



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Daily Discipleship Guide

Spring 2023 | CSB



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ye are
another.
him, Lord,
answered him,
follow me now;
afterwards.
Lord, why cannot
all lay down my life
him, Wilt thou lay down
e? Verily, verily, I say unto
shall not crow, till thou hast
rice.

OF MANY MANSIONS

at I not your heart be troubled: ye
believe in God, believe also in me.
a my Father's house are many man-
sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
ou. I go to prepare a place for you.
And if I go and prepare a place for you, I
will come again, and receive you unto my-
self; that where I am, there ye may be also.
And whither I go ye know, and the way
ye know.

JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
not whither thou goest; and how can we
know the way?
Jesus saith unto him, I am the way,
the truth, and the life: no man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.
If ye had known me, ye should have
known my Father also: and from henceforth
ye know him, and have seen him.
Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the
Father, and it sufficeth us.
Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so
long time with you, and yet hast thou not
known me, Philip? he that hath seen me

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

John 12-21



ONE MORE THING

“Just one more thing before I go . . .”

It might be a parent talking to their college-bound freshman, a friend wrapping up a phone call with a really great story, or boss leaving last-minute instructions before a business trip. Whatever the specific situation, we’ve all found ourselves with a lot to say and not enough time to say it. So, in a last-ditch effort to squeeze every second out of every minute, we add one more thing to the list.

That’s similar to what we find throughout John 12–21. Jesus knew His “hour” was coming. His arrest and crucifixion were close. In His last few hours, He had a few more things to share with His disciples. Even after three years of teaching them through His words and His example, Jesus still had things to tell them about being His people in a fallen world.

Thankfully, Jesus’s crucifixion was not the end of the story. He rose from the dead on that first Easter morning, so He would continue walking with them, teaching them through the work of the Holy Spirit. Plus, He promised to come back for them one day—and anyone else who chose to accept His offer of salvation by faith.

That’s the “one more thing” John wanted his readers to understand more than anything else. All of Jesus’s teaching, all of His miracles, even His death and resurrection pointed in one direction. God’s Son had come to earth to be humanity’s Savior. Of all the things He said and did, the one thing Jesus wants us to grasp is that we can find forgiveness for our sins and experience eternal life through Him. If you’re ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here’s what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Connect with a local church that will help you grow spiritually and demonstrate your faith in Jesus publicly by following Him in baptism by immersion.

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THE WEEK OF

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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FROM THE TEAM

When someone dear to us passes away, our last conversations with that person take on new meaning. We may have had other discussions that were more extended, but those last words seem to overshadow everything that came before. Even as time passes, those final exchanges seem to dominate our memories and color our perceptions of that loved one. We may even find ourselves reliving those last conversations, remembering every detail including what was going on around us.

In his Gospel, John dedicated nearly half of what he wrote to the week leading up to Jesus's death, and a large portion of those words focus on the last hours of His life. All the actions we find in John 13:1–19:42 took place during the final 24 hours leading up to Jesus's arrest and crucifixion. It begins with the washing of the disciples' feet and ends with Jesus's body being placed in a tomb.

He included Jesus calling on John to care for Mary in His place, their final conversation before Jesus's death .

During this study of John 12–21, we will walk with John as he relayed those final conversations, teachings, predictions, prayers, denials, and actions of Jesus. In doing so, we will be reminded of His purpose, of the hope He offers, and the joy of being a disciple He loves.

In His service,

Dwayne McCrary

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BIBLE READING PLAN

MARCH

- ☐ 1. John 12:1-3
- ☐ 2. John 12:4-8
- ☐ 3. John 12:9-11
- ☐ 4. John 12:12-16
- ☐ 5. John 12:17-19
- ☐ 6. John 12:20-22
- ☐ 7. John 12:23-26
- ☐ 8. John 12:27-29
- ☐ 9. John 12:30-34
- ☐ 10. John 12:35-36
- ☐ 11. John 12:37-43
- ☐ 12. John 12:44-47
- ☐ 13. John 12:48-50
- ☐ 14. John 13:1
- ☐ 15. John 13:2-5
- ☐ 16. John 13:6-11
- ☐ 17. John 13:12-15
- ☐ 18. John 13:16-17
- ☐ 19. John 13:18-20
- ☐ 20. John 13:21-25
- ☐ 21. John 13:26-30
- ☐ 22. John 13:31-33
- ☐ 23. John 13:34-35
- ☐ 24. John 13:36-38
- ☐ 25. John 14:1-4
- ☐ 26. John 14:5-7
- ☐ 27. John 14:8-11
- ☐ 28. John 14:12-14
- ☐ 29. John 14:15-17
- ☐ 30. John 14:18-21
- ☐ 31. John 14:22-26

APRIL

- ☐ 1. John 14:27-31
- ☐ 2. John 15:1-4
- ☐ 3. John 15:5-8
- ☐ 4. John 15:9-11
- ☐ 5. John 15:12-17
- ☐ 6. John 15:18-21
- ☐ 7. John 15:22-25
- ☐ 8. John 15:26-27
- ☐ 9. John 16:1-4
- ☐ 10. John 16:5-11
- ☐ 11. John 16:12-15
- ☐ 12. John 16:16-18
- ☐ 13. John 16:19-22
- ☐ 14. John 16:23-24
- ☐ 15. John 16:25-28
- ☐ 16. John 16:29-33
- ☐ 17. John 17:1-2
- ☐ 18. John 17:3-5
- ☐ 19. John 17:6-8
- ☐ 20. John 17:9-12
- ☐ 21. John 17:13-15
- ☐ 22. John 17:16-19
- ☐ 23. John 17:20-23
- ☐ 24. John 17:24-26
- ☐ 25. John 18:1-5
- ☐ 26. John 18:6-9
- ☐ 27. John 18:10-14
- ☐ 28. John 18:15-18
- ☐ 29. John 18:19-24
- ☐ 30. John 18:25-27

MAY

- ☐ 1. John 18:28-32
- ☐ 2. John 18:33-36
- ☐ 3. John 18:37-40
- ☐ 4. John 19:1-5
- ☐ 5. John 19:6-7
- ☐ 6. John 19:8-11
- ☐ 7. John 19:12-16
- ☐ 8. John 19:17-18
- ☐ 9. John 19:19-22
- ☐ 10. John 19:23-24
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- ☐ 27. John 21:12-14
- ☐ 28. John 21:15-17
- ☐ 29. John 21:18-19
- ☐ 30. John 21:20-23
- ☐ 31. John 21:24-25

MEMORY VERSES

Session 1:

Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. – John 12:17

Session 2:

“As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” – John 12:32

Session 3:

“Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” – John 14:1

Session 4:

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful.” – John 14:27

Session 5:

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

Session 6:

The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. – John 20:8

Session 7:

When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. – John 16:8

Session 8:

“I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.” – John 17:20-21

Session 9:

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

Session 10:

“My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus. “If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” – John 18:36

Session 11:

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit. – John 19:30

Session 12:

Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” – John 20:29

Session 13:

“If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow me.” – John 21:22

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The first half of the Gospel of John (chaps. 1–11) tells primarily of seven “signs” Jesus performed. These signs highlight His role as Messiah. The second half (chaps. 12–21) focuses primarily on events surrounding the final week of Jesus—leading up to and including His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The two halves open and close with similar scenes and statements. For instance, John declared early in the second half of his Gospel that Jesus “loved his own who were in the world” (13:1). This echoes what John stated earlier about Jesus: “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (1:11). Additionally, the first half closes with climatic scenes related to Lazarus being brought back to life. The second half culminates with scenes related to the empty tomb of Jesus and His subsequent appearances.

Reading through the second half of John’s Gospel, three themes emerge. These focus on the responses of people, the words of Jesus, and the actions of Jesus.

Perplexed—John consistently portrayed people who were puzzled by what was happening. The disciples were perplexed when Jesus allowed Mary to anoint His feet with expensive oil (12:3-8). They were perplexed as the people shouted “Hosanna” when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem (12:12-16). The religious leaders did not know what to do with Jesus (12:19). The disciples were confounded as Jesus took a basin and towel and washed their feet (13:1-20). The women, Peter, and

John were perplexed when they found the tomb empty (20:1-14).

Promises—Jesus told His disciples they soon would not see Him, they would mourn, weep, and have sorrow. Soon afterward, they would experience joy, a reference to His burial and subsequent resurrection (16:16-29). He promised that if He went away, He would send the Holy Spirit as a Counselor (15:26). He also promised if He were lifted up (meaning crucified), He would draw all people to Himself (12:32).

Proof—The second half of John contains many instances that prove the reliability of what Jesus had said or done. For example, although the disciples did not understand what was happening at the triumphal entry, they recalled after the resurrection what the Scripture had declared prophetically about Jesus (12:16). The Lord’s words became the proof He had come from God (16:30). The wounds in the hands and side of Jesus proved to Thomas that He was alive (20:26-28). Finally, John said the proof of what he had written in his Gospel came because he had been an eyewitness to the events (21:24).

May what you read in John’s Gospel help you “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and . . . by believing [may you] have life in his name” (20:31).

OUTLINE

- I. Prelude: Christ As the Eternal Word** (John 1:1-18)
- II. Presentation: Christ as the Son of God** (John 1:19–12:50)
- III. Preparation: Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God** (John 13:1–17:26)
 - A. The Last Supper (John 13:1-38)
 - B. The way to the Father (John 14:1-31)
 - C. The true vine (John 15:1-27)
 - D. The gift of the Spirit (John 16:1-33)
 - E. Jesus's high-priestly prayer (John 17:11-26)
- IV. Passion: Suffering of Christ as the Son of God** (John 18:1–20:31)
 - A. His arrest, trial, and death (John 18:1-19:42)
 - B. His triumph over death (John 20:1-31)
- V. Postlude: The Continuing Work of the Son of God** (John 21:1-25)
 - A. Appearances to His disciples (John 21:1-14)
 - B. Assignment to His disciples (John 21:15-25)



ON THE COVER

Olive trees growing in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. [See Session 9.]


USING THE **DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE**

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and moves us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.



Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focuses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
- In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

Why Wasn't This Sold?

Jesus is worthy of our worship as the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

JOHN 12:1-11



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life

...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.

...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...ons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. ¹⁰I go to prepare a place for you.

³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁹where I am, *there* ye may be also.

⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.

**JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE**

⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ²the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ³no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.

⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.

⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

east saith

s, to whom I

e dipped *it*. And

sop, he gave *it* to

of Simon.

p Satan entered into

s unto him, That thou

at the table knew for what

e this unto him.

e of them thought, because

What is the most formal dinner you have ever attended? Are you more comfortable with being the host/hostess or being a guest? Explain.

On December 22, 1874, President Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia, hosted King Kalakaua of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) for the first official state dinner at the White House. Few questioned the presence of taste testers required by King Kalakaua to make sure the guest was honored appropriately. We will find a way to honor those we believe to be worthy of being honored.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After raising Lazarus, Jesus went to Ephraim before returning to Bethany where He and His disciples were invited to a dinner. Some readers mistakenly think the meal happened at Lazarus's home. Parallel accounts indicate the banquet occurred at the home of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). Lazarus was a special guest. Mary and Martha, Lazarus's sisters, were present. Martha helped serve the meal, after which Mary anointed Jesus's feet.

Some confuse this incident with the narrative in Luke 7:36-50. Similarities include the name of the host (Simon) and the act of anointing Jesus with precious ointment. However, significant differences regarding the place, people, and purpose demonstrate these were separate events. The banquet in Luke 7 happened during Jesus's Galilean ministry, while John 12 was set in Bethany of Judea. Simon in Luke 7 was a Pharisee, not a leper. The woman of Luke 7 was identified as a notorious sinner, while Mary of Bethany had no history of infamy. In John 12, Lazarus was present, unlike the record of Luke 7. In John 12, Judas objected to what he considered

wasteful use of a valuable commodity. Luke did not mention such complaints. Finally, unlike Luke's account, John mentions that dinner attracted many Jews who heard about Lazarus's being raised.

The day after the banquet, Jesus entered Jerusalem as people cheered and waved palm branches. They proclaimed Jesus to be the King of Israel who came in the name of the Lord. Some were present when Jesus raised Lazarus. They testified about His amazing miracle, attracting people who wanted to see the One who could raise the dead. The people's exuberance further infuriated the Jewish leaders. They feared Jesus's popularity, saying among themselves that the whole world was going after Him.

JOHN 12:1-11

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. **2** So they gave a dinner for him there; **Martha**^A was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. **3** Then **Mary**^B took a **pound**^C of perfume, pure and expensive **nard**,^D anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. **4** Then one of his disciples, Judas **Iscariot**^E (who was about to betray him), said, **5** "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred **denarii**^F and given to the poor?" **6** He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it. **7** Jesus answered, "Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. **8** For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." **9** Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one he had raised from the dead. **10** But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also, **11** because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

Key Words

- A. Sister to Mary and Lazarus. Martha is always shown as gifted in hospitality and service (Luke 10:40; John 11:20; 12:2).
- B. Sister to Martha and Lazarus. She is always shown in a position of worship and deeply desiring to know Jesus (Mark 14:3,6-9; Luke 10:39,42; John 12:3,7).
- C. The Greek (*litra*) refers to twelve ounces, according to the ancient Roman standard.
- D. Fragrant oil derived from a plant in India. According to Matthew 26:7 and Mark 14:3, Mary poured her nard from an alabaster jar.
- E. Aramaic for "man of Kerioth," perhaps referring to the village of Kerioth Hezron near Hebron.
- F. A denarius represented a day's wage, so Mary's nard equaled a laborer's annual salary.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. HONORED

(JOHN 12:1-3)

Believers should humbly honor Christ as Lord.

How should we respond to Jesus's work in our lives?

How do we balance when there is conflict between what our culture finds acceptable and our expressions of worship?

2. QUESTIONED

(JOHN 12:4-8)

Believers should affirm others who worship Jesus.

How can a person's misguided agenda discourage others from honoring Christ?

How do we reconcile Judas's being involved in ministry as a disciple with his betrayal that led to Jesus being arrested?

3. DIVISION

(JOHN 12:9-11)

Believers honor Christ by testifying to others about His work.

How can the way a person honors Christ bring others to Him?

APPLY THE TEXT

Share with your group ways of showing devotion to Jesus.

What role does the group play in helping each other show devotion to Jesus?

How can the group corporately express devotion to Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

Believers should recognize that their time, talents, and material possessions are entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. (See Deuteronomy 8:18; Romans 12:1-2.)

BIBLE SKILL: Review passages that interpret a narrative.

Review Romans 12:1-2 and compare Mary's sacrificial act of love with the idea of a believer's sacrifice in the Romans passage. How do Mary's actions serve as an illustration of what Paul was teaching in Romans 12?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 12:17. If you were a lawyer trying a case, what kind of person would you want to be your “star witness?”

John’s Gospel is the only one that tells of Jesus raising Lazarus (chap. 11). He noted that the crowd who worshiped Jesus at the triumphal entry was the same crowd that witnessed that miracle. They had seen firsthand His power and were convinced He was worthy of their praise.

If you are a follower of Jesus, what convinced you that He is who He says He is?

Think about an emotionally powerful experience you’ve had. Maybe it was a great concert, an exciting sporting event, or even a really powerful movie. You probably wanted to tell people who weren’t there all about it. This was the effect Lazarus being raised from the dead had on everyone who witnessed it, only a million times greater! They couldn’t wait to bear witness.

**What makes your personal experience such a powerful part of your testimony?
How can we encourage each other to “continue to bear witness?”**

For the next seven days, make “continue to bear witness” a repeating event on your smartphone calendar.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 12:1-2

Underline the phrase that describes Lazarus.

Passover commemorated the night the Lord passed through Egypt killing the firstborn, except where the doorposts had been painted with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. Jews celebrated this miracle annually during the spring. Jerusalem's population would swell by an additional 100,000 people as the faithful came to celebrate. Many visitors stayed in the homes of friends or family members who lived either in Jerusalem or one of the nearby villages, such as Bethany, the hometown of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

John linked the event in John 12:1-11 with the raising of Lazarus from the dead in chapter 11. Lazarus figures prominently in this section, being mentioned by name five times in 12:1-17. John's description of him as the one Jesus "raised from the dead" emphasizes the source of Lazarus's fame. The occasion for the meal may have been in part to celebrate Lazarus's return from the grave, but the context makes it clear that the main honoree was Jesus. Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the twelve disciples, and likely others were present. We are not told by John who the host was, but we know Martha was involved as a server.

**Note the significance of Lazarus being known for what Jesus did.
How does Jesus's work in you impact how you're known by others?**

Day 2: John 12:3

Reflect on the extravagance of what Mary did.

Mary's actions were startling for several reasons. First, Jews considered washing someone's feet a degrading task, typically reserved for servants. This explains Peter's protest when Jesus washed his feet (John 13:4-9). Mary did not wash the Lord's feet with water, though; she anointed them with nard. Second, the perfume was extravagant. The perfume was pure, not diluted with other oils or extracts. Nard was an oil derived from the roots of a tree that grew in northern India; it was red and had a sweet aroma. Third, Mary uncovered her hair, let it down, and used it to wipe dry the feet of Jesus. Respectable Jewish women of the first century kept their hair concealed. Keeping it covered indicated personal piety. Jewish law at the time allowed a man to divorce his wife if she went in public with her hair uncovered. Mary, though, seemingly with reckless abandon, disregarded cultural expectations and concerns. Expressing a balance of humility and devotion, she instead focused solely on honoring and worshiping Jesus.

How should you respond to Jesus's work in your life?

Day 3: John 12:4-6

Note the discrepancy between Judas's words and motives.

The Gospel writers regularly included two details about Judas Iscariot: he was one of the Twelve, and he was the one who betrayed Jesus. Along with the other disciples, Judas had heard Jesus preach and teach; he had witnessed the miracles. Additionally, he, along with a partner, had gone out and proclaimed a message of repentance. He may have been involved in casting out demons and anointing the sick with oil (Mark 6:7-13). Judas had earned the trust of the other disciples; he served as the group's treasurer, the one in charge of the money-bag.

The first recorded words of Judas in Scripture were in protest of Mary's extravagance. His words contrasted his greed, selfishness, and deceit with her generosity, selflessness, and devotion. Mary's gift was equivalent to about a year's salary. He, a thief, knew Mary's extravagance meant he would have no opportunity to get his hands on her money. Of the Gospel writers, only John indicated that Judas kept the money-bag. This money was used to meet the needs of the disciples and to help the poor (John 13:29). Additionally, only John gave the detail that Judas would steal from the bag. Judas was self-serving, greedy, hypocritical (pretending to care about the poor), and he was a thief.

How do you reconcile Judas's being a disciple of Jesus with his greed and betrayal that led to Jesus being arrested?

Day 4: John 12:7-8

Identify how Jesus interpreted Mary's action.

Jesus knew Mary could have sold the perfume. He also knew she had kept it for His pending burial. Jesus considered Mary's action to be noble—a beautiful gesture and a good deed (Matthew 26:10). Some have used the Lord's statement, "for you always have the poor with you," as an excuse not to help people in need. Such thinking violates what God said to the ancient Israelites: "For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, 'Open your hand willingly to your poor and needy brother in your land'" (Deuteronomy 15:11). Throughout both Old and New Testaments, Scripture urges believers to care for those who are less fortunate. We do not have to choose between caring for the poor and showing love toward Christ.

Jesus's focus already was on His death and burial: "you do not always have me." He knew Mary would not have many more opportunities to express her devotion to Him. As had happened when she sat at the feet of Jesus rather than busy herself with serving guests (Luke 10:38-42), Mary, with this perfume, had again made the better choice.

How is Jesus's statement in verse 8 applicable to you?

Day 5: John 12:9-11

Notice the chief reason many of the Jews were believing in Jesus.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees worried that everyone would become a follower of Jesus and that they would lose their places of authority. “So from that day on they plotted to kill [Jesus]” (John 11:53).

News had spread of Lazarus walking out of his tomb. Curiosity seekers made their way to Bethany. They had heard what Jesus had done and wanted to see this man who had performed the impossible. Additionally, they wanted to see Lazarus, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. The very thing the religious leaders feared began to happen. Many of the Jews saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. They began deserting the chief priests’ authority and believing in Jesus. Not only did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus, they wanted to kill Lazarus because he was the reason many Jews were believing in Jesus.

How can the way you honor Christ bring others to Him?

APPLY THE TEXT

How can you show your devotion and appreciation to Jesus? As an act of devotion, who will you tell about Jesus and what He has done in your life?



If It Dies

Jesus offers hope to those who seek Him.

JOHN 12:20-33



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et /not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. ¹⁰I go to prepare a place for you.
...¹¹And if I go and prepare a place for you, ¹²I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ¹³where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...¹⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...¹⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...¹⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ¹⁷the way,
...the truth, and ¹⁸the life: ¹⁹no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...²⁰If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...²¹Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

20

Share about your favorite fruit. What steps are required for you to enjoy that piece of fruit?

Most of us have a favorite fruit. At some point, a seed was planted that led to the producing of that fruit. While the seed may look nothing like the fruit, it sacrificed itself in producing the plant or tree that led to the piece of fruit we enjoy. Unless the seed “died,” it could not have taken root and produced growth. Even so, Jesus predicted He had to die to provide eternal life.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus came not only as Messiah of the Jews but Savior of the world. While He primarily ministered among the Jews, Jesus made it clear that God also loves the Gentiles who seek and serve Him. When some God-fearing Greeks wanted to meet Jesus, the event triggered Jesus’s proclamation of His impending death. As His hour approached, He again explained what was about to happen. As He often did, Jesus used metaphors and symbols to teach. He pointed out that a seed had to die to produce life.

Jesus’s analogy of dying to live not only applied to Him, but also to anyone who followed Him. Some people might try to preserve their ways of life rather than die to self and come after Him. In doing so, they would lose the opportunity for greater, eternal life. In contrast, Jesus was willing to yield His life to glorify the Father and provide salvation for believers. His death would result in drawing people to Himself for God’s glory. Just as some Greeks had been attracted to Jesus, even so His death on the cross would bring countless others to Him.

Using another metaphor, Jesus described Himself as the light of the world. He urged His followers to believe in the light and walk in the light. Addressing His earthly life, Jesus warned that the light would only be with them for a short while. They should take advantage of His presence to grow stronger in their faith and to put that faith into practice as children of the light.

Unfortunately, in keeping with Isaiah’s prophecies, many people were blind to the light and refused to believe. Some of the people who heard Jesus believed in Him but were reluctant to do so openly for fear of the religious leaders. They desired the approval of people rather than laying down their lives for Christ.

JOHN 12:20-33

20 Now some **Greeks**^A were among those who went up to worship at the festival. **21** So they came to **Philip**,^B who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” **22** Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** Jesus replied to them, “The **hour**^C has come for the **Son of Man**^D to be **glorified**.^E **24** Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. **25** The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. **27** Now my soul is troubled. What should I say — Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for me, but for you. **31** Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. **32** As for me, if I am **lifted up**^F from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” **33** He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.

Key Words

- A. Synonymous with “Gentiles.” These religious outsiders revered the God of Israel and had come to Jerusalem to worship during Passover.
- B. The Greeks probably approached Philip because he was one of only two disciples who had a Greek name.
- C. The predetermined time of Jesus’s sacrificial death on the cross had come.
- D. Messianic title based on Daniel 7:13-14. Jesus often used this term in reference to Himself.
- E. The Greek word *doxazo*, meaning “magnificence,” “excellence,” “preeminence,” or “majesty.” Combined with the Greek word *logos* (meaning “word”), we get our English word “doxology.”
- F. Jesus’s crucifixion. Jesus would be lifted up to bring eternal life to all who believe in Him (see also Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. INTRODUCED

(JOHN 12:20-22)

Believers can introduce others to Jesus.

What makes a person approachable?

How does our personal identity serve to point others to Jesus?

2. DIES

(JOHN 12:23-26)

Following Jesus has costs and rewards.

How was Jesus glorified through His death, burial, and resurrection? How was this contrary to what people expected in the Messiah?

3. GLORIFIED

(JOHN 12:27-28)

Hope is found in faithfully following the Father.

How does the struggle Jesus faced help believers faithfully follow God?

4. DRAWS

(JOHN 12:29-33)

Jesus draws those seeking Him to the cross.

How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory? How does the cross draw people today?

APPLY THE TEXT

As a group create a list of people who are far from God. Pray for the people listed and for opportunities to share with them.

What other actions can the group take to introduce others to Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

Salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. (See Matthew 1:21; Ephesians 2:8-9.)

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the usage of key words or phrases.

Examine Jesus's reference to His hour as He responded to His mother. (John 2:4) Notice the difference between Jesus's reference to "My hour" and "the hour" in John 4:21-23. Consider how the early failures of Jesus's enemies related to the fact that His hour had not yet arrived. (John 7:30). Read John 13:1 to see another description of Jesus's hour. What changed to indicate Jesus's hour finally arrived in John 12:23?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 12:32. What do we mean when we say we want to “lift up Jesus”?

This isn't the first time Jesus has talked about being lifted up. Way back in John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9), Jesus Himself would be lifted up in order that whoever believed in Him would have eternal life (John 3:1-16).

What double meaning does Jesus's statement “If I am lifted up” have?

Jesus made this statement immediately after some Greeks had asked Philip to introduce them to Jesus. Even though Jesus was the King of Israel (John 12:13), He emphasized that when He is lifted up from the earth He will draw all people to Himself—not just the Jews. The death He was about to die on the cross would be for the Jews and Greeks alike.

Discuss what this verse tells us about our obligation to share the gospel. How do we lift Jesus up in our own lives? To whom do we lift Him up?

Write “Lift Him UP!” on a piece of tape, and tape it above your door, high enough that you have to jump to touch it. Tap the tape on your way out the door every morning.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 12:20-22

Consider Philip and Andrew's role in helping other people see Jesus.

Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem attracted the attention of the entire city. The capital was filled with people for the Passover festival, including some Greeks. The text does not specify why these Greeks chose to approach Philip. Essentially, they needed someone to introduce them to Jesus, and Philip may have been available in the moment. They may have approached Philip because he had a Greek name or because they knew he was from Bethsaida. Many of its residents reflected a Greek rather than Jewish influence. Philip told Andrew, who was also from Bethsaida (and the only other disciple with a Greek name), about the men's request. Both men were known for bringing people to Jesus. Philip had introduced Nathanael to Christ, and Andrew told his brother, Simon, about finding the Messiah (John 1:41-45). Together, these two disciples alerted Jesus to the Greeks' desire to see Him.

Sometimes divine appointments intersect in daily life, offering opportunities to tell people about Jesus. Other times, we may intentionally seek people who need to be saved. In every situation, the Holy Spirit can use us to help others know Christ and be born again.

What might make you more approachable to others? What can you do to point others to Jesus?

Day 2: John 12:23

Underline the word "glorified."

News of the Gentiles' request triggered something in Jesus. It elicited an announcement that the hour had come for Him to die for the whole world. The word *hour* represented the culmination of Jesus's life purpose. Just as His birth occurred at the perfect time in God's plan (Galatians 4:4), His death would also take place according to the Father's will (Acts 2:23). For Jesus to say the hour had come meant He was not passively subjected to the circumstances. Jesus would be glorified through His death.

Most people would not link glory with death on a cross. In the eyes of the world, Jesus's death was inglorious. But He understood the spiritual dimensions behind the cross. Certainly, Jesus would be glorified at the resurrection, but He also knew that through His atoning sacrifice the Son of Man would be glorified.

How was Jesus glorified through His death, burial, and resurrection?

Day 3: John 12:24-26

Highlight each occurrence of the word “life” in verse 25.

Jesus presented the metaphor of planting a seed in verse 24 then moved to the application. He wanted the disciples to understand a vital spiritual truth. If a person “loves his life,” he will “lose it.” This phrase describes people caring more about their earthly lives, including worldly pleasures, than about serving God. When Jesus spoke of someone loving or hating his life, He was referring to a life dictated and governed by one’s ego, whims, self-interests, and desires. In another context, Jesus described the necessity of denying oneself and following Him (Luke 9:23). Jesus went further and said anyone not willing to do so was not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:38).

Jesus was nearing the cross; to follow Him at this point meant being willing to die a martyr’s death. That death, though, would be followed by the eternal rewards of being with Jesus and being honored by the Father. Discipleship involves casting aside personal desire for the honor of serving Jesus. Some believers may experience physical death as a result, but all Christians must die to self so they can live in Christ.

How have you personally experienced the spiritual truth that loving your life leads to losing it and losing your life leads to gaining it?

Day 4: John 12:27-28

Reflect on Jesus’s use of the word “Father” in that hour.

Jesus came as God in human flesh—as much human as if He were not divine and as much divine as if He were not human. Verse 27 is a reminder of that truth. He had just announced the hour had arrived; His death was near. Jesus had surely seen crucified bodies hanging on Roman crosses. He had witnessed the barbaric torture and resultant agony. Thus, for Jesus to say “my soul is troubled” had to be an understatement. Despite the anguish, however, this was why He came. The words of verse 27 reflect the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39). The prayer reflects both the dread Jesus felt and His steadfastness in His obedience to the Father, understanding He was to be sacrificed for our sins (John 10:17-18; 1 John 4:10).

Looking back on these events, believers see the Father brought glory to His name through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son. Jesus was not crucified because God was angry, dissatisfied, or disappointed with Jesus. The crucifixion was the means through which Jesus would seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Just as Jesus fulfilled His purpose on earth by obediently glorifying the Father, believers magnify the Heavenly Father through their faithfulness.

How does the struggle Jesus faced help you faithfully follow God?

Day 5: John 12:29-33

Compare John 12:32 to John 3:14-16.

Jesus did not need to hear the audible voice of God to know the Father heard His prayer. The voice was for the benefit of others who heard it. They recognized that the brief prayer Jesus uttered had resulted in a divine response from the sky. That thunderous response itself was a declaration that this was to be a pivotal and powerful moment. For Jesus, the crucial moment had arrived, and it was now.

When Jesus declared that “the ruler of this world” would be cast out, He was speaking of Satan himself. The enemy was to be defeated—now. How was the enemy going to be defeated? Jesus would be lifted up from the earth. He had used similar terminology when alluding to the lifting of the bronze snake (John 3:14-15). Jesus was speaking about His crucifixion, the kind of death he was about to die.

In saying He would “draw all people” to Himself, Jesus was not teaching that all people would automatically or eventually be saved—even without coming to faith in Christ. Instead, Jesus was saying that God was calling all people to Him—Jews and Greeks, Romans and Gentiles, male and female, young and old, rich and poor. He came to be the Savior for all. (See John 1:12.)

How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory? How does the cross draw people to Jesus today?

APPLY THE TEXT

What actions can you take to lift up Jesus? In what areas do you need to strengthen your witness for Him? How can you strengthen those areas?



I Will Come Again

Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.

JOHN 13:31–14:6



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁶the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁷no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

03

How does knowing the time of a person's return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?

Whether it is a military deployment, business trip, or trip to the store, goodbyes can cause anxiety. We want to know when the person will be coming back. Somehow, knowing the exact projected time eases the anxiety and we can look forward to being reunited. Assurance of a return produces confidence to endure. We also should have confidence as we anticipate Jesus's return.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The day before Jesus's crucifixion had arrived. He had told His disciples He would be put to death in Jerusalem. Yet as they gathered for their last Passover together, they argued over who would be greatest in Christ's kingdom (Luke 22:24-27). Jesus used a powerful object lesson to teach them humility and service.

Because travel took place on dusty roads, hosts typically offered water so guests could wash their feet. Sometimes servants performed this menial task, but in the upper room no one volunteered to assume that role. Jesus set aside His robe, took a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. At first, Peter resisted but yielded when Jesus said it was necessary. Jesus urged the Twelve to follow His example and serve others.

During the meal, Jesus referred to the presence of one who would betray Him. Quoting Psalm 41:9, He said someone who shared His food would lift his heel against Him. He identified the traitor by dipping bread in the sauce and giving it to Judas.

As Jesus prepared the remaining disciples for His death, He commanded them to love one another as He loved them. This section begins what some scholars call the Farewell Discourse. Responding to their confusion over His remarks, Jesus told them they could not go with Him yet. Peter declared his willingness to go with Jesus anywhere and even to die for Him. Jesus knew Peter's heart but predicted he would deny his Master before daybreak. Naturally, the disciples were troubled at His sayings. Jesus encouraged them to believe in Him. He promised to return and gather them to Himself. Thomas questioned where Jesus was going and how they could get there. Jesus pointed to Himself as the only way to the Father.

JOHN 13:31–14:6

13:31 When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. **33**

Little children, ^A I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ **34** I give you a **new command:** ^B Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my **disciples,** ^C if you love one another.” **36** “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.” **37** “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” **38** Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times. **14:1** Don’t let your heart be **troubled.** ^D Believe in God; believe also in me. **2** 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? **3** If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. **4** You know the way to where I am going.” **5** “Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?” **6** Jesus told him, “I am the **way,** ^E the **truth,** ^F and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Key Words

- A. A term of affection, used by teachers to their followers in the New Testament.
- B. While loving others was not a new concept (Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5), loving as Jesus loved raised the bar.
- C. The Greek word *mathetes* means “to learn.” Therefore, to be a disciple requires that there be a mentor as well as a student.
- D. Literally, stirred up or agitated. The idea is being violently shaken instead of resting at peace.
- E. A road or path that is traveled. The implication is that the road leads to a destination.
- F. The Greek *aletheia* occurs 109 times in the New Testament, with John’s writings accounting for more than half of the uses. Jesus does not simply know truth, He is truth itself.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Honor Through Love

(John 13:31-35)

Believers honor God by loving each other.

How does the mutual honoring of the Son and the Father through Jesus's death demonstrate love between the two?

How does love for others define a follower of Jesus?

2. Honor Through Loyalty

(John 13:36-38)

Believers honor Christ by remaining loyal to Him.

How might a person's good intentions get derailed? How can believers honor Jesus through their loyalty?

3. Honor Through Believing

(John 14:1-4)

Believers honor Christ by believing in Him as they await His return.

How does the promise of a place in heaven motivate a person to remain loyal to Christ?

How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?

APPLY THE TEXT

List things the group does that honor God.

How are the items listed connected to actions noted in today's passage?

What actions does the group need to take to bring honor more fully to God?

KEY DOCTRINE: Last Things

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Hebrews 9:27-28.)

BIBLE SKILL: Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.

Consider how many times the terms *glorify* or *glorified* occur in John 13:31-32. Use a Bible dictionary or similar resource to determine the difference between *glory* and *glorify*. How does glory reflect God's essential character? List some ways Christ's death, resurrection, and second coming glorify Jesus and God the Father.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 14:1. What tends to make you anxious?

Jesus's disciples had a lot to be anxious about. Earlier that night, Jesus had washed their feet. He said that one of them would betray Him. To cap it off, Jesus predicted that Peter, the outspoken leader of the disciples, would deny even knowing Jesus before the night was over. After all this, Jesus gave them the simple reassurance of verse 14:1.

In what way does believing in God involve more than just intellectual belief?

The Greek word for “believe” implies more than just intellectual assent to an idea. It carries with it the idea of something or someone in which you place your full trust and confidence. It's a belief that changes behavior. It's more than believing someone can catch you; it's letting go of the ledge.

How has believing in Jesus helped you with anxiety or uncertainty?

Who do you know who needs to hear your story?

Have each person in your group write their name and number on a piece of paper, then have group members draw a name (make sure no one draws their own name). Commit to texting John 14:1 to your person at some point this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 13:31-32

Identify the key word in these verses.

At the time of Judas's departure, John—speaking both literally and figuratively—declared, “And it was night” (13:30). Once Judas left, Jesus addressed the Eleven—those who would remain faithful to Him. He returned to a theme He introduced earlier, His being glorified (12:23). The time had arrived; it was now. Shockingly, glorification would come through crucifixion.

Crucifixion in the first century was the most demeaning and shameful form of capital punishment. Yet Jesus saw the cross as the means for revealing God's glory. The crucifixion would be the ultimate display of God's merciful love for sinners. It would destroy the power of Satan and his hold on sinners (Romans 6:6; 1 John 3:8). Rather than it be a moment of shame, the crucifixion would glorify the Father and reveal the Son of Man in His glory.

How do you see the glory of God displayed in the cross?

How is your life reflecting His glory?

Day 2: John 13:33-35

Underline each occurrence of the words “love” and “loved.”

When Jesus had been at the Feast of Tabernacles some six months earlier, religious leaders tried to have Him arrested. What He said to them then He repeated almost word-for-word to the disciples in the upper room. Both groups would look for Him but not find Him (John 7:34; 13:33). The difference was the religious leaders would look for Jesus because they wanted to kill Him—the disciples would look for Him because they would miss Him and long for the intimate friendship they had shared.

The farewell address of Jesus included a new command: His followers are to love one another as He had loved them. This begs the question: How had Jesus loved them? John 13:1 says Jesus “loved them to the end.” The word *end* means that Jesus loved His disciples to the fullest measure or to the uttermost. He had demonstrated that kind of love in the most unexpected manner by washing the disciples' feet—something only a servant would do. Jesus was demonstrating selfless love, the kind His followers were (and are) to put into action. What a contrast this selfless love would be in a world filled with self-focused people who operate out of self-serving motives. To practice selfless love would give evidence that a person was indeed one of His disciples.

How does the way you demonstrate love for others define you as a follower of Jesus?

Day 3: John 13:36-38

Pay attention to Peter's claim.

Peter asked Jesus two questions. His first—“where are you going?”—showed either that the disciples still did not understand what Jesus was facing or that Peter was unwilling to accept that Jesus was going away. Either way, Peter could not reconcile the thought of Jesus leaving with His recently being declared by the crowds to be “the King of Israel” (John 12:13). Jesus explained that Peter would not be going there now but would follow Him there later. Peter’s second question—“why can’t I follow you now?”—indicated he truly wanted to be with Jesus, regardless of the personal cost. How intensely Peter desired to be with Jesus is revealed in his rash yet sincere declaration: “I will lay down my life for you.”

Unswayed by Peter’s declaration, Jesus asked, “Will you lay down your life for me?” This question indicated Peter did not yet grasp who was laying down whose life for whom. It would be Jesus who would willingly lay down His life for others (10:11,17-18). Jesus declared Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. Peter must have been shocked by what Jesus said. Simon Peter, the rash disciple who was normally full of zeal and passion, evidently did not utter another word the entire time the disciples were in the upper room. Reading John’s Gospel, we do not see anything else concerning Peter until Gethsemane when he cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (18:10).

What might cause your good intentions get derailed?

How can you remain loyal to Jesus?

Day 4: John 14:1-3

Reflect on the phrase “and take you to myself.”

The disciples all had been confused and uncertain about what Jesus had been telling them. The remedy for troubled hearts was trust. Even though their world had seemingly turned upside down, Jesus instructed them to trust in the Creator and His Son. Jesus began to explain that their separation from Him would be temporary. The “Father’s house” referred to heaven. The practice of first-century Jewish families called for a son to add onto his father’s house a place where he and his bride would live after the wedding (see John 8:35). Over time, the house might contain many separate housing units around a courtyard that the extended family shared. Herod built these type houses for himself in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Tiberias, and Jericho. Knowing His disciples had seen these royal villas, Jesus was saying the place He would prepare for them would exceed anything that even the wealthiest of their day enjoyed.

How does the promise of a place in heaven motivate you to remain loyal to Christ?

Day 5: John 14:4-6

Circle the words “way,” “truth,” and “life.”

Jesus declared He alone is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus is not merely one way among many ways to God. He stated plainly, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” If it were possible to have peace with God in any other way, Jesus would not have to die. He had to go away—die—to prepare a path and a place. Jesus is also the truth. We should not be tricked by humanistic pluralism that contends we must accept all religions and philosophies as equally valid. The path to the Father exclusively goes through Jesus. Finally, Jesus is the life. He is not merely the way to life; Jesus is the life. Paul reminded believers that Christ is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). To have Christ is to have life. He possesses the power to grant eternal life to everyone who believes in Him (John 5:26; 17:2). Jesus’s purpose in going away by way of the cross made it possible for believers to receive eternal life through Him.

Through the centuries, followers of Christ have found assurance in His declaration. In fact, this claim of exclusivity was so embraced by early believers that people referred to Christianity as “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 24:14).

In light of verse 6, how can you respond to someone who says there are many paths to God?

APPLY THE TEXT

Review your life. Is there a time when you placed your faith in Christ and His work? How have you done in fulfilling that decision? What changes might you need to make in order to live up to that decision?



Peace I Leave

Jesus offers peace to those who trust in Him.

JOHN 14:16-29



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ^owhere I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ^othe way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ²no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

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How do you define peace? What's the difference between peace and a lack of conflict?

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary became the catalyst that led to the outbreak of World War I. H. G. Wells dubbed it “The War to End All Wars.” It ended with the signing of an armistice agreement on November 11, 1918. The end of the war, though, did not usher in a lasting peace. What we really need is a peace that is only available through Jesus. He offers a peace that surpasses human understanding.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Perfect peace finds its ultimate expression in the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God in three persons. During the Last Supper, Jesus’s disciples were wrestling with the reality of His imminent departure from this world when He re-introduced them to the concept of the Trinity, though He did not use that term. The perfect harmony found within the Godhead provides a basis for and an example of believers’ peace.

Philip asked Jesus to reveal the Father. Jesus gently rebuked His disciple and reminded Philip that He and the Father were one. Jesus’s words and deeds were in complete agreement with the Father. The Son and the Father experience no separation in essence, purpose, or being. Even the disciples’ prayers should be directed toward the Father but offered in Jesus’s name. God’s answers to prayer glorified Himself in the Son.

Later, speaking about the Holy Spirit, Jesus assured the group He would send a Comforter who would be like Himself. The Spirit had been with believers and would reside within them. Jesus referred to the third person of the Trinity as the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to believers.

When Jesus departed the world, His disciples would not be alone but would experience the Spirit’s presence forever. The concepts Jesus taught were difficult for them to understand, but the Spirit would make everything clear. The primary way He reveals truth is through God’s Word. The Spirit inspired biblical writers and illuminates Scriptures as believers read them today.

Although the disciples were troubled and confused, Jesus offered them perfect peace. His peace was different than what the world could give them. We can be at peace regardless of what the world might throw at us.

JOHN 14:16-29

16 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Counselor** ^A to be with you forever. **17** He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him, because he **remains** ^B with you and will be in you. **18** I will not leave you as **orphans**; ^C I am coming to you. **19** In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. **20 On that day** ^D you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. **21** The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him.” **22 Judas (not Iscariot)** ^E said to him, “Lord, how is it you’re going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” **23** Jesus answered, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and **make our home with him**. ^F **24** The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me. **25** I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. **26** But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. **27** Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful. **28** You have heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because **the Father is greater than I**. ^G **29** I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe.”

Key Words

- A. The Greek word *parakletos* means “one who comes alongside.”
- B. Jesus continues His work among His followers through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit fully exists in Jesus (Colossians 2:9).
- C. Though He was leaving, Jesus was not abandoning His people.
- D. Old Testament prophets regularly used this phrase to introduce end-time revelation.
- E. Refers to Judas the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Some suggest he was also called Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18).
- F. Recalls God’s presence among His people in the tabernacle and, later, the temple. At Pentecost, the Spirit indwelt believers (Acts 2). While God dwelt with humans on earth, they would one day dwell with Him in heaven (Revelation 21:3).
- G. Not a denial of Jesus’s deity. Instead, Jesus acknowledged that He voluntarily submitted to the Father’s plan for salvation (John 1:1-5,14).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Counselor

(John 14:16-21)

Believers have peace knowing that the Holy Spirit is with them.

How do believers know that the Holy Spirit lives within them?

How does the resurrection of Jesus serve as proof of the relationship between Jesus and the Father?

2. The Teacher

(John 14:22-26)

Believers can understand God's truths and act on them.

How does understanding a truth move a person to act on that truth? Why do some people struggle with obeying God's Word?

3. The Peace

(John 14:27-29)

Believers can demonstrate their love for God by obedience to Him.

How is the peace Jesus offered different from the peace offered by the world?

How can a person demonstrate love for Jesus today?

APPLY THE TEXT

As a group, identify people who are currently experiencing significant difficulties.

What can the group do to help offer comfort and support to them in a helpful and affirming way?

How can the words Jesus spoke in these verses be used to bring comfort?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit's presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. (See Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14.)

BIBLE SKILL: Compare passages to gain a clear understanding.

Compare John 14:27 to Matthew 10:34-39. How do you reconcile these statements? Reflect on how loving Jesus relates to receiving Jesus's peace (John 14:27) and the conflict believers may experience with unbelievers. Write a prayer expressing your love for Christ and asking Him to manifest His peace in your life.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 14:27. When people talk about “world peace,” what do they usually mean?

Jesus promised His disciples He would give them His peace. It’s one thing to say, “I’ll leave you in peace.” That can simply mean, “I won’t bother you anymore.” But to say “My peace I give to you” takes it to another level. Jesus would give His disciples a peace that was different from anything the world has to offer.

What is different about the peace Jesus gives? What ways do people try to find peace apart from Jesus?

Peace is more than the absence of conflict. The peace Jesus gives is His presence. Though He would be going to the Father, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would remain with them. We don’t have to be troubled or fearful, because He has given us the Holy Spirit.

Share a time when you experienced the peace of Christ.

Write this verse on a sticky note and stick it to your TV. As you are watching TV this week, use every commercial break to think about the difference between the world’s peace and God’s peace.

Prayer Requests

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 14:16-18

Underline the words “with you” and “in you.”

Jesus promised to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them. He had no doubt about the Father’s response. The phrase “he will give” translates a declaration without equivocation. The disciples could have complete confidence in the Father’s affirmative response. The word *another* means another of the same kind. Jesus was saying, “He will be exactly like me.” The word *Counselor* referred to one who is called alongside another. This One who would stand alongside the disciples would “be with you (plural) forever.” None of the disciples would be excluded from the comforting and strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit who would never leave them. Jesus assured the disciples that the Spirit would be with them forever. They could take comfort in Jesus’s promise that the Spirit would never leave them.

People who trust Christ “know” the Holy Spirit (v. 17). The pronoun *you* specifically indicated the disciples but also included everyone who would believe in Jesus. Jesus promised the Spirit “remains with you.” While Jesus was returning to heaven, the Spirit would stay. Jesus also promised the Spirit “will be in you.” In salvation, the Holy Spirit regenerates the human spirit and lives within the believer’s spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 3:18).

Based on these verses, how can you know that the Holy Spirit lives in you?

Day 2: John 14:19-21

Identify the evidence of love for Jesus in verse 21.

Jesus knew He was hours from His crucifixion. When He said, “but you will see me,” He was referring to His post-resurrection appearances (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). His promise, “Because I live, you will live too,” assures us death does not have the final word.” Death’s victory and sting were obliterated at the empty tomb (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Another promise Jesus made here was that the resurrection would verify He is in the Father, His disciples are in Him, and He is in them. Jesus previously said He was in the Father and the Father was in Him (John 14:10,11). He was saying that not even death could break the union He had with His disciples, a union not unlike what He enjoyed with the Father. Jesus then returned to an earlier theme, that of loving Him and keeping His commands (see 14:15). His followers do not keep His commands to earn His love but because they already love Him.

How does the resurrection of Jesus serve as proof of the relationship between Jesus and the Father?

Day 3: John 14:22-26

Pay attention to how the Holy Spirit works in believers' lives.

Some have identified Judas (not Iscariot) as possibly being Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3). Regardless, his question revealed he still believed Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. Jews of the day were expecting a Messiah to free the Jews from Roman oppression and reestablish Israel politically and militarily as it had been in the days of King David. How could Jesus do that without revealing Himself to everyone? Jesus responded to Judas's question by teaching that His kingdom would consist of those who love Him and keep His word. Both Jesus and the Father will make their home with the believer. Jesus was talking about the Father and the Son being present with the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would continue to teach and remind them of what Jesus had said. Significantly, the word you in verse 26 is singular. Jesus was saying that the Holy Spirit would work individually in the life of each disciple.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had explained that the Father had sent Him to do the Father's will and to teach His words (John 6:38-40; 7:16; 12:44-49). At this point, Jesus explained the Father would be sending the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus. Jesus had come representing the Father on the earth; the Spirit would be coming and representing Jesus on the earth. Jesus would later state He was sending His disciples, which meant they would be His representatives in the world (20:21). Jesus was both a sender and one who had been sent.

How should you live differently because of the Spirit's presence and work in your life?

Day 4: John 14:27

Note the connection between the promise and the command.

As He did in verse 26, Jesus again used the singular form of the pronoun *you*. In doing so, He promised His disciples they would each experience a sense of peace unlike anything the world could offer. The world often defines peace as the absence of conflict. This, though, was not what Jesus was promising. Jesus told His disciples they would be facing persecution, hatred, threats of death, and even martyrdom (Matthew 24:9; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; 16:2). The peace Jesus promised did not mean the disciples would not face conflicts or challenges.

The peace Jesus was promising would abide in each disciple's heart, meaning the seat of each person's emotions. The disciples would thus have an inner calmness, even when experiencing threats and adversity. The disciples' troubled hearts would be calmed by Jesus's promise of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling.

What causes your heart to be troubled? What's the difference between the peace Jesus offers you and the peace offered by the world?

Day 5: John 14:28-29

Notice Jesus's desire to strengthen His disciples' faith.

Jesus stated that the disciples should have rejoiced because He was going to the Father. Their lack of doing so indicated they were more concerned about their own loss because He was leaving, that is, dying, than they were with what Jesus would accomplish by doing so. Instead of mourning their loss, those who loved Him would be happy He was rejoining the Father in heaven.

In saying "the Father is greater than I," Jesus was not contradicting what He had said during His ministry, that He is equal with God (John 5:17-18; 10:30; 14:9). Rather, He was highlighting the submissive status He assumed while on earth.

Again, wanting to remove the disciples' feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, Jesus explained that His words were intended to help strengthen their faith in the future. More than once, Jesus spoke of future events, knowing that when they were fulfilled, the disciples would, in light of then-current happenings, remember what He had said and recognize the significance of what He had said (2:19-22; 16:1-4).

Jesus's words in verse 29 spotlighted His concern for the disciples' faith. Jesus wanted to make sure they had peace in the moment and that, as they faced challenges in the future, their strong faith would continue to give them that sense of abiding peace.

How can you demonstrate your faith in Jesus today?

APPLY THE TEXT

Jesus linked loving Him with keeping His commandments. Are there areas where you sense you are falling short of obeying what Jesus taught? What actions can you take to help you follow His teachings more closely?



Remain in Me

Jesus is the source of life and spiritual growth.

JOHN 15:1-17



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...east saith
...s, to whom I
...e dipped *it*. And
...sop, he gave *it* to
...of Simon.
...p Satan entered into
...s unto him, That thou
...at the table knew for what
...e this unto him.
...e of them thought, because
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁷the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁸no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the



**What is one interesting thing you know about your family heritage?
How does that fact impact your family's identity?**

Many people have interest in researching their family history. Piecing together our family stories can help us understand why our family does some of the things it does, help us connect as a family, and give us identity. Jesus called on His disciples to connect to Him and His purposes. In doing so, they would find their identity.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

As Jesus continued His discourse after the Passover supper, He taught the disciples the importance of remaining in Him. Using the picture of a grapevine, Jesus employed a common experience from Jewish life. The disciples understood the processes related to raising and harvesting grapes. Clusters of grapes grew on small branches connected to the larger vine. If a branch withered and failed to produce fruit, the gardener removed it, so it did not hinder the rest of the grapevine. He then pruned the vine so new growth would produce even more grapes. With this analogy, Jesus emphasized the necessity for the disciples not only to set up their lives within Him, but also for them to be fruitful spiritually as a result. Doing so glorifies the Father.

One aspect of abiding in Christ involves love for Him and for one another. When believers abide in Christ, His love naturally produces reciprocal love for Him. We demonstrate our love for Him by loving one another. Another characteristic of remaining in Christ is to abide in His word. Genuine love for Jesus can be observed by obedience to His commands. Knowing He loves us, we follow His words

because they are good and are intended for our good. Joy results from a loving obedience to Christ. We cannot keep Jesus's commands if we do not know or understand them.

People who abide in Christ should be ready for opposition. Those who reject Jesus not only resist Him, but also hate everyone associated with Him. They do not accept His words or acknowledge His works. Refusing God's love in the gift of His Son, these adversaries turn their animosity toward those who follow Christ. Believers should count themselves blessed to suffer with their Lord so the Father may be glorified in them.

JOHN 15:1-17

1 “**I am**^A the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. **3** You are already **clean**^B because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the **vine**,^C neither can you unless you remain in me. **5** 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. **6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the **fire**,^D and they are burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be **complete**.^E **12** This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. **13** No one has greater love than this: to **lay down**^F his life for his friends. **14** You are my **friends**^G if you do what I command you. **15** I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. **16** You did not choose me, but **I chose you**.^H **I appointed**^I you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. **17** This is what I command you: Love one another.”

Key Words

- A. The last of Jesus’s seven “I am” statements (see 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25; 14:6).
- B. Holy and accepted by God
- C. The vine (Jesus) mediates life between the gardener (the Father) and the branches (believers).
- D. A parallel passage can be found in Ezekiel 15:1-8. Fire is often used in the Bible to denote judgment.
- E. Full to the brim; perfect; accomplished
- F. Jesus demonstrated love by laying down His life. His followers are called to sacrifice for others.
- G. Abraham (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8) and Moses (Exodus 33:11) are called friends of God because of their obedience. Jesus offered the same opportunity to all who obey His commands.
- H. In first-century Israel, disciples typically selected a rabbi to follow. Jesus broke protocol by choosing His own pupils.
- I. Set aside for a specific mission (see Luke 10:1; Acts 1:23-26; 22:10,21; 2 Timothy 1:11).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Pruned

(John 15:1-8)

Believers are being pruned by God so they can be more fruitful.

How does the Father prune us so that we can be more fruitful?

How does remaining, or abiding, in Christ change our perspective on pruning?

2. Joy

(John 15:9-11)

Believers find joy through obedience.

How does a person's obedience to Jesus produce joy?

What substitutes does the world offer and how do they compare to the joy produced by obedience to Jesus?

3. Love

(John 15:12-17)

Believers love others because they are friends of Jesus.

How does a friendship with Jesus lead to abiding fruit in a person's life?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss how the group helps one another remain connected to Jesus.

How can the group encourage each other to joyfully obey even in the seasons of pruning?

What can be done to improve in this area as a group?

KEY DOCTRINE: Sanctification

Sanctification is enabling of the believer to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Romans 8:15-18; 1 Corinthians 2:12.)

BIBLE SKILL: Compare uses of the same word.

Use a Bible concordance to identify other instances of the use of the word translated “abide” or “remain” (Greek word *meno*) in John's Gospel (such as John 1:38-39; 8:31; 11:6; 14:10,17). How does the use of this word in these other passages help you gain a clearer understanding of what Jesus was teaching in John 15?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 15:5. What does it mean to “remain in” Jesus?

On the last night of His life, Jesus was preparing His disciples for when He wouldn't be with them anymore. In John 14, He told them repeatedly that He was going away (vv. 3,19,28). Now, in John 15:5, Jesus tells them to remain in Him. Other translations use the word “abide.”

Do you think the disciples were confused? How were they supposed to remain in Jesus if He wasn't going to be with them anymore?

There is a difference between remaining “in” and remaining “with.” If you are married, you know that you are in a covenant relationship with your spouse even when you are physically separated. You remember your vows and your commitment; no matter where you go, you are someone's husband or wife.

What are some ways we remain in Christ?

Give each group member five “fortune cookie sized” strips of paper. Lead them to write “Remain in Jesus” on each one, and place them in different places (wallet, computer monitor, tucked under watch, etc) to remind them of John 15:5.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 15:1-3

Underline the words “true vine,” “gardener,” and “branch.”

The Old Testament referred to Israel as a vine God planted: “I planted you, a choice vine from the very best seed” (Jeremiah 2:21; see also Isaiah 5:1-7 and 27:2-6). Jesus referred to Himself as “the true vine,” which stood in stark contrast to the fruitlessness of Old Testament Israel. The Father was “the gardener” or the vinedresser. Everything that was produced thus depended on God.

Verse 2 outlines the Father’s role as gardener. Removing unfruitful portions of the branch and pruning it were essential tasks in vineyard husbandry—the entire purpose of the branch is to produce fruit. Left untended, it will produce a lot of unfruitful growth, which the Master Gardener prunes. We should be careful not to misinterpret what Jesus was saying. He was not talking about a true believer being cut off from the kingdom. The emphasis is on God performing the work necessary to produce more fruit. The disciples were “clean,” meaning the pruning had already been done in them. This cleaning occurred as they had absorbed what Jesus taught in their years together.

In what ways has the Father pruned you so that you can be more fruitful?

Day 2: John 15:4-5

Identify the key to spiritual fruitfulness.

Jesus introduced the focus of His teaching, the necessity of remaining or abiding in Him. The verb *remain* in verse 4 is an imperative and emphasizes being constantly present. Having identified His role and the Father’s as the vine and the gardener, Jesus clarified the disciples’ role—they were the branches. He also spoke of a reciprocal relationship; He remains in His disciples and His disciples remain in Him. The outcome of this relationship is that the branch will produce fruit. Apart from that shared connection, disciples can do nothing, meaning they can produce no fruit.

The opposite is also true. Not abiding, not remaining in Him, or not staying connected results in a nonproductive vine. Without the connection and steady supply of nourishment, the vine produces no fruit and eventually withers (v. 6). For believers, this is a reminder of the necessity of regular Bible study, prayer, and discipleship. Without these a follower of Christ cannot thrive spiritually.

How do these verses encourage you?

Day 3: John 15:6-8

Note the contrast between verses 6 and 7.

These three verses contrast those who remain or abide in Christ with those who do not. Those who do not abide, those not connected, face judgment. The external evidence of their being disconnected is fruitlessness. In speaking of the unfruitful, Jesus was not talking about believers who have periods of unfruitfulness in their Christian walk; this can happen to any believer. Instead, Jesus was referring to persons who have never been believers but who still appear among the faithful. These are, as Jesus said in another parable, tares that sprout up alongside the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

Verse 7 provides the contrast to verse 6. Those who abide in Christ and adhere to His teaching ultimately grow in their Christlikeness. These faithful believers experience answered prayers as their requests are in keeping with God's will and in accordance with the character of Christ (see 14:14). As we abide in Christ and bear much fruit, God is glorified (v. 8). Through this abundance of abiding we also prove to be Christ's disciples.

How does abiding in Christ change your prayer life?

Day 4: John 15:9-11

Look for the connection between obedience and joy.

Remaining in Jesus and His love is lived out by being obedient to what Jesus taught. This obedience is the external evidence of the internal love relationship we have with Christ. Jesus modeled this obedience by keeping His Father's commands. We don't obey so He will love us. We obey Him because we love Him who first loved us (1 John 4:19).

The reward and capstone of living in this loving and intimate fellowship with Jesus is joy—His joy. For Jesus to speak of “my joy” when He was just hours from the cross may seem illogical. Having joy at such a moment emphasizes that such joy is possible only when one is being obedient to God—not because one is having blissful experiences. The joy Jesus experienced and that He offers is unquenchable, even in the face of pain. Disobedience, though, blocks this joy, as David found out (see Psalm 51:12). The word *complete* carries the idea of being fulfilled and satisfied to the maximum amount. Jesus later prayed His disciples would “have my joy completed in them” (John 17:13).

How has your obedience to Jesus produced joy?

Day 5: John 15:12-17

Compare John 15:16 to 15:7.

Jesus again turned His focus to the disciples loving one another (13:34). This command, “love one another,” is stated in verses 12 and 17, thus framing the teaching of Jesus in these verses. The repetition underscores how essential this loving relationship is for His disciples.

Jesus had earlier said no one would take His life from Him; He would lay it down on His own (10:18). The time was near for that to happen. He would soon endure the ultimate expression of self-sacrifice; He would “lay down his life for his friends.”

Concerning His friends, Jesus said they were to love selflessly. Second, they were to obey what Jesus commanded. Third, friends of Jesus receive the truth He teaches. Fourth, Jesus’s friends have heard His call to go and produce fruit. To go carried the idea of fulfilling the Great Commission—to go into all the world and make disciples. Producing fruit that remains comes because Christ’s followers ask the Father in His name. This establishes the vital link between prayer, evangelism, and disciple making.

How do you relate to Jesus differently as His friend than you would as only a servant?

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your life for evidence of abiding fruit, joy in obedience, and answered prayer. What keeps you from experiencing these things to a greater level? How can you abide with Jesus to a greater degree?



I Have Seen

Jesus is the resurrected Savior.

JOHN 20:1-18



90

...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. ¹⁰"I go to prepare a place for you.
...¹¹And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ¹²where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...¹³And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...¹⁴Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...¹⁵Jesus saith unto him, I am ¹⁶the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ¹⁷no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...¹⁸If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...¹⁹Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

How does using first names in a business setting impact interactions between people with different roles?

When our mother uses our first name, we usually stop in our tracks. We know better than to ignore that call. The same is true when our boss uses our first name, especially if they're doing so to congratulate or recognize our work. Hearing our first name changes the relationship. When Mary heard her name called by the One she thought to be the gardener—it changed everything.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Skeptics who mock divine creation and divine incarnation also discredit the resurrection of Jesus. Their problem lies in the implication of the resurrection. If Jesus died and rose again, He was exactly who He claimed to be—God the Son, the Messiah, the Savior.

Scripture gives solid evidence for Jesus's resurrection. If the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection were trying to prove preconceived ideas, one might legitimately question their accounts. However, Mary, Peter, and John were not expecting to find an empty tomb. Mary went to the tomb early in the morning of the third day after Jesus's crucifixion. Other Gospel accounts relate that she went with several women to anoint Jesus's dead body with spices appropriate for burial (Mark 16:1). They even worried about how they could get past the stone and guards that stood between them and their Lord's body. When Mary found the tomb vacated, she ran to tell the disciples what she had seen. The other women also recounted their experience (Luke 24:1-10).

Most of the disciples remained in hiding for fear of the Jews. They didn't believe the women and discounted their report as idle tales (Luke 24:11). Peter and John ran to the tomb to see what happened. John arrived first but was hesitant to enter. Peter did not wait but immediately went inside. Even when looking into the open grave, they did not fully understand what they saw.

Mary must have followed the two disciples since she remained by the tomb after they went back to Jerusalem. Two angels questioned her about her crying. She thought someone had stolen Jesus's body. Only when Mary encountered the living Christ did she finally realize that He had risen from the dead. Returning to the disciples, she had exciting news. No longer did she merely report seeing an empty tomb; she had met the risen Lord!

JOHN 20:1-18

1 On the **first day**^A of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. **2** So she went running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb, and **we**^B don’t know where they’ve put him!” **3** At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. **4** The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. **5** Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. **6** Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. **7** The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. **8** The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. **9** For they **did not yet understand**^C the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. **10** Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying. **11** But Mary stood outside the tomb, **crying**.^D As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. **12** She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus’s body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. **13** They said to her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “Because they’ve taken away my Lord,” she told them, “and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” **14** Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. **15** “Woman,” Jesus said to her, “why are you crying? Who is it that you’re seeking?” Supposing he was **the gardener**,^E she replied, “Sir, if you’ve carried him away, tell me where you’ve put him, and I will take him away.” **16** Jesus said to her, “Mary.” Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, **“Rabboni!”**^F — which means “Teacher.” **17** “Don’t **cling**^G to me,” Jesus told her, “since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” **18** Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.

Key Words

- A. The Sabbath would have ended at sundown on Saturday, so Sunday morning would have been the first chance for Mary to come to the tomb.
- B. This implies other women were with Mary, which echoes other Gospel writers (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:10).
- C. Peter and John had not yet grasped the scriptural connection to Jesus’s resurrection. That would come later.
- D. The Greek verb *klaio* refers to wailing or loud mourning. Mary was lamenting not only Jesus’s death but His lack of a proper burial.
- E. Mary may have assumed Jesus to be the gardener because of the time of day. Gardeners usually worked early in the morning to avoid the heat.
- F. Aramaic for “my dear (or beloved) Rabbi.” John’s Greek translation “teacher” does not carry the same intimacy as the Aramaic word.
- G. “Hold on” (NIV); “touch” (KJV)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Examine

(John 20:1-10)

Believers can challenge others to examine the truth of the empty tomb.

How can we help others investigate the truth of the resurrection?

What elements of the experiences of Mary, Peter, and Paul give credence to the resurrection of Jesus?

2. Questions

(John 20:11-13)

People can take their questions to God.

What questions and preconceived beliefs get in the way of believing the resurrection?

3. Witness

(John 20:14-18)

Believers can tell others about Jesus.

How does Mary's failure to recognize Jesus add to the credibility of her story?

How does Jesus reveal Himself today as the resurrected Savior?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group the elements of the resurrection account that cause the greatest amazement.

How can the group remind each other in the days and weeks ahead about the wonder of the resurrection?

How should the wonder of the resurrection impact how the Bible study group functions?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. (See John 20:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.)

BIBLE SKILL: Create a compare/contrast chart to study a passage.

Create a two-column chart to compare the experience of Peter and John with that of Mary. Analyze John 20:1-18 and record your ideas about how they approached the empty tomb, noting these elements: motivations, expectations, emotions expressed, and reactions.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 20:8. Why do people say “seeing is believing?” Do you agree?

Just before sunrise on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene came to Peter and John with a fantastic story. Someone had taken Jesus’s body from the tomb and no one knew where it was. Peter and John raced to the tomb. John, the writer of the Gospel, couldn’t resist telling us who won. They saw the grave clothes lying in a heap, and the face covering rolled up separately. That was enough to make John believe.

**Would that have been enough for you? John “saw and believed” what?
What did John believe at this moment?**

The easiest thing for John to believe was that Jesus wasn’t there; that was obvious. Did he believe at that moment that Jesus had been resurrected? It’s hard to say. All verse 8 says is that he believed, but that is immediately followed by, “For as yet they did not understand the Scripture.”

What about you? How important is it for you to understand before you believe?

Write “John saw and believed” on a note card and put it in your glasses case or near your contact lens case. If you don’t wear glasses, put it near the first thing you see every day.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 20:1-4

Reflect on the thoughts and emotions of Mary, John, and Peter when they discovered the stone rolled away.

Although the other Gospel writers stated that other women also came to the tomb that morning, John focused on Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1). Only John states it was still dark when she came to the tomb. Together, these accounts paint a picture of the women leaving Jerusalem together; Mary Magdalene, though, evidently moved faster and arrived first. When Mary arrived, she saw the stone had been rolled away. Her first thought was someone had taken the Lord's body. Tomb robbery was such a problem that Emperor Claudius (ruled AD 41-54) issued a decree of capital punishment for anyone who robbed a tomb or stole a body. Upon hearing about the empty tomb, chief priests instructed the soldiers who guarded the tomb to report that the disciples had stolen the body (Matthew 28:11-15).

Mary ran to find Simon Peter and John, the one Jesus loved. Mary's running was not surprising. John's readers would be amazed, however, by the men running, since men in first-century culture almost never ran. (See Luke 15:20.) Although John outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first, he waited outside.

How can you help others investigate the truth of the resurrection?

Day 2: John 20:5-10

Identify the evidence of Jesus's resurrection in these verses.

When John arrived at the tomb, he stooped down and looked inside without entering. Simon Peter, true to his impetuous nature, arrived at the tomb and entered immediately. The fact the grave clothes were still in the tomb indicated there had been no robbery. After Peter arrived and entered the tomb, John also went in. The fact that two men had seen the tomb empty would render their testimony as reliable and legally admissible (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).

Writing decades after the events of that Easter morning, John explained that when he went in the tomb and saw the funeral wrappings, he believed. What, though, did he believe? These burial wrappings convinced John that Jesus had been raised from the dead—He was resurrected. Only later did John and Peter understand the fuller meaning of Old Testament Scripture that spoke of the Messiah's resurrection (maybe Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10-12). Peter and John returned to the place where they were staying. Luke's Gospel says of Peter, "So he went away, amazed at what had happened" (Luke 24:12).

What is the most convincing proof of Jesus's resurrection for you?

Day 3: John 20:11-13

Pay attention to why Mary was crying.

Mary evidently remained outside the tomb as Peter and John entered. Questions had to be swirling through her mind. What had happened before she first arrived at the tomb? Who would have moved the stone? Had someone stolen the body? Would the Jews look for someone to accuse? Where was the body? What should she do next? Overcome with pain, grief, and confusion, Mary wept. Four times these verses state she wept (vv. 11,13,15). The Greek term described wailing because of profound anguish. Perhaps for the first time, she stooped to look into the tomb.

Mary saw two angels in white but apparently was not frightened by the angels' presence. Their appearance in human form may have caused her to mistake them for men. When they asked why Mary was crying, the question was not intended to gain information. They were challenging Mary to consider what she was experiencing. It was likely a gentle rebuke. Mary, though, was still thinking the same thing she had conveyed to the disciples earlier—someone had taken away the body of Jesus and she did not know where the body was. Nothing she had seen or experienced had altered her thinking . . . yet.

What questions and preconceived beliefs get in the way of people believing in the resurrection? How can you respond to their concerns?

Day 4: John 20:14-15

Highlight the questions in verse 15.

When Mary turned around, she did not recognize Jesus. Still in the emotional fog of the morning, she looked through tear-filled eyes. Additionally, she was not expecting to see Jesus alive. She had last seen Him as a corpse that had been beaten, bruised, bloodied, and bound in grave linens.

Jesus asked Mary two questions. The first was identical to the angels' (v. 13). The second, though, directed Mary's attention away from herself and onto Him. Mary supposed the One speaking to her was the gardener. Seeing a gardener this early would not be unexpected. Any grave robbers would have already fled, and mourners would come later in the day.

She returned to her earlier concern about the body's location. Mary had come with the intention of properly preparing the body for burial; she was committed to fulfill that task.

How does Mary's failure to recognize Jesus add to the credibility of her story?

Day 5: John 20:16-18

Notice the term Jesus used for His disciples.

Jesus called Mary by name. He spoke one word, “Mary.” In that instant, everything changed. Astonishment replaced anguish, delight replaced despair, and hope replaced heartache. She responded with one word, “Rabboni,” which translates affectionately as “Teacher.”

Jesus had previously referred to His disciples as servants and friends (John 15:15). Here, for the first recorded time, Jesus called them “my brothers.” His death had changed their relationship. Through Christ’s redemptive work, God adopts us as sons and daughters (see Romans 8:14-15; Ephesians 1:5). Jesus further emphasized the inclusiveness of this new intimate relationship by saying He was “ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” The relationship Jesus had with God, His Father, was not restricted to His disciples, His “brothers”—Mary Magdalene was part of the family as well.

Jesus gave Mary two imperatives: go and tell. This woman, out of whom Jesus had exorcised seven demons, was the first to see the risen Christ, the first to hear His voice, the first to touch Him, and the first to be commissioned to share the news of His resurrection. She announced, “I have seen the Lord!” That one sentence changed everything.

How does the resurrection of Jesus change everything for you?

APPLY THE TEXT

For many, one of the most effective methods of leading people to Christ is to simply tell about your experience with Him. That was what Mary Magdalene did. Who do you know that might be receptive to hearing about your experience with Jesus? Pray for the Lord to use you to tell others about Him.



When the Spirit Comes

The Holy Spirit points people to the truth.

JOHN 15:26-27; 16:7-15



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life

...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.

...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...ons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.

**JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE**

⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
not whither thou goest; and how can we
know the way?

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁶the way,
⁷the truth, and ⁸'the life: ⁹no man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.

⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
known my Father also: and from henceforth
ye know him, and have seen him.

⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

...east saith
...s, to whom I
...e dipped *it*. And
...sop, he gave *it* to
...of Simon.
...p Satan entered into
...as unto him, That thou
...at the table knew for what
...e this unto him,
...e of *them* thought, because

07

How does a phrase like “a person inside the organization” give you confidence in a news story? How do you know a source can be trusted?

Two reporters can cover the same event and walk away with different stories if they consult different sources. If we read both reporters’ stories, we may wonder if we can trust either to be accurate. This becomes more complicated when we are considering issues that impact our lives and the lives of others. We need a reliable source we can trust.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power; He is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is the Spirit of God, fully divine. The Holy Spirit fills believers, guides them into truth, and enables them to witness about Jesus effectively. In the disciples’ search for truth, He guides them. In their distress, the Spirit comforts them. In their ministry, the Spirit enables them. In everything, He glorifies Jesus.

Throughout His dialogue with the disciples, Jesus continually reminded them that He would soon be going away. They were deeply concerned (John 14:1; 16:6). They would face opposition from powerful political and religious forces. They would be ostracized from their places of worship by their own people. In fact, the Jews would think they were following God by destroying Jesus’s followers. The disciples would endure pain and death. They had a challenging mission to take Jesus’s gospel to the world, and they would not have His physical presence with them. Yet, Jesus promised they would not be left alone. They would have the Holy Spirit. With Him, they could go forth in power and confidence.

When Jesus rose from the grave, the disciples’ sorrow was turned into joy. His ascension into heaven, though, was not yet clear to them. Jesus spoke plainly about leaving the world and going to the Father. Abandoning figurative language, Jesus revealed what was about to happen. He told them the day was approaching when they would be persecuted and scattered. In the midst of suffering, they could go forth in courage because He had overcome the world.

JOHN 15:26-27; 16:7-15

15:26 “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father — he will **testify**^A about me. **27** You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.” [. . .]

16:7 “Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will **convict**^B the world about **sin**,^C **righteousness**,^D and **judgment**.^E **9** About sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; **11** and about judgment, because the ruler of **this world**^F has been judged. **12** I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now.

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will **guide**^G you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. **14** He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. **15** Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.”

Key Words

- A. Used twice in verses 26-27: once to describe the Spirit’s coming and once to describe the mission of the disciples.
- B. The Greek word *elenchein* means “to bring to light” or “expose.” Reminiscent of a courtroom proceeding, it includes the charges against the defendant, the standard to which the accused must conform, and the judge’s logic in reaching a decision.
- C. The Greek term suggests missing a mark or wandering from a standard—in this case, the righteousness of God.
- D. A condition acceptable to God. The focus is on living with correct actions and correct thinking.
- E. Separation, condemnation, and punishment.
- F. From the Greek word *kosmos*, from which we get our English word “cosmic.” Usually, John used *kosmos* to describe those who are hostile toward Jesus and His followers (see 1 John 2:15-17).
- G. To teach or show the way.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Testify

(John 15:26-27)

Believers are partners with the Holy Spirit in telling others about Jesus.

What role does the Holy Spirit play in our telling others about Jesus?

2. Convicts

(John 16:7-11)

Believers depend on the Holy Spirit to convict others about sin.

How does the Holy Spirit convict people about sin, righteousness, and judgment?

How can believers cooperate with the Spirit to bring people to repentance and faith?

3. Guides

(John 16:12-15)

Believers can depend on the Holy Spirit to show them truth.

What is the significance of Jesus calling the Counselor the “Spirit of truth”? Why is it necessary for us to have a Guide when it comes to truth?

Why is it essential that the Spirit point to Christ?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group how the Holy Spirit convicted you of your need for Jesus.

What questions and situations did He use to move you toward Jesus?

How can we help others be more open to hearing God’s truth?

KEY DOCTRINE: Holy Spirit

He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See Isaiah 61:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14.)

BIBLE SKILL: Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

Compare the following passages, noting the activities of the Holy Spirit found in each passage: John 14:26; 16:7-8,13-15; Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 3:4-6. How does His role give you a greater appreciation for Jesus promising to send the Spirit? Write a short paragraph explaining the role the Holy Spirit plays in a believer’s life.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 16:8. What do those three words—sin, righteousness, and judgment—mean?

No matter what else you pick up from Jesus's teaching about the Holy Spirit, don't miss the pronoun "he." Jesus wasn't promising an impersonal force. He was promising a relationship with a Person who would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Would you rather hear a pre-recorded lecture or sit in a classroom with a live instructor? Why?

By now, the disciples were probably in full-brain overload. Jesus seemed to acknowledge this in verse 12. If you went to college, you can relate to the feeling of being overwhelmed. The Spirit is like having a tutor who meets with you every day for the rest of the semester. You don't have to remember everything the professor says. Your tutor, the Holy Spirit, will be there to remind you.

The Holy Spirit is called by a several names: Counselor, Comforter, and Helper. Which one means the most to you and why?

Place John 16:8 on your phones or on cards and memorize it together.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 15:26-27

Pay attention to both uses of the word “testify.”

Earlier, when speaking of the Spirit, Jesus said the Father would send Him, He would be with the disciples forever, He is the Spirit of truth, He would come in the name of Jesus, He would teach the disciples all things, and He would remind them of what Jesus had said (John 14:16-17,25-26). Here in 15:26-27, Jesus returned to some of the same themes but highlighted an additional and important task of the Holy Spirit—He would testify about Jesus. Not only would the Spirit testify about Jesus, He would lead believers to do the same. The Spirit empowers believers for the work of being witnesses about Jesus (Acts 1:8).

The spotlight belongs on Jesus. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus, and believers do the same. This is a reminder that the Christian faith is never about us; it is all about Jesus. The context of these two verses clearly shows that believers are to give testimony about Jesus to a sinful world that is lost without Him. John 15:18-25 and 16:1-4 speak of the persecutions Christ's disciples will face. Believers are not only to live in a world that may be openly hostile to the Christian faith, we are to confront that world with the glorious news that Jesus saves. He alone has the words of life (John 6:68). Thankfully, we do not go into that world by ourselves; we go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

How would you describe your mission according to these verses?

Day 2: John 16:7

Circle the word “benefit.”

The fact Jesus was going away must have been inconceivable to His followers. Their lives had been completely transformed when He called each to be His follower. They had forsaken everything to follow Him (Matthew 19:27). They had heard Jesus teach and saw Him stand up to the religious leaders and confront their hypocrisy. They had watched Him restore sight to the blind, heal lepers and the lame, deliver the oppressed and possessed, and raise the dead. To say that His leaving was for their benefit had to be unthinkable.

Jesus connected His departure with the coming of the Spirit. After leaving, He would send the Spirit to them. The Holy Spirit would fall on the disciples, fill their human spirits, and fulfill Christ's mission through them.

What are some ways the Holy Spirit's presence benefits you?

Day 3: John 16:8-11

Identify the role of the Holy Spirit in these verses.

Jesus explained what the Holy Spirit would do when He came—He would convict. This means the Spirit would expose the error that the rebellious and disobedient held onto concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. The word *sin* is singular and refers not to sins in a general sense but to the ultimate sin of not believing in Jesus. Not believing in Jesus results in a person being estranged from God and facing judgment (see John 3:18). The Jews misunderstood *righteousness*. Isaiah proclaimed, “all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment” or as some translations have it, “like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Jesus was the ultimate model of righteousness during His earthly life. He was the perfect manifestation and embodiment of the holiness of God (1 John 3:5). Concerning His death, Jesus earlier stated, “Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). Here, He repeated much the same thought; the ruler of this world—Satan, the father of all lies, the accuser of God’s people, and the great deceiver—already has been judged. The crucifixion, which Satan thought to be his crowning moment, was his crushing blow. Because of Christ’s atoning work, no longer would sin and rebellion retain their stronghold.

Polished presentations and harsh words do not entice unbelievers to faith in Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can convince people they are sinners in desperate need of a Savior. Only He can lead persons to repentance. Only He can open their hearts to the truth and love of Jesus.

Why is it important for you to depend on the Holy Spirit when telling others about Jesus?

Day 4: John 16:12-13

Pay attention to the promise in verse 13.

Jesus still had many things to tell His disciples. He did not do so, though, because they could not bear it. The term *bear* conveys the idea of comprehension and acceptance rather than mere endurance. The enormity of Christ’s death and resurrection and their role in establishing Christ’s church would have overwhelmed them.

Jesus knew what His disciples were going through. They were sorrowful at the thought of His leaving, and they were anxious and confused about the approaching conflict. Jesus knew that when the Spirit came, the situation would be different. The Spirit would guide His disciples in all the truth. The Spirit would not speak on His own; He would speak whatever He hears. This a reminder that the Spirit’s messages will always agree with what God has revealed in His Word.

**Why is it necessary for you to have a Guide when it comes to truth?
What are some ways the Holy Spirit guides you into truth?**

Day 5: John 16:14-15

Notice who the Holy Spirit glorifies.

The ultimate task of the Spirit is to glorify Jesus—just as Jesus had glorified the Father by revealing Him. Christ came as the Word incarnate, God in human flesh and form. In doing so, “We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

In a summary statement, Jesus explained that the source for all that the Spirit would do and reveal would be the Father Himself. The Father had been the source for the Son; He would now be the source through the Son to the Spirit and, ultimately, to the disciples. All three are involved in guiding followers of Christ into knowing, understanding, and following truth.

How is the Holy Spirit glorifying Jesus in and through you?

APPLY THE TEXT

Take a few moments to evaluate your life. In what areas do you need the Holy Spirit’s guidance? What is He telling you about sin, righteousness, and judgment? How might the Holy Spirit use this study to help you increase your understanding of yourself and of truth?



I Pray

A shared commitment to God's purposes produces unity among all believers.

JOHN 17:13-26



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...shall "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...ons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁷the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁸no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

08

What is one thing you wish were shatterproof but is not? Explain.

French chemist Edouard Benedictus invented shatterproof glass when he accidentally dropped a flask that had a thin layer of dried plastic cellulose nitrate residue inside it. Although covered in a web of cracks, the thin film kept the flask together. The pieces were bound by the properties of the film. Believers are bound today by the properties of our Savior. Jesus prayed that all believers would be unified by a shared faith and purpose.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the upper room, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples and washed their feet. After Judas exited, Jesus taught the Eleven about the coming of the Holy Spirit, abiding in Him, loving one another, and enduring persecution. When He had finished teaching, Jesus turned His voice toward heaven.

Jesus's hour had arrived. He asked the Father to glorify Him so the Father may be glorified in Him. While Jesus's death and resurrection were the centerpiece of Jesus's glory, the disciples also played a role in His exaltation. Jesus's prayer for His followers included several themes that intertwined to glorify Him.

First, Jesus was glorified by giving eternal life to those who believed in Him. The Father gave Him to them and them to Him. This passage defines eternal life as knowing God the Father and Jesus whom He sent. Conversely, judgment lies in the fact that unbelievers do not know Jesus and are not known by Him (Matthew 7:23).

Second, Jesus glorified the Father by giving them His words. The disciples did not merely hear His words; they received them. Jesus was glorified in the disciples as they believed and followed Him.

Third, Jesus asked the Father to protect them. Jesus knew an unbelieving world would persecute them. He also foresaw how Satan would try to destroy them because of Him. Jesus did not pray that they would escape difficulty, but that the Father would be with them in the midst of their struggle.

Finally, Jesus not only prayed for the disciples gathered with Him that night. He also prayed for everyone who would believe through the disciples' testimony. Knowing Jesus intercedes for us today gives us confidence to fulfill His will and share His word so others might also know Him and be with Him forever.

JOHN 17:13-26

13 “Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy **completed**^A in them. **14** I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **15** I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you **protect**^B them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **17 Sanctify**^C them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I also have **sent**^D them into the world. **19** I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth. **20** I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. **21** May they all be **one**,^E as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. **22** I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. **23** I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. **24** Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world’s foundation. **25** Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. **26** I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and **I may be in them.**”^F

Key Words

- A. The key to complete (“perfect,” “full”) joy is a close relationship with Jesus (John 15:11; 16:24).
- B. The wording suggests keeping something close, preserving, holding fast, watching, or guarding.
- C. Sanctify (Greek, *hagiazō*) means to consecrate, purify, make holy, or set apart for sacred work.
- D. The Greek word *apostellein* refers to being sent on a mission. Our English word “apostle” comes from this verb. Being an apostle is less about position and more about the mission.
- E. This unity in the church is important because it reflects the unity within the Godhead.
- F. At Sinai, God came to live with the nation of Israel. He assured them of His presence by making His home in the tabernacle over the ark’s mercy seat. Here Jesus makes a similar covenant with all those who follow Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Sanctify

(John 17:13-19)

Believers share in representing Jesus in this sinful world.

How can believers engage with an antagonistic world?

How does living a sanctified, or set apart, life serve as a contrast when compared to what the world offers?

2. Unite

(John 17:20-23)

Believers should find acceptance from other believers.

Why is Christian unity such an important aspect of our witness to an unbelieving world?

How does a shared faith unify believers from different cultures?

3. Gather

(John 17:24-26)

Believers can live with a shared assurance of seeing God's glory.

What impact does the promise of seeing the glory of God have on the way we love others?

APPLY THE TEXT

Consider as a group ways a shared faith in Jesus unifies the group. Evaluate the group's level of acceptance of other believers.

What actions need to be taken for the group to more effectively live out Jesus's prayer for all believers?

KEY DOCTRINE: The Church

The New Testament speaks of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 7:9-10.)

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.

Using a Bible dictionary, look up the term *sanctification*. Compare Old Testament passages listed with New Testament passages listed. Identify synonyms for sanctify (such as "consecrate"). How do Old Testament references help us understand the New Testament concept?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 17:20-21. Does it surprise you that the one thing Jesus prayed for His disciples on the last night of His life was unity? Why or why not?

In John 13–16, Jesus talked to His disciples about Himself and the Holy Spirit. In John 17, He talked to His Father about the disciples—and, by extension, about us. He prayed for their protection as they faced persecution. More than that, He prayed they would be united.

What does it mean for the people of Jesus to truly be one? In our divided world, is that even possible?

Jesus wasn't just praying for His disciples. He was also praying for those who would believe in Him through their word. That includes you and me. The night before Jesus was crucified, He was praying for us! That's pretty unbelievable. As Jesus looked into the future to us, He prayed that we would be one. Let that sink in for a minute.

If unity was that important to Jesus, then what can we do to be more united?

Review John 17:20-21 in various translations and create a paraphrase of the verse.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 17:13-16

Note the repetition of the word “world.”

Jesus mentioned “the world” eighteen times in this prayer. In almost each instance, He contrasted God’s holiness with the sinful realm in which humans live. At one point, He said His disciples had come from the world (v. 6). In verse 14, however, Jesus declared the disciples are “not of the world.” What had made such a significant difference in these men? For three-plus years, they had been with Jesus. During that time, He had given them God’s word. Here *word* refers to a unified block of teaching, a particular theme, or a specific lesson. The message was that God had come to earth in human form “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). He had come so that those who were dead in their trespasses and sin might “have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10).

Jesus stated, “I have given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me” (17:8). Although others heard what Jesus taught without receiving His words (John 6:60-69; 8:42-45), the disciples received and kept the words Jesus spoke. So complete was their resultant transformation that Jesus could say they are “not of the world.”

What evidences in your life reflect that you are “not of the world”?

Day 2: John 17:17-19

Circle the word “sanctify.”

Jesus asked the Father both to protect His disciples and to sanctify them by the truth, which is God’s word. The Greek verb translated “sanctify” carries the idea of being made holy and set apart for God’s service. Sanctification is an ongoing process that begins at salvation. It continues through the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work as the believer increasingly walks according to God’s revealed truth (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Jesus prayed His disciples would be protected, unified, and sanctified because He was sending them into a hostile environment, just as the world had been hostile toward Him. Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared for the mission ahead.

What prepares you to engage a world that is antagonistic toward the gospel?

Day 3: John 17:20-21

Reflect on the connection between the church's unity and witness.

Jesus broadened the focus of His prayer to include those who would come to faith as a result of His disciples' ministry and mission. He was praying for subsequent spiritual generations, those who would come to faith through the disciples' word. This was the message Jesus had received from the Father and had shared with them. The disciples would deliver this same message of salvation, beginning in just a few days. The impact of Christ's prayer continues today. Jesus prayed for those "who believe in me," without specifying a time frame. This means Christians today are among those for whom He prayed.

Jesus prayed His followers would embody the oneness He and the Father share (John 14:9). Although we believers each have our own spiritual gifts, talents, and personalities, we are to be unified in our love for others, our mission and message, our purpose and proclamation. Our unity testifies to the divine nature of Christ—that the Father had sent Him. Believers' relationships are not intended merely to make us feel good about one another. Earlier, Jesus said the world would know we are His disciples by our love (John 13:35). Sadly, conflict between Christians remains one of the primary negative influences cited by unbelievers for not coming to Jesus. How we treat each other makes a difference.

Why is your oneness with other believers such an important aspect of your witness to an unbelieving world?

Day 4: John 17:22-23

Underline the words "that the world may know."

Jesus began His prayer with a petition for glory: "Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you" (17:1). At this point, Jesus revealed He had given His disciples the glory the Father had given Him. This is not a reference to the glory Jesus had from eternity past (17:5). Instead, it was the glory God revealed through His public ministry and work. When Jesus turned water to wine, He "revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). Jesus prayed that His disciples would have this same manifestation of God's glory in their lives and ministry, so that people would continue to believe in Jesus through their works. He knew this shared glory would be a unifier for the disciples; it would help them be one as He and the Father are one. This unity authenticates that believers have had a genuine life-altering encounter with Christ.

What are some ways you can work to keep the unity Jesus prayed for in these verses?

Day 5: John 17:24-26

Identify Jesus's expressed desire in verse 24.

The disciples were saddened when Jesus said He would be going away. He reassured them, saying, "Don't let your heart be troubled . . . If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also" (14:1-3). Near the end of His prayer, Jesus circled back to this thought and asked that His disciples would be with Him in glory. The phrase "where I am" in verse 24 included eternity since He wanted them to see His glory. Jesus expressed His heart's desire for His disciples to be in eternal fellowship with Him. What a humbling thought that Jesus wants to be with us for eternity!

Jesus made the Father's name known to His followers and would continue to do so (17:26). God's essential nature was expressed in His name. The purpose of revealing the Father was so the disciples could experience the love with which the Father had loved the Son. Additionally, Jesus would be in them. Jesus was referring to the believer's union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thanks to this relationship, believers are spiritually united in faith and purpose with Jesus.

What impact does the promise of seeing the glory of God have on the way you love others?

APPLY THE TEXT

Think about your life. To what might a person who knows you point to as evidence that you are a follower of Jesus? What changes might you need to make to show to a greater degree the difference Christ has made in you?



I Am He

Jesus is always in control and committed to the redemption of humanity.

JOHN 18:1-11



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life

...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.

...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...ons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ³where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.

JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE

⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
not whither thou goest; and how can we
know the way?

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁶the way,
⁶the truth, and ⁶the life: ⁶no man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.

⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
known my Father also: and from henceforth
ye know him, and have seen him.

⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

east saith

s, to whom I
e dipped *it*. And
sop, he gave *it* to
of Simon.

p Satan entered into
s unto him, That thou

at the table knew for what
e this unto him.

e of them thought, because

69

When you have mistaken someone for another person, how did you react once you realized their identity?

Most of us have mistaken someone for another person. Once we discover they are not who we thought, we may be amused, embarrassed, or relieved. In Gethsemane, there was no way to mistake Jesus for someone else. Not only did Judas identify Him with a kiss to the cheek, but Jesus boldly stated, “I am he.” He was not afraid of Judas or the mob. This was His hour.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the upper room, Jesus began His prayer with, “Father, the hour has come” (John 17:1). It was time. As Jesus and the disciples crossed the Kidron brook on the eastern side of Jerusalem, they ascended the Mount of Olives to a very different scene. Jesus often resorted to the Garden of Gethsemane for prayer during His journeys to Jerusalem. Familiar with this mountainside retreat, Judas knew where to bring the soldiers assigned by the chief priests to arrest Jesus. John’s Gospel does not include Jesus’s intense prayers while waiting in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-56). John was so focused on Jesus’s betrayal, death, and resurrection that he moved directly to the betrayer’s approach. The torch-bearing mob shattered the peace of this place of prayer as they moved cautiously to seize the Lord.

John also did not mention Judas’s kiss of betrayal (Matthew 26:48-50). Still, Jesus knew what was happening. He asked the officials with Judas who they were seeking. When they replied, Jesus firmly stated, “I am he.” The power of His presence and the authority of His manner strongly impacted the crowd as they fell back to the ground. He

asked the question again. When He affirmed He was the One, the soldiers moved forward to take Him.

Jesus’s disciples were not so quick to give up. Peter drew a sword and apparently tried to cut off the head of a servant of the high priest. Slicing off the man’s ear could have resulted in Peter’s arrest or worse, but Jesus healed the man and rebuked Peter. If He wanted to resist, Jesus had angelic armies on whom He could call to defend Him and destroy His enemies (Matthew 26:53).

When the soldiers made no move to seize Peter or others, the disciples fled into the night. The mob was not interested in them. They only wanted Jesus.

JOHN 18:1-11

1 After Jesus had said **these things**, ^A he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a **garden**, ^B and he and his disciples went into it. **2** Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas took a **company of soldiers** ^C and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. **4** Then Jesus, **knowing everything** ^D that was about to happen to him, went out and said to them, “Who is it that you’re seeking?” **5** “Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “I am he,” Jesus told them. Judas, who betrayed him, was also standing with them. **6** When Jesus told them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground. **7** Then he asked them again, “Who is it that you’re seeking?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said. **8** “I told you I am he,” Jesus replied. “So if you’re looking for me, let these men go.” **9** This was to fulfill the words he had said: “I have not lost one of those you have given me.” **10** Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) **11** At that, Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword away! Am I not to drink **the cup** ^E the Father has given me?”

Key Words

- A. Jesus had been teaching His disciples (John 13–16) and had prayed for them (John 17).
- B. John mentioned a garden, while Matthew, Mark, and Luke referred to “Gethsemane” (Mark 14:32). “Gethsemane” means “oil press,” and a cave that was used to press oil from olives sits at the traditional site on the Mount of Olives. Jesus and His disciples may have spent nights in this cave.
- C. The Latin word *speira* described a military cohort consisting of several hundred men.
- D. John emphasized that Jesus understood His mission and accepted everything it entailed before it actually happened. This also reflects Jesus’s ultimate authority over the situation, which is a recurring theme throughout His trials and crucifixion.
- E. A metaphor Jesus used to refer to His imminent suffering and death (Matthew 20:22-23; 26:39; Mark 10:38-39; 14:36; Luke 22:42).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Show of Force

(John 18:1-3)

Believers can expect enemies of Jesus to use maximum force against Him.

What does the presence of armed soldiers tell us about the expectations of Judas and the accompanying officials?

2. Positive Identification

(John 18:4-9)

Believers can confidently face life knowing that Jesus is in charge.

How did John's portrayal of the conversation between Jesus and the group point to Jesus's being in charge?

How does the response of the soldiers verify Jesus's deity?

3. Rebellion Snuffed

(John 18:10-11)

Believers can obediently involve themselves in God's redemptive plan.

Why was it important for John to note Jesus's response to Peter?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group ways people oppose Jesus today.

What kinds of "weapons" do they use to attempt to silence or destroy Jesus and His gospel in the world today?

What can your group do to encourage each other and others to stand boldly for Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See Psalm 110:1-4; John 1:1-4.)

BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; and Luke 22:35-38,49-53 as well as the session passage. Write out a timeline placing each event in order as much as possible. How does the timeline help you get a better picture of what happened? How does Jesus's rebuke of Peter produce deeper insight into Jesus's understanding of His mission and the fulfillment of the Father's will?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 18:11. What does Jesus's rebuke of Peter tell you about Jesus's character?

John's account of Jesus's betrayal and arrest reveals that instead of Judas approaching Jesus, Jesus was the one who initiated contact with Judas, the soldiers, and temple police (John 18:4). John emphasizes that Jesus was in total control of the situation (see v. 4).

What is the difference between power and authority?

Jesus demonstrated His authority. His voice alone knocked the soldiers to the ground (v. 6). He commanded the soldiers to let the disciples go (v. 8). However, Jesus didn't use His power to protect Himself. The only power He used was to heal Malchus's ear (see Luke 22:51). The soldiers had power but no authority. They had torches and weapons but didn't make a move until Jesus gave the word. Peter had power because he had a sword, but Jesus had the authority to tell him to put it away. No earthly power was going to stop Jesus.

What is an area of your life you need to submit to Jesus's authority?

Write John 18:11 on a card. Review it each morning before you go to work this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 18:1-3

Review chapters 13–17 to see what “said these things” refers to in John 18:1.

Jesus had spoken to the disciples about the necessity of being a servant as He washed their feet. He had foretold Judas’s betrayal and that they would face persecution. He had instructed them to love one another as He had loved them. He spoke of praying in His name and of abiding in Him. He said He was returning to the Father and would be sending the Counselor who would be with them always. He had told them their sorrow would be turned to joy. The disciples had much to think about as they left the upper room.

Jesus often met His disciples at Gethsemane (see Luke 21:37). Because Judas had doubtlessly been with Jesus on those earlier visits, he knew where to find Him. Judas brought with him a company of soldiers. The term can refer to a cohort, a Roman military unit that included up to 600 men. Accompanying the soldiers were officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. This group would have been part of the temple police, who would serve as the arresting officers. They were determined to take Jesus into custody and were ready to use as much force as was necessary to do so. Believers can expect enemies of Jesus to oppose them just as they did Jesus. Since the world persecuted Jesus, we should anticipate similar treatment as we testify for Him.

What does the presence of armed soldiers tell you about the expectations of Judas and the officials?

Day 2: John 18:4-6

Underline verse 6.

By choosing to be in this location at this moment, Jesus was showing that He was orchestrating each detail of His betrayal and arrest. He knew what moves were coming next. He was in charge—not Judas, not the Romans, and not the temple police. Stepping forward, Jesus asked: “Who is it that you’re seeking?” They responded with “Jesus of Nazareth.” The Greek text does not include the word translated “he.” Thus, Jesus replied by simply saying “I am,” using the Father’s name for Himself and thereby affirming His divinity (see Exodus. 3:14).

In an incredible and unique display of Christ’s lordship, just speaking the divine name caused His enemies to step back and fall to the ground. Can you imagine hundreds of armed strong men falling helplessly backwards like dominoes? This scene screams that Jesus had all the power; He was in complete control. That Judas was also standing with them indicates he also fell backwards.

What does the reaction of the Roman soldiers and Jewish officials tell you about Jesus?

Day 3: John 18:7-8

Pay attention to how Jesus demonstrated His control of the situation.

By asking a second time and having the soldiers repeat their reply, Jesus was clarifying they were there to arrest Him alone, not His disciples. In saying, “I told you I am he,” He was distinguishing Himself from His disciples. The soldiers and temple police had followed orders that led them to the night’s actions. This time, Jesus would give the order, “let these men go,” referring to His disciples. Having seen the remarkable display of Jesus’s power, no one protested or said, “Who do you think you are to give us orders? You do what we say, not the other way around.”

In giving this order, Jesus was putting Himself between His followers and the enemy. In a very real sense, this is what redemption and salvation are all about. Christ has positioned Himself as the sacrifice to protect His own. He revealed Himself to be the Good Shepherd who willingly gives His life for His sheep (John 10:12-13). This momentary display of physical protection is a snapshot of the spiritual and eternal security that only Jesus can give.

That the disciples were not taken into custody again underscored that Jesus was in control of all that happened in the garden that night.

How did John’s portrayal of the conversation between Jesus and the group point to Jesus’s being in charge? What circumstance in your life do you need to submit to Jesus’s control?

Day 4: John 18:9

Compare John 18:9 to John 6:39 and 17:12.

As he often did in his Gospel, John interjected an explanation. Jesus’s securing the disciples’ release fulfilled prophecy of John 6:39 and the words the Lord had earlier in John 17:12. In that prayer, Jesus had told the Father that He had not lost one of the followers God had placed under His care. Confronted by an armed host, Jesus took the initiative to preserve their safety. Of course, all of them would eventually suffer for Him. All but John would end up dying as a martyr for Him and the gospel. On this night, though, they were spared such violence because of Jesus’s authority.

The Christian life is not without danger. Following Jesus does not mean we will never suffer for our faith. But it does mean we can face whatever challenges that come with the confidence that we are not alone. He is with us, and He is in control of everything.

**In what sense had Jesus “not lost one” of those the Father had given Him?
How are you trusting Him not to “lose” you?**

Day 5: John 18:10-11

Pay attention to how Jesus responded to Peter.

Having seen the remarkable display of Christ's power, the disciples felt emboldened. Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. If Jesus had not intervened, the soldiers probably would have responded with deadly force or at least by seizing Peter and the other disciples. Luke said the disciples had two swords; thus, Simon Peter was probably not the only one carrying a weapon. Jesus did not need defending. He had already shown that the most formidable soldiers of His day were powerless against just His spoken word. Additionally, Jesus had at His beck and call legions of angels who would have readily appeared and stepped forward to protect Him (Matthew 26:53).

The scene is a reminder that the disciples were still thinking Jesus was going to be a political leader. They still did not understand Jesus's purpose. He did not come to start a war. He came to drink the cup of His Father to suffer and die for the world's sins. Jesus challenged Peter: "Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?" This was the cup of God's fury, His judgment on a sinful world (Revelation 14:10). Recognizing it to be the Father's will, Jesus would willingly drink from that cup.

What does Jesus's commitment to "drink the cup" mean for you?

APPLY THE TEXT

Think of an area of difficulty in your life. How does knowing Jesus is in charge help strengthen your faith and confidence for the future? What opportunity can you take this week to tell a friend or family member about the Lord demonstrating His control in your life?



I Find No Fault

Jesus was without guilt and sinless in every way.

JOHN 18:28-40



...you,
...aved

...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...I will lay down my life

...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.

...OF MANY MANSIONS

...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. ¹⁰I go to prepare a place for you.
...¹¹And if I go and prepare a place for you, I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ¹²where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...¹³And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.

...east saith

...s, to whom I
...e dipped *it*. And
...sop, he gave *it* to
...of Simon.

...p Satan entered into
...s unto him, That thou

...at the table knew for what
...e this unto him.

...e of them thought, because

JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE

⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
not whither thou goest; and how can we
know the way?

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁷the way,
⁸the truth, and ⁹the life: ¹⁰no man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.

¹¹If ye had known me, ye should have
known my Father also: and from henceforth
ye know him, and have seen him.

¹²Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

What factors intrigue you the most when watching a legal drama or reading a book about legal proceedings?

“We the jury find the defendant . . .” Most of us are intrigued about the factors that swayed a jury to decide one way or the other. The appeal of whodunit stories highlight our desire to piece together the evidence so we can develop our own verdict. Pilate interviewed Jesus and found Him not guilty. Yet, he ignored his own conclusion and handed Jesus over for crucifixion.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

By torchlight, an armed mob seized Jesus and brought Him bound before Annas. A former high priest, Annas retained considerable power and lived in the palace of his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the current high priest. In this hearing, Jesus was falsely accused and cruelly treated. When He challenged His assailants to testify of any wrongdoing, He was met with silence since they had no real evidence. Subsequently, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas for further examination.

These hearings, held at night against lawful procedures, took place while Simon Peter waited in the palace courtyard. Peter had followed John into the compound to see what would happen to Jesus. Already frightened by the events in the garden, Peter responded defensively when questioned about his association with Jesus. Three times various people accused him of associating with Jesus, and three times Peter denied knowing Him. Following his third denial, a rooster crowed for the second time. Reminded of Jesus’s predictions, Peter fled the palace in tears.

Shortly after daybreak, knowing they lacked authority to execute Jesus, the Jewish leaders took Him to the Roman governor. At first, Pilate refused to hear the case. Finally, he yielded to their insistence and questioned Jesus. He focused his interrogation on whether Jesus claimed to be a king. Such an assertion would be treasonous in an empire ruled by Caesar.

After further examination, Pilate declared he found no fault in Jesus. He recognized the false testimony of conflicting witnesses to be a set-up by the Jewish authorities. Several times, Pilate sought to release Jesus. Instead, the Jews cried out for the governor to release a criminal named Barabbas. As the crowd became increasingly unruly, Pilate gave Jesus over to be scourged and crucified.

JOHN 18:28-40

28 Then they led Jesus from **Caiaphas**^A to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They **did not enter**^B the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover. **29** So **Pilate**^C came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?" **30** They answered him, "If this man weren't a **criminal**,^D we wouldn't have handed him over to you." **31** Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law." "It's **not legal**^E for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. **32** They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die. **33** Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the **king of the Jews**?"^F **34** Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?" **35** "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" **36** "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." **37** "You are a king then?" Pilate asked. "You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." **38** "What is truth?" said Pilate. After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. **39** You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" **40** They shouted back, "Not this man, but **Barabbas**!"^G Now Barabbas was a **revolutionary**.^H

Key Words

- A. Jewish high priest from AD 18-36/37.
- B. Jews considered Gentiles unclean. Entering a Gentile's home would have left them ceremonially unclean for the Passover celebration.
- C. Pontius Pilate served as the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26-36/37. In general, his rule was marked by violent anti-Semitism. He was later recalled to Rome to answer for his weak leadership.
- D. The term literally referred to an evildoer.
- E. "Have no right" (NIV); "not lawful" (KJV; ESV). The Jews were limited in their ability to carry out capital punishment, so they appealed to the Romans.
- F. Pilate only cared if Jesus was leading a Jewish rebellion or threatening the Roman Empire.
- G. "Son of the father." In contrast to Barabbas, Jesus is the true Son of the Father.
- H. A zealot engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Romans.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Transfer

(John 18:28-32)

Followers of Jesus should expect false accusations to be made against them.

How might a person justify being careful in not violating his or her religious traditions while at the same time bringing false accusations against someone?

Why would the Jewish leaders be so eager to get rid of Jesus?

2. The Trial

(John 18:33-38a)

Believers can confidently proclaim Jesus is without guilt.

How did Jesus's response to Pilate point to His innocence?

3. The Trade

(John 18:38b-40)

Some people reject Jesus regardless of the facts.

How should we characterize Pilate's attempt to release Jesus?

Why were the people so easily swayed to follow the Jewish leaders?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss with the group principles for engaging others who are unsure of or hostile toward the truth of Jesus.

What communication practices did Jesus demonstrate when dialoguing with Pilate?

How can the group help each other follow the example set by Jesus when encountering questions about Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. (See Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5.)

BIBLE SKILL: Compare similar situations.

Compare Jesus's interaction with Pilate to Paul's interaction with the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34).

What issues are similar in the two exchanges? How do the key points made in both settings compare?

Write a short statement expressing how you might respond to someone who denies the truth of Christ and His gospel.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 18:36. What is the key phrase in the verse?

The religious leaders agreed Jesus was worthy of death but didn't have authority to execute anyone. So they took Jesus to someone who did: Pilate, the Roman governor. It's worth noting that when Jesus was before the religious leaders, the charge was blasphemy (Matthew 26:64-65). But when they brought Him to Pilate, they accused Him of treason (Luke 23:2). They knew Jesus claiming to be God wouldn't get Pilate's attention. But claiming to be a king was a threat to Rome.

How is the kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of this world?

Make this personal: If Jesus's kingdom is not of this world, then what does that say about us as His subjects? Paul said our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). So our values and priorities should reflect God's kingdom. This is what Jesus was getting at in Matthew 6:33 when He taught that we are to seek first God's kingdom.

How can we seek God's kingdom first this week?

Agree to text John 18:36 to each other over the next few days as a reminder to make God's kingdom your priority this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 18:28

Note why the Jewish leaders did not enter the Roman governor's headquarters.

The Sanhedrin, the highest ruling Jewish body of the first century, heard accusations against Jesus—though the testimonies were contradictory (Mark 14:56). Two accusers stepped forward and recalled how Jesus stated He could rebuild the temple in three days. The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, a charge that called for the death penalty (Leviticus 24:16). But the Sanhedrin did not have authority to put anyone to death. For that to happen, Jesus would need to appear before the Roman authorities.

The Jewish leaders led Jesus to the Roman governor's headquarters. Jewish law was passed down orally through the generations. Eventually these laws and traditions were put into a written document known as the Mishnah. This text claimed Gentile homes were unclean; entering resulted in a defilement requiring a seven-day purification period. The Jewish leaders who led Jesus to the governor's headquarters thus stayed outside in the courtyard. Doing otherwise meant they would have been unable to eat the Passover. In the scenes that follow, Pilate entered and exited the residence as he talked with Jesus inside and the Jewish leaders outside.

What do you find ironic about the Jewish leaders' carefulness not to violate their religious traditions while at the same time bringing false accusations against Jesus?

Day 2: John 18:29-32

Contemplate the implications of verse 32.

Pilate saw through the Jewish leaders' scheme and wanted no part of their plot. His saying, "you take him and judge him according to your law," forced the Jews to admit they were powerless to execute Jesus. If Jesus's alleged crimes were against Roman law, Pilate would have exercised quick and severe justice. Since the priests were accusing Jesus of violating their religious rules, Pilate initially refused to play the game. The Jews thought they had the power to order Jesus to be executed. Pilate felt certain the decision was his. Both were wrong. All the details about the death of Jesus had been orchestrated long before this mock trial. (See John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32.)

Unknowingly, the Jews' conspiracy fulfilled Jesus's prophecy about the kind of death He was going to die (see Matthew 20:19; John 3:14; 12:32). Crucifixion was an exclusively Roman form of execution. All along, Jesus knew the price of human salvation and willingly went to the cross. No one took His life; He gave it for our sakes.

Reflect on Jesus's willingness to die on the cross for you.

Day 3: John 18:33-35

Pay attention to the question Jesus asked of Pilate.

Nothing about Jesus's appearance indicated He was a threat. No army stood ready to protect Him. He had no royal robes, crown, or jewelry. One can almost hear the disbelief in Pilate's voice. In the Greek text the "you" is emphatic: You? Are you the king of the Jews?

Before answering Pilate's question, Jesus asked for clarification. If Pilate was asking this on his own, it meant he was concerned Jesus was trying to establish Himself as a political king. If this were the case, Jesus would have been guilty of insurrection and would have been a threat to Rome. The answer to this question would have been "No." If the question, though, had come from something the religious leaders had reported, then the question was religious in nature: "Are you the Messianic King of Israel?" The answer to this question would have been "Yes."

Pilate responded with contempt. Not being a Jew, Pilate had no interest in the charges this religious mob was hurling at Jesus. He clearly saw that Jesus was not a political threat. Jesus must have done something, though, to draw these people's ire and cause them to hand Jesus over to him—hence, the question, "What have you done?"

What is something in your life that is rightfully threatened by acknowledging Jesus as your King?

Day 4: John 18:36-38a

Identify those who are "of the truth."

Jesus's kingdom was not of this world and posed no threat to Rome. His kingship was "not from here." Therefore, it would not have to be defended like other earthly kingdoms. Evidently the only word that caught Pilate's ear was "kingdom." Not having fully grasped what Jesus was saying, he pressed further: "You are a king then?" Jesus did not deny He was a king. Having said what His kingdom was not, Jesus next explained the nature of what His kingdom was. He stated He was born to be a king. He connected His coming to earth with His mission—"to testify to the truth." He came to reveal the truth about God's nature, about salvation, and grace.

Those who are of the truth are those who listen to His voice (v. 37). Implied in what Jesus said to Pilate was a call to self-examination: "Pilate, are you listening to my voice? Are you part of the truth?" Pilate responded with a cynical philosophical question, "What is truth?" He revealed that he had no concept of what truth really is.

What are the implications for you of Jesus's statement, "everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice"?

Day 5: John 18:38b-40

Underline Pilate's verdict.

Pilate reported to the Jews that he found no grounds for charging Jesus. Implied in his report was the possibility that although he found nothing to charge Jesus with, the Jews might still have grounds for an indictment—an offense that would allow them to judge Jesus according to their law (see v. 31). Pilate thus offered to release Jesus to them. During the intertestamental period, the Jews had begun this practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover. The Romans continued the practice as a gesture of goodwill.

Mark explained that “the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he [Pilate] would release Barabbas to them” (Mark 15:11). John referred to Barabbas as a revolutionary. The Greek word can refer to a robber, outlaw, or revolutionary. The crowd, having been worked up into a frenzy, demanded Barabbas to be released rather than Jesus. Barabbas could say, “This man Jesus died the death I should have died. He died in my place.” We who are followers of Jesus know this truth equally applies to us as well.

Why do people today so quickly reject Jesus regardless of the facts?

APPLY THE TEXT

List ways people today commonly misinterpret or misrepresent facts about Jesus. What can you point to from this study that counters the items you listed? With whom should you speak to and address the misinterpretations that you hear most often?



It Is Finished

Jesus provided for our redemption through His death on the cross.

JOHN 19:17-30



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you."
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁶the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁷no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

On what types of unfinished business might a person focus if given a terminal diagnosis?

Some die in hospitals, while others die at home. Some have long illnesses, while others die from sudden accidents. While some family members are relieved that the pain and suffering has ended, none really want to let go. Each life is precious and, to some degree, seems unfinished. This was not the case when Jesus died. His work of atonement was complete through His death.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

“They took Jesus away” (John 19:16). That simple statement envelopes the scene of Jesus carrying His cross toward Golgotha (v. 17). The Synoptic Gospels relate how soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to take the cross part of the way to Calvary (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Although not specified in Scripture, weakened by blood loss, Jesus likely tumbled beneath the weight of the cross. At that point, the guards forced the Cyrenian to carry the burden as he followed Jesus.

John states, “they crucified him” (John 19:18). His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Humiliating voices jeered at Him from passersby. Soldiers laughed as they divided His garments and gambled for His tunic. Pilate had a board placed above Jesus stating in three languages: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” Although the priests objected to the language, Pilate refused to change the wording. As far as he was concerned, this was their king.

Jesus’s mother and other women stood nearby. No one else from Jesus’s immediate family came to witness the horrible sight. Seeing His mother and His beloved disciple, Jesus placed Mary into John’s care.

After crying, “It is finished,” Jesus surrendered His spirit. Even in death, He was no victim. With Pilate’s permission, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus’s body down from the cross. These members of the Jewish Sanhedrin had been secret followers of Jesus. After His sacrifice, they would remain quiet no longer. Because the Sabbath was fast approaching, they hastily prepared Jesus’s body with spices and wrappings and buried Him in Joseph’s newly-hewn tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus anticipated what would happen just three days later.

JOHN 19:17-30

17 Carrying the cross ^A by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called ‘**Golgotha**’. ^B **18** There they crucified him and **two others with him**, ^C one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. **19** Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. **20** Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in **Aramaic, Latin, and Greek**. ^D **21** So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The king of the Jews,’ but that he said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’” **22** Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.” **23** When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. **24** So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it.” This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing. This is what the soldiers did. **25** Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of **Clopas**, ^E and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” **27** Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. **28** After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, “I’m thirsty.” **29** A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth. **30** When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “**It is finished.**” ^F Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

Key Words

- A. Jesus carried the cross beam. The upright beam was set in the ground before His arrival.
- B. Aramaic word for “skull.” *Calvaria* (calvary) is the Latin parallel.
- C. Matthew 27:38 and Mark 15:27 identify these as revolutionaries. For Isaiah’s prophecy, see Isaiah 53:9.
- D. Aramaic was the common language for Judeans. Latin was the formal language of the Roman Empire. Greek was the universal language known by all.
- E. This may be one of the two disciples that met Jesus after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:18).
- F. Translated from a single Greek word: *tetelestai*. It refers to the completion or fulfillment of something. John used this word eight times in Revelation (10:7; 11:7; 15:1,8; 17:17; 20:3,5,7).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Raised

(John 19:17-22)

Believers can declare Jesus as King.

Why do some want to discredit the claims of Jesus?

2. Planned

(John 19:23-24)

Jesus's death was a part of God's redemptive plan.

Why was it important for John to point to Psalm 22 when talking about Jesus's crucifixion?

3. Honored

(John 19:25-27)

Believers are to follow Jesus's example of showing compassion to family.

How did Jesus honor His mother while on the cross?

4. Finished

(John 19:28-30)

Humanity's redemption comes only through faith in Jesus.

How would you characterize Jesus's final declaration from the cross?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group how the crucifixion as an essential element in God's redemption plan impacts the life of the group. Create a list of people who may not know or understand the necessity of the crucifixion.

What can the group do to help others know and understand this reality?

KEY DOCTRINE: Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. (See Genesis 15:6; Romans 5:1.)

BIBLE SKILL: Connect Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment.

Read Psalm 22. Jot down elements of the Psalm that were fulfilled with Jesus's crucifixion. Compare Jesus's experience with the description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Which elements in Psalm and Isaiah overlap? How do these passages demonstrate prophetic knowledge of what would happen at Golgotha?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 19:30. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” what was “it”?

Jesus was on the cross for six hours (Mark 15:25,34). It’s impossible to imagine the agony and torture of this slow execution. Even the most graphic movie portrayals fall short in conveying the physical and emotional toll of these six hours. While the other three Gospels say Jesus gave “a loud cry” at the point of His death, John is understated: “he said, ‘It is finished.’” We don’t know how Jesus said it. Was it triumphant? Was it exhausted? John doesn’t say.

In your opinion, what was the most painful aspect of the crucifixion for Jesus?

Even here, we see Jesus’s absolute authority. John submitted to Jesus’s authority by caring for Jesus’s mother Mary from that moment on. And Jesus did not give up His spirit until He knew that “everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (v. 28). He exercised authority even over the moment of His death.

What does the finished work of Jesus on the cross mean in terms of salvation?

Write John 19:30 on a card, and place it on your pillow every morning when you make you bed. When you go to bed at night, let it remind you that the work of salvation is finished.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 19:17-18

Reflect on the words “they crucified him.”

On the way to the place of crucifixion, Jesus carried the cross by himself. Carrying the horizontal beam (Latin, *patibulum*) was part of the punishment Romans inflicted on the condemned. The other Gospels state that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the beam for Jesus, who was at the point of collapse (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). The exhaustion came from the flogging Jesus had endured. Having someone carry the *patibulum* was not because of compassion; the Romans wanted to make sure the criminal did not die before he reached the crucifixion site. Doing so would have been anticlimactic for the crowd and less painful for the condemned.

Being crucified between two criminals (Mark 15:27), Jesus was fulfilling what Isaiah had foretold some 800 years earlier, He “was counted among the rebels” (Isaiah 53:12).

How does Jesus’s crucifixion demonstrate the depth of God’s love for you?

Day 2: John 19:19-22

Consider how the inscription on the sign unintentionally confirmed Jesus’s true identity.

Romans commonly prepared a tablet or placard detailing the offender’s crimes; they wanted to discourage others from committing the same felonies. The sign, typically written in multiple languages, was either hung from the neck of the condemned person or carried by someone who accompanied the criminal. Once all were in place, the sign was affixed to the cross. The sign Pilate prepared for Jesus was different from what was expected; it listed no crimes. Instead, it simply read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” When the Jews had brought Jesus to Pilate, they claimed He had said He was “a king” (Luke 23:2). However, Jesus did not make this claim (see John 18:34-37).

The sign was written in Aramaic, a language commonly spoken by Jews; Latin, the official language of the Roman military; and Greek, the shared language Jews and Gentiles spoke throughout the Empire. Pilate’s refusing to change the sign as the chief priests requested was his way of mocking the Jews, as if he were saying, “You think you are such a powerful people? Here, this dying rebel from the insignificant village of Nazareth is the king you deserve.”

Pilate’s placard contained more truth than he realized, though. Jesus was and is King of kings and the Lord of lords. Pilate had unwittingly refused to change the truth into a lie.

Why do some people want to discredit the claims of Jesus?

Day 3: John 19:23-24

Identify how Old Testament Scripture was fulfilled.

Just as Pilate unwittingly declared the truth with his sign, the soldiers unknowingly fulfilled Old Testament prophecy with their actions at the foot of the cross. Psalm 22:18 states, “They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.” The tunic Jesus wore would have been like a long, linen t-shirt that came down to or just below the knee. The tunic was seamless. This detail emphasizes the fact it was not made of two materials that had been stitched together. The Old Testament prohibited combining materials when making clothes (Leviticus 19:19). Rather than rip it into pieces, the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it. The one-piece tunic was also an allusion to clothing the Jewish High Priest wore. The robe of the priest’s ephod was made of one piece of cloth with “an opening at its top in the center of it. Around the opening” was “a woven collar with an opening like that of body armor so that it does not tear” (Exodus 28:32). Significantly, the seamless article of clothing was a reminder that Jesus is our ultimate High Priest (Hebrews 4:15).

While the soldiers’ actions may seem to be a minor detail, it is a reminder that, in the death of Jesus, nothing was left to chance. The crucifixion’s every element was in keeping with God’s redemptive plan.

Why was it important for John to point to Psalm 22 when recounting Jesus’s crucifixion?

Day 4: John 19:25-27

Note how Jesus demonstrated love for His mother.

Jesus commended the care of His mother to John, the writer of this Gospel. Several details stand out in this scene. First, Jesus knew and obeyed both civil and religious law. The statement commending Mary’s care to John followed a form known as a testamentary disposition—the legal transference of responsibility that occurs after a person’s death. Details of such transference are often given in a last will and testament. Roman law allowed someone to make such a declaration even from a cross. Jesus was also following Jewish law, which gave Him, as the oldest son, responsibility to provide protection for His mother. Second, Jesus was obedient to the Father, even to His last breath. In providing for Mary’s care, He followed the commandment, “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Third, Jesus entrusted His mother’s care to the beloved disciple rather than His half-brothers who had not yet placed their faith in Him or become part of His mission. Jesus was ensuring no loose ends remained after His death. Fourth, in taking Mary into his home, John was doing more than providing a roof over her head. From that hour forward, he assumed responsibility of providing care for her.

How does Jesus caring for His mother give you a practical model for honoring members of your household?

4:10-11
5:11 ch. 2:17;
3:29-30; Gal. 4:9
m. 12 Gen. 3:6;
1 Cor. 15:21
10, 5:23; Gen.
1:1 Cor.
4:15.

...fences unto jus
17 ¶ For if
reigned by on
ceive abundan
of righteousness
Je'-sus Christ.
18 Therefore
ment came up
even so by the
came upon
" "
" as by
le simp
be

4:10-11
 4:11 ch. 2:12
 3:29-30; Gal. 4:4
 4:12 Gen. 3:6
 1 Cor. 15:21
 4:13, 5:23; Gen.
 1:26-27; 1 Cor.
 4:15.

Reach Out Your Hand

Believers can be confident that Jesus is resurrected.

JOHN 20:19-29



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ke? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ³where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁶the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁶no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

12

What is the most unbelievable thing you have ever seen?

Robert Ripley was a sports columnist who, during a slow sports news day, wrote an article about unusual competitions and called it “Champs and Chumps.” In time, oddities from around the world took on a new name, “Ripley’s Believe It or Not.” We are fascinated by things that seem unbelievable. Some things may test what we think to be possible until we see the evidence. Even Jesus’s closest followers had questions about His resurrection until they saw the evidence.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Throughout John’s Gospel we find a connection between seeing and believing. John the Baptist declared that he had seen and testified that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:33-34). At a wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water to wine, we are told that the disciples believed as a result of seeing the miracle (2:11). After giving a blind man sight, the formerly blind man professed his belief in Jesus (9:38). After raising Lazarus, John tells us that many Jews saw Lazarus and believed in Jesus (11:45). This theme finds its culmination in Jesus showing His scars after His resurrection.

Fearful of Jewish reprisals, the disciples hid behind locked doors, possibly in the same upper room where they celebrated the Passover. They did not realize the significance of it being the third day since Jesus’s crucifixion. Although Jesus repeatedly told them He would rise on that day, they could not connect His promise with their reality—until Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.

Jesus showed them His scars and ate with them. They needed complete confidence that Jesus had triumphed over the grave if they were to carry out the mission He was about to give them.

Thomas was not present at this gathering. When he returned and heard his companions’ testimonies, he said he would have to place his fingers into the nail prints of Jesus’s hands and put his hand into the Lord’s side before he could believe. Thomas could not comprehend this supernatural reality without hard evidence.

Thomas continued in his despondency for a week. As suddenly as His previous appearance, Jesus stood among the disciples again. He invited Thomas to do exactly what he had requested—to put his finger into Jesus’s scars. Thomas fell at Jesus’s feet and acknowledged Him as Lord and God. He saw and believed. Jesus commended persons who could believe even what they had not seen.

JOHN 20:19-29

19 When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “**Peace**^A be with you.” **20** Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.”

22 After saying this, he **breathed**^B on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you **forgive**^C the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” **24** But Thomas (called “**Twin**”^D), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples were telling him, “We’ve seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never **believe**.”^E

26 A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.” **28** Thomas responded to him, “**My Lord and my God!**”^F **29** Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Key Words

- A. *Shalom alekum* is still a common Jewish greeting today. Jesus could offer true and lasting peace to His disciples because of His sacrifice on the cross.
- B. The only New Testament use of this Greek word. However, the Hebrew equivalent appears in Genesis 2:7. As God gave Adam life, Jesus breathed new life into His people through the Spirit.
- C. Only Jesus can forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). However, the church is called to proclaim Christ’s forgiveness and to caution those who shun His mercy.
- D. The KJV and NIV use *Didymus*, which is Greek for “twin.” Thomas is the Hebrew/Aramaic equivalent.
- E. In John’s Gospel, “believe” is more than an intellectual exercise. It involves repentance, faith, and total dependence on Jesus for salvation.
- F. Thomas’s confession points to the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4). His confession equated Jesus as Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Commissioned

(John 20:19-23)

Believers are empowered to tell others about Jesus.

How does the joy of knowing Jesus is resurrected motivate believers to tell others about Him?

How does the Spirit empower people to share the gospel with others?

2. Demands

(John 20:24-25)

Believers should expect people to express their doubts about Jesus.

What kind of evidence might a person today demand prior to believing in Jesus?

3. Believed

(John 20:26-29)

People can trust the fact that Jesus was physically resurrected.

What was the significance of Jesus calling for His disciples to be at peace?

How does Jesus address people's doubts about Him today?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss with your group ways of addressing doubts.

How have you dealt with doubts in the past?

How can you encourage others in the group when they face doubts? What can the group do to be a safe place for sharing doubts and assuring each other?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Holy Spirit

At the moment of regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 5:9.)

BIBLE SKILL: Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.

Review a Bible dictionary article on the term "breath." Notice passages identified in the article that point to God's breath and His sovereignty over life. How does the article give you a deeper understanding of Jesus breathing on the disciples in John 20:22? What does Jesus breathing on them communicate about the nature and role of the Holy Spirit?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 20:29. Do you think it's a sin to have doubts about God? Explain.

Because Thomas wasn't with the other disciples the first time Jesus appeared to them, he needed a little extra convincing. He told the others, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands . . . I will never believe." Because of that, he is known as "Doubting Thomas."

How did Jesus deal with Thomas's doubts? How does he deal with yours?

Jesus graciously allowed Thomas to put his finger in the nail holes and his hand into the wound in His side. At that point, Thomas worshiped Jesus, calling Him, "My Lord and my God." Even though there's a note of rebuke here ("Don't be faithless"), the rebuke is overshadowed by the blessing in 20:29: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." That blessing is for all of us today!

Talk about each person's personality in your group. Do they tend to be a "seeing is believing" person? How do you share the gospel with naturally skeptical people?

Review John 20:29. Write your own name in the blank: "Blessed is _____, who has not seen and yet believes."

Prayer Requests

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 20:19-20

Identify how the disciples felt when they saw Jesus.

Despite Peter and John's visiting the empty tomb and Mary Magdalene's telling the disciples she had seen and spoken with the Lord, the disciples were still fearful. Knowing the role the Jews played in the crucifixion, the disciples were afraid of what they might do to them. Thus, they were behind locked doors.

Rather than hearing temple police banging on the doors, they heard a familiar voice: "Peace be with you." Jesus, who miraculously passed through grave clothes, evidently passed through the walls and stood among them. The disciples thought they were seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37). Jesus showed them his hands and his side. Although John had been the only disciple to stand at the foot of the cross, the others had certainly heard details about the crucifixion. Luke reported that Jesus "presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs" (Acts 1:3). The wounds offered such proof. When teaching His disciples during the Passover supper a few days earlier, Jesus had foretold, "But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice" (John 16:22). This was what happened; upon seeing the Lord alive, the disciples rejoiced.

How does the joy of knowing Jesus is alive motivate you to tell others about Him?

Day 2: John 20:21-23

Compare John 20:21-23 to John 15:26-27.

The words Jesus spoke to His disciples in John 15:26-27 were partially fulfilled in John 20:21-23. Having commissioned them, Jesus breathed on them and spoke of their receiving the Holy Spirit, an event that would occur in a few weeks at Pentecost. By breathing on His disciples, Jesus was providing a visible preview of the Spirit's arrival. He was also affirming His divinity by echoing what the Father had in creation (see Genesis 2:7).

When Jesus spoke of sins being forgiven or retained by His disciples, He used legal terms that referred to a judge's ability to discern the legitimacy of a person's behavior. The question for the judge to determine was whether a person was innocent or merely acting innocent. In the same way, Jesus was saying His followers could, based on someone's behavior, declare that person had truly repented and thus been forgiven—or had not.

**As the Father sent Jesus, Jesus is sending you out in the power of the Holy Spirit.
How are you obeying His commission?**

Day 3: John 20:24-25

Note why Thomas doubted.

For some unspecified reason, Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors. When the disciples later saw Thomas, they proclaimed, “We’ve seen the Lord!” Thomas wanted confirmation. He would never believe unless he could see and touch Jesus’s wounds. Before criticizing Thomas, we should recall two things. First, when Jesus appeared behind locked doors, He voluntarily showed the disciples His hands and side (20:20). Second, “He must be alive” was not people’s first thought. Instead, confusion and skepticism were the common reactions (see 20:13,15).

After realizing she was seeing the resurrected Christ and touching Him, Mary Magdalene reported her experiences to the disciples; yet, “when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it” (Mark 16:11). Additionally, when the group of women who had been at the empty tomb told the disciples what they had seen, their “words seemed like non-sense to them, and they did not believe the women” (Luke 24:11). Not only did the disciples not believe what they heard, some even doubted what they saw. Jesus later appeared to them on a mountain in Galilee. “When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted” (Matthew 28:17). Thomas was evidently no more skeptical than anyone else had been. He likely just wanted to verify the report personally.

What kind of evidence might people demand prior to believing in Jesus?

Day 4: John 20:26

Compare John 20:26 to verses 19 and 21, looking for the repeated key word.

This encounter occurred a week later. Thomas continued in his comfortless resolution that Jesus was dead. His doubt did not discourage his fellow disciples. They continued to share meals and fellowship with Thomas, but they did so with the joy of having seen the Lord.

By specifying his disciples were indoors again, John infers that they had gained courage to venture away from the safety of their seclusion. It was much like the disciples had experienced on the evening of the resurrection, except Thomas was present. We do not know why Jesus stayed away for seven days. But again, He appeared. The disciples still made sure the doors were locked. They remained concerned for their safety. A greater reason for John’s observation was that Jesus did not enter the room through the normal manner. As He did the previous week, Jesus came and stood among them. He greeted them in the usual way, “Peace be with you.”

Jesus promised His disciples a peace unlike what the world gives. It would be marked by an absence of trouble and fear. This peace would endure even amid suffering; it was possible because Christ conquered evil in the world (John 14:27; 16:33).

What was the significance of Jesus’s calling for His disciples to be at peace?

Day 5: John 20:27-29

Underline Thomas's words.

Jesus addressed Thomas's exact, earlier words and instructed him to do precisely what Thomas had declared—to see and touch His wounds. Jesus was clearly showing He knew both what Thomas had said and what was in his heart and mind—a sense of hope mixed with uncertainty. The instructions Jesus gave Thomas were not a rebuke but a compassionate invitation for the apostle to satisfy his curiosity.

John gave no indication of what Thomas's actions were. Did he put his finger in the wounds in His hands? Did he look at the scars or put his hand into wound the soldier made with his spear? We don't know. What we do know is that Thomas followed the final instruction Jesus gave: "Don't be faithless, but believe." The apostle's verbal response was an exclamation of faith and personal conviction: "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas's words were a testimony about his personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus, though, looked beyond that moment to a time when no tangible evidence would be available to prove His resurrection. He proclaimed those who do not see and yet believe are blessed. This declaration of Jesus applies to those who, even centuries later, would come to believe without seeing. They would be blessed. To be blessed does not mean a person is merely happy or content; it also indicates God has accepted the individual.

Do you have any doubts concerning Jesus?

How does He address those doubts?

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your own heart. To what degree are you certain you have a saving belief in Jesus? If you have sincere questions about your answer, ask your Bible study leader or pastor about how you can have assurance of your relationship with Jesus.



Do You Love Me?

Believers are offered God's grace even when they fail.

JOHN 21:15-23



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...him, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁷the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁸no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the



What makes asking someone about their love for you dangerous?

Asking someone if they love us can be a dangerous question. We may hear the right answer while their body language communicates something different. They may view love differently than we do or to a different degree than what we had hoped. Even though this may be a dangerous question, it is an important question so we can know the potential for that relationship. Jesus asked Peter this question to help Peter reflect on his future.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Following their encounters with the risen Jesus in Jerusalem, the disciples traveled northward to the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). Shortly after His resurrection, Jesus sent a message with the women who saw Him. He wanted the disciples to go on to Galilee where He would join them (Matthew 28:10).

As they waited for Jesus, several of them joined Peter who went fishing. One wonders if Peter wanted to return to his former occupation as a commercial fisherman. Peter was tired emotionally, physically, and spiritually. His flight to the familiar was a natural reaction to the stress he had been experiencing.

Jesus had other plans. He purposefully chose this site to confront the disciples with His commission. After they fished all night without catching anything, Jesus appeared to them from the shore. At first, they did not recognize Him. Heeding His instructions, they cast their nets and caught a huge harvest of fish. This event mirrored Peter's initial experience with Jesus immediately prior to Jesus's call (Luke 5:1-11).

Realizing this was Jesus, Peter swam to shore while the others brought along the boat and fish-laden nets. Jesus already had a fire going and invited them to join Him for breakfast. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter was grieved because he recognized the allusion to the three times that he had denied Jesus. Jesus was not trying to hurt Peter but to challenge him with a bigger goal in life.

When Jesus first met Peter, He promised to make him a fisher of men. Jesus linked love for Him with service to His flock. We cannot avoid the connection between love for Jesus and serving Him by ministering in His name.

JOHN 21:15-23

15 When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you **love** ^A me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to him, “you know that I love you.” “**Feed** ^B my lambs,” he told him. **16** A second time he asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to him, “you know that I love you.” “**Shepherd** ^C my sheep,” he told him. **17** He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” “Feed my sheep,” Jesus said. **18** “Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would **tie your belt and walk** ^D wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will **stretch out your hands** ^E and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don’t want to go.” **19** He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, “Follow me.” **20** So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, “Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray you?” **21** When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” **22** “If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

Key Words

- A. In His first two questions, Jesus used *agapao*, the Greek word for divine love. In His third question and in all three of Peter’s responses, the word *phileo* (brotherly love) is used. The distinctions do not change the basic meaning of Jesus’s questions or Peter’s answers.
- B. The Greek word *bosko* includes the idea of providing good grazing land for sheep under one’s care.
- C. The Greek word *poimaino* encompasses all the responsibilities of a shepherd, including feeding, tending, protecting, and guiding. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (10:11,14), and He calls His disciples to follow His example.
- D. As a young man, Peter was free to do as he wanted. Jesus indicated that would change later in life.
- E. Implies crucifixion (see v. 19). The victim’s arms were stretched out so his wrists could be nailed.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Do You?

(John 21:15-17)

Believers should examine the depth of their love for Jesus.

What might a person point to as proof that they love Jesus?

Why do we easily think that if we have faltered then God is no longer able to use us?

2. Will You?

(John 21:18-19)

Believers can faithfully follow Jesus in spite of their past.

Would knowing you would be a martyr for your faith in Jesus cause joy or anxiety? Explain.

3. What About . . . ?

(John 21:20-23)

Believers are to trust God's plans for their lives.

What are the dangers of believers comparing themselves to other believers?

How do we stay focused on Jesus's call in our life?

APPLY THE TEXT

How can your group be more redemptive when a person fails to represent Christ well? Where is the balance between rebuking and restoring?

How can the group become a place to foster restoration with Jesus for both believers and those who are far from God?

KEY DOCTRINE: God

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. (See Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 John 2:4-6.)

BIBLE SKILL: Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.

Look up selected passages that use *agape*: John 13:34; 17:26; 1 Corinthians 13:8; and 1 John 4:19. Note which passages refer to love relating to God and love relating to people. Compare what you find to selected passages that use *phileo*: Matthew 10:37; John 5:20; 16:27; and James 4:4. Make notations about use of the term love. How does the use of these words help us understand what Jesus was communicating to Peter in John 21?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 21:22. Why is it so tempting to compare yourself to others, even in the way you live out your Christianity?

After Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus gave him an opportunity to confess his love for Jesus three times. But rather than calling him by his nickname, Peter (“Rock”), Jesus called him by his given name. It almost seems tentative, as though we don’t know where Peter stands at this point.

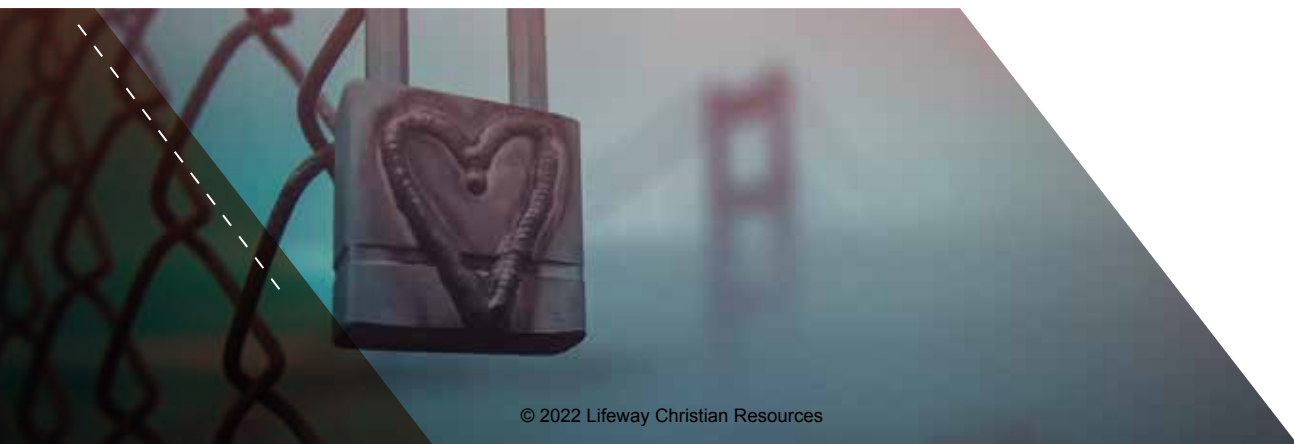
When there has been a rift in a relationship, what does it take to restore it?

Simon could have decided he had let Jesus down too much to be used by Him again. Instead, he allowed himself to be restored by Jesus. Notice that the last thing Jesus said to Peter—“Follow me”—echoes the first thing He had said to Peter (Mark 1:17). In addition, they were having this conversation by the Sea of Galilee, where it all started.

Have you ever felt like you messed up so badly that God couldn’t use you? How does Peter’s story encourage you?

Use a marker to write “Follow me” on the bottom of your shoe. Each time you put on or take off your shoes, reflect on what it means to follow Jesus.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 21:15

Contemplate the meaning of “these.”

Simon Peter and six other disciples returned to the Sea of Galilee and fished through the night (John 21:1-3). On this night, they pulled up empty nets. Standing on the shore, Jesus called out and told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. When they did, the nets filled with large fish. Once the disciples were on shore, Jesus prepared over a charcoal fire a breakfast of bread and fish for them. We wonder if Peter, standing next to the charcoal fire, thought back to the night outside the palace of the high priest when he had stood next to a charcoal fire. That night was marked with disappointment and denial. This, though, was a time for reconciliation and restoration.

What did Jesus mean when He asked Peter, “do you love me more than these?” What is the “these”? Some believe Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him more than he did his previous occupation of fishing. Others believe Jesus was asking if Peter loved Him more than he loved his fellow disciples. Still others believe Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him more than the other disciples loved Jesus. Loving Jesus more than anything and anyone else was to be essential in the work He was calling Peter to do.

What can you point to as evidence of your love for Jesus?

Day 2: John 21:16-17

Think about why Peter was grieved when Jesus asked him the third time.

The Greek text uses two words for love. First is *agapao*, which is the highest form of love (see John 3:16). The second Greek term is *phileo*, which denotes a friendship. The first two times, Jesus asked, “Do you *agapao* me?” Both times, Peter, knowing how he had denied knowing Jesus, replied, “You know that I *phileo* you.” In the third questioning, Jesus used the verb Peter used and asked, “Do you *phileo* me?” Recognizing Jesus knew his heart, Peter replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I *phileo* you.” At that moment, it was the best Peter felt he could sincerely confess; there was no need to hide his sense of inadequacy from Jesus.

Jesus commanded Peter to feed and shepherd His flock. Feeding and shepherding encompassed all duties related to providing care for sheep. Peter may have turned his back on Jesus, but Jesus had not turned His back on Peter. Jesus was ready to restore and commission Peter for kingdom work. The scene offers hope; the fact we have failed does not mean we are finished.

Reflect on a time when you faltered then felt God was no longer able to use you.

Day 3: John 21:18-19

Identify the impact of Peter's death as a martyr.

Following Jesus is not without cost. Having renewed Peter's profession of love, Jesus helped Peter understand the implications of following Him. These verses contain a prophecy concerning Peter's death as a martyr. Jesus spoke in contrasts. In his youth, Peter had control over his own actions; later in life, he would not. In his youth, Peter walked where he wanted to go; in old age, someone else would carry him where he did not want to go. The image of Peter stretching out his hands likely referred to crucifixion. The terms reflect practices related to Roman crucifixion. Thus, the words Jesus spoke in verse 18 depicted what kind of death Peter would experience; he would be crucified. Jesus knew that even in death, Peter would glorify God. By the time John penned these words, the prophetic words Jesus had spoken had been fulfilled.

When Jesus initially called His disciples, He did so with the simple command, "Follow me" (see John 1:43). Jesus issued the call to Peter again. Peter would begin to follow anew—but this time as a fully forgiven and restored disciple of the risen Christ.

Would knowing that you were going to die as a martyr for your faith in Jesus cause joy or anxiety? Explain.

Day 4: John 21:20-21

Notice Peter's question.

John never named himself in his Gospel. One of the ways he identified himself was by calling himself "the disciple Jesus loved" (see 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7). He had been next to Jesus at the Passover supper. Reclining as they did during meals, this meant when John spoke to Jesus, he leaned back against Him (13:23).

Peter, having absorbed what Jesus said about his martyrdom, became concerned about what would happen to John. For whatever reason, John was following them, suggesting that Jesus and Peter had walked away from the group. His proximity attracted Peter's attention. Peter thus asked, "Lord, what about him?" He wanted to know how John's life would end; would he also face martyrdom? Sometimes when we feel on the spot, it's tempting to shift the focus to someone else. Peter had been given his marching orders, but Jesus said nothing about John or the other disciples.

What are the dangers of comparing yourself to other believers?

Day 5: John 21:22-23

Underline the words, “As for you, follow me.”

Jesus responded to Peter’s curiosity with a mild rebuke. He stated that if He desired John to live until He returned, that was not Peter’s concern. He had already explained what Peter’s future was to be. Thus, Peter did not need to compare himself with John or to focus on John’s fate or future but his own.

The verb Jesus used was both singular and emphatic—“follow me.” Jesus was not going to allow Peter to change the subject; following Him was to be the single-minded emphasis for Peter’s future. The lesson applies to us today. We cannot spend our energies comparing ourselves to other believers and how the Lord may be using their lives in contrast to our own.

Peter, active in establishing the early church, did die as a martyr during the reign of Nero—likely about AD 65. John, however, lived well into his nineties. In his senior years, John penned his Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. God had different courses for these two men’s lives. Comparing themselves with each other would be pointless, and Jesus knew that. Ultimately, John died like any other man, but first he fulfilled Jesus’s purpose in his life, just like Peter was commanded to do. How others interpret God’s call remains between them and the Lord. We must focus on Christ’s purpose for us.

How can you stay focused on Jesus’s call in your life?

APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on times when you have failed Jesus in some way. Have you asked Jesus to forgive and restore you? If not, take a few minutes and ask for His forgiveness. What can you learn from that experience that will help you in the future remain faithful to Jesus?



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.

Through the Week

- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.



The Day before Group Study Time

- Ask God to direct the creation of a group plan.
- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

Continued on next page — — — — —

After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open your mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **Visit them.** Deliver a copy of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to every person in your group.
- **Ask them.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **Tell them.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **Show them.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **Invite them.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
- Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
- Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Continued on next page — — — — —

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here’s how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **Step 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You’re just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **Step 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **Step 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **Step 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **Step 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **Step 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **Step 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

Why Wasn't This Sold?

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, talk about what they had for dinner last night. After a few minutes, direct attention to the lesson introduction on page 13. Encourage them to respond to the questions after the introduction. Be prepared to share about a formal dinner you attended.

ASK: *What are some other ways to demonstrate honor to people in our culture?*

Lead the group in a brief discussion about who our culture honors and how we show them honor.

TRANSITION: *With today's session, we are starting a new quarter, but we are continuing our study of John's Gospel. Last quarter ended with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11. Today's study examines something that happened not long after that. Jesus was the honored guest at a dinner in Bethany the week before His death, but what John emphasized was a startling act of worship and generosity—along with Jesus's response.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John*) displayed on the wall. Remind the group that Jesus's coming and His public ministry are the focus of the first several chapters of John's Gospel.

SUMMARIZE: *Beginning in John 12, though, the focus shifts toward the last week of Jesus's life on earth. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: John Time Line). Point out that this event took place around AD 33, just before Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead. Share that Bethany was where Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and it is the setting for the banquet we see in today's key passage.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **John 12:1-3**, instructing the group to look for ways Jesus was honored.

EXPLAIN: Use information from Understand the Context (p. 13) to identify two different anointings of Jesus in the Gospels. Explain that this session will focus on the second one.

EXPLAIN: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: First-Century Sabbath Laws*). Remind the group that the Jewish leaders believed that Jesus had violated the Sabbath on multiple occasions and wanted to arrest and execute Him as a result. Point out the danger of holding this dinner in light of the Sanhedrin's instructions (John 11:57). Talk about the risk of being with Jesus at the banquet.

EXAMINE: Encourage the group to work in pairs to make a list of ways John described Mary's offering. After a few minutes, allow volunteers

to share what stuck out to them. Highlight the fact that Mary's perfume was expensive and pure. Note that it also was aromatic, filling the room with its fragrance.

- **(12:3)** Mary used a pound of pure and expensive nard. This fragrant ointment was made from the roots of a rare herb. It may have been imported from its native India. Such a large amount seemed extravagant, lending credence to the idea that Mary applied it to Jesus's head and His feet. Using a pound of perfume caused the house to be filled with the fragrance. As with modern perfume, some fragrances were diluted with other oils to reduce the cost. Mary's perfume was pure, making it even more valuable. Mary's expression of gratitude was not watered down by any consideration of expense.

ASK: *What can we say about Mary based on John's description?* Lead a brief discussion about Mary's humility and passion for worshiping Jesus. Emphasize that she wasn't worried about the reactions of others. *She was simply determined to honor the Lord with her gift and her actions.*

REFLECT: Direct the group to silently respond to this question on page 15: ***How should we respond to Jesus's work in our lives?*** Encourage them to recall things Jesus has done in their lives and how they can show gratitude and honor to Him for those situations.

TRANSITION: *"Haters gonna hate" is a popular saying in our culture. It means someone is always going to complain or find fault with something. As it turned out, what's true in the 21st century was also true in the first century. Someone at the*

banquet had a problem with Mary's extravagant gift and worship.

READ: Read John 12:4-8 aloud, directing the group to determine the attitude or motivation behind Judas's question.

ASK: *What role did Judas have with the disciples? How did that play into his criticism of Mary?* Note that there were other disciples who agreed with him that the perfume, costing a year's wages, could have been sold to benefit the poor (Matt. 26:8-9; Mark 14:4-5).

VISUAL: On a board, create a chart with two columns, one titled "Mary" and the other "Judas." For each column, encourage the group to suggest descriptive words that illustrate the attitudes of Mary and Judas. Ask: ***How do we reconcile Judas's being involved in ministry as a disciple with his betrayal that led to Jesus being arrested?*** (p. 15)

CONSIDER: Enlist a volunteer to read the Key Doctrine (p. 15). Encourage volunteers to suggest how Mary demonstrated biblical stewardship. Challenge the group to reflect on their own attitudes toward generosity. Offer time for silent prayer, allowing the group to talk with God about areas where they could be better stewards and areas where they could adjust their attitudes toward generosity.

DISCUSS: Read verse 8 aloud again. Ask: ***What did Jesus mean by this?***

- **(12:8)** The disciples could (and should) minister to the poor at any time. However, they would not always have Jesus physically present with them. The time for honoring Jesus in person was limited. His death was

fast approaching. It was important for them to take advantage of the time they had to show love for their Master.

- **(12:8)** Some have used Jesus's statement, "for you always have the poor with you," as an excuse not to help people in need. The Bible teaches we should always look for occasions to help the poor (see Deut. 15:7-11), but we also have a responsibility to honor Jesus through our giving and our worship.

TRANSITION: *Because John included her in this story, we know what Mary did—and we can follow her example.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud **John 12:9-11**, suggesting the group look for reasons a large crowd would have gathered. Note that they were probably neither faithful followers nor hostile enemies of Jesus, but curious onlookers.

REFLECT: Call attention to the last verse in this section. Ask: ***Why did the leaders feel so threatened by Jesus—and even Lazarus?*** Share that they were ruled by jealousy over Jesus's popularity and fear over their own loss of standing.

- **(12:10-11)** The religious establishment had already begun a conspiracy to kill Jesus (11:49-53). His popularity challenged their position and authority and drew people away from their teaching. His miracles, along with His authoritative preaching, stood in sharp contrast to the impact of their teaching among the people (Matt. 7:29). They saw the effect Lazarus's presence had on the people, so they also decided to kill Lazarus.

ASK: ***Were the leaders more like Mary or Judas? Why?*** Note how they aligned with Judas's attitude. Affirm again that Mary developed a reputation for honoring Jesus. Ask: ***How can the way a person honors Christ bring others to Him?*** (p. 15)

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Encourage the group to share ways believers can show devotion to Jesus.

RESPOND: Encourage the group to respond to the "Apply the Text" questions on page 15: ***What role does the group play in helping each other show devotion to Jesus?***
How can the group corporately express devotion to Jesus?

CHALLENGE: Lead the group to privately identify ways they will show their devotion and appreciation to Jesus during the coming week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, acknowledging Jesus is worthy of our worship and asking Him to help us honor Him purposefully in our quiet times and in our corporate worship.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce attendance by suggesting that group members invite friends and family members who don't normally attend. Remind them that this part of John's Gospel focuses on the last week of Jesus's life on earth and the first Easter.



If It Dies

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Display a variety of seed packets. As the group arrives, invite them to share their gardening stories. Highlight one or two of the seed packets. Note that the seed itself does not look anything like its final product, but the packets let you know what to expect. Ask: ***Before you get a harvest, what happens to the seed?***

TRANSITION: *Just like the seed has to be buried, Jesus said He would need to die. In today's study, we'll see Jesus predicting His death. But John also reminds us that He offers hope through His death.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Using John 12:12-19, briefly summarize Jesus's triumphal entry. Underscore that Jesus understood that His "hour" (12:23) was coming, so He wanted to tell His followers what would be happening.

REVIEW: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John*) displayed on the wall or locate the outline of John on page 9. Recall that John 12 represents a transition in John's Gospel, as the writer turned toward Jesus's last week.

TRANSITION: On **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*), indicate that Jesus

entered Jerusalem. *For the most part, the rest of John's Gospel happens in Jerusalem or just outside the city walls. It also happened during Passover, a major celebration among the Jews. But the first account John provided related to a group of Gentiles.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read John 12:20-22, considering why a group of Greeks would be interested in talking with Jesus. Direct the group to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Jesus's Last Week*) to find these events.

DESCRIBE: *Though Jesus's ministry was primarily to Jews, these verses make it clear He also came for Gentiles. These God-fearing Greeks had probably come to celebrate Passover.*

STUDY: Encourage the group to use the information on page 25 and to work as pairs in answering this question: ***Why did the Greeks approach Philip about seeing Jesus?*** Point out that Philip and Andrew were the only disciples with Greek names, so they might have seemed more approachable to the Greeks. Also it was probably easier to reach out to one of the disciples than to Jesus Himself.

DISCUSS: Suggest that having something in common makes people more approachable. Ask: ***What are some affinities people share that could serve as a door to point someone***

to Jesus? Record responses on the board. As time permits, allow a few volunteers to share how they have used affinities to reach others for Jesus.

TRANSITION: *John didn't share what Jesus said to the Greeks—or if He even met with them at all. But he did describe the lessons Jesus taught afterward.*

READ: Read John 12:23-26 aloud, directing the group to determine why it was important for Jesus to know and explain that His hour had come.

DISCUSS: *What did Jesus mean when He talked about His “hour”?*

- **(12:23)** “Hour” did not refer to a sixty-minute period. Instead, it represented the culmination of Jesus’s life purpose at the cross. Just as His birth occurred at the perfect time in God’s plan (Gal. 4:4), Jesus’s death would take place according to the Father’s will (Acts 2:23). Jesus had previously noted that His hour had not yet arrived (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now, He knew His death was imminent.

ASK: *What did Jesus mean when He said He would be glorified?* Share that Jesus understood that His death would lead to our eternal life. Point out that through His death, He would be exalted, honored, and known. Ask: *What illustration did Jesus use to describe His death?*

- **(12:24)** Jesus often employed familiar objects for spiritual application. In this agricultural society, the people understood the life cycle of a “grain of wheat.” As in His parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15), the seed is planted by the

farmer. Prior to germination, the grain “remains by itself.” It cannot reproduce. But through its death, the seed “produces much fruit.”

VISUAL: Explain that in a rural economy like first-century Palestine, planting and reaping made sense. On the board, draw a seed, then draw dirt over it. Draw a yield sign and a plant growing out of the dirt.

- **(12:25)** The Greek word translated *lose* can mean to ruin or to destroy. The act of treating one’s own life as more important than God means that person’s life will be ruined.
- **(12:25)** Jesus contrasted the self-centered person with “one who hates his life in this world.” Some scholars argue that the term *hates* implies less love or personal preference. The believer’s love for Jesus should be so strong that compared to it, other relationships seem like hate.

DISCUSS: Highlight that Jesus said those who serve Him would follow Him. Ask: *What implications does that have for us?* Emphasize that the believer who has a proper attitude toward being Jesus’s disciple will be involved in service to Jesus.

TRANSITION: *Jesus felt the weight of what He was getting ready to face. But He also knew that He had a higher purpose: Bringing glory to Himself by bringing glory to the Father.*

READ: Instruct a volunteer to read aloud, John 12:27-28, encouraging the group to recall other times in Scripture when God spoke aloud.

REFLECT: Call attention to the turmoil Jesus was experiencing. Ask: ***How do these verses reveal that Jesus knew and accepted His purpose for coming to earth?*** Challenge the group to consider times when they struggled to obey God's will. Ask: ***How does Jesus's struggle help believers faithfully follow God?***

TRANSITION: *The Father validated Jesus by speaking to the crowd. But Jesus already knew His Father was pleased with Him. It was another indication for those around Him that He was the Son of God.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read John 12:29-33 aloud, directing the group to determine the crowd's response to what they heard.

EXPLAIN: *Not everyone understood the voice, but Jesus said the voice proved that He was the Christ. He also explained that Satan and his forces of evil would be defeated once He was lifted up. This indicated His crucifixion.*

ASK: Direct the group to the question on page 23: ***How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory? How does the cross draw people today?*** Facilitate a brief discussion about how Jesus's death provides life.

MEMORY VERSE: Divide John 12:32 into three parts and assign one third of the group each of the parts. After repeating their sections several times, direct them to switch parts. Repeat and change again. Distribute **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Challenge the group to place the bookmark in their Bible or DDG.

CHALLENGE

PROPOSE: Call attention to this week's summary statement on page 20: *Jesus offers hope to those who seek Him.* Direct the group to create a list of people they know who are far from God. Ask: ***What actions can we take as individuals and as a group to introduce others to Jesus?*** Mention the opportunity to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering as one example.

RESPOND: Encourage the group to use the Apply the Text questions on page 27 in their personal quiet time as they reflect on strengthening their witness.

PRAY: Conclude with prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus to be our sacrifice. Pray that the group will be bold in sharing Jesus and in giving to missions.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week and reminding them of the memory verse (John 12:32). Suggest they identify people they know who need the hope that Jesus offers. Encourage them to pray for those individuals and to look for opportunities to share Jesus. Reassure them that He is already drawing people to Himself as the memory verse says.

I Will Come Again

ENGAGE

BEGIN: On the board, write these words: *Adios, Arrivederci, Au Revoir, Auf Wiedersehen, Sayonara*. As the group arrives, show them the list and talk about what each word might mean. Share that these are how people say “goodbye” in other nations.

ASK: *When was it hard for you to say goodbye to someone?*

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the session introduction on page 29. Encourage the group to share their responses to the question at the top of the page: ***How does knowing the time of a person’s return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?*** (p. 29)

TRANSITION: *Today’s study takes place the day before Jesus’s crucifixion. Jesus shared some last words with His disciples as part of His “Farewell Discourse.”*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Using Understand the Context (p. 29), briefly explain the setting and Jesus’s remarks that He was leaving but would come again. Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John’s Gospel*) or locate the outline of John on page 9. Note that these chapters focus on the Passover meal and Jesus’s final words to His

followers. Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*), indicate where the meal likely took place.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 13:31-35**, as the group listens for Jesus’s new command to the disciples. Direct the group to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Jesus’s Last Week*) and find these events in the context of Passion Week.

DISCUSS: ***What did the cross have to do with Christ’s glory?*** Talk about how Jesus would be glorified through His death. *The crucifixion would destroy Satan’s power and pave the way for sinners to find forgiveness. Through His death, both the Son and the Father would be glorified.*

- **(13:31-32)** Jesus viewed His approaching crucifixion as the ultimate fulfillment of His mission of salvation. What was about to happen glorified Him by accomplishing His Messianic purpose. What looked to the world to be shame and humiliation would turn instead to be victory and glory not only for the Son but also for the Father. In Jesus’s high priestly prayer, Jesus said to the Father, “I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (17:4).

ANALYZE: Place the group into an even number of teams and give them the following assignments:

- *Even Teams:* In your group, respond to the following question: ***How does the term “little children” in verse 33 characterize the relationship between Jesus and His followers?***
- *Odd Teams:* In your group, respond to the following question: ***How do you think the disciples felt when He said they could not come with Him?***

After giving the teams time to work, allow a volunteer from each to share their responses. Highlight the transition from disciples to friends, as well as the sadness and fear they felt about Jesus leaving.

ASK: ***What are some rules we have to keep as a society?*** Record responses on the board. ***What new “rule” did Jesus give His followers? Why should we obey it?*** Emphasize love as the identifying character quality of Christ followers.

TRANSITION: *Jesus challenged His disciples to love Him and to love one another. Sometimes, we think we love Jesus until we face an opportunity to compromise.*

READ: Read John 13:36-38 aloud, reminding the group of how Peter attempted to validate his loyalty to Jesus.

- **(13:37)** All four Gospels tell of Peter’s declaration of loyalty. Matthew recorded it as, “Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away” (Matt. 26:33). Luke

stated, “‘Lord,’ he [Peter] told him, ‘I’m ready to go with you both to prison and to death’” (Luke 22:33). Mark said the other disciples felt the same way: “But he [Peter] kept insisting, ‘If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.’ And they all said the same thing” (Mark 14:31).

EXPLAIN: *Jesus often used questions in His teaching as He did here. The last sentence in verse 38 must have been a blow to Peter and shocking to the other disciples.*

CONSIDER: Direct attention to this question on page 31: ***How might a person’s good intentions get derailed?*** Invite the group to create and respond to a hypothetical situation where loyalty to Christ is challenged.

TRANSITION: *Jesus’s conversation with Peter revolved around his desire to follow Jesus and Jesus’s insistence that he couldn’t. But Jesus wasn’t closing the door forever. He promised a day when they would all be together again.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud John 14:1-6, as the group reflects on how Jesus used the word “believe.” Ask: ***What are some things that challenge our belief as we try to live out our faith?***

IDENTIFY: Encourage the group to work in pairs to read the verses again and to highlight phrases that stick out to them. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to report on what they discussed. Emphasize that Jesus’s words were meant to provide hope. *Even though the disciples couldn’t grasp it at the time, millions of believers have found peace in these words ever since.*

ASK: What problem did Thomas identify? Why was that a significant issue for the disciples?

- **(14:5)** Thomas voiced the ongoing uncertainty of the group. His use of the plural “we” indicated the other disciples had the same unanswered questions. He confessed they did not know where Jesus was going. Although Jesus had just told them that He was going to Father, they remained clueless. In addition, since they didn’t know where Jesus was going, they couldn’t possibly know the way.

DISTRIBUTE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: “I Am” Sayings of Jesus*). Walk through the “I am” statements and review the ones that appeared earlier in John’s Gospel. Highlight Jesus’s words in verse 6 using **Pack Item 6** (*Key Verse: John 14:6*). Read the verse a few times and encourage the group to memorize it during the week. Lead the group to review the information about verses 4-6 on page 35. Ask them to briefly share about avoiding the deception of humanistic pluralism and the propensity in our culture to accept all beliefs, values, lifestyles, and truth claims as equal and valid. Ask: **How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?** (p. 31)

- **(14:6)** Jesus not only answered Thomas’s question (v. 5), but He also went a step further. He explained that the destination is the Father, and He emphasized that He is the way. Despite what some in today’s culture may believe, Jesus is not merely one way among many paths to the divine. Jesus stated plainly, no one can establish a relationship with the

heavenly Father except through me. If it were possible to find peace with God in any other way, Jesus would not have died on the cross.

REVIEW: Enlist a volunteer to read today’s summary statement on page 28: *Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.*

LIST: Guide the group to list some actions that honor God and record their ideas on the board. Challenge each person to choose one to focus on this week and tell why.

RESPOND: Encourage the group to privately reflect on the Apply the Text questions on page 35, recalling the time when they made a commitment to follow Jesus as Savior. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Is Jesus the Only Way?*). Discuss how this could be used to share the gospel with someone. Point out the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover. Assure those who have not made a commitment to follow Christ that you are available to talk with them after the group time.

PRAY: Conclude with prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus to teach us how to live. Ask God to enable the group to love others, remain loyal to Christ, and strengthen their belief in Him while awaiting His return.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by encouraging the group to follow Jesus this week and to find ways to honor Him through their words and actions. Let them know you are praying for them to put Christ’s command to love one another into action.



Peace I Leave

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Prior to the session, create an acrostic for the word “peace.” Make enough copies for each person to have one. As the group arrives, give each person an acrostic and a pencil. Encourage them to identify words they associate with peace using the acrostic. To start the small group time, allow a few volunteers to share the words they used for their acrostics. Discuss why they connect those words with peace.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the session introduction on page 37. Ask: ***How do you define peace? What’s the difference between peace and a lack of conflict?*** (p. 37) Encourage the group to keep that question top of mind as they study today’s verses.

TRANSITION: *After Jesus told His disciples that He was going away, He promised to send them the Holy Spirit. As Christians, the Holy Spirit lives in us. The Spirit guides us and teaches us. He also gives us peace.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point out **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of John’s Gospel) displayed on the wall or locate the outline of John on page 9. Share that this passage falls under the third outline point: “Preparation: Instructions of the Twelve by the Son of God.”

REVIEW: *The events of John 14 took place in the upper room after the Passover meal. John focused on some of Jesus’s final instructions to His disciples because His arrest and crucifixion were just hours away. On **Pack Item 1** (Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem), locate where the Passover meal and this time of teaching may have taken place.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 14:16-21**, as the group listens for Jesus’s teaching on the concept of the Trinity. Direct the group to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Jesus’s Last Week) and encourage them to find these events on the poster.

ASK: ***What words come to mind when you hear “counselor?” Why?*** Allow a few volunteers to share their thoughts and record their responses on the board. Point out that a good counselor will help reduce the client’s confusion or distress. *They enable their clients to look at their troubles in a rational way and help them see a way forward. The best counselors lead their clients toward a more hopeful, healthy, and peaceful life.*

IDENTIFY: ***What was the first promise Jesus made to His disciples in these verses?*** Highlight the significance of “another” and that Jesus called the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of truth.”

- **(14:16)** The term *Counselor* describes “one called alongside.” The Greek word for *another* means “another of the same kind.” It could be rendered: “Another like Myself.” The Spirit was equal in every way to the Father and the Son.
- **(14:17-18)** Jesus described the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth.” The Spirit testifies about Jesus (John 15:26) and leads believers to know the truth through the Scriptures (John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16). Through the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfilled His promise that He would “not leave you as orphans.” The Spirit’s presence would empower them to be His witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8).

IDENTIFY: Instruct the group to identify the second and third promises about the Spirit found in verses 19-21.

- **(14:19-20)** The second promise, “Because I live, you will live too,” addressed the age-old question: “When a person dies, will he come back to life?” (Job 14:14). The answer is, “Yes, death does not have the final word.” Death’s victory and sting were obliterated at the empty tomb (1 Cor. 15:55). The third promise was that the resurrection would verify Jesus is in the Father, His disciples are in Him, and He is in them. Jesus was saying that not even death could break the union He had with His disciples, a union not unlike what He enjoyed with the Father.

SHARE: Give out **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: The Role of the Holy Spirit*). After the group reviews the handout, ask: ***What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives as Christ followers? The Counselor replaces Jesus’s physical presence. As the divine Spirit of truth, He brings***

truth to the believer. Unlike Old Testament times, when the Spirit entered a person for a special enablement over a limited time, the Holy Spirit enters the believer at the moment of salvation and remains forever.

ASK: ***How do believers know the Holy Spirit lives within them?*** (p. 39)

TRANSITION: *Think about how important love is in your relationship with Jesus (v. 21). Keeping Jesus’s commands represents an outward demonstration that a person loves Jesus. Jesus promises His love to us and a fuller understanding of Him.*

READ: **Read John 14:22-26 aloud**, as the group considers Jesus’s answer to Judas’s (not Iscariot) question in verse 22. Mention that the disciples may have had so many questions because they were still hoping Jesus would stay and set up an earthly kingdom.

DISCUSS: Lead the group in a discussion of the relationship between love and obedience in verse 23. Contrast the behavior of the one who loves Jesus and the one who doesn’t.

- **(14:23-24)** Anyone who loves Jesus will keep His commands. Love for Jesus is the motivating factor in the believer’s obedience. Where there is no love there is no obedience. That love is the result of Jesus’s work on the cross on our behalf (1 John 4:10). Our obedience flows out of the great love that the Father has for us. On the other hand, whoever doesn’t love Christ will not obey Him. When unbelievers disobey God’s Word, they are merely behaving naturally. Because they have no love for Christ, they lack the supernatural

desire to follow Him. Only those who accept Jesus will love Him, and only those who love Him will follow Him as children of God.

APPLY: Guide the group to consider how we sometimes struggle to obey God's Word.

Ask: ***How does understanding a truth move a person to act on that truth? Why do some people struggle with obeying God's Word?*** (p. 39) Share that the Holy Spirit operates according to divine, holy standards and enables Christ followers to obey the will of God. Encourage the group to reflect silently on this question: ***How would you describe the Holy Spirit's residence in your life: owner, temporary guest, or unnoticed?***

TRANSITION: *In verse 26, Jesus again called the Holy Spirit the Counselor. It's reassuring to know that He not only teaches us, but He also gives us insight into Jesus's words and reminds us of everything He taught. But Jesus had one more thing to say about the Spirit's work in us. And it might have been the most important for disciples struggling with fear and confusion.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud **John 14:27-29**, suggesting the group reflect on the word "peace."

CONTRAST: Encourage the group to discuss this question: ***How does the peace Jesus provides differ from the peace the world tries to offer?*** Highlight the reality of hard times and the assurance that Jesus's peace rests on our relationship with Him rather than our external circumstances. Note that with the sovereign God ruling the world and the peace of Christ ruling our hearts, we can overcome trouble and fear.

TRANSITION: *Jesus's words made it hard for the disciples to rejoice, knowing He was going away. But He told them He had to leave for the Spirit to come. It was all part of the Father's mission for Him and for them.*

CHALLENGE

GUIDE: Direct a volunteer to read today's study theme: *Jesus offers peace to those who trust in Him* (p. 36). Led the group to think of those who are experiencing significant difficulties. Call on a volunteer to read the Apply the Text questions on page 39. Challenge the group to seek ways to be a comfort to hurting people.

PRAY: Invite the group to pair up and share where they need Jesus's peace in their own lives. Let them close in prayer for one another, asking Jesus to bring peace to their struggles. Encourage them to continue praying for each other in the week ahead.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by reminding the group that the Holy Spirit is with them and that they can know Jesus's peace even during difficult circumstances. Encourage them to be alert to how the Spirit leads them toward someone who needs to experience Jesus's peace. Challenge them to be bold in praying for that individual.

Remain in Me

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Prior to the session, draw a simple family tree for your family on the board. As the group arrives, point out the different people on your tree. Talk about how much they know about their family tree and who is the primary source of their family's history. Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 45.

ASK: *What is one interesting thing you know about your family heritage? How does that fact impact your family's identity?* (p. 45)

EXPLAIN: *Just as this information confirms your family's identity, it also connects you as a family. Some families even create a family mission statement to set expectations and emphasize values. Allow anyone with a family mission statement to share about how they decided what was important.*

TRANSITION: *When we accept Jesus as Savior, we establish a connection with Him. In today's verses, Jesus talked with His disciples about maintaining that connection to Him. In doing so, they would find their true identity and purpose. The same is true for us.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) displayed on the wall or

locate the outline of John on page 9. This Bible passage takes place in the upper room after the Passover meal and includes some of Jesus's final instructions to His disciples. Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*) or the map on the inside back cover of the DDG, indicate where in Jerusalem this dinner may have taken place. Draw attention to **Pack Item 4** (*Handout: Jesus's Last Week*) to show on which day this event took place.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 15:1-8**, suggesting the group listen for the metaphor Jesus used. Read verse 1 again aloud and identify the Father as the Gardener, Jesus as the Vine, and believers as the branches. Point out "I am the True Vine" on **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: "I Am" Sayings of Jesus*). Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: "I Am" Sayings of Jesus*) and encourage the group to dig deeper into the other sayings during the week.

- **(15:1)** Old and New Testament passages used images of a vine or vineyard in both positive and negative contexts (Isa. 5:2; Matt. 21:33-46). Unlike those texts that portray Israel as the vineyard, Jesus pointed to Himself. He did not say He was like a vine. He said He was the true vine. The original text could be read "the vine, the true one," meaning He is the only genuine vine. The metaphor points to Him as the Source of spiritual life.

Jesus likened God to a gardener. Jesus called Him “my Father.” This intimate relationship places each action about to be described within the relationship of the Father and the Son. As the gardener, the Father cares for the true vine, and He acts according to how believers relate to the Son.

ASK: *What is your favorite kind of fruit? How would you describe the kind of fruit Jesus was talking about here?*

EXPLAIN: Point out that Jesus did not go into specifics about what the fruit would be. Suggest that it could include things like the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), evangelism, thanksgiving, or generosity. Fruit also can refer to the “fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11). In any case, we can surmise it relates to following Christ and obeying Him. Jesus knew that if His disciples would keep that strong connection to Him, they would naturally produce fruit that pleases Him.

ASK: *How does the Father prune us so we can be more fruitful?* (p. 47) Point out that God brings challenges and trials into our lives, and those difficult circumstances help us get rid of unnecessary things or things that keep us from becoming more like Him. *How does abiding in Christ change our perspective on life? What happens if we don’t maintain that connection to Him?* Share that if we don’t think of Jesus all week, we cannot show up at church on Sunday morning and expect growth.

- **(15:2)** The emphasis is on God performing the work necessary to “produce more fruit.” The issue was whether every branch connected to the Vine fulfilled its purpose. We should not understand “he removes” to mean that

believers can lose their salvation. This would contradict other passages that promise eternal security to whoever receives Jesus (John 3:15-16; 10:28-29b). Some scholars suggest the issue rests not in whether the branches are true but whether they bear fruit. In this case, the branches are unfruitful because they do not abide in Christ. It becomes a matter of discipleship rather than salvation.

TRANSITION: *Jesus didn’t say we’d be limited if we didn’t remain in Him. He said we could do nothing without Him. So, we’ve got to protect that connection. One way to do that is to focus on loving Him and loving others.*

READ: Read John 15:9-11 aloud, directing the group to pick out what produces a joyful life.

GUIDE: Encourage the group to pair up and talk about the difference between happiness and joy. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they discussed. Emphasize that joy is more than happiness. *It doesn’t depend on our circumstances and situations like happiness.*

ASK: *Based on these verses, what is the basis for true joy?* Highlight how Jesus returned to the topic of love—both His love for us and our love for others. Share that remaining in His love nourishes our connection to the vine. Ask: **Now, how do we experience His love?**

TRANSITION: *It all comes back to obedience. Keeping Jesus’s commands keeps us in His love, which keeps us connected to Him, which leads to much fruit, which produces joy. Like dominoes, if something is missing along the way, the whole chain stops.*

READ: Direct the group to read silently **John 15:12-17** and identify words that stick out to them. Allow some volunteers to share what they found. Highlight words like *love, friends,* and *choose*.

DISCUSS: *How do we define our “friends” these days?* Draw three concentric circles on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Point out that we have a handful of close friends in our inner circle, more people with whom we are friendly in our circle of influence, and even more acquaintances that don’t have much of an impact on our lives.

ASK: Encourage the group to read the third paragraph on p. 51, “Concerning His friends . . .” Ask: *How did Jesus define true love and friendship?* Emphasize the role of sacrifice rooted in genuine love. *Jesus demonstrated this by literally laying down His life. He challenges us to demonstrate it by the way we sacrifice for one another.*

SHARE: Encourage the group to think back to their days on the playground. *Most people have one of two reactions. Some smile because they were chosen quickly for games. Others cringe because they were the last one chosen for anything.* Allow a few volunteers to share their memories, and share your own experiences with being chosen or feeling left out. Facilitate a discussion about what it means to be chosen and appointed by Jesus.

- **(15:16)** In the first century, disciples typically took the initiative to attach themselves to a particular teacher. In contrast to what was customary, Jesus took the initiative to call disciples to Himself. The emphasis of the verse

is not privilege but purpose, similar to God’s choosing Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3)

TRANSITION: *The Christian life comes with so many blessings: love, joy, relationships, and inclusion. But it all comes back to being connected to the Vine and obeying His commands.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: *The main point for today’s study is “Jesus is the source of life and spiritual growth” (p. 44).* Lead the group to consider times they have been pruned by God, including how that helped them experience His joy. Call for volunteers to share.

GUIDE: Read the Apply the Text questions on page 47. Share your responses and encourage some volunteers to share as well.

PRAY: Invite the group to pray silently as you lead: *Lord, help us to protect our connection with You so we can bear fruit. Help us obey You and to find ways to love people like You do.*

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by encouraging the group to grow in Christ by abiding in Him and obeying Him. Challenge them to identify a friend to whom they can show love in Jesus’s name this week.

I Have Seen

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, ask: *What do you think of coffee shops writing your name on your cup? Have you ever used a fake name? Why?* Note that first names are usually reserved for friendly relationships.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph for the session on page 53. Reflect on the opening question: *How does using first names in a business setting impact interactions between people with different roles?* Point out that more informal situations call for more informal titles. *We might expect it from our parents, but not from most businesses.* Note that using first names implies a closer relationship.

TRANSITION: *In today's verses, Mary heard her name called by someone she thought was a gardener, but that encounter changed everything. People can have a similar encounter today. In fact, that's what Easter is all about.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) displayed on the wall or locate the outline of John on page 9. Explain that this Bible study skips over a few chapters to focus on the resurrection, but that the group will pick up on those chapters in the weeks to come.

CONTEXT: Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*), point out the two sites associated with Golgotha as the site of the crucifixion and nearby resurrection. Also direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Jesus's Last Week*) and locate the resurrection.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 20:1-10**, as the group listens for the time of day the events occurred and for the identities of the main characters.

EXPLAIN: Note that several women went to the tomb on that first Easter, though John focused on Mary Magdalene. As a review, highlight that Jesus had delivered her from seven demons (Luke 8:2), and she had become a faithful follower. Point out that she was at the crucifixion and had watched Christ being put in the tomb (Mark 15:40,47).

- **(20:1)** John mentioned only Mary Magdalene going to the tomb. The other Gospel writers mention additional women by name (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). Mary seemed to indicate that other women were with her when she recounted her experiences for the apostles (John 20:2). All four Gospels list Mary Magdalene first, indicating her prominence as the first to see the risen Lord.

ASK: *How would you describe Mary's emotional state three days after the*

crucifixion? Why did she go to the tomb so early? Enlist a volunteer to read Mark 16:1-2 and Luke 24:1. Note that Mary and the other women were planning to spread spices and perfume on Jesus's grave clothes, according to Jewish burial traditions. Ask: **What was Mary's reaction when she discovered the stone had been removed?** Encourage the group to share what they would have thought about the empty tomb if they had been in Mary's situation. Lead the group in a brief discussion about different "explanations" for the empty tomb that people use in an effort to deny the resurrection.

ASK: What message did Mary deliver that sent Peter and John to the tomb?

- **(20:2)** Grave robbery was common enough in Jesus's day that the Roman Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) ordered capital punishment for those convicted of looting graves and removing bodies. It is also possible that Mary may have feared that the Jewish leaders might have taken Jesus's body. It is noteworthy that Mary did not expect to find an empty tomb, and her only explanation for the empty tomb was that someone had stolen Jesus's body.

RESPOND: Direct the group to work in teams of two or three to identify things that would have convinced Peter and John that no one had stolen the body. Briefly discuss what it meant for John to believe. Emphasize that he and Peter didn't fully understand the Scriptures about the resurrection until later.

- **(20:5-10)** The reference to "cloths" in the plural includes the main shroud and a smaller "wrapping" that covered Jesus's face and head. It was "not lying with the linen cloths."

By taking time to fold the head covering, Jesus was pointing to His mastery over the situation.

TRANSITION: *God is not scared by our questions about the resurrection. Instead, He wants us to bring them to Him honestly.*

READ: Read John 20:11-13 aloud, encouraging the group to reflect on the nature of Mary's encounter with the angels.

DISCUSS: Invite the group to think of a time they could not locate a family member. Ask: **What went through your mind?**

- **(20:11)** The Greek wording ("crying") indicates incessant weeping. John recorded three times that Mary was crying (vv. 11,13,15), emphasizing the state of her grief.

ASK: What impact did the angels' presence have on the situation? Point out that it would have been difficult to deny that the angels were from heaven and had a message from God.

- **(20:12-13)** The angels' sitting "one at the head and the other at the feet" means one sat where Jesus's head would have rested while the other was at the opposite end of the burial bench. Some scholars have compared this to the mercy seat that sat upon the ark of the covenant. The mercy seat had two cherubim, one on either end, spreading their wings over the place where the high priest offered blood for the people's redemption (Ex. 25:18-20). When the angels asked why Mary was crying, the question was not intended to gain information. They were challenging Mary to consider what she was experiencing.

CONSIDER: *Many thought Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. After the crucifixion, they could not contemplate a resurrection.* Ask: ***What questions and preconceived beliefs get in the way of believing the resurrection?*** (p. 55) Challenge the group to filter their ideas about Jesus through Scripture so they can focus on who He really is, not what they (or others) think He should be.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read **John 20:14-18**, encouraging the group to listen for what broke through the wall of Mary's grief and confusion.

ASK: ***Why did Mary not recognize Jesus?*** Encourage the group to examine verses 14-15 for possible answers.

- **(20:14)** Some scholars think Mary's eyes were blurry from tears, while others believe she may have been supernaturally prevented from recognizing Him, much like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:16). It's also possible that she only took a quick glance at the man beside her without really looking at Him.

HIGHLIGHT: Point out that when Jesus told Mary not to cling to Him, He was highlighting a change in His relationship with her and His "brothers." Share that some see His command in verse 17 as a preview of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

ASK: ***How does Jesus reveal Himself today as the resurrected Savior?*** (p. 55) Challenge the group to look for ways Jesus is working to reveal Himself to them this week, even in something as familiar as their name.

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Ask: ***What objections do people raise to the resurrection? How can we respond?*** We can know the resurrection is true because of at least seven facts: (1) broken Roman seal, (2) an empty tomb, (3) large stone moved, (4) Roman guards gone, (5) empty graveclothes, (6) appearances of Christ, and (7) a woman saw Him first in a culture where a woman's testimony was usually considered invalid. Note that the greatest evidence might be the changed lives of the disciples, who went from a group of scared followers to powerful witnesses in a matter of days.

GUIDE: Read the Apply the Text questions on page 55. Allow a few volunteers to share their answers. Encourage the group to find someone this week with whom they can share their own experience with Jesus.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for a resurrected Savior who can be personally known. Ask God to help the group identify someone who would like to know more about Jesus as the resurrected Savior.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week and encouraging them to reach out to someone else in the group. Remind them that even people who have not been regularly attending may be open to an invitation for Easter. Suggest that they pray with the person they have contacted and to continue praying for that individual in the coming weeks.



When the Spirit Comes

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As individuals arrive, ask: ***How do you get the news? How do you determine what is true and what's not?*** Discuss briefly, but avoid chasing rabbits. Note that most of us have a standard through which we filter everything we hear.

CONTINUE: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 61. Encourage the group to reflect on the introductory question and to share their responses. Point out that the rise of multiple news outlets and social media has made the task of discerning truth harder. Emphasize the need for having a reliable filter in our lives.

TRANSITION: *Jesus identified the "Spirit of truth." He wants believers to trust the Spirit to guide them to do what's right. Today's passage offers details about the Holy Spirit's ministry.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of John's Gospel*) displayed on the wall or locate the outline of John on page 9. To set the context, explain that Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure in chapters 13–17. Note that today's verses focus on how the Holy Spirit enables believers to move forward.

EXPLAIN: *Earlier, Jesus predicted that the disciples would be persecuted for Him. But these verses offer support and assistance.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 15:26-27**, as the group listens for how the word *truth* is used.

REFLECT: Give each person an index card and a pen. Draw three columns on the board and label each column as *God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit*. Direct the group to think about how much they know about each member of the Trinity and to rank them 1-3, with 1 being "know the most about" and 3 being "know the least about." After a few minutes, direct the group to report on their rankings. In the columns, keep track of the votes. Ask: ***Based on this, how much do we think we know about the Holy Spirit compared to the Father and the Son?*** Point out that many Christians are uncomfortable talking about the Spirit. *Some churches all but ignore Him, while other churches seem to emphasize the Spirit more than Jesus. But Jesus wanted His disciples to have a solid understanding of the Spirit.* Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (Handout: *The Role of the Holy Spirit*) and encourage the group to reflect on His work and character in the week to come.

EXAMINE: Encourage the group to work in pairs to read verses 26-27 again. Direct the

pairs to highlight what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in these verses. After a few minutes, allow volunteers from each pair to share what they discovered.

- **(15:26-27)** Jesus said the Spirit comes from the Father. He is God the Spirit just as Jesus is God the Son. Second, He comes at the behest of Jesus. (See also John 14:26.) Third, by focusing on the Spirit's coming, Jesus described the Spirit's personal involvement with believers. After Pentecost, He would dwell within them (John 14:17). Unlike an abstract power, the Holy Spirit relates to believers personally. Fourth, He would testify about Jesus. He reveals truth about Christ through the Scriptures, which He inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit does not attract attention to Himself but focuses on Jesus.

ASK: *What role does the Holy Spirit play in our telling others about Jesus?* (p. 63) Use information from page 65 to explain the Spirit's role in testifying about Christ and equipping believers to testify about Him as well.

- **(15:27)** Just before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples to wait for the coming Spirit so they could become His witnesses (Acts 1:1-8). The Holy Spirit empowers our testimony, convicts the sinner, and enables regeneration (Titus 3:4-5). Only the indwelling of the Spirit of God can transform us into dynamic witnesses of the living Savior.

TRANSITION: *Testifying about Jesus (and helping us testify about Him) is only part of the Spirit's work in the world. Jesus shared more about the Spirit's ministry in chapter 16.*

READ: Read John 16:7-11 aloud, challenging the group to discover why it was important for Jesus to go away.

ASK: *What did Jesus promise the disciples?*

Note that Jesus said that they would experience the Spirit in a personal way. *His departure was actually a blessing. Through the Spirit, they would accomplish so much more than they could have without Him.*

DISCUSS: Place the group into teams of three or four. Instruct each team to read these verses in multiple translations and to identify how those versions translate "Counselor" (*Examples: Comforter, Advocate, Helper, and so forth*) Ask: **Which of these terms resonates with you? Why?** Lead the group in a brief discussion about when they have felt the Spirit work in their lives.

ASK: *How does the Holy Spirit convict a person?* Direct the group to read verses 8-11 and to identify the three areas in which the Spirit convicts the world: sin, righteousness, and judgment. Lead a brief discussion about what each of those terms means. Point out that while we usually think of conviction as negative, the Spirit's ministry is an example of God's love and grace toward the world. *While the Spirit empowers and equips believers to share, He also prepares the hearts of those who need to hear.*

- The Greek term for *sin* most commonly conveys missing the mark. Paul wrote that every human falls short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Jesus refined the disciples' concept of sin by saying the world did not believe in Him. All sin involves lack of faith (Rom. 14:23). Specifically, this applies to not trusting Christ. Second, the Spirit would

convict the world of *righteousness*. Jesus warned His disciples that their righteousness had to go beyond the superficial righteousness of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). Isaiah wrote that human efforts at righteousness are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). The third aspect of the Spirit's convicting work involved *judgment*. Jesus specifically applied the Holy Spirit's judgment to the ruler of this world, the devil (John 12:31; 14:30). Jesus's atoning sacrifice sealed Satan's defeat. God's judgment of the devil will be consummated by casting him into the lake of burning fire (Rev. 20:10), but that verdict is already assured because the adversary has already been judged.

READ: Direct the group to read silently

John 16:12-15 and ask them to look for another thing the Spirit does. Call on a volunteer to read verse 13 aloud.

ASK: *What is the significance of Jesus calling the Counselor the "Spirit of truth"? Why is it necessary for us to have a Guide when it comes to truth?* (p. 63) Share that the Spirit never speaks on His own authority. *Like Jesus, He only shares what He hears from the Father. As He shares those messages, He brings glory to God.* Highlight the interdependence of the Persons in the Trinity. Emphasize that because the Spirit speaks from the Father, we can know that His guidance is true and reliable.

SUMMARIZE: Direct the group to work in pairs to list times when it's good to have a guide. After a few minutes, discuss those situations. (Examples: *On a hike, making financial decisions, getting car repairs, traveling overseas, and so*

forth) Affirm that it's usually a great comfort to have someone who understands the problems and the solutions. Remind the group that this is exactly what the Spirit does in our lives. *He knows what is best for us, and He will guide us in truth if we will trust Him.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Enlist a volunteer to read today's session focus: *The Holy Spirit points people to the truth* (p. 60). Remind the group that the Holy Spirit began working in their lives when they accepted Christ as Savior, and He is still working in hearts and lives today.

REFLECT: Encourage the group to consider areas where the group might need the Holy Spirit's guidance. Challenge them to think about how the Spirit can help them better understand and apply God's truth.

PRAY: Conclude the group time with prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him for the wisdom to lean into the Spirit's guidance in the days to come.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week, sharing prayer requests and praises. Encourage them to ask God to help them become more aware of how the Holy Spirit is working in their lives. Highlight the three actions in this week's verses: convicting of sin, guiding believers in truth, and helping Christ followers share Him with others.

I Pray

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, ask: ***Where have you encountered shatterproof glass? What are its benefits?*** Allow a few volunteers to share. Direct another volunteer to read aloud the story of Edouard Benedictus on page 69.

CONTINUE: Share that shatterproof glass maintains its integrity because pieces that would normally fall apart and be scattered are held in place by a special coating. Ask: ***How does that resemble the Christian life?*** Lead the group in a brief discussion of how believers are bound by our Savior.

TRANSITION: *We know from Scripture that Jesus prayed a lot. John 17 gives us His longest recorded prayer—and it focused on believers sticking together, refusing to be broken and scattered. As we study these verses today, think about how you can promote the kind of unity that becomes a witness to the world.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Guide the group to locate the outline of John (p. 9) or point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*). Share that Jesus's private instructions to His disciples had come to an end. *In chapter 17, He began to pray for Himself. After that, He interceded for the disciples and for future believers.*

DISTRIBUTE: Give each person a copy of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Prayers of Jesus*). Point out Jesus's High Priestly prayer on the handout and note that it is the longest of Jesus's recorded prayers in Scripture. Ask: ***Why do you think this has been called Jesus's High Priestly prayer?*** Share that Jesus was interceding for all believers in all generations, including those who follow Him today. Allow a few volunteers to share how they feel knowing that Jesus spent time praying for them.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 17:13-19**, as the group identifies what Jesus prayed about regarding the world and His people.

ASK: ***How can believers engage with an antagonistic world?*** (p. 71) Share that the world hated Jesus and will hate His followers as they oppose its agenda. *While believers sometimes cause unnecessary headaches for themselves through their words and actions, the world will still oppose anyone who follows the ways of Christ.*

- **(17:14-16)** Being “of the world” means accepting and integrating worldly beliefs and lifestyles. Both secular and religious societies demand compliance with their standards and reject anyone who does not conform. Jesus told the disciples that the world would hate them because they followed Jesus's example

and refused to compromise (John 15:19). Their focus was on their citizenship in God's kingdom and their allegiance to Christ.

DISCUSS: *What comes to your mind when you think about “sanctification?”* Lead the group to read the information for verses 17-19 on page 73 to answer this question. Add that believers are called to be distinct from the world's values and goals. Ask: *How does sanctification happen?* (*The answer is in verse 17.*) *How does verse 18 connect sanctification to our responsibility to share Jesus with others?*

MEMORIZE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). **Read John 17:20-21 aloud**, explaining that these are the memory verses for this session. Direct the group to paraphrase the verses or read them in other versions as they reflect on them during the week.

READ: **Read John 17:20-23.** Lead the group to circle the word “one” in these verses on page 70 of the DDG.

ILLUSTRATE: Set out small puzzles (about 50 pieces) on two tables. Encourage individuals to pick a table and start working the puzzles. After the puzzles are finished, ask: *How do puzzles illustrate Christian unity?* Point out that you can only see the whole picture when all the pieces are together. *Why is Christian unity such an important aspect of our witness to an unbelieving world?* (p. 71) Highlight the way unity attracts people to Jesus. *When we are working together for the gospel, we are more effective. People want to be a part of a community, not a group of dysfunctional individuals.*

- **(17:22-23)** The goal of Christian unity is that “the world may know” Jesus and experience His love and salvation. This dual result glorifies Christ and draws people to Him. Through our loving relationships, we testify that Jesus is God's Son. Believers receive the testimony that God loves us with the same perfect love He has for the Son.
- **(17:22-23)** Christian unity does not necessitate conformity or uniformity in all things. It does require Christians to love one another in a way that honors our Lord and demonstrates His love within us.

CHALLENGE: Offer the group a few minutes to reflect on their lives and to determine areas where they may be promoting a lack of unity in the body of Christ. Provide a few minutes for them to pray about what they discover.

TRANSITION: *Jesus could have prayed about so many things, but He prayed about our unity. That's important because it reflects the relationship between Jesus and His heavenly Father.*

READ: **Allow a volunteer to read John 17:24-26**, directing the rest of the group to highlight the word *glory* on page 70 of the DDG. Remind them that glory is a divine quality meaning brightness or splendor and refers to the radiance of God's presence. Allow a few volunteers to recall times in Scripture when humans encountered and responded to God's glory.

ASK: *How would Jesus's disciples see His glory after He went back to heaven?* Share that unity among believers would reveal God's

glory because it would reveal Jesus's continuing work on earth. *Jesus promised to make Himself known through His people as they lived in unity and love.*

FOCUS: Direct the group to verses 25-26 and encourage them to summarize how Jesus concluded His prayer. Draw a connection between love and unity.

- **(17:25-26)** Jesus concluded His prayer by affirming two desires, first, that His disciples would experience the fullness of God's love—the same love the Father had for the Son. Second, Jesus stated He would be in them. In the coming of Immanuel, indeed "God is with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). After the ascension, Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, would be even closer—within His disciples, never to be separated again. Because of His presence within them, Christ's followers are spiritually united in faith and purpose. This kind of unity occurs only by the supernatural work of our Heavenly Father—it never happens by accident.

TRANSITION: *Because of His presence in our lives, we are spiritually united in faith and purpose. As we keep our focus on Him, we learn to love one another well and live with the kind of unity that can make a difference in the world.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Direct a volunteer to read the summary statement for today's session: *A shared commitment to God's purposes produces unity among all believers* (p. 68). Lead the group in a brief discussion about how Jesus's prayer and His teachings reinforce that truth.

REFLECT: Challenge the group to consider ways they can work toward unity in the body of Christ, as noted in the Apply the Text questions on page 71.

ASK: *What changes might you need to make to show to a greater degree the difference Christ has made in you?* Encourage the group to think about the impact greater unity could have on their church and their community.

PRAY: Conclude the group time with directed silent prayer:

- Thank God for His Son's prayers for us in John 17.
- Ask Him for help in nurturing unity among other believers
- Rejoice that one day we will see His glory!
- Say "Alleluia, amen" together in closing.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week, encouraging individuals to engage with the Bible using the Bible Reading Plan found on page 6. Remind the group that part of worshiping God and enjoying Him is spending time in His Word each day. Suggest they focus on creating a pattern of consistent reading more than worrying about the number of verses they read each day.

I Am He

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Prior to the group time, write these words on the board: *doppelganger*, *twin*, *clone*, *spitting image*, and *replica*. As the group arrives, ask: ***What do all these words and phrases have in common?*** Affirm that they all refer to look-alikes. Encourage individuals to add words to the list.

DISCUSS: Share a situation where you mistook someone for another person. Allow a few volunteers to share similar situations in their lives. Talk about how those situations felt.

INTRODUCE: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud the paragraph on page 77. Encourage the group to respond to the question: ***When you have mistaken someone for another person, how did you react once you realized their identity?*** (p. 77)

TRANSITION: *Jesus was used to crowds that recognized Him. In John 18, though, a crowd came looking for Him for a different reason. They didn't recognize Him at first, but they soon found that there was no one like Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Guide the group to locate the outline of John on page 9 or refer to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*)

displayed on a focal wall. Highlight that John 18 moves the Gospel into a new section on the outline, a section focused on Jesus's suffering and death.

ASK: ***Where do you go when you need to prepare yourself for a stressful time?*** Guide the group to think in terms of their personal and work lives. Share that Jesus had a place near Jerusalem where He would often go to be alone with the Father.

TRANSITION: *Known as Gethsemane, this was where Jesus took His disciples after the upper room. It's also where the mob found Him.*

READ: **Direct a volunteer to read aloud John 18:1-3**, as the group listens for words describing where Jesus and the disciples had gone.

EXAMINE: Point out the Kidron Valley and Gethsemane on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*). Remind the group of some key things Jesus had taught the disciples and how those topics would have weighed on their hearts. ***What do you think the disciples were thinking as they walked with Jesus?***

- **(18:1)** "These things" could be a reference to the prayer that Jesus had just finished praying. However, it seems more likely that John was referring to the entire upper room discourse (John 13–17).

- **(18:1)** John is the only Gospel writer who referred to the location as “a garden.” Matthew and Mark referred to the location as “Gethsemane” (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). Luke simply called it “the place” (22:40). The fact that they “went into it” may suggest that the garden was enclosed with some sort of wall.

SHARE: Remind the group that Judas was not with them because He had left the Passover meal earlier that night. Point out that he had gone to the religious leaders to plan how he could betray Jesus. Emphasize that he knew exactly where to lead the crowd to find Jesus.

ASK: What motivated Judas to betray Jesus? Discuss responses, pointing out he may have been hoping Jesus would take the opportunity to finally assert Himself as an earthly king and overthrow Roman occupation. Ask: **What does the presence of armed soldiers tell us about the expectations of Judas and the accompanying officials?** (p. 79)

- **(18:2-3)** The soldiers probably included guards who protected the temple. However, some commentators think Roman troops accompanied temple police, indicating the Roman authorities had been brought into the conflict. The chief priests also sent representatives to supervise Jesus’s arrest. The term *company* could refer to a cohort, which numbered around 600 soldiers in the Roman army. Some scholars estimate the company probably numbered around 200. The mob arrived with lanterns, torches, and weapons. They may have anticipated resistance by Jesus and His followers.

TRANSITION: *It was one thing to find Jesus. It was another thing to actually take Him into custody. While Jesus would never oppose the Father’s will, His enemies would come to experience His power and authority before all was said and done.*

READ: Read John 18:4-9, guiding the group to note how the situation affirmed Christ’s knowledge and power.

EXPLAIN: Lead the group to circle the words “I am he” (twice) in the verses printed on page 78. Ask: **What is the significance of that phrase?** Direct a volunteer to read Exodus 3:14 and identify “I am” as God’s personal name for His people. *John records several instances in his Gospel where Jesus used “I am” to describe Himself. Each time, He was affirming His deity, and each time His enemies understood exactly what He was claiming. That’s why they wanted to kill Him.*

ASK: After Jesus identified Himself, what happened to the crowd? Emphasize that their falling to the ground was a demonstration of His power and authority. Ask: **What order did Jesus give them in verse 8? Why would that have seemed unusual?** Point out that prisoners are rarely in a position to negotiate, much less make demands. Share that even though He was vastly outnumbered, Jesus was still in control.

- **(18:6)** The effect of Jesus’s statement was profound. Instead of surging forward to arrest Him, the mob fell to the ground. If the troops anticipated resistance, this phrase could mean they moved into a defensive posture. However, the Greek word rendered “fell” means to drop from one level to another. Jesus stepped forward while the crowd fell backward,

highlighting His authority and their weakness. His words overwhelmed them.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **John 18:10-11**, as the group identifies Peter's rash reaction and Jesus's response.

EXAMINE: Direct the group to work in pairs. Give each pair an index card and a pen. Instruct them to summarize Peter's reaction in one word and Jesus's reaction in one word. After a few minutes, allow each pair to share what they wrote.

ASK: *How did Jesus rebuke Peter? Why did Jesus refuse to let anyone defend Him?* Emphasize that Jesus had already shown that those who came to arrest Him were powerless against His word. Point out that He also could have called legions of angels to come to His aid, but He didn't. Note Luke's Gospel shares that Jesus actually healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51).

SHARE: Direct the group to this question on page 79: *Why was it important for John to note Jesus's response to Peter?* Explain that the disciples still thought of Jesus as a military or political leader. Emphasize that He was committed to the cup (v. 11) that His Father gave Him to drink. *That cup was His suffering and death, and He wasn't about to shirk back from it now.*

- **(18:11)** Peter and the other disciples still did not understand Jesus's purpose. He did not come to start a war. He came to "drink the cup" of His Father to suffer and die for the world's sins. The syntax of Jesus's question implies a positive response: Yes, He would drink, regardless of the cost.

CONCLUDE: *Jesus surrendered to the crowd, but He did so on His terms. He was in complete control the whole time. He's still in control of every situation we face. That should help us stand strong, even when things feel out of control in our world.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Point out the summary statement for this session: *Jesus is always in control and committed to the redemption of humanity* (p. 76).

DISCUSS: Using the Apply the Text questions on page 79, name ways Jesus is opposed today. List the weapons Satan uses. Describe ways to encourage each other in spiritual warfare.

PRAY: Encourage the group to think of a difficult situation in their lives. Close in prayer, asking for God's guidance in those times and for His strength to remain faithful. Ask God to remind each person that He is in control of every situation.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week, encouraging them to remember that Jesus is always in control, even when Satan attacks. Ask how you can pray for each person and let them know that you are looking forward to seeing them in Bible study.

I Find No Fault

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, encourage them to suggest some legal shows or movies. (*Examples: Perry Mason, To Kill a Mockingbird, 12 Angry Men, Matlock, JAG, Runaway Jury, Just Mercy*)

DISCUSS: *What factors intrigue you the most when watching a legal drama or reading a book about legal proceedings?*

(p. 85) Allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Point out that people enjoy trying to figure out who did it or pulling for the underdog to win the day.

TRANSITION: *In today's study we will examine the Jewish and Roman trials of Jesus. As we examine the Scripture, reflect on how Jesus proved that He was sinless and guiltless in every way.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Guide the group to locate the outline of John on page 9 or point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*). Remind the group that John 18 moves into a section where John focused on Jesus's suffering. Briefly review the events in the upper room and Gethsemane from previous sessions.

EXPLAIN: Direct the group to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: The Trials of Jesus*). Share that after

Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, He was taken to the home of the former high priest Annas (John 18:12-14) where he was falsely accused and treated with cruