 5

Just the Carpenter?

Read: Mark 6:1-3 Go further: John 1:10-13

Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary... **Mark 6:3**

When Jesus returned to Nazareth as a well-known teacher, His hometown marveled at His wisdom and miracles. But they couldn't get past who they thought He was. They had watched Him grow up and work in the village for years. They knew His mother and His brothers and sisters. So they took offense at Him. Familiarity can blind people. Some who knew the old you may doubt that anything has really changed. Don't let their doubts define you, and don't argue your case. Let time and a changed life do the talking. Jesus knows how it feels to be written off.

RESPOND *Who knew the old you and may doubt your change? How can you love them patiently?*

KEY TRUTH

Others may doubt my change, but Jesus knows me and isn't finished with me.

PRAY: Jesus, You were doubted by the people who knew You best. When others can't see what You are doing in me, help me stay patient, kind, and faithful. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: How did the people closest to you react when you began following Jesus?

DAY 6

Good News for the Poor

Read: Luke 4:16-21 Go further: Isaiah 61:1-3

He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled." **Luke 4:21**

On the Sabbath, the weekly day of rest, Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth, the local house of prayer and Scripture. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah and read a promise about the One God would anoint with His Spirit: good news for the poor, release for captives, sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. Then He rolled up the scroll and sat down as every eye fixed on Him. His next words, printed above, claimed He was that promised One. This was His mission. Jesus came for people who are broke, bound, blind, and beaten down. He came for you.

RESPOND *Jesus came for the poor, the captive, the blind, and the crushed. Check where you have needed Him.*

- ☐ Poor: nothing to offer God on my own
- ☐ Captive: held by a habit or my past
- ☐ Blind: unable to see the truth
- ☐ Crushed: beaten down by life

KEY TRUTH

I don't have to have it together. Jesus came for people who don't.

PRAY: Jesus, You came with good news for the poor and freedom for captives. Set me free where I am still bound, and help me share Your good news. Amen.

Fully God, Fully Human

This week's memory verse says the Word became flesh. Christians have always believed that Jesus is fully God and fully human, one Person. It is a wonderful truth bigger than our minds, and the Bible teaches both sides of it clearly. Look up some of these passages this week.

— Fully God

- He existed before Abraham and before creation (John 8:58; John 1:1-3).
- He forgave sins, something only God can do (Mark 2:5-7).
- He accepted worship (Matthew 14:33; John 20:28).
- He calmed a storm and raised the dead (Mark 4:39-41; John 11:43-44).
- All the fullness of God lives in Him in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

— Fully Human

- He was born as a baby and grew up (Luke 2:7, 52).
- He got hungry, tired, and thirsty (Matthew 4:2; John 4:6; John 19:28).
- He worked with His hands (Mark 6:3).
- He wept at a friend's grave (John 11:35).
- He died a real death (John 19:30).

— Without Sin

Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). That is why He could die for sinners. He had no sins of His own to pay for (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22).

— Why It Matters

Only God can save, and only a human can stand in a human's place. Jesus is both, the one go-between who brings God and people together (1 Timothy 2:5). He shows you exactly what God is like (John 1:18), and He understands your life from the inside (Hebrews 2:17-18).

— Your Response

Which of these truths means the most to you today? Write a short prayer of thanks to Jesus.

Pointing to the Lamb

John the Baptist called people to turn back to God and pointed them to Jesus, the Lamb who takes away sin.

THIS WEEK

A Voice in the Wilderness

READ FIRST: [John 1:19-28](#)

Our trail now drops down to the Jordan River. Crowds streamed out of the towns and into the wilderness to hear a strange preacher named John. He wore camel hair, ate locusts and wild honey, and spoke with a bluntness no one could ignore. People called him John the Baptist because he baptized them, immersing them in the river as a sign they were turning back to God.

His popularity worried the religious leaders in Jerusalem, so they sent a delegation to question him. Was he the Messiah? No. Was he the prophet Elijah come back? No. Was he the great Prophet Moses had promised? No again. John described himself as a voice calling in the wilderness, telling people to get the road ready for the Lord. Someone was already standing among them, he said, someone so great that John wasn't worthy to untie His sandal strap, a job for the lowest servant.

John had crowds, influence, and a platform. He could have made it all about himself. Instead, his whole life was an arrow pointing away from himself and toward Jesus. The very next day, when John saw Jesus coming, he told the crowd to look: here was the Lamb of God.

This week you will hear John's call to repent, see what real change looks like, and watch heaven open at Jesus' baptism. You will learn why John called Jesus a lamb. And you will be invited to do what John did: point people to Jesus instead of yourself.

Put It Into Practice

Write down the names of people who helped point you toward Jesus, through their words, prayers, or example. This week, thank one of them with a call, a note, or a visit. Then pray by name for someone you could point to Him.

Memory Verse

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 1:29

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Jesus' baptism comes up this week, and your friend may ask about being baptized. Baptism, by immersion, is for those who have already trusted Christ. It pictures His death, burial, and resurrection and our new life, but it doesn't save. If they're ready, connect them with Pastor James.

When You Meet

- 1 John refused to take credit that belonged to Jesus. Where are you most tempted to make things about yourself?
- 2 If you have trusted Christ but haven't been baptized, what questions or hesitations do you have about it?
- 3 Who pointed you toward Jesus? Who might God want you to point toward Him?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Lamb of God who takes away my sin. Like John, I want my life to point to You, not to me. Make my heart ready for all You want to do in me. Amen.

DAY 1

Clearing the Road

Read: Luke 3:2-6 Go further: Isaiah 40:1-5

A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight! **Luke 3:4**

Luke begins by naming the powerful men of the day, up to the high priests. But God's word didn't come to any of them. It came to John, out in the wilderness. John preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins. To repent means to turn away from sin and turn to God. It is a change of direction, not just a bad feeling. Isaiah had pictured a road built for a coming king, with valleys filled, hills leveled, and crooked stretches made straight. Anyone who has driven a mountain road knows that is a big job. Repentance clears the road in your heart for Jesus.

RESPOND *What is one crooked path in your life that needs straightening? What would turning look like?*

KEY TRUTH

To repent is to turn from sin and turn to God, not just feel bad.

PRAY: God, I don't want to just feel sorry. I want to turn. Straighten what is crooked in me, and make my heart ready for Jesus. Amen.

DAY 2

Fruit You Can See

Read: Luke 3:7-14 Go further: Luke 19:8-10

He replied to them, "The one who has two shirts must share with someone who has none, and the one who has food must do the same." **Luke 3:11**

John didn't flatter the crowds. He called them a brood of snakes and warned that having Abraham as an ancestor would not save them. Family religion is no substitute for a changed heart. When people asked what to do, his answers were practical. Tax collectors, known for overcharging, should collect only what was owed. Soldiers should stop extorting people and be satisfied with their pay. Repentance shows up in ordinary places: your paycheck, your honesty, your use of power, and how you treat people who can't pay you back. These changes don't earn forgiveness. They are the fruit that shows the tree is alive.

RESPOND *John's answers were practical. Where could a changed heart show up in your life?*

	Fruit that could grow here
My money	
My work	
My words	
My relationships	

KEY TRUTH

Good works don't earn forgiveness, but real forgiveness always bears fruit.

PRAY: Lord, I don't want a faith that stays on the surface. Let my turning to You show up in my money, my work, my words, and how I treat people. Amen.

DAY 3

Why Was Jesus Baptized?

Read: Matthew 3:13-15 Go further: Romans 6:3-4

Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized. [Matthew 3:15](#)

John was baptizing people who were turning from their sins. Then Jesus stepped into line, and John tried to stop Him. John knew Jesus had nothing to repent of. Yet Jesus insisted, because this was part of obeying His Father completely. He was also standing shoulder to shoulder with the sinners He came to save. Ever since, baptism has been a first step of obedience for Jesus' followers. It is by immersion, for people who have already trusted Christ. Going under the water and rising again pictures Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and your new life in Him. Baptism doesn't save you. Jesus does.

RESPOND *If you've been baptized, what do you remember about it? If not, what questions do you have?*

KEY TRUTH

Baptism doesn't save me. It shows that Jesus has.

PRAY: Jesus, You obeyed Your Father in every step, even at the river. Help me follow You in obedience, and show me my next step. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask Pastor James or your mentor to explain what baptism means and how it happens at PGBC.

DAY 4

Father, Son, and Spirit

Read: Matthew 3:16-17 Go further: Matthew 28:18-20

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." [Matthew 3:17](#)

As Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened. The Spirit of God came down like a dove and rested on Him, and the Father spoke from heaven. In one moment we see the Son in the river, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking. The Bible teaches that there is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a wonderful truth bigger than our minds, one we worship more than explain. Notice also when the Father spoke His love: before Jesus had preached a sermon or done a miracle. In Christ, you are loved before you accomplish anything.

RESPOND *Do you find it hard to believe God loves you apart from your performance? Why?*

KEY TRUTH

One God in three persons. I can worship what I can't fully explain.

PRAY: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are one God, greater than I can understand. Thank You that I am loved in Christ, not for what I achieve. Amen.

DAY 5

The Lamb Who Takes Sin Away

Read: John 1:29-34 Go further: 1 Peter 1:18-21

I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. [John 1:34](#)

When John saw Jesus coming toward him, he called Him the Lamb of God. His listeners knew what lambs were for. For centuries God's people had offered them as sacrifices. A sacrifice was an offering to God, and when an animal died in a sinner's place, it showed how serious sin is. But those sacrifices had to be repeated again and again, because an animal could never truly remove sin. They were pictures pointing ahead. Jesus is the Lamb they pointed to, and His one sacrifice is enough for every sin you have ever committed.

RESPOND *What sin or shame do you still carry as if Jesus hadn't taken it away?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus doesn't just cover my sin. He takes it away.

PRAY: Lamb of God, thank You for taking away my sin, not just covering it. When old guilt returns, remind me that You already carried it. Amen.

DAY 6

More of Him, Less of Me

Read: John 3:26-30 Go further: 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

He must increase, but I must decrease. [John 3:30](#)

John's disciples were upset. The crowds that used to come to John were now going to Jesus. John's reply shows a secure heart. Everything anyone has, he said, is a gift from heaven. Then he compared himself to the groom's friend at a wedding, like a best man today. The best man doesn't compete with the groom. He's thrilled just to hear his voice. John's joy wasn't shrinking with his crowds. It was complete. Comparison and the hunger for credit can poison work, friendships, and even churches. John shows a better way. Let Jesus have the glory, and let your joy come from Him.

RESPOND *Be honest about the spotlight. Where do you want credit, and how could you point to Jesus there?*

Where I want credit or attention	How I could point to Jesus

KEY TRUTH

The less I need the spotlight, the freer I am to enjoy Jesus.

PRAY: Jesus, You deserve all the glory. Free me from needing credit and comparing myself to others. Let my joy be complete in You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: How do you deal with wanting credit or comparing yourself to others?

The Lamb Through the Bible

John expected his listeners to understand why he called Jesus a lamb. Many of us need some background. Lambs appear from the first book of the Bible to the last, and each appearance helps explain what Jesus came to do.

— God Will Provide the Lamb

In a hard and mysterious test, God asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac. On the way up the mountain, Isaac asked where the lamb was. Abraham answered that God Himself would provide it. At the last moment God stopped Abraham and provided a ram in Isaac's place (Genesis 22:1-14).

— The Passover Lamb

When God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt, each family killed a young lamb or goat without defect and marked its doorframe with the blood. Where God saw the blood, judgment passed over that home (Exodus 12:1-13). Jesus died at Passover time, and Paul calls Him our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

— Sacrifices Again and Again

At God's house of worship, lambs were offered every morning and every evening (Exodus 29:38-39), along with many offerings for sin. The sacrifices never stopped, because the blood of animals could never take sins away (Hebrews 10:1-4).

— The Lamb of God

Isaiah described the suffering Servant as a lamb led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). John pointed to Jesus as that Lamb. Sinless, like a lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:18-19), He offered Himself once for all time and then sat down, because the work was finished (Hebrews 10:11-12). Heaven's worship centers on Him (Revelation 5:12).

— Thinking About Baptism?

If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, baptism is your next step of obedience. It doesn't save you; the Lamb already did that. Being immersed and raised from the water pictures Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and your new life in Him (Romans 6:3-4). Talk with Pastor James about taking that step.

— Your Response

Write a prayer thanking Jesus for being the Lamb who took your place.

Tested in the Wilderness

Jesus faced real temptation and won by trusting His Father and His Word, and He helps us do the same.

THIS WEEK

What We Really Live On

READ FIRST: **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**

Our trail now leaves the green banks of the Jordan for the wilderness: dry hills, rock, heat, and silence. There are no towns, no crowds, and very little food. It is the kind of place that exposes what is really in a person's heart.

Israel knew places like this. After God rescued them from slavery in Egypt, they spent forty years in the wilderness. In this week's reading, Moses reminds them why. God let them go hungry to humble them and to test what was in their hearts. Then He fed them manna, a food no one had ever seen, which appeared on the ground each morning. He wanted them to learn that "man does not live on bread alone" but on every word God speaks.

Out there, Israel often grumbled, tested God, and even worshiped an idol. Centuries later, Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days, and the devil came to tempt Him. Three times Jesus answered with Scripture, and all three answers came from Moses' words to Israel in Deuteronomy. Where Israel failed, Jesus stood firm, for them and for us.

To be tempted is to feel pulled toward sin. Being tempted is not the same as sinning; Jesus was tempted and never sinned. You will be tempted too, often in your weakest moments, when you're hungry, tired, lonely, or hurting. This week you will see how Jesus fought back, and how He helps you when you are tested. You don't face the wilderness alone.

Put It Into Practice

Choose the temptation you face most often. Find a Bible verse that answers it, write it on a card, and carry it with you all week. When the pull comes, read it out loud, pray, and if you can, call or text your mentor.

Memory Verse

It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Temptation is personal, and your friend may be fighting old habits or addictions. Make it safe to be honest. Being tempted is not the same as sinning, and a fall is not the end. Help them name their weak moments and choose one verse to memorize. Your steady friendship is one of God's tools.

When You Meet

- 1 When are you most easily tempted: when you're hungry, tired, lonely, angry, or bored? What usually happens next?
- 2 Jesus answered temptation with Scripture He knew by heart. Which verse could you start memorizing for your hardest moments?
- 3 Is there a temptation you've been fighting alone? Who could you trust to pray with you about it?

Prayer

Father, You led Your people through the wilderness and fed them with manna. Teach me to live on every word You speak. When I am tempted, help me stand firm the way Jesus did. In His name, amen.

DAY 1

Led Into the Wilderness

Read: Luke 4:1-2 Go further: Mark 1:12-13

Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4:1-2

Jesus had just heard His Father's voice at the river. What came next was not a celebration but the wilderness. He went forty days without food, and by the end He was desperately hungry. That is when the devil pressed in. This surprises many new believers. We assume that if God is leading, life should get easier. But the hardest tests often come right after the greatest highs. Temptation is not sin. It is the pull toward sin, and Jesus felt it fully. If you are being tested, it doesn't mean God has left you. The Spirit who led Jesus there never left Him.

RESPOND *Have you faced a hard test since you started following Jesus? What happened, and what did you learn?*

KEY TRUTH

Being tempted is not sinning, and being tested doesn't mean God has left me.

PRAY: Holy Spirit, lead me, even through dry and difficult places. When I'm tested, remind me that You are with me and that Jesus has walked this road before me. Amen.

DAY 2

Stones Into Bread

Read: Matthew 4:1-4 Go further: John 4:31-34

It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

Jesus was hungry, and the Father had just called Him His beloved Son. The tempter went after both at once. He began with "If you are the Son of God" and suggested Jesus turn stones into bread. Hunger wasn't wrong, and bread wasn't wrong. The temptation was to meet a real need His own way, apart from His Father's plan. Most temptations work like that. They take a real longing, for comfort, love, relief, or rest, and offer a shortcut to fill it. Jesus answered from Deuteronomy: God's Word mattered more than bread. Your appetites are real, but they don't have to be in charge.

RESPOND *Temptation often offers a quick fix for a real need. Fill in a row or two.*

A real need I feel	The quick fix I'm tempted by	God's way to meet it

KEY TRUTH

My appetites are real, but they don't get to be in charge.

PRAY: Father, You know my needs better than I do. When I'm tempted to meet them my own way, help me trust You and live on Your Word. Amen.

DAY 3

When the Devil Quotes Scripture

Read: Matthew 4:5-7 Go further: Exodus 17:1-7

Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God." Matthew 4:7

Next the devil set Jesus on the highest point of the temple and dared Him to jump. This time the devil quoted the Bible himself, a promise from Psalm 91 about angels protecting God's servant. But he twisted it into a reason to force God's hand. Testing God means demanding that He prove Himself on our terms: If You really love me, You'll fix this by Friday. Jesus refused. He didn't need a stunt to trust His Father. Scripture can be twisted, even by voices that sound spiritual. Your best protection is knowing the Bible well and reading verses in context, not just favorite lines.

RESPOND *Have you ever demanded that God prove Himself? What would trusting Him look like instead?*

KEY TRUTH

I don't need to test God to know He loves me. I can trust Him.

PRAY: Father, forgive me for the times I've demanded that You prove Yourself. Help me know Your Word well and trust You without conditions. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: How do you read the Bible so you understand verses in context, not just pulled out alone?

DAY 4

The Shortcut to the Crown

Read: Matthew 4:8-11 Go further: Hebrews 12:1-3

Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

Matthew 4:10

Finally the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in their splendor. All of it could be His if He would bow down once. It was an offer of the crown without the cross. His Father's path to the throne ran through suffering first. Every shortcut has a hidden price, and this one was worship. We face smaller versions all the time: cut this corner, fudge these numbers, compromise a little, and you'll get what you want faster. Jesus refused, and the devil left. Then angels came and cared for Him. God's way is often harder, but it leads home.

RESPOND *What shortcut are you tempted to take right now? What would it really cost you?*

KEY TRUTH

Every shortcut around God's way has a hidden price. I will worship God alone.

PRAY: Lord, You alone deserve my worship. When I'm offered a shortcut, give me strength to choose Your way, even when it's harder and slower. Amen.

DAY 5

He Knows How It Feels

Read: Hebrews 4:14-16 Go further: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

In the Old Testament, the high priest went before God on behalf of the people. Hebrews says Jesus is our great high priest, and He is not distant or unmoved. He sympathizes with our weaknesses, because He was tempted in every way we are, yet He never sinned. So when you fail or feel weak, don't hide from Him. You don't have to clean yourself up first or wait until you feel worthy. For those who belong to Him, His throne is not a judge's bench waiting to condemn. It is a place of mercy, and the door is always open.

RESPOND After you give in to temptation, what do you usually do? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Hide it | ☐ Make excuses |
| ☐ Beat myself up | ☐ Promise to try harder |
| ☐ Give up for a while | ☐ Confess it to God |
| ☐ Tell someone I trust | |

KEY TRUTH

Jesus understands my weakness, and He never turns me away when I come.

PRAY: Jesus, You know what temptation feels like. When I fail, help me run to You instead of hiding. Thank You for mercy and grace right when I need them. Amen.

DAY 6

A Plan for the Fight

Read: James 4:7-8 Go further: Psalm 119:9-11

Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. James 4:7-8

James wrote to believers who were quarreling and chasing whatever they wanted. His answer comes in three moves, and the order matters. Surrender comes first. Resisting temptation on willpower alone rarely lasts, but a heart that has settled who is in charge can say no and mean it. Then comes a promise: when you come close to God, He comes close to you. James also calls out the double-minded, people trying to keep one foot in each world. Following Jesus means choosing one direction. Keep God's Word in your memory, keep a trusted friend in the loop, and keep coming back to Him.

RESPOND Make a simple plan for the next time temptation comes.

When I'm tempted by: _____

The verse I'll use: _____

The person I'll call: _____

KEY TRUTH

I can't win on willpower alone, but I don't fight alone.

PRAY: God, I surrender to You. Give me strength to resist the devil and a heart that isn't divided. Thank You for coming near when I come near to You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: Would you check in with me this week about the plan I made today?

Answering the Lies

Jesus answered every temptation with God's Word. Temptation often comes as a lie that sounds reasonable in the moment. Each card below names a common lie and answers it with the truth. Look up each verse, and copy the words that help you most onto the lines.

No one will ever know.

Hebrews 4:13

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Living in the open before Him is not a threat. It is freedom.

Just this once won't hurt.

James 1:14-15

Desire that is fed grows into sin, and sin grows into death. Small compromises rarely stay small.

I can't help myself.

1 Corinthians 10:13

God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, and He always provides a way out.

I deserve this.

James 1:17

The best gifts come from your Father above. You don't have to grab what He hasn't given.

God must be done with me.

1 John 1:9

When you confess your sins, God is faithful to forgive you and make you clean. His mercy is bigger than your worst failure.

I have to fight this alone.

James 5:16

God tells His people to confess their sins to each other and pray for each other. You were never meant to fight alone.

I'll never really change.

2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:6

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation, and God finishes the good work He starts in you.

I need this to cope.

2 Corinthians 12:9

God's grace is enough for you, and His power shows up best in weakness. Bring Him the pain you've been numbing.

The Call to Follow

Jesus' call reaches ordinary, imperfect people, and He is worth more than anything we give up.

THIS WEEK

If You Say So

READ FIRST: [Luke 5:1-11](#)

This week's stop is the shore of the Sea of Galilee, a freshwater lake about thirteen miles long, ringed by hills. Luke calls it Lake Gennesaret. Fishing villages lined its banks, and much of Jesus' ministry happened here. Along this shore Jesus found His first disciples, people who would learn from Him and follow His way of life.

One day the crowd pressed so close that Jesus climbed into Simon's boat and taught from the water. Afterward He told Simon to head for deep water and let down the nets. Simon knew fishing. He had fished all night with his partners and caught nothing. Still, he answered, "But if you say so..." and let down the nets. This time the catch was so large the nets started to rip, and two boats nearly went under.

Simon did not celebrate. He dropped to his knees before Jesus: "I'm a sinful man, Lord!" Standing that close to Jesus' power, he saw himself clearly, and he asked Jesus to go away. Jesus stayed. He said, "Don't be afraid," and gave Simon a new purpose: "From now on you will be catching people." Back on land, Simon, James, and John left it all behind to follow Him.

Jesus' call has not changed. He still calls ordinary people with real lives, real bills, and real failures to trust Him and go where He leads. This week you'll watch Him call fishermen, a doubter, and a tax collector. You'll see why He chose twelve, hear Him call His followers friends, and meet a man who walked away because the price seemed too high.

Put It Into Practice

Pray every day this week for one person who doesn't follow Jesus yet. Ask God for a natural opening, then invite them to something: church on Sunday, a meal, or a conversation about what is changing in your life.

Memory Verse

"Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for people."

Matthew 4:19

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Your friend may wonder whether their past disqualifies them, or whether they have given up enough. Listen for both. Jesus called fishermen and a tax collector, not finished saints. Tell your friend how He called you, and what following Him has cost you and given you.

When You Meet

- 1 Simon obeyed before he understood. Where is Jesus asking you to trust Him before you see how it turns out?
- 2 Have you ever felt too sinful to follow Jesus? What do you think He would say to you?
- 3 Who helped you come to know Jesus? Who is one person you would love to see follow Him?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I'm amazed that You would call someone like me. When You say so, help me let down my nets and trust You. Make me someone who helps others find You too. Amen.

DAY 1

Leaving the Nets

Read: Mark 1:16-20 Go further: Luke 9:57-62

“Follow me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1:17-18

Mark tells his story at a fast pace, and one of his favorite words is immediately. Simon and Andrew were in the middle of a workday when Jesus walked by. They didn’t yet know where following Him would lead, and they understood only part of who He was. What they had was His invitation. James and John stepped out of the family boat, leaving their father with the hired men. That was a real cost. Following Jesus still means loosening our grip on whatever we hold for security or control. You don’t have to understand everything first. Follow Him, and let Him shape you along the way.

RESPOND *What are you gripping that might keep you from following Jesus freely?*

KEY TRUTH

Following Jesus starts with trust, not with having everything figured out.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You called me to follow You. Show me what I’m holding too tightly, and give me courage to follow You today, one step at a time. Amen.

DAY 2

A Skeptic Meets Jesus

Read: John 1:43-51 Go further: John 1:35-42

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered. John 1:46

Nazareth was a small, unimportant village, and Nathanael doubted that anyone worth following could come from there. Jesus didn’t scold him. He praised him as a man “in whom there is no deceit,” someone honest enough to say what he really thought. Then Jesus told Nathanael He had seen him under the fig tree before Philip ever called him. We don’t know what happened under that tree, but Nathanael did. Before the conversation was over, he was calling Jesus the Son of God and the King of Israel. Honest questions don’t push Jesus away. He knew you long before you came looking for Him.

RESPOND *What questions or doubts about Jesus do you still have? Write one down to bring to your mentor.*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus welcomes honest questions, and He knew me before I knew Him.

PRAY: Jesus, You saw me long before I came to You. I bring You my honest questions. Help me see You more clearly and trust You more fully. Amen.

DAY 3

A Doctor for the Sick

Read: Luke 5:27-32 Go further: 1 Timothy 1:12-16

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:32

Tax collectors in Jesus' day gathered money for the ruling powers, and many got rich by charging people more than they owed. Their neighbors saw them as traitors and thieves. So when Jesus stopped at Levi's tax booth and said, "Follow me," it was a scandal. Levi left everything, then threw a banquet and filled his house with people like himself. The Pharisees, a group of strict religious leaders, complained. Jesus replied that it's the sick, not the healthy, who need a doctor. Repentance means turning from sin and turning to God, and it begins by admitting we need the Doctor. Nobody is too far gone for Him.

RESPOND *Levi introduced his friends to Jesus. Who would you love to see meet Him? Pray for them this week.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

KEY TRUTH

Jesus came for people who know they need Him, and that includes me.

PRAY: Jesus, You came for sinners, and that means me. Keep me honest about how much I need You, and give me Your welcome for people others avoid. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: Who do churches tend to keep at a distance? How can we welcome them like Jesus did?

DAY 4

Chosen to Be with Him

Read: Mark 3:13-19 Go further: Luke 6:12-16

He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, to send them out to preach... Mark 3:14

An apostle is a messenger who is sent. Look at the twelve men Jesus chose for that job. Simon, whom He renamed Peter, would one day deny knowing Him. James and John got the nickname "Sons of Thunder," perhaps for their fiery tempers. Matthew, also called Levi, had collected taxes, and Simon the Zealot may once have wanted to drive the Romans out. The list ends with Judas, the betrayer. It was not an impressive group. But look at their first assignment: to be with Him. Before they preached a word, they walked, ate, and talked with Jesus. Everything you do for Jesus will grow out of time with Him.

RESPOND *When and where will you spend time with Jesus each day this week? Be specific.*

KEY TRUTH

Before Jesus sends me anywhere, He calls me to spend time with Him.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for choosing ordinary, flawed people, including me. Teach me to spend time with You first, and then send me wherever You want me to go. Amen.

DAY 5

Called His Friends

Read: John 15:12-15 Go further: 1 John 3:16-18

No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Jesus spoke these words on His last night before the cross. A servant, He explained, does what he is told without being let in on his master's plans. But Jesus had told His disciples all that the Father had told Him. "I have called you friends," He told them. That's an astonishing thing for the Son of God to say to fishermen and a tax collector. Notice what friendship with Jesus looks like. We love one another the way He has loved us, and we do what He says. Obedience doesn't earn His friendship. It's how His friends live, because they trust Him.

RESPOND *Jesus said to love one another as He has loved us. Fill in both sides.*

How Jesus has loved me	How I can love someone this week

KEY TRUTH

The cross proves Jesus means it when He calls me His friend.

PRAY: Jesus, it amazes me that You call me Your friend. Thank You for dying in my place. Teach me to love people as You have loved me. Amen.

DAY 6

The One Thing He Lacked

Read: Mark 10:17-27 Go further: Philippians 3:7-8

Looking at them, Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God." Mark 10:27

The man who ran up to Jesus had wealth, good manners, and an impressive record. He asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, as if it were one more thing to achieve. Jesus loved him, and because He loved him, He named the one thing the man couldn't let go of. His possessions had become his security, and he went away grieving. Jesus doesn't give every follower this same instruction, but He asks each of us for first place. The stunned disciples asked who, then, could be saved. That is exactly the point. No one can save themselves. Salvation is God's work, and He can loosen any grip.

RESPOND *What competes with Jesus for first place in your life? Check any that apply, and add your own.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Money or financial security | ☐ Work or reputation |
| ☐ A relationship | ☐ Comfort and routine |
| ☐ What other people think | ☐ An old habit |
| ☐ _____ | |

KEY TRUTH

What is impossible for me, God can do, even changing my heart.

PRAY: Father, You know what I hold on to most tightly. I can't let go in my own strength. Be first in my heart, and change what I cannot. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: What has the hardest time taking second place to Jesus in your life? Ask your mentor how they keep Him first.

The Men Jesus Chose

Jesus' twelve apostles were not religious professionals. They were fishermen, a tax collector, a man called the Zealot, and others we know little about. Some failed Him badly, and one betrayed Him. Read each card and look up its verses. Which apostle's story gives you the most hope?

Peter

Mark 3:16; Luke 22:54-62;
John 21:15-17

A fisherman named Simon, whom Jesus renamed Peter. Bold and quick to speak, he denied Jesus three times. Jesus restored him, and he became a leader of the early church.

Andrew

John 1:40-42; John 6:8-9;
John 12:20-22

A fisherman like his brother, Simon Peter, and the one who first brought Peter to Jesus. In John's Gospel, he keeps bringing people to Jesus.

James, Son of Zebedee

Mark 5:37; Acts 12:1-2

A fisherman, and John's brother. With Peter and John, he was one of three disciples Jesus often kept closest. He was the first of the Twelve to die for his faith.

John

Mark 1:19-20; Acts 4:13

A fisherman, and James's brother. When he and Peter spoke boldly before the council, the leaders recognized that these untrained men had been with Jesus.

Philip

John 1:43-46; John 14:8-9

From Bethsaida, like Andrew and Peter. He invited his skeptical friend Nathanael to come and see. Later, Jesus told him that to see Jesus is to see the Father.

Bartholomew

Mark 3:18; John 1:45-49

Beyond his name, Scripture says little about him. Many Bible teachers identify him with Nathanael, whom Jesus noticed under a fig tree.

Thomas

John 11:16; John 20:24-28

Called the Twin. Once he urged the others to go and die with Jesus. Later he doubted the resurrection until he saw Jesus, then worshiped Him as Lord and God.

Matthew

Matthew 9:9; Luke 5:27-29

A tax collector who left his booth to follow Jesus, then threw a banquet so his friends could meet Him. Mark and Luke call him Levi.

James, Son of Alphaeus

Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13-14

He is named in all four lists of the apostles, yet no words or deeds of his are recorded. Jesus chose him too.

Thaddaeus

Luke 6:16; John 14:22

Luke's list seems to name him Judas son of James, a different man from the betrayer. The night before the cross, he asked Jesus a sincere question.

Simon the Zealot

Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13

His title, the Zealot, may mean he once wanted to drive the Romans out of Israel. If so, Jesus put him on the same team as a former tax collector.

Judas Iscariot

John 12:4-6; Matthew 26:14-16;
Acts 1:26

The group's treasurer, he helped himself to the money. For thirty pieces of silver, he handed Jesus over. Matthias later took his place.

A Life Built on Rock

Wise people don't just admire Jesus' teaching; by His grace, they build their whole lives on it.

THIS WEEK

Two Builders, One Storm

READ FIRST: **Matthew 7:24-29**

This week's stop is a hillside in Galilee. Crowds had begun following Jesus everywhere, so He went up on a mountain and sat down, the way teachers did in His day. His disciples sat nearest, with the crowds listening in. Matthew records what He taught in chapters 5 through 7. We call it the Sermon on the Mount, and it may be the most famous teaching ever given.

Jesus ended the sermon with a picture. Two men each built a house, one on rock and one on sand. Then the same storm hit both: pounding rain, rising rivers, and hard wind. The house on the rock stood firm. The house on the sand collapsed "with a great crash." The difference wasn't the weather. It was the foundation.

Jesus explained that the wise builder is anyone who hears His words and acts on them. The fool listens to the very same words and never puts them to use. Storms come to everyone: illness, job loss, broken relationships, grief. A life built on Jesus' words still gets hit, but it stands. When He finished, the crowds were astonished. He didn't teach like the scribes, experts in the law who usually quoted earlier teachers. He taught with His own authority, as the Son of God.

This week you'll read some of the heart of the sermon: who God calls blessed, what it means to be salt and light, how to love an enemy, how to ask God for what you need, why not to worry, and which road leads to life. Keep this in mind as you read: obedience doesn't buy God's love. In Christ, you already have His love. Obeying Him is how you live in it.

Put It Into Practice

Choose one teaching from this week's readings and act on it before Sunday: pray for someone who has wronged you, treat someone as you'd want to be treated, or hand one worry to God each morning. Tell your mentor how it went.

Memory Verse

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Matthew 6:33

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

The Sermon on the Mount can feel impossible, and your friend may feel like a failure. Help them see that Jesus describes the life He creates in His people, not a ladder to climb. Ask which teaching challenges them most, and share where you still struggle.

When You Meet

- 1 What storm have you faced, or are you facing now? What has held you steady, and what has given way?
- 2 What is one teaching of Jesus you agree with but haven't started doing yet?
- 3 Jesus taught with authority. Is there something He says that you find hard to accept? Talk about it honestly.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Your words are true, and they will hold. Forgive me for hearing without doing. Build my life on You, so that when storms come, I will still be standing. Amen.

DAY 1

Who God Calls Blessed

Read: Matthew 5:1-12 Go further: Luke 6:20-26

Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5

Blessed means more than happy. It describes a person God favors, someone who is truly well off. Jesus' list surprised His listeners, and it still surprises. He didn't bless the confident, the comfortable, or the successful. He began with "the poor in spirit," people who know they have nothing to offer God. Then He named those who mourn, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those mistreated for doing right. These aren't hoops to jump through to earn God's favor. They describe the people who already belong to His kingdom. If you came to Jesus empty-handed, you started in exactly the right place.

RESPOND Which of these descriptions feels most true of you right now? Which feels furthest away?

KEY TRUTH

God's kingdom belongs to people who know they need Him.

PRAY: Father, I come to You with empty hands. Make me humble, merciful, and pure in heart, and teach me to find my joy in belonging to You. Amen.

DAY 2

Salt of the Earth

Read: Matthew 5:13-16 Go further: 1 Peter 2:11-12

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Notice that Jesus didn't tell His followers to try to become salt and light. He said, "You are the salt of the earth," and "You are the light of the world." That is who His followers already are. In a world without refrigerators, salt kept meat from spoiling and brought out flavor. It only works when it's different from what it touches, yet close enough to make contact. Light works the same way. A lamp is lit to sit on a stand, not to hide under a basket. God has placed you where you are—at home, at work, in your neighborhood—on purpose. Don't hide what He is doing in you.

RESPOND Where has God placed you to shine? Write a name or two on each line.

Where I spend my days: _____

Family and friends: _____

My neighborhood: _____

KEY TRUTH

Jesus has made me salt and light, right where I am.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You are the true Light. Shine through me wherever I go today, so that people notice You and give glory to the Father. Amen.

DAY 3

Love Like Your Father

Read: Matthew 5:43-48 Go further: Romans 12:17-21

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:44-45

People had been taught to love their neighbor and hate their enemy. The first half came from God's law. The second half did not. God sends sunshine and rain on good and evil people alike, Jesus said, and His children should love like that. Anyone can love the people who love them back. Loving an enemy means wanting God's best for them and praying for them. It does not mean pretending wrong is fine, trusting someone who isn't safe, or staying where you are being harmed. To be perfect like the Father is to love completely, not selectively. Only God can grow that in us.

RESPOND *Who is hard for you to love right now? Write their initials and one prayer you can pray for them.*

KEY TRUTH

When I love my enemies, I show whose child I am.

PRAY: Father, You loved me when I was far from You. Help me pray for those who have hurt me, free me from bitterness, and give me wisdom about whom to trust. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: What is the difference between forgiving someone and trusting them again?

DAY 4

Good Gifts from a Good Father

Read: Matthew 7:7-12 Go further: Luke 11:9-13

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

Jesus' words here carry the sense of keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. Prayer isn't a one-time transaction. It's an ongoing conversation with a Father. Jesus asked what parent would answer a child's request for bread by handing over a rock. Even imperfect parents know how to give good things. Whatever your own parents were like, your Father in heaven is better. That doesn't mean every request gets a yes. A good father sometimes says no or wait, because he sees what we can't. Then Jesus gave what we call the Golden Rule. A generous Father teaches His children to treat others generously too.

RESPOND *What have you stopped asking God for? Write it here, and start asking Him again this week.*

KEY TRUTH

My Father gives good gifts, even when His answer is no or wait.

PRAY: Father, thank You for hearing me. Teach me to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking, to trust Your answers, and to treat others as generously as You treat me. Amen.

DAY 5

Worry Can't Add a Moment

Read: Matthew 6:25-34 Go further: Philippians 4:6-7

Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? **Matthew 6:26**

Jesus knew His listeners had real needs: food, drink, clothing. So do you, whether it's bills, a diagnosis, a family member, or a job. He doesn't wave those needs away. He reasons with us. Worry can't add a single moment to your life. The wildflowers do no work at all, yet they outshine King Solomon in all his royal finery. Your Father already knows every need you have. So Jesus gives us a different first priority: seek God's kingdom, and trust Him with tomorrow. If worry has become constant, talk with your pastor or a doctor. Asking for help isn't a lack of faith.

RESPOND Write down what's weighing on you. Next to each worry, write something true about your Father from today's reading.

What I'm worried about	What's true about my Father

KEY TRUTH

My Father knows what I need, so I can seek Him first today.

PRAY: Father, You feed the birds and clothe the fields. I hand You my worries about today. Help me seek Your kingdom first and trust You with tomorrow. Amen.

DAY 6

The Narrow Gate

Read: Matthew 7:13-14 Go further: John 10:7-10

How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it. **Matthew 7:14**

Near the end of His sermon, Jesus set out a choice. Two gates, two roads, and every life is on one of them. The wide gate is easy to enter, and the broad road is crowded. It asks nothing of you, but it ends in destruction, far from God. Elsewhere Jesus calls Himself the gate. We don't squeeze through by being good enough. We enter by trusting Him. The road beyond isn't always easy. Following Jesus may cost you some old habits, some approval, maybe some friends. But it leads to life, and you never walk it alone.

RESPOND What has following Jesus already cost you? What has it given you that the broad road never could?

KEY TRUTH

Through Jesus, the gate, I enter life, and I never walk alone.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for being the way to the Father. When the narrow road feels hard or lonely, keep me walking with You toward life. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Where do you feel the pull of the crowd most? Ask your mentor how they have handled that pressure.

Hearing and Doing

Jesus said the wise builder hears His words and acts on them. Here are some practical commands found in the Sermon on the Mount. Look up each passage, and check it off when you put it into practice. You won't do them all this week, and that's fine. Start with one.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Where it is safe, make things right with someone you have wronged (Matthew 5:23-24). | ☐ Keep your word, and let your yes mean yes (Matthew 5:37). |
| ☐ Go the extra mile for someone (Matthew 5:41). | ☐ Pray by name for someone who has hurt you (Matthew 5:44). |
| ☐ Give to someone in need without telling anyone (Matthew 6:3-4). | ☐ Pray in private, with the door shut (Matthew 6:6). |
| ☐ Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly, one line at a time (Matthew 6:9-13). | ☐ Forgive someone who has wronged you (Matthew 6:14-15). |
| ☐ Put money or time toward treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). | ☐ Hand one specific worry to God each morning (Matthew 6:34). |
| ☐ Deal with your own faults before pointing out someone else's (Matthew 7:3-5). | ☐ Do for someone what you would want done for you (Matthew 7:12). |

My notes

i We don't do these to earn God's love. In Christ, we already have it. We obey because we love Him, and His Spirit helps us.

Who Is This Man?

Jesus' miracles are signs pointing to who He is: God the Son, with authority over everything He made.

THIS WEEK

Don't You Care?

READ FIRST: **Mark 4:35-41**

This week's stop is a fishing boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had spent the day teaching the crowds from that boat. When evening came, He told His disciples to cross to the other side. Several of them were experienced fishermen who knew that lake well, including how suddenly a storm could sweep down on it from the surrounding hills.

Then a great windstorm hit. Waves broke over the sides until the boat was filling with water. Jesus was asleep on a cushion in the stern, the back of the boat. His sleep showed He was truly human, worn out from a long day. The terrified disciples woke Him with an accusation: "Don't you care that we're going to die?" Maybe you have asked Him something similar in a storm of your own.

Jesus got up and rebuked the wind. He told the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind died down, and the lake lay perfectly calm. His command showed He is truly God. Then He asked why they were afraid and whether they still had no faith. Strangely, the calm frightened them more than the storm had. They had just watched the wind and waves obey a voice, and only God rules the sea.

Jesus did care, and He was in the boat the whole time. The disciples' question in this week's memory verse sits behind every story you'll read: Jesus turning water into wine, feeding thousands with one boy's lunch, walking on the water, and sending Peter fishing for a coin. You'll also read why John wrote these signs down, and a psalm about God stilling a storm. The answer to their question changes everything.

Put It Into Practice

Name a storm you're in right now, even a small one. Each morning this week, pray about it honestly, the way the disciples did. Each evening, jot down one way you saw Jesus' care that day, and share your notes with your mentor.

Memory Verse

And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Mark 4:41

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Storm stories raise honest questions. Why doesn't God stop every storm? Why does He sometimes seem asleep? Let your friend ask them. You don't need every answer. Keep pointing back to who Jesus is, and tell about a storm He carried you through, even one He didn't stop.

When You Meet

- 1 When have you felt like the disciples, wondering whether Jesus cared about what you were going through?
- 2 Jesus was in the boat the whole time. What difference does His presence make in a storm you're facing now?
- 3 Put the disciples' question in your own words, then answer it. Who is Jesus to you today?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, the wind and the sea obey You. When my life feels like it's sinking, remind me that You are in the boat. Calm my fears, and grow my faith in who You are. Amen.

DAY 1

Filled to the Brim

Read: John 2:1-11 Go further: John 1:14-18

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:11

Wedding celebrations in that culture could last a week, and running out of wine would have embarrassed the family in front of everyone. Jesus' mother, Mary, brought the problem to Him, then told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus had them fill six stone jars used for religious washing, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. They filled them to the brim, without knowing why. When the headwaiter tasted what they drew out, it was better than anything served that day. Only the servants knew where it came from. Jesus' first sign met an ordinary family's need, and those who obeyed saw it most clearly.

RESPOND *What has Jesus made clear that you should do, even if you can't see how it will turn out?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus meets ordinary needs, and those who obey Him see His glory.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You cared about a family's embarrassment at a wedding. I bring You my ordinary needs today. Give me a heart that does whatever You say, even before I understand. Amen.

DAY 2

More Than Enough

Read: John 6:1-14 Go further: John 6:26-35

Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks he distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted. John 6:11

Jesus tested Philip with a question: where could they buy enough bread for this crowd? Jesus already had a plan. Philip ran the numbers: more than half a year's wages wouldn't buy everyone even a bite. Andrew mentioned a boy who had five barley loaves, a cheap bread poor families ate, and two fish. Then he asked the obvious question: "what are they for so many?" We know that feeling when we compare our time, money, or strength with the need in front of us. Jesus didn't ask for more than the boy had. He took what was offered, and when everyone had eaten, twelve baskets of leftovers remained.

RESPOND *Like the boy's lunch, what could you put in Jesus' hands this week? Name one thing for each.*

My time: _____

My abilities: _____

My resources: _____

KEY TRUTH

In Jesus' hands, my little is enough for His purposes.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, when I look at what I have, it seems too small. Here it is anyway. Use my time, my gifts, and my resources however You choose. Amen.

DAY 3

Out of the Boat

Read: Matthew 14:22-33 Go further: Psalm 46:1-3

Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” **Matthew 14:27**

The disciples spent most of the night fighting a headwind while Jesus prayed alone on the mountain. Then, before dawn, He came to them walking on the sea. At Peter’s request, Jesus told him to come, and for a moment Peter did the impossible. Then he noticed the wind, grew afraid, and began to sink. His prayer was three words long: “Lord, save me!” Jesus reached out immediately and caught him. Peter’s faith wasn’t perfect, and Jesus held on to him anyway. When you are sinking, you don’t need a long prayer. Call out to the One who is close enough to catch you.

RESPOND *What wind has your attention right now? What would it look like to fix your eyes on Jesus instead?*

KEY TRUTH

Even when my faith wavers, Jesus is quick to catch me.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, when I start to sink, I will cry out for Your help. You hold on to me, even when my faith is weak. Thank You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor about a time their faith felt weak. How did Jesus hold on to them?

DAY 4

Free, but Paying Anyway

Read: Matthew 17:24-27 Go further: Romans 13:6-8

...go to the sea, cast in a fishhook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth you’ll find a coin. **Matthew 17:27**

Jewish men paid a yearly tax to support the temple in Jerusalem. When the collectors asked whether Jesus paid it, Peter said yes. Back at the house, Jesus asked him a question: do kings collect taxes from their own sons, or from others? Others, of course. The temple was His Father’s house, so the Son owed nothing. Yet Jesus paid anyway, so He would not give needless offense. He also provided the coin in the strangest way imaginable, with enough to cover Peter too. Jesus knew His rights and chose not to insist on them. His followers can let go of small rights too, and trust Him to provide.

RESPOND *Where could you give up a small right this week for the sake of peace or someone else’s good?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus set aside His rights for others, and He provides what I need.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You owed nothing, and still You paid. Make me humble enough to let go of being right, and help me trust You to provide what I need. Amen.

DAY 5

Why John Wrote It Down

Read: John 20:30-31 Go further: 1 John 5:11-13

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [John 20:31](#)

A road sign isn't the destination. It points you there. That's why John calls Jesus' miracles signs: each one points past itself to who Jesus is. John admits his book leaves out many of Jesus' signs. He chose the ones he did on purpose, and he tells us exactly why. Messiah means Anointed One, the King whom God had long promised. Christ is the same title in Greek. You weren't there to see Jesus feed a crowd, but you don't need to have been. God has given you a trustworthy record so you can believe in Jesus, and that brings a life that starts now.

RESPOND Why do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Write a few sentences in your own words.

KEY TRUTH

God gave me a trustworthy record so I can believe and live.

PRAY: Father, thank You for the Gospel of John and for every word You have given us. I believe Jesus is the Messiah, Your Son. Help me grow in the life He gives. Amen.

DAY 6

Brought to the Harbor

Read: Psalm 107:23-31 Go further: Isaiah 43:1-3

He stilled the storm to a whisper, and the waves of the sea were hushed. [Psalm 107:29](#)

Centuries before Jesus, this psalm described sailors caught in a violent storm. Their ship rose toward the sky and dropped into the depths. Their courage melted, and none of their skill could save them. Maybe you know that feeling, when experience and effort can't fix what you're facing. The sailors did the one thing left: they called on the LORD for help. He brought them through and guided them to "the harbor they longed for." Now think back to the Sea of Galilee. Jesus did exactly what this psalm says God does. God doesn't always remove a storm right away, but He is in it with you.

RESPOND Look back at storms God has brought you through. Write what each one taught you about Him, then thank Him.

A storm God brought me through	What it taught me about Him

KEY TRUTH

The God who stills storms is with me in mine.

PRAY: Lord, You rule the wind and the waves. When my own strength runs out, I will cry out to You, and I thank You for every storm You have brought me through. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: What storm are you facing right now? Ask your mentor to pray with you about it.

The Seven Signs in John

John calls Jesus’ miracles signs because each one points to who He is. Bible teachers often count seven signs in the first half of John, and you have already read two of them this week. Look up each one, note what happened, and write what it shows you about Jesus.

- Read slowly. Notice who Jesus helped and how.
- Watch how people responded. Who believed, and who didn’t?
- Ask what each sign shows about Jesus’ power and His heart.
- Then read John 20. The empty tomb confirms everything the signs point to.

Read	What happened	What it shows me about Jesus
John 2:1-11		
John 4:46-54		
John 5:1-15		
John 6:1-14		
John 6:16-21		
John 9:1-12		
John 11:1-44		

Jesus Stops for the Hurting

Sickness, sin, and death all answer to Jesus, and He stops for hurting people who call out to Him.

THIS WEEK

Have Mercy on Me

READ FIRST: **Mark 10:46-52**

This week's stop is the road. Jesus spent much of His ministry walking from village to village, and hurting people found Him wherever He went. Our story takes place outside Jericho. Jesus was heading out of the city with His disciples and a large crowd, on His way up to Jerusalem, where He would soon die.

A blind beggar named Bartimaeus sat beside the road. When word reached him that Jesus was near, he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Mercy is kindness shown to someone in need who can't repay it. People told him to be quiet. That only made him louder. The title Son of David pointed to the promised King from David's family line. A blind man saw what many others missed.

Jesus stopped. With a crowd around Him and the cross ahead of Him, He stopped for one man and called him over. Bartimaeus flung his coat aside, sprang to his feet, and made his way to Jesus. Jesus asked him what he wanted. "I want to see," he said. Jesus healed him on the spot, and Bartimaeus did what the memory verse describes: he fell in behind Jesus on the road.

Jesus still stops for hurting people. If you are hurting, He has not walked past you. This week you'll watch Him forgive and heal a paralyzed man, notice a woman in a crowd, raise a young girl from death, weep at a friend's grave, call a dead man out of the tomb, and heal ten men with leprosy. He does not heal every sickness in this life. But He hears every cry, and a day is coming when He will make all things new.

Put It Into Practice

Think of someone who is sick, grieving, or lonely. This week, do one concrete thing for them: visit, call, bring a meal, or give them a ride. Pray for them before you go, and ask if you can pray with them.

Memory Verse

Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

Mark 10:52

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

This week may stir up pain: a diagnosis, a loss, a prayer that seems unanswered. Don't rush to fix it; listen first. Be honest: God is able to heal, and at times He does, but many illnesses aren't cured in this life. Pray with your friend, and check on them later.

When You Meet

- 1 Bartimaeus kept calling out even when people told him to be quiet. What makes it hard for you to keep praying?
- 2 Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted. If He asked you the same question today, how would you honestly answer?
- 3 Who do you know who is hurting right now? How could you stop for them this week?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Thank You for stopping for hurting people. Open my eyes to see You clearly, and help me follow You wherever the road leads. Amen.

DAY 1

What He Needed Most

Read: Mark 2:1-12 Go further: Psalm 32:1-5

Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” **Mark 2:5**

The house was so packed that four men couldn’t get their paralyzed friend through the door. So they climbed onto the flat roof, dug through it, and lowered him down in front of Jesus. His friends hoped for a healing. Jesus spoke first about the man’s sins. That doesn’t mean his condition was a punishment. It means forgiveness was his deepest need, and it is ours. The scribes, experts in God’s law, rightly believed forgiveness belongs to God alone. What they missed was who stood in front of them. So Jesus healed the man to prove that He “has authority on earth to forgive sins.”

RESPOND *Number these events in order. What did Jesus give the man first?*

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ The scribes object in their hearts | ☐ Jesus sees their faith |
| ☐ Jesus tells the man to get up | ☐ Jesus forgives the man’s sins |
| ☐ The crowd gives glory to God | ☐ Four friends dig through the roof |

KEY TRUTH

My deepest need was forgiveness, and Jesus has the authority to give it.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You have authority to forgive, and You have forgiven me. Now I bring the people I love to You. Carry them as only You can. Amen.

DAY 2

Seen in the Crowd

Read: Mark 5:25-34 Go further: Psalm 34:17-18

“Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction.”
Mark 5:34

For twelve years this woman had been bleeding. She had spent all she had on doctors and only grown worse. Religious law also counted her unclean, which kept her on the edges of worship and community. Her plan was to touch Jesus’ clothes and slip away unnoticed. She was healed the instant she touched them, but Jesus stopped and kept looking for her. He wasn’t trying to embarrass her. He wanted to give her more than a healed body. Trembling, she told Him “the whole truth,” and He welcomed her as family. Jesus doesn’t only want to fix your problem. He wants you to know Him.

RESPOND *Where do you feel unseen right now? Write what you want Jesus to know about it.*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus sees me in the crowd, and He wants me to know Him.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You noticed one hurting woman in a pressing crowd, and You notice me. I bring You the whole truth about my life, and I trust You with it. Amen.

DAY 3

When the News Is Bad

Read: Mark 5:35-43 Go further: Mark 5:21-24

When Jesus overheard what was said, he told the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” Mark 5:36

Jairus led the local synagogue, where the town gathered to worship. His twelve-year-old girl lay near death, and he had pleaded with Jesus to hurry. Then came the delay. While Jesus stopped for the woman in the crowd, messengers arrived with the worst news a parent can hear. “Why bother the teacher anymore?” they asked. Jesus heard, and He kept going. At the house, the mourners laughed at Him. Jesus held the girl’s hand and told her to get up, and she did. Then He told her parents to give her something to eat. For those who belong to Jesus, death does not have the final word.

RESPOND *What bad news or long delay is testing your faith right now? What would trusting Jesus look like in it?*

KEY TRUTH

Delays and bad news don’t mean Jesus has stopped caring.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, when the news is bad and I’m tempted to stop asking, help me keep trusting You. Thank You that for Your people, death is not the end. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor about a time God seemed slow to answer. What did they learn while they waited?

DAY 4

Tears at a Friend’s Grave

Read: John 11:32-37 Go further: Hebrews 4:14-16

Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” John 11:35-36

Mary threw herself at Jesus’ feet and said what grieving people often pray: “Lord, if you had been here...” It was faith and complaint at once, and Jesus didn’t correct her. Then comes the shortest verse in many English Bibles. He knew Lazarus would soon walk out of the tomb, yet He still entered His friends’ sorrow. Some in the crowd asked a harder question: couldn’t He have kept this from happening? Maybe you have asked that too. Scripture doesn’t scold that question. It shows us a Savior who weeps with us. Grief is not a failure of faith. It is love that has lost someone.

RESPOND *What loss or disappointment are you still carrying? Tell Jesus about it honestly, the way Mary did.*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus weeps with me, and my grief is safe with Him.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for weeping with Your friends. You know my losses and my questions. I bring them to You, trusting that You love me. Amen.

DAY 5

Called Out of the Tomb

Read: John 11:38-44 Go further: John 11:17-27

After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” **John 11:43**

Martha’s objection was practical. Lazarus had been in the tomb four days, and decay had set in. Jesus answered that faith would let her see “the glory of God.” So the stone was rolled aside, and Jesus called a dead man out of his grave. Only Jesus could give Lazarus life. But notice what He told the people standing there: “Unwrap him and let him go.” Lazarus was alive but still bound in burial cloths, and others had a job to do. New life in Christ is His gift alone. Yet many of us still wear old wrappings: shame, fear, old habits. That’s what a church family is for.

RESPOND *What old wrappings still slow you down? Check any that fit, then ask someone you trust to help.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Shame about my past | ☐ An old habit or addiction |
| ☐ Fear of what people think | ☐ Bitterness toward someone |
| ☐ Doubt that God really forgives me | ☐ _____ |

KEY TRUTH

Jesus gives new life, and His people help me walk free.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You called Lazarus out of the grave, and You have called me out of death too. Use my church family to help me shed what still binds me. Amen.

DAY 6

Where Are the Nine?

Read: Luke 17:11-19 Go further: Psalm 103:1-5

But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. **Luke 17:15**

Leprosy was a name for serious skin diseases that forced people to live apart from their families and towns. These ten men called to Jesus from a distance. He sent them to the priests, who had the authority to declare them clean and send them home. Somewhere along the road, all ten were healed. Just one turned back, a Samaritan, an outsider most Jews looked down on. Jesus asked, “Where are the nine?” Then He told the man, “Your faith has saved you.” The nine got their healing. The one who returned received that and more. Gratitude turns a gift into worship.

RESPOND *When did you last come back to thank God for something specific? Write Him a thank-you note now.*

KEY TRUTH

Gratitude brings me back to Jesus, not just to His gifts.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times I’ve enjoyed Your gifts and forgotten You. Thank You for Your countless kindnesses. I want to come back and worship You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: What helps you remember to thank God, especially when life is hard? Ask your mentor what habits help them.

Praying When You Hurt

This week's stories are full of people who brought their pain to Jesus. None of them had polished words. They shouted, trembled, begged, wept, and gave thanks. Their prayers can teach you to pray honestly when life hurts.

— Five Honest Prayers

- Cry out for mercy, and keep at it, like Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47-48).
- Tell Jesus the whole truth, like the woman in the crowd (Mark 5:33).
- Keep trusting when the news is bad, like Jairus (Mark 5:35-36).
- Pour out your grief honestly, like Mary at Jesus' feet (John 11:32).
- Come back and give thanks, like the healed Samaritan (Luke 17:15-16).

— A Word About Healing

God is able to heal, and at times He does, through doctors and medicine or without them. But not every sickness is healed in this life, even for people with strong faith. When healing doesn't come, it doesn't mean God has stopped caring or that you didn't believe enough. Jesus' healings are previews of the new creation, when He will make all things new (Revelation 21:4-5).

— Don't Pray Alone

Four friends carried a paralyzed man to Jesus when he couldn't get there himself (Mark 2:3-5). Ask your mentor, Pastor James, or a Christian friend to pray with you. Then do the same for someone else.

— My Honest Prayer

Write a prayer about something that hurts. Use any of the five ways above.

Welcome at His Table

Jesus came looking for the lost, and He welcomed the very people everyone else avoided.

THIS WEEK

Hurry and Come Down

READ FIRST: **Luke 19:1-10**

This week's stop is the table. Jesus did some of His most important work over a meal. In His culture, eating with someone was a sign of acceptance, and Jesus ate with people respectable folks kept away from. His critics sneered that He was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. They were right, and for people like us, that is the best news there is.

In Jericho lived a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, and rich. Tax collectors often took more than people owed, so he was likely one of the most resented men in town. Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he raced ahead and scrambled up a sycamore tree along the route.

Jesus stopped under that tree, called him by name, and told him to "hurry and come down." Jesus meant to be his guest that very day. Zacchaeus came down fast and gladly took Him home, while the crowd grumbled. Then Zacchaeus pledged half his possessions to the poor and fourfold repayment to anyone he had cheated. "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him. Then He summed up His mission in this week's memory verse. Son of Man was the title He used most often for Himself.

Notice the order. Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus first. The change came after, as the fruit of grace (God's kindness we don't deserve), not the price of it. This week you'll hear Jesus explain God's love to a religious teacher, offer living water to a Samaritan woman, welcome little children, forgive a woman who wept at His feet, and invite the weary to come to Him. He came looking for the lost, and that includes you.

Put It Into Practice

Share a meal, even a simple one, with someone who might not expect an invitation: a neighbor, a coworker, someone new at church, or someone who usually eats alone. Ask about their life and listen well. Welcome them the way Jesus has welcomed you.

Memory Verse

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

- ☐ Memorized
- ☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Your friend may still wonder whether they are really welcome, at church or with God. Listen for shame. Remind them that Jesus went looking for Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus changed anything. If you can, share a meal together this week. Jesus did much of His ministry around a table.

When You Meet

- 1 Zacchaeus climbed a tree just to see Jesus. What first made you curious about Him?
- 2 Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus before he changed anything. How does that shape the way you see your own past?
- 3 Who might feel unwelcome at church? What could you do to help them feel at home?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You came looking for me when I was lost. Thank You for welcoming me before I had changed anything. Give me a heart that makes room for others, especially the people everyone else avoids. Amen.

DAY 1

Look and Live

Read: John 3:9-17 Go further: Numbers 21:4-9

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Nicodemus, a respected teacher, asked, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered with a story Nicodemus knew well. Centuries earlier, God’s people had complained against Him in the wilderness, and deadly snakes came into the camp. God had Moses make a bronze snake and raise it on a pole. Whoever had been bitten could look at it and live. They couldn’t cure themselves. They only had to look in trust. Jesus said He must be lifted up in the same way, and He was speaking of the cross. Don’t miss the verse after the famous one: God sent His Son not to condemn the world, but to save it.

RESPOND *Have you ever felt condemned by God? What does John 3:17 say to that feeling?*

KEY TRUTH

I am saved by looking to Jesus in faith, not by curing myself.

PRAY: Father, thank You for sending Your Son to save me, not to condemn me. I look to Jesus, lifted up on the cross for me, and I trust Him. Amen.

DAY 2

Thirsty Again

Read: John 4:5-15 Go further: Isaiah 55:1-3

But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. John 4:14

Around noon, Jesus stopped at a well, worn out from the road. Fully God and fully human, He got tired and thirsty like anyone. When a local Samaritan woman arrived to draw water, He asked her to give Him a drink, and she could hardly believe it. Jews and Samaritans had despised each other for centuries, and Jewish teachers didn’t usually talk with women in public. Jesus told her that if she knew the gift of God, she would be asking Him for living water. That well left everyone thirsty again. So do the wells we keep going back to: approval, money, relationships, success, or something stronger. Only Jesus satisfies.

RESPOND *What wells do you keep going back to? Be honest. Then write what Jesus offers instead.*

A well I keep going back to	What Jesus offers instead

KEY TRUTH

Every other well leaves me thirsty. Jesus alone satisfies.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You know the wells I keep going back to. I’m thirsty for more than they can give. Give me Your living water, and satisfy my soul. Amen.

DAY 3

She Left Her Water Jar

Read: John 4:27-30, 39-42 Go further: Mark 5:18-20

Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.” **John 4:39**

The woman left her water jar at the well, the very thing she had come for, and went back into town. Her message wasn't polished. It was an invitation and a question: “Could this be the Messiah?” She didn't claim to have everything figured out. She invited people to come and see Him. They came. Jesus spent two days there, and many more believed after hearing Him for themselves. Now, they said, they knew He was the Savior of the world. That's how sharing your faith works. You point people to Jesus, and He does the convincing. Your story, even the messy parts, is enough to begin.

RESPOND *In two or three sentences, what has Jesus done for you? Write it simply enough to share with a friend.*

KEY TRUTH

I can tell what Jesus has done for me without knowing everything.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You came to save the world, and You saved me. Make me bold enough to share my story, and use it to point people to You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Practice with your mentor: take two minutes each to tell how you came to trust Jesus.

DAY 4

Receiving Like a Child

Read: Mark 10:13-16 Go further: Matthew 18:1-5

Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **Mark 10:14**

The disciples probably thought they were protecting Jesus' time. Children had little standing in that culture, so the disciples scolded the people who brought them. Mark says Jesus was indignant, a strong word. Then He said something that turns adult religion upside down: whoever doesn't receive God's kingdom like a little child will never enter it. Little children don't earn their place at the table. They trust, depend, and receive. That is how every one of us enters, whatever our age or history. Then Jesus held the children and blessed them. If no one held you like that when you were young, Jesus welcomes you now.

RESPOND *Are you still trying to earn God's welcome? What would it look like to simply receive it?*

KEY TRUTH

Like a child, I receive God's kingdom as a gift.

PRAY: Father, I can't earn Your welcome, and I don't have to. Teach me to trust You the way a child does, and to make room for the people others overlook. Amen.

DAY 5

Two Debts Forgiven

Read: Luke 7:36-50 Go further: 1 John 1:8-9

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that's why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little. Luke 7:47

Dinner guests reclined on their sides, feet stretched out behind them. So a woman known in town as a sinner could reach Jesus' feet, weeping over them, using her hair as a towel, and pouring out perfume. Simon, the Pharisee host, thought a real prophet would know what kind of woman she was. Jesus answered his unspoken thought with a story about two canceled debts, one huge and one small. Which would love the lender more? Simon didn't think he needed much forgiveness. She knew she did. Her love didn't earn her forgiveness; it flowed from it. Jesus sent her off with these words: "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

RESPOND *How does knowing how much you've been forgiven affect your love for Jesus? You don't need to write details.*

KEY TRUTH

My love for Jesus grows as I see how much He has forgiven.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You know every sin You have forgiven me. Keep me from thinking I needed only a little mercy. Let my gratitude pour out in love for You. Amen.

DAY 6

An Easy Yoke

Read: Matthew 11:28-30 Go further: Isaiah 40:28-31

Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Many people in Jesus' day felt crushed by religion. Their teachers had piled rule upon rule, and no one could keep them all. Jesus offered something different. A yoke was a wooden beam that joined two animals so they could pull a load together. Jesus doesn't promise a life with no work. He invites you into His yoke, to walk beside Him and learn from Him. He describes Himself as "lowly and humble in heart," not harsh or demanding. Whatever you're carrying today, whether guilt, bills, caregiving, or a job that drains you, you weren't meant to carry it alone. With Jesus, you'll find rest for your soul.

RESPOND *What is wearing you out? Check any that fit, then bring each one to Jesus in prayer.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Guilt or regret | ☐ Money worries |
| ☐ Caring for someone | ☐ Work or job stress |
| ☐ Health | ☐ Loneliness |
| ☐ Trying to earn God's approval | ☐ _____ |

KEY TRUTH

Jesus offers His yoke and His rest. I don't carry life alone.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, I'm tired, and I bring You what I've been carrying. Teach me to walk in step with You, and give my soul the rest only You can give. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: What does rest in Jesus look like on an ordinary, busy day?

Telling Your Story

The woman at the well didn't preach a sermon. She told people what happened when she met Jesus, and then she pointed them to Him. You can do the same. Use this page to put your own story into words. Keep it short, honest, and centered on Jesus.

— Before

What was your life like before you trusted Jesus? What were you looking for, or leaning on?

— How I Came to Trust Jesus

What happened? Who or what did God use to draw you to Himself?

— What Is Changing

What is different now? Be honest. You don't have to sound finished, because none of us are.

— Tips for Telling It

- Keep it to about two or three minutes.
- Make Jesus the hero of the story, not yourself.
- Skip church words your listener might not know.
- Be honest about your past without dwelling on details.
- Ask if they would like to hear more.

— Who Needs to Hear It?

Write the names of two or three people you could tell. Pray for an opening this week.

Ears to Hear

Jesus' stories reveal what God is like and call us to hear His Word and live it.

THIS WEEK

The Long Road Home

READ FIRST: **Luke 15:11-24**

This week's stop is the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where the crowds grew so large that Jesus taught from a boat. He often taught in parables: short stories about seed, sheep, coins, and families, each carrying a truth about God. Parables have a way of slipping past our defenses. Some listeners walked away puzzled, but those who wanted to understand kept listening.

Luke 15 holds one of His best-loved parables. A younger son asked for his share of the estate early, as if he wanted his father's things more than his father. He squandered it all in a distant country. When famine struck, he ended up feeding pigs, about as low as a Jewish listener could imagine. Hungry enough to envy the pigs, he came to his senses and headed home to confess his sin and ask for a job.

His father spotted him in the distance. He didn't wait for an apology or a repayment plan. He ran to his son and embraced him. Before the son could finish his rehearsed speech, the father was giving orders: the finest robe, a ring, sandals, a feast. This is Jesus' portrait of God. Maybe you know that distant country yourself. The Father's welcome is for you too.

This week you will also hear about four soils, a mustard seed, buried treasure, a lost sheep, an angry older brother, and a Samaritan who stopped to help. Our memory verse says those who hear God's Word and keep it are blessed. Hearing is where it starts. Keeping means putting it into practice. Read each story slowly and ask two questions: What does this show me about God? What is He asking of me?

Put It Into Practice

Each day this week, pray by name for someone you know who seems far from God. Ask Him to bring that person home. Then look for one practical way to show them kindness, like a meal, a phone call, or a ride.

Memory Verse

...blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Luke 11:28

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

The story of the lost son often stirs up a person's own story: wasted years, regret, or a hard relationship with a parent. Listen more than you talk. If your friend struggles to believe God could welcome them, keep pointing to the father running down the road.

When You Meet

- 1 Where do you see yourself in this story right now: far away, on the road home, or at the table?
- 2 What do you think kept the son from coming home sooner? What keeps people from coming to God today?
- 3 Which parable this week was hardest for you to understand or to accept? Why?

Prayer

Father, thank You for running to meet me when I came home to You. Give me ears to hear Your Word and a heart that keeps it. And make me glad whenever someone else comes home. Amen.

DAY 1

Four Soils, One Seed

Read: Matthew 13:3-9 Go further: Matthew 13:18-23

Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown. Matthew 13:8

Jesus' first listeners knew this scene well: a farmer flinging seed across his field. The same seed fell on four kinds of ground, and on three of them it came to nothing. Birds snatched it from the hard path. It sprang up in shallow, rocky soil and withered. Thorns choked it. Jesus later explained: the seed is His message, and the soil is the heart that hears it. We know these soils: a heart packed hard by old hurts, a quick start that fades when life gets difficult, a mind crowded with bills and worries. The seed is never the problem, and God can break up hard ground.

RESPOND Check what most often crowds out God's Word in your life. Then ask God for help with one of them.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Worry about money, work, or health | ☐ A packed schedule |
| ☐ Screens and constant noise | ☐ Old hurts that keep me guarded |
| ☐ Giving up when life gets hard | ☐ Chasing more money or things |
| ☐ _____ | |

KEY TRUTH

God's Word is good seed, and God can soften the hardest ground.

PRAY: Lord, soften the hard places in my heart and pull up the worries that choke Your Word. Let what I read today take root and bear fruit. Amen.

DAY 2

Small Beginnings

Read: Matthew 13:31-33 Go further: Mark 4:26-29

It's the smallest of all the seeds, but when grown, it's taller than the garden plants and becomes a tree... Matthew 13:32

The kingdom of heaven means God's rule as King over His people. Jesus compared it to two small things. A mustard seed is tiny. A little leaven, or yeast, disappears into fifty pounds of flour and quietly works through the whole batch. The kingdom began with a carpenter from Nazareth and a handful of ordinary followers. Today it has spread around the world. God often works this way in a person too. A new believer's growth can feel painfully slow: a softer answer here, an old habit loosening there. Small is not the same as insignificant. God finishes what He starts.

RESPOND Where does your faith or growth feel small right now? Where have you seen God quietly at work anyway?

KEY TRUTH

God grows great things from small beginnings, and He is growing me.

PRAY: King Jesus, when my faith feels small and my progress slow, remind me that You are at work. Grow Your kingdom in me and through me. Amen.

DAY 3

Worth Everything

Read: Matthew 13:44-46 Go further: Philippians 3:7-8

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. **Matthew 13:44**

Jesus told two short stories with the same ending. One man stumbled onto hidden treasure. A pearl merchant searched until he found one priceless pearl. One came by surprise, the other after a long search, but both sold everything to have what they found. These stories aren't about buying salvation. That is a gift of grace, God's kindness we could never earn. They are about value. Following Jesus may cost you habits, plans, or even friendships. Notice, though, that the man in the field sold everything gladly. Once you see what Jesus is worth, letting go stops feeling like loss.

RESPOND *Be honest: what has following Jesus cost you so far, and what have you gained?*

What I've let go of	What I've found in Him

KEY TRUTH

Nothing I let go of for Jesus compares with having Him.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You are the treasure I never deserved to find. Loosen my grip on lesser things, and fill me with joy in knowing You. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: What did following Jesus cost you? What has He given you that was worth more?

DAY 4

Carried Home

Read: Luke 15:3-7 Go further: Ezekiel 34:11-12

When he has found it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders... **Luke 15:5**

Luke 15 opens with religious leaders grumbling that Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. Jesus answered with three stories about lost things. In the first, a shepherd noticed one of his hundred sheep was missing, so he left the ninety-nine and searched until he found it. A lost sheep can't find its own way home; it has to be found. That is humbling, and hopeful. You didn't reach God by being clever or good enough. The Shepherd came after you. And heaven greets a returning sinner with a party, not a lecture: "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." To repent means to turn from sin to God.

RESPOND *How did God pursue you before you trusted Him? Who did He use to bring you home?*

KEY TRUTH

I didn't find my way to God. The Good Shepherd found me.

PRAY: Jesus, my Shepherd, You came after me when I was lost and carried me home with joy. Keep me close, and use me to reach others who are lost. Amen.

DAY 5

The Brother Who Stayed Outside

Read: Luke 15:25-32 Go further: Luke 15:1-2

But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. **Luke 15:32**

The story doesn't end at the party. The older son came in from the fields, heard the music, and learned it was for his brother. He was furious and refused to go in. Listen to his complaint: "I have been slaving many years for you." He had lived under his father's roof without enjoying his father's heart. Jesus aimed this at the grumbling religious leaders, but any of us can drift into it, keeping score and resenting grace shown to others. Notice that the father went out and pleaded with this son too. Jesus never says whether he went in. The door is still open.

RESPOND *Where are you tempted to keep score with God or with other people? What would it look like to go in and celebrate?*

KEY TRUTH

Grace is never earned, so I can celebrate it wherever it lands.

PRAY: Father, forgive me when I keep score and resent Your kindness to others. Thank You that I am always welcome with You. Teach me to rejoice when anyone comes home. Amen.

DAY 6

Mercy on the Jericho Road

Read: Luke 10:25-37 Go further: Micah 6:8

"The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same." **Luke 10:37**

An expert in God's law knew the right answer: love God completely and love your neighbor as yourself. Then, "wanting to justify himself," he asked who his neighbor was. Jesus told of a man beaten by robbers and left half dead. A priest and a Levite, a temple worker, both "passed by on the other side." Then a Samaritan, an outsider the lawyer's people looked down on, stopped, bandaged the man, and paid for his care. None of us has loved like that perfectly, which is why we need a Savior. But people who have received mercy learn to show it, even across old lines.

RESPOND *Name someone in each place who needs mercy, and one practical thing you could do this week.*

Close to home _____

Where I spend my days _____

Someone outside my circle _____

KEY TRUTH

I don't get to choose my neighbors, only whether I stop.

PRAY: Lord, You showed me mercy when I couldn't help myself. Open my eyes to the hurting people I pass by, and make me willing to stop. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: Is there someone in our church or community who needs help that we could give together?

Eight More Parables to Read

Jesus told dozens of parables. Here are eight more worth reading slowly, one a day or whenever you have a few quiet minutes. For each one, write what the story shows about God and what it asks of you. The tips below will help you read them well.

- Notice who Jesus is talking to, and why.
- Look for the surprise. It usually carries the point.
- Don't hunt for a meaning in every detail. Find the main point.
- Ask what the story shows about God before asking what it asks of you.

Read	What it shows about God	What it asks of me
Luke 15:8-10		
Luke 12:13-21		
Luke 14:15-24		
Luke 18:1-8		
Luke 18:9-14		
Matthew 18:21-35		
Matthew 20:1-16		
Matthew 25:14-30		

Jesus in His Own Words

Jesus tells us plainly who He is, and each of us must answer His question for ourselves.

THIS WEEK

The Question Everyone Must Answer

READ FIRST: **Matthew 16:13-17**

This week's stop is far to the north, near the city of Caesarea Philippi (sez-uh-REE-uh fih-LIP-eye) at the foot of Mount Hermon. The city was named to honor the Roman emperor, and it was known for its shrines to false gods. There, away from the crowds, Jesus asked His disciples who others said He was.

The answers were respectful. Some said John the Baptist, others Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. People today still speak well of Jesus: a great teacher, a good man, a prophet. Many are comfortable with Jesus as long as He stays one of those. Then Jesus made it personal: "who do you say that I am?" No one can answer that question for you.

Peter spoke for the group. Jesus, he said, is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Messiah is a Hebrew title meaning Anointed One, God's promised King; Christ is the Greek form of the same word. Jesus called Peter blessed, because no human being had taught him this. The Father had revealed it. If you have trusted Christ, the same thing has happened to you. God opened your eyes.

This week Jesus answers His own question. In John's Gospel He describes Himself in seven "I am" sayings: the bread of life; the light of the world; the gate; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; and the true vine. Six are in this week's readings, and our memory verse is one of them. His words echo the name God gave Moses at the burning bush: I AM. Read slowly, and let Jesus tell you who He is.

Put It Into Practice

Each day, copy that day's "I am" saying onto a card or sticky note and put it where you will see it often. By the end of the week you will have a portrait of Jesus in His own words. Read them aloud before you pray.

Memory Verse

*I am the way, the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except
through me.*

John 14:6

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

Your friend may still be working out who Jesus is, and that's okay. Ask which of this week's pictures of Jesus means the most to them, and why. Share your own answer to Jesus' question and how you came to it. Honest questions often lead to deeper faith.

When You Meet

- 1 Before you trusted Christ, who did you think Jesus was? How has your answer changed?
- 2 Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples directly instead of simply telling them who He was?
- 3 Which picture of Jesus from this week do you most need to hold on to right now, and why?

Prayer

Father, thank You for showing me who Jesus really is. Open my eyes to know Him better this week, and help me answer His question with my whole life. Amen.

DAY 1

The Hunger Beneath the Hunger

Read: John 6:32-35 Go further: John 6:47-51

"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again." John 6:35

The day before, Jesus had fed thousands with a few loaves and fish. Now the crowd had tracked Him down, hoping for more. Jesus reminded them that the manna their ancestors ate in the wilderness came from God, not Moses, and that His Father was now offering the true bread from heaven. The crowd answered, "Sir, give us this bread always." They still meant ordinary bread. We can do the same thing: come to Jesus for a job, a healing, or a way out of trouble, and want His gifts more than Him. But Jesus doesn't only give bread; He is the bread. The deepest hunger in you was made for Him.

RESPOND *Be honest: do you ever want Jesus' gifts more than Jesus Himself? What would it look like to seek Him for who He is?*

KEY TRUTH

I was made for Jesus, and nothing less will satisfy me.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, forgive me when I want Your gifts more than I want You. Be my daily bread, and satisfy me with Yourself. Amen.

DAY 2

Light for the Next Step

Read: John 8:12 Go further: John 9:1-7

I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life. John 8:12

This verse is the theme of this whole guide. Jesus spoke it in the temple courts around the time of the Festival of Shelters, when Israel remembered their years in the wilderness. God had led His people then by a pillar of fire at night. By tradition, huge lamps lit the temple courts during the festival. Against that backdrop, Jesus claimed to be the light, not just for Israel, but for the whole world. Notice that the promise is for those who follow. A lamp on a night path lights your feet, not the whole mountain. Following Jesus won't remove every shadow, but you will never face them without light.

RESPOND *Where does life feel dark or unclear right now? Beside each, write one next step of following Jesus there.*

Where I need light	My next step

KEY TRUTH

Jesus lights the next step, and that is enough for today.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You are the light I need. Shine on the path in front of me. Where I am confused or afraid, show me the next step, and help me follow. Amen.

DAY 3

A Shepherd Who Stays

Read: John 10:11-15 Go further: John 10:7-9

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11

Shepherds in Israel lived with their flocks and defended them from wolves and thieves. Jesus contrasted two kinds of caretakers. A hired hand works for wages. When a wolf comes, he runs, because the sheep aren't his and he doesn't care about them. Many of us have known people like that: leaders, partners, or parents who left when things got hard. Jesus is different. He says, "I know my own," and His sheep know Him too. He doesn't run from danger; He walks toward it for His sheep. Soon He would prove it at the cross. You are not a job to Him. You belong to Him.

RESPOND *Has someone you trusted ever run when things got hard? What does it mean to you that Jesus stays?*

KEY TRUTH

I'm not a job to Jesus. I'm His, and He stays.

PRAY: Jesus, thank You for staying when others ran. You gave Your life for Your sheep, and I am one of them. Teach me to recognize Your voice. Amen.

DAY 4

Do You Believe This?

Read: John 11:23-27 Go further: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. John 11:25

Lazarus had been in the tomb four days when Jesus reached Bethany. Martha met Him on the road, grieving and still hoping. When Jesus said her brother would rise again, she gave the answer she had been taught: yes, at the resurrection on the last day. She believed a true doctrine about the future. Jesus pointed her to Himself. Then He asked her, "Do you believe this?" Martha answered with one of the clearest confessions in the Gospels: "I believe you are the Messiah." Grief is real; Jesus Himself wept for Lazarus. But for those who trust Him, death does not get the last word.

RESPOND *Think of a loss you carry. How does Jesus' promise speak to it? Do you believe this?*

KEY TRUTH

For those who trust Jesus, death is not the end.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, I believe You are God's promised Messiah and His Son. When grief comes, hold me in the hope that death does not have the last word. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask Pastor James or your mentor: How is grief different for people who know Jesus? What has helped you grieve with hope?

DAY 5

Thomas Asks for Directions

Read: John 14:1-6 Go further: Acts 4:12

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? **John 14:2**

On the night before the cross, the disciples were shaken. Jesus had just told them He was leaving. He urged them, "Don't let your heart be troubled," and promised to come back for them. Thomas admitted what the others were probably thinking. They had no idea where He was going, let alone how to get there. Jesus didn't hand him a map. He pointed to Himself. In a world that says every road leads to God, that sounds narrow. But it is also a mercy. We don't have to find our own way to the Father or hope we guessed right. The Way came to find us.

RESPOND What troubles your heart most right now? Write it down, then write what Jesus promises in this passage.

KEY TRUTH

I don't have to find my way to God. Jesus is the way.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, when my heart is troubled, remind me that You are preparing a place for me. Thank You for being the way to the Father. Amen.

DAY 6

Branches Don't Strain

Read: John 15:1-8 Go further: John 15:9-11

I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. **John 15:5**

Everyone in Israel knew grapevines. A branch doesn't produce grapes by effort. It stays attached, and the life of the vine flows through it. Jesus kept repeating one word: remain. "Remain in me, and I in you." To remain in Him means to stay close: trusting Him, listening to His Word, praying, obeying, and staying connected to His people. Jesus also said the Father is the gardener who prunes fruitful branches so they produce more. Pruning can feel like loss. But a gardener's cuts are careful, not angry. If God is cutting something away from your life, trust His hands. He is after a bigger harvest.

RESPOND Check the ways you are staying close to Jesus this week. Add one you want to begin.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Reading Scripture each day | ☐ Praying honestly, not just at meals |
| ☐ Worshiping with my church family | ☐ Meeting with my mentor or a Christian friend |
| ☐ Obeying what I already know to do | ☐ Confessing sin quickly instead of hiding it |
| ☐ _____ | |

KEY TRUTH

Fruit comes from staying close to Jesus, not from straining harder.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, keep me attached to You. When the Father prunes, help me trust His careful hands, and let my life bear fruit that honors Him. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor which daily habits have helped them remain in Christ, and which one you should start with.

I Am: Jesus Describes Himself

In seven sayings in John's Gospel, Jesus completes the words "I am" with a picture of who He is. They echo the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Read each passage. Then write one line about what that picture of Jesus means for your life right now.

The Bread of Life

John 6:35

Bread was the most basic food in Jesus' day. He alone satisfies the soul's deepest hunger.

The Light of the World

John 8:12

In a dark world, Jesus shows the way to God and lights each next step for those who follow Him.

The Gate

John 10:7-9

A sheep pen had one way in. Jesus is the entrance into God's flock, where His sheep are safe.

The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-15

Unlike a hired hand, Jesus knows His sheep, stays with them, and laid down His life for them.

The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:25-26

Death is not stronger than Jesus. All who trust Him will live, even though they die.

The Way, Truth, and Life

John 14:6

More than a guide, Jesus is Himself the way to the Father, the truth in person, and the source of real life.

The True Vine

John 15:1-5

Branches bear fruit by staying attached. As we remain in Jesus, His life flows through us.

The Great I Am

John 8:56-59

Jesus claimed to exist before Abraham, using the very name God gave Moses. His listeners understood exactly what He meant.

The Servant King

Jesus entered Jerusalem as the promised King, then showed what His kingship means by serving and giving Himself.

THIS WEEK

A Different Kind of King

READ FIRST: **Luke 19:28-40**

This week's stop is Jerusalem. Passover was near, the yearly feast remembering how God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, and pilgrims filled the roads. As Jesus and His disciples neared the Mount of Olives, He sent two of them ahead to bring a colt no one had ever ridden. If anyone asked, they were to say, "The Lord needs it." Everything happened just as He said.

The disciples threw their cloaks on the colt and helped Jesus on. As He rode, people laid their garments across the road ahead of Him, a welcome fit for a king. Where the road dropped toward the city, His disciples broke into loud, joyful praise for every miracle they had witnessed: "Blessed is the King who comes." Some Pharisees, members of a strict religious party, told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. He replied that if they went quiet, the stones themselves would cry out.

What kind of King is this? Not a conqueror on a warhorse but a humble King on a young donkey, just as the prophet Zechariah foretold. Many in the crowd hoped for a king who would drive out Rome. Jesus came to defeat enemies far greater: sin and death. Within days, He would do it by giving His life.

This week you will see the King clear the temple, receive a costly gift, answer a trap about taxes, wash His disciples' feet, and share a final Passover meal with them. Our memory verse is His command from that night: love one another as He has loved us. The King who rode a donkey also knelt with a towel.

Put It Into Practice

Look for one humble, hands-on way to serve someone this week, the kind of job nobody notices: cleaning up after a church meal, helping a neighbor with yard work, or sitting with someone who is lonely. Do it quietly, as if for Jesus.

Memory Verse

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

John 13:34

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

The next two weeks cover Jesus' final days, from the triumphal entry to the cross. Listen for what surprises or troubles your friend. Many new believers have questions about the Lord's Supper; welcome them, and let Pastor James answer questions about taking part at PGBC.

When You Meet

- 1 What kind of king were the crowds hoping for? What kind of king do people want Jesus to be today?
- 2 Is it easier for you to praise Jesus in public or to serve Him in private? Why?
- 3 Jesus washed the feet of the man about to betray Him. Who is hardest for you to serve, and why?

Prayer

King Jesus, You came humbly to serve and to save. I welcome You as King of my life. Teach me to love others the way You have loved me. Amen.

DAY 1

Promised Centuries Before

Read: Zechariah 9:9 Go further: Matthew 21:4-5

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey... **Zechariah 9:9**

Zechariah preached to a small, discouraged community roughly 500 years before Jesus. They had returned from exile in Babylon to a city still partly in ruins, with no king on David's throne. Into that discouragement, God sent this promise, with a surprise in it. Conquering kings rode warhorses. A donkey was a working animal, and a king who rode one came in peace. When Jesus chose a colt for His entry into Jerusalem, He was claiming this promise for all to see. God kept His word to the letter, centuries later. The King you follow is strong enough to win and gentle enough to approach.

RESPOND *Where do you need Jesus' strength this week, and where do you need His gentleness?*

KEY TRUTH

God keeps His promises, even when they take centuries to unfold.

PRAY: King Jesus, You are righteous and victorious, yet You came humbly. Your promises never fail. Rule my life with Your gentle strength. Amen.

DAY 2

Tables Overturned

Read: Mark 11:15-18 Go further: Isaiah 56:6-7

He was teaching them: "Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves!" **Mark 11:17**

The temple's outer court was the one place where non-Jewish people could come to pray to Israel's God. But it had become a noisy marketplace. Pilgrims needed animals for sacrifice and the right coins for the temple tax, and sellers were glad to profit from them. Jesus overturned the money changers' tables and the dove sellers' chairs. He would not even let people carry goods through. This was not a temper tantrum. It was holy zeal for His Father's house and for the outsiders being crowded out. The religious leaders answered by plotting to kill Him. Jesus still clears away whatever keeps people from meeting God.

RESPOND *What tends to crowd out prayer in your life? What could you clear away this week to make room?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus wants His house, and my heart, to be a place of prayer.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, clear out whatever crowds out prayer in my heart. Make me a true worshiper, and make our church a place where outsiders can find You. Amen.

DAY 3

A Beautiful Waste

Read: Mark 14:3-9 Go further: Romans 12:1

Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a noble thing for me.” Mark 14:6

Jesus was at dinner in Bethany when a woman broke open an alabaster jar of pure nard, a rare perfume, and poured it on His head. It was worth over three hundred denarii, about a year’s wages. Some at the table grumbled: “Why has this perfume been wasted?” Jesus took her side. “She has done what she could,” He said. She had anointed His body ahead of time for burial. She seemed to grasp what the disciples kept missing: He was about to die. Mark doesn’t even record her name here. Yet Jesus promised that wherever the gospel, the good news about Him, is told, her gift will be remembered.

RESPOND *What would extravagant love for Jesus look like in your life? What might others call a waste?*

KEY TRUTH

What I pour out for Jesus in love, He treasures and remembers.

PRAY: Jesus, You are worth more than anything I could pour out. Free me from worrying what others think, and help me love You with everything I have. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Read Mark 14:7 with your mentor. How do we love Jesus extravagantly and still care well for people in need?

DAY 4

Stamped with God’s Image

Read: Mark 12:13-17 Go further: Genesis 1:27

Jesus told them, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him. Mark 12:17

Two rival groups, the Pharisees and the Herodians, teamed up to trap Jesus. They asked whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. A yes would anger the crowds, who resented Roman rule. A no would brand Him a rebel against Rome. Jesus called for a denarius, a Roman coin, and asked, “Whose image and inscription is this?” Honoring God includes paying what we owe. But you bear an image too, and it isn’t Caesar’s. You were made in God’s image. No government, employer, or person gets the loyalty that belongs to God alone. He claims all of you.

RESPOND *Check the areas you have truly handed over to God. Circle one you’re still holding back, and pray about it today.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ My money and possessions | ☐ My time and schedule |
| ☐ My relationships | ☐ My body and health |
| ☐ My work or daily responsibilities | ☐ My past |
| ☐ My plans for the future | |

KEY TRUTH

God’s image is stamped on me; my whole life belongs to Him.

PRAY: God, You made me in Your image. Help me be honest in what I owe others, and give You what is Yours: all of me. Amen.

DAY 5

The Lord Who Knelt

Read: John 13:1-15 Go further: Mark 10:45

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you. John 13:15

John says Jesus knew the Father had given everything into His hands. So what did the One with all authority do? He rose from the table, wrapped a towel around Himself, and began washing His disciples' dusty feet, a servant's job. He even washed the feet of Judas, knowing Judas would betray Him. Peter objected, but Jesus told him that unless He washed him, Peter would have no part with Him. Before we can serve like Jesus, we have to let Him serve us by washing away our sin. Then we can kneel for others, even people who are hard to love. This is love with its sleeves rolled up.

RESPOND Name someone in each group, and one humble, practical way you could serve them this week.

Someone who can't repay me _____

Someone who serves me _____

Someone hard to love _____

KEY TRUTH

Jesus washed me clean, so I can kneel to serve others.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You knelt to wash feet, even the feet of Your betrayer. Wash me clean, and give me a servant's heart toward everyone, even those who are hard to love. Amen.

DAY 6

A Meal to Remember

Read: Luke 22:14-20 Go further: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

Jesus told His apostles He had "fervently desired to eat this Passover" with them before He suffered. For centuries this meal had retold the night God rescued Israel from Egypt, when the blood of a lamb marked their doors and judgment passed over them. Now Jesus gave the meal a new center: Himself. The cup after supper, He said, was "the new covenant in my blood." A covenant is a binding promise, and this one promised forgiveness through His death. When a church shares the Lord's Supper, it looks back to the cross and ahead to His return. If you have questions about taking part, ask Pastor James.

RESPOND What do you want to remember about Jesus the next time you see the bread and the cup at church?

KEY TRUTH

The Lord's Supper looks back to the cross and ahead to His coming.

PRAY: Jesus, Your body was given and Your blood poured out for me. When I see the bread and cup, help me remember and give thanks until You return. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask Pastor James about the Lord's Supper: what it means and when you may take part.

The Last Week, Day by Day

About a third of the Gospel accounts focus on Jesus' final week. The Gospels don't give a day for every event, so this is one common way of arranging the week. Read each passage, and notice how deliberately Jesus walks toward the cross.

PALM SUNDAY

Riding a colt, Jesus enters Jerusalem as His followers shout praise to the King.
[Luke 19:28-40](#)

MONDAY

He clears the temple's outer court. The leaders start looking for a way to kill Him.
[Mark 11:15-18](#)

TUESDAY

In the temple courts, He answers questions meant to trap Him, including one about taxes.
[Mark 12:13-17](#)

WEDNESDAY

Judas makes a deal with the chief priests to hand Jesus over for money.
[Mark 14:10-11](#)

THURSDAY

He shares the Passover meal with His disciples, then prays in Gethsemane, where He is arrested.
[Luke 22:14-20, 39-46](#)

FRIDAY

He is crucified at The Skull, prays for His executioners, and breathes His last.
[Luke 23:33-46](#)

SATURDAY

His body lies in the tomb Joseph of Arimathea provided, while the women who followed Him rest on the Sabbath.
[Luke 23:50-56](#)

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

At dawn the women find an open, empty tomb and hear the news: He has risen!
[Luke 24:1-7](#)

Crucified for Us

Jesus freely chose the cross, bearing the judgment our sin deserved to bring us back to God.

THIS WEEK

Love That Didn't Wait

READ FIRST: **Romans 5:6-11**

No stop on this trail is harder. We begin among the olive trees of Gethsemane, where Jesus spent His last free hours in prayer. We end at The Skull, the execution site outside the city walls. The Gospel writers tell this part of the story with restraint, and we will too. They say little about the pain and much about who Jesus is and why He died.

Romans 5 explains why. Paul describes the people Christ died for: helpless, ungodly, sinners, even enemies of God. He admits that a person might possibly give his life for someone truly good. Christ gave His life for people who were not. God did not wait for us to improve before loving us. The cross proves it.

Why was the cross necessary? Sin, our rebellion against God, separates us from Him, and its penalty is death. God is holy and just, so He does not pretend sin doesn't matter. But He is also loving. At the cross, justice and love meet: Jesus, who never sinned, bore the penalty our sins deserved. Paul uses two big words for the result. Justified means God declares us not guilty. Reconciled means enemies are brought back as friends.

As you read this week, watch Jesus choose this path. He asks His Father for another way, then surrenders to His will. He steps forward to meet the soldiers. He prays for the people crucifying Him. He finishes the work. Take your time with these readings. And remember that the story doesn't end at the cross.

Put It Into Practice

Set aside twenty quiet minutes this week to read Luke 23 slowly, start to finish. Then write Jesus a short letter of thanks in your own words for what He did for you. Share it with your mentor if you're comfortable.

Memory Verse

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

This is a heavy week. The cross can stir up guilt, grief, or hard questions. Listen for whether your friend truly believes they are forgiven or still feels they must earn it. Keep pointing to what Jesus finished, and remind them the next stop is the empty tomb.

When You Meet

- 1 Romans 5 describes us as helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies when Christ died. Which word hits hardest for you, and why?
- 2 Do you ever feel you have to earn God's forgiveness or clean up first? Where does that feeling come from?
- 3 What about the cross is still hard for you to understand? Talk it through together.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You died for me while I was still a sinner. I could never repay You, and You don't ask me to. Thank You for taking my place. Help me live as one who is forgiven. Amen.

DAY 1

The Hardest Prayer

Read: Matthew 26:36-46 Go further: Hebrews 5:7-8

Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” **Matthew 26:39**

After the Passover meal, Jesus took His disciples to Gethsemane. Peter, James, and John went farther in with Him, and He told them He was “deeply grieved to the point of death.” The cup He faced meant more than physical pain. It meant bearing God’s judgment against our sin. He prayed in anguish; His closest friends could not stay awake. His second prayer ends, “your will be done.” Here is the Son of God, honest about His sorrow and fully trusting His Father. You can pray that way too. God’s answer may not be what you asked, but surrender to Him is not defeat. It is trust.

RESPOND What situation is hardest for you to surrender to God’s will right now? Write an honest prayer about it.

KEY TRUTH

I can bring God my honest anguish and still trust His will.

PRAY: Father, thank You that Jesus prayed honestly and obeyed completely. When I am overwhelmed, teach me to pour out my heart to You and still say, Your will be done. Amen.

DAY 2

He Walked Out to Meet Them

Read: John 18:1-11 Go further: John 10:17-18

At that, Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?” **John 18:11**

Judas knew where to find Jesus, because Jesus often met with His disciples in that garden. He arrived at night leading soldiers and temple officials with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus didn’t hide among the olive trees. He knew exactly what was coming, and He walked out to meet them. When He answered, “I am he,” the armed crowd staggered backward and fell. Even then He was protecting His friends: “let these men go.” Peter drew a sword and struck a servant, but Jesus stopped him. Jesus was not a victim of events. He was laying down His life by choice, and still caring for others.

RESPOND Number these moments from John 18:1-11 in order. Then circle the one that shows most clearly that Jesus chose the cross.

- ☐ Peter strikes the high priest’s servant
- ☐ Jesus steps forward and asks whom they want
- ☐ The crowd draws back and falls down

- ☐ Jesus and His disciples enter the garden
- ☐ Judas arrives with soldiers and officials
- ☐ Jesus asks them to let His disciples go

KEY TRUTH

Jesus walked toward the cross on purpose, and He did it for me.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You walked toward Your enemies to protect Your friends. Thank You for laying down Your life of Your own free will. I am safe in Your hands. Amen.

DAY 3

Warming by the Wrong Fire

Read: Luke 22:54-62 Go further: Luke 22:31-32

| *Then the Lord turned and looked at Peter. ... And he went outside and wept bitterly.* **Luke 22:61-62**

That same evening, Peter had sworn he would stand by Jesus even if it meant prison or death. Now he trailed behind at a safe distance and sat by a fire in the high priest's courtyard, among the people who had arrested his Lord. A servant girl studied his face and recognized him. "Woman, I don't know him." Twice more he denied knowing Jesus, each time more forcefully. But earlier that night, Jesus had told Peter He was praying for him, and that once he turned back, he should strengthen the others. Jesus expected him to come back. Failure is not the end of a believer's story.

RESPOND *What failure do you keep replaying? What does Jesus' prayer for Peter tell you about how He sees you?*

KEY TRUTH

My failures are real, but Jesus' prayers for me are stronger.

PRAY: Jesus, I have failed You too, in ways I remember with shame. Thank You for praying for me and looking at me with love. Turn me back, and use me to strengthen others. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor about a time they failed the Lord. How did they find their way back?

DAY 4

Truth on Trial

Read: John 18:33-38 Go further: John 19:1-11

| *"My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus.* **John 18:36**

Pilate, the Roman governor, held the power of life and death. He asked Jesus if He was the king of the Jews. Jesus explained that His kingdom doesn't advance by force. He had come to testify to the truth, and everyone who belongs to the truth listens to Him. Pilate brushed it off: "What is truth?" Then he walked out without waiting for an answer. He found no grounds to charge Jesus, yet he later handed Him over to protect his own position. Many people still ask Pilate's question and walk away. But truth is not just an idea to debate. It is a Person to follow.

RESPOND *Where are you tempted, like Pilate, to choose what's easy or popular over what's true? What would standing with Jesus look like there?*

KEY TRUTH

When truth is costly, I will still stand with Jesus.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You are the truth in person. When going along with the crowd would be easier, give me courage to listen to Your voice and stand with You. Amen.

DAY 5

Grace for a Dying Criminal

Read: Luke 23:32-43 Go further: Isaiah 53:12

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43

Luke describes the crucifixion in just a few words. At the place called The Skull, soldiers crucified Jesus between two criminals. His first recorded words there were a prayer: "Father, forgive them." Leaders sneered, soldiers mocked, and one of the criminals joined in. The other rebuked him, admitting that they deserved their sentence but Jesus was innocent. Then he turned to Jesus with a simple request. Consider what this man could never do: be baptized, join a church, make amends, or live a better life. Those things matter, but they are not what saves. He could only trust Jesus, and Jesus welcomed him.

RESPOND *The man beside Jesus brought nothing but trust. What are you tempted to bring God to make yourself acceptable?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus welcomes empty hands that simply trust Him.

PRAY: Jesus, I come with empty hands, like the man beside You on the cross. Thank You for forgiving me and promising me a place with You forever. Amen.

DAY 6

Nothing Left to Pay

Read: John 19:28-30 Go further: Mark 15:37-39

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit. John 19:30

John says Jesus knew that everything was now finished, and even His request for a drink fulfilled Scripture. Those words from the cross don't signal defeat. They mean the work is completed, accomplished, brought to its goal. He truly died, but not as a victim. Everything needed to pay for sin was done. Mark records that as He died, the temple curtain split from top to bottom. Nothing now stood between God and those who trust His Son. Many believers still live as if they owe God installments. But the debt is paid. Nothing can be added to a finished work. You can only receive it and rest in it.

RESPOND *Is there anything you still try to pay God back for? What would it look like to rest in Jesus' finished work?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus finished the work. I rest in it instead of adding to it.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, You said it is finished, and I believe You. When I try to earn what You have already given, remind me that nothing is left to pay. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor: What changes in everyday life when you truly believe Jesus' work is finished?

Four Words That Explain the Cross

The Bible uses several rich words to explain what happened at the cross. You don't need special training to understand them, and each one is good news. Read each section slowly, look up the verses, and thank God for what each word means for you.

— Substitution: The Innocent for the Guilty

Sin deserves judgment, and God is too holy and just to pretend otherwise. At the cross, Jesus, who never sinned, stood in our place and took the penalty we deserved. Isaiah saw it coming centuries earlier (Isaiah 53:5-6). Paul describes a great exchange: Jesus took our sin, and we receive His perfect standing with God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

— Justified: Declared Not Guilty

Justified is a courtroom word. It means God, the judge, declares a person right with Him. Paul says we have been “justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9). That verdict rests on what Jesus did, not on your performance, so it doesn't change on your bad days.

— Redeemed: Bought Back

To redeem is to buy back, like paying the price to set a slave free. Jesus called His death a ransom (Mark 10:45). Peter says the price was not money but Christ's own precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). You were bought at great cost. You belong to Him now, and you are free.

— Reconciled: Enemies Made Friends

Reconciled is a relationship word. Paul says that “while we were enemies,” God made peace with us through His Son's death (Romans 5:10). The cross doesn't just cancel a debt. It restores a relationship. God doesn't merely put up with you. He welcomes you as His own.

— Your Response

Which of these four words means the most to you right now? Write why, then turn it into a prayer of thanks.

— Still Have Questions?

If you aren't sure you have trusted Christ, or the cross raises hard questions for you, you are not alone. Talk with Pastor James or your mentor this week. And keep reading: the next stop is the empty tomb.

Death Could Not Hold Him

Jesus rose bodily from the dead, restores those who failed Him, sends us out, and will come again.

THIS WEEK

The Morning Everything Changed

READ FIRST: [Luke 24:1-12](#)

Our trail ends at a garden tomb outside Jerusalem, just after dawn on the first day of the week. The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee arrived with the burial spices they had prepared. They had watched Him die and seen where His body was laid. They came to finish a burial, not to witness a miracle.

They found the stone rolled away and the body gone. While they stood there bewildered, two men in dazzling clothes appeared and asked why they were “looking for the living among the dead.” Then came the best news ever spoken: “He is not here, but he has risen!” The angels reminded them that Jesus had predicted all of this, and the women remembered His words.

The apostles dismissed the women’s report as nonsense. They were not gullible people looking for a happy ending; they were grieving skeptics. Peter, though, raced to the tomb, stooped to look in, and saw the linen cloths lying there. He left in amazement. In the days ahead, Jesus would show Himself alive to them many times.

Everything depends on this morning. Because Jesus rose bodily, His claims are true, His payment for sin was accepted, and death has lost its grip on everyone who trusts Him. Our memory verse, first spoken to Martha in Bethany, was proved true at this empty tomb. This week the risen Jesus meets frightened women, walks with discouraged travelers, answers a doubter, restores a man who failed Him, sends His followers out, and promises to return. The last page of this guide is not the end of the road. He still goes ahead of you.

Put It Into Practice

Tell one person this week your story of coming to Christ: what your life was like, how you came to trust Him, and what has changed. The Good News page at the back of this guide can help you prepare. Pray first and keep it simple.

Memory Verse

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live.

John 11:25

- ☐ Memorized
☐ Shared it with someone

For Your Mentor

This is the last week of the guide, but your friend’s walk with Jesus is just beginning. Celebrate their faithfulness. Talk about next steps: a reading plan, church involvement, continuing to meet, and, if they have trusted Christ and haven’t been baptized, a conversation with Pastor James.

When You Meet

- 1 The apostles first dismissed the women’s report as nonsense. What questions about the resurrection would you like to talk through?
- 2 How does Jesus’ resurrection change the way you think about death, grief, or your own future?
- 3 Looking back over these fifteen weeks, where have you grown most? What next step do you sense God leading you to take?

Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus, You are alive, and because You live, I will live too. Lead me on from here, and make me a faithful witness until You come again. Amen.

DAY 1

Fear and Great Joy

Read: Matthew 28:1-10 Go further: 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Matthew 28:6

Matthew's account begins with an earthquake and an angel whose appearance was like lightning. The guards posted to keep the tomb sealed shook with fear and became like dead men. There's a holy irony here: the guards look dead, and the dead man is alive. The angel calmed the women and sent them to tell the disciples. They ran "with fear and great joy." Then the risen Jesus met them on the road. They clung to His feet in worship. This was no ghost or vision. He had a real body. Paul later lists more than five hundred eyewitnesses. This happened.

RESPOND *Why does it matter that Jesus rose bodily, not just in spirit or in memory? What difference does it make for you?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus really rose, so every promise He made can be trusted.

PRAY: Risen Jesus, You kept Your word and walked out of the grave. Replace my fears with joy, and help me tell others what You have done. Amen.

DAY 2

A Stranger on the Road

Read: Luke 24:13-32 Go further: Luke 24:44-45

Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. Luke 24:27

Two discouraged followers were walking to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. When a stranger joined them, they poured out their disappointment: "we were hoping that he was the one." They had even heard the women's report and still couldn't believe it. The stranger was Jesus, though they were kept from recognizing Him. He showed them that the cross they thought had ended everything had been God's plan all along. Only when He broke bread at their table did they know Him. Then He vanished. Sometimes Jesus walks beside us in our disappointment long before we recognize Him. He still opens eyes through His Word.

RESPOND *Which passage from these weeks has warmed your heart most? What did it show you about Jesus?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus walks with me in disappointment and opens my eyes through His Word.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, walk with me when I am discouraged. Open the Scriptures to me, open my eyes to see You, and set my heart burning again. Amen.

DAY 3

From Doubt to Worship

Read: John 20:24-29 Go further: 1 Peter 1:8-9

Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

John 20:29

Thomas missed Jesus' first appearance to the disciples, and he refused to take anyone's word for it. He wanted to see and touch the wounds for himself. The following week, behind locked doors, Jesus came again and turned to Thomas. He didn't scold him. He met him exactly where his doubt was: "Put your finger here." John never says whether Thomas actually touched Him. He didn't need to. He simply confessed, "My Lord and my God!" The man remembered for doubting made one of the boldest confessions in the Gospels. Honest questions brought to Jesus can lead to deeper worship. You don't have to hide your doubts from Him.

RESPOND *What doubt still nags at you? What does Thomas's story tell you about bringing it to Jesus?*

KEY TRUTH

I can bring Jesus my doubts, and He can turn them into worship.

PRAY: Jesus, You are my Lord and my God. Thank You for meeting doubters with patience. I bring You my questions, and I trust You with them. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: Ask your mentor your hardest resurrection question, and what convinced them Jesus rose.

DAY 4

Three Questions by the Fire

Read: John 21:15-19 Go further: John 21:1-14

He said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." "Feed my sheep," Jesus said. John 21:17

After a fruitless night of fishing, the disciples found the risen Jesus cooking breakfast over a charcoal fire. The last time Peter stood by a fire, he denied Jesus three times. Now Jesus gave him three chances to answer a single question, "do you love me?" The repetition hurt, but it was healing. Three declarations of love answered three denials, and each came with a charge to care for His flock. Jesus didn't just forgive Peter. He trusted him again with His people, even warning that following would one day cost Peter his life. Then Jesus repeated His first invitation: "Follow me." Your failures don't disqualify you from His service.

RESPOND *If Jesus asked you the question He asked Peter, how would you answer? What might He be asking you to do?*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus restores people who have failed and trusts them with His work.

PRAY: Lord, You know all my failures, and You still call me. I love You. Show me whom You want me to care for, and help me follow You to the end. Amen.

DAY 5

Sent Out, Never Alone

Read: Matthew 28:16-20 Go further: Romans 6:3-4

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

The eleven disciples met Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, as He had told them. Matthew includes an honest detail: they worshiped, “but some doubted.” Jesus gave His mission to worshipers and doubters alike. With all authority in heaven and on earth, He sent them out to make disciples, people who follow Him and learn to obey Him. New disciples are to be baptized. Baptism is for people who have already trusted Christ. Going under the water and coming up again pictures Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, and your new life in Him. It doesn’t save you. It is an act of obedience that shows whose you are.

RESPOND *Name three people you long to see follow Jesus. Pray for them by name every day this week.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

KEY TRUTH

Jesus sends me to make disciples, and He goes with me every step.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, all authority belongs to You. Make me brave enough to share what You have done, and faithful to obey all You have commanded. Thank You for being with me always. Amen.

DAY 6

Keep Walking Until He Comes

Read: Acts 1:6-11 Go further: Hebrews 12:1-2

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven. Acts 1:11

The risen Jesus spent forty days with His followers. They asked if He would now restore the kingdom to Israel. It was “not for you to know times or periods,” He said. Their job was to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from sight. As they stared into the sky, two men in white asked why they stood there. Don’t spend your days guessing when He will return. Spend them following Him and telling others. This guide ends here, but the trail goes on. Keep walking.

RESPOND *Jesus is coming back. How do you want to be living when He does? Name one next step for this week.*

KEY TRUTH

Jesus is coming back, so I will keep following Him and telling others.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for these ninety days. Fill me with Your Spirit, make me Your witness, and keep me following You until I see You face to face. Amen.

TALK IT OVER: With your mentor, plan what you’ll read, how you’ll keep meeting, and what to ask Pastor James.

Looking Back, Walking On

When you opened this guide, you set out to walk with Jesus through His life, from the promises before Bethlehem to the empty tomb and His promise to return. Before you put it on the shelf, take a few minutes to remember where you have been and where you are headed. The One who said “Follow me” is still leading.

— A Stop That Stayed with Me

Flip back through the weeks. Which stop on the trail meant the most to you, and why?

— What I Know About Jesus Now

Finish this sentence in your own words: Because of these weeks, I know that Jesus is...

— A Verse I Want to Keep

Choose a memory verse from these weeks and write it out from memory. Then tell someone what it means to you.

— Keep Walking: Next Steps

Circle the steps you will take in the coming month. Add your own on the line.

- Read the Gospel of John, one chapter a day, using the plan at the back of this guide.
- Worship with your church family on Sundays, and join a Sunday School class or Wednesday Bible study.
- If you have trusted Christ, talk with Pastor James about baptism and church membership.
- Keep meeting with your mentor. Someday, walk alongside someone newer in the faith.
- Start Deep Roots, the companion to this guide.
- Tell one person this month how you came to follow Jesus.

— A Prayer for the Road

Write a prayer thanking Jesus for these weeks and asking Him to lead you on from here.

Memory Verse Challenge

Check a box each time you can say a verse from memory: **1** to someone at home, **2** to your mentor or Pastor James, and **3** a month later, to be sure it has stuck.

		1	2	3
1	2 Corinthians 1:20 — For every one of God’s promises is “Yes” in him.	☐	☐	☐
2	Luke 2:11 — Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.	☐	☐	☐
3	John 1:14 — The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.	☐	☐	☐
4	John 1:29 — Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!	☐	☐	☐
5	Matthew 4:4 — It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.	☐	☐	☐
6	Matthew 4:19 — “Follow me,” he told them, “and I will make you fish for people.”	☐	☐	☐
7	Matthew 6:33 — But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.	☐	☐	☐
8	Mark 4:41 — And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”	☐	☐	☐
9	Mark 10:52 — Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.	☐	☐	☐
10	Luke 19:10 — For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.	☐	☐	☐
11	Luke 11:28 — ...blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.	☐	☐	☐
12	John 14:6 — I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.	☐	☐	☐
13	John 13:34 — I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.	☐	☐	☐
14	Romans 5:8 — But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.	☐	☐	☐
15	John 11:25 — I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live.	☐	☐	☐

✂ Memory Verse Cards

Cut these out and keep them in your Bible, on the fridge, or in your car.

WEEK 1

For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him.

2 Corinthians 1:20

WEEK 2

Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:11

WEEK 3

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

WEEK 4

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 1:29

WEEK 5

It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

WEEK 6

"Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for people."

Matthew 4:19

WEEK 7

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Matthew 6:33

WEEK 8

And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Mark 4:41

✂ Memory Verse Cards

Cut these out and keep them in your Bible, on the fridge, or in your car.

💖 WEEK 9

Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

Mark 10:52

🔪 WEEK 10

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

🌱 WEEK 11

...blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Luke 11:28

🏠 WEEK 12

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

👑 WEEK 13

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

John 13:34

✝ WEEK 14

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

🕊 WEEK 15

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live.

John 11:25

💖 MY FAVORITE VERSE

Sermon Notes

Date: _____

Preacher: _____

Bible passage:

Sermon title:

The main point

 Notes

Verses to remember

Questions to ask

How I will respond this week

Sermon Notes

Date: _____

Preacher: _____

Bible passage: _____

Sermon title: _____

 The main point

 Notes

 Verses to remember

 Questions to ask

 How I will respond this week

Sermon Notes

Date: _____

Preacher: _____

Bible passage: _____

Sermon title: _____

 The main point

 Notes

 Verses to remember

 Questions to ask

 How I will respond this week

Sermon Notes

Date: _____

Preacher: _____

Bible passage:

Sermon title:

The main point

 Notes

Verses to remember

❓ Questions to ask

How I will respond this week

ROOT Bible Study

Use these four steps with any passage of Scripture. Print more copies of this page anytime.

Date: _____

I read: _____

R

Read it

Read the passage slowly, twice, and aloud if you can. Note anything that stands out.

O

Observe

What happens in the passage? What does it reveal about God, about Jesus, and about people?

O

Own it

What is God calling you to believe, change, or do?

T

Talk to God

Write a prayer in response: thanks, confession, and requests for help.

ROOT Bible Study

Use these four steps with any passage of Scripture. Print more copies of this page anytime.

Date: _____

I read: _____

R

Read it

Read the passage slowly, twice, and aloud if you can. Note anything that stands out.

O

Observe

What happens in the passage? What does it reveal about God, about Jesus, and about people?

O

Own it

What is God calling you to believe, change, or do?

T

Talk to God

Write a prayer in response: thanks, confession, and requests for help.

The Good News

Five truths at the heart of the gospel, each with a verse. Learn them well enough to explain them in your own words.

- 1 God loves you.**
God created you, knows you fully, and loves you with a love you could never earn.
"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." **John 3:16**
- 2 Sin separates.**
All of us have sinned. We have gone our own way instead of God's, and our sin separates us from Him.
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **Romans 3:23**
- 3 Jesus saves.**
Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, and He rose again.
"But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." **Romans 5:8**
- 4 Trust Him.**
Salvation is God's gift. We receive it by turning from our sin and trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." **Romans 10:9**
- 5 Follow Him.**
The Christian life is a new life of following Jesus, day by day, with His Spirit and His church.
"So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him." **Colossians 2:6**

Your story in three parts

My life before Christ...

How I came to trust Him...

What has changed...

Have you trusted Jesus?

If you're not sure, or you'd like to talk about it, Pastor James Safrit would be glad to meet with you. Call (336) 984-3360.

What's Next?

Ninety days is a real beginning. Here's how to keep growing:



Keep meeting with God every day.

Read the Gospel of John, one chapter a day. John wrote his Gospel so that readers would believe Jesus is the Son of God and have life in His name. Check off each chapter:

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21



Take your next step: baptism.

If you haven't been baptized since you trusted Christ, talk with Pastor James Safrit about baptism and church membership.



Worship with your church family.

Sunday School: Sundays, 9:45 AM · Worship: Sundays, 11:00 AM · Bible Study: Wednesdays, 6:00 PM.



Try Deep Roots next.

It's a 90-day guide for adults who are new in Christ. Download it free at pgbcronda.com/resources.



Keep meeting with someone.

Keep meeting with your mentor, or ask the church to connect you with a small group.



Share your story.

Use The Good News page to tell a friend or family member what Christ has done for you.

Answer Key

Week 9: Jesus Stops for the Hurting

Day 1: 4, 2, 5, 3, 6, 1 (top to bottom)

Week 14: Crucified for Us

Day 2: 6, 1, 3, 2, 4, 5 (top to bottom)



Follow Me is one of the **Growing in the Grove** guides—free resources from Pleasant Grove Baptist Church for adults who are new in Christ.

Sunday School · Sundays, 9:45 AM

Worship · Sundays, 11:00 AM

Bible Study · Wednesdays, 6:00 PM

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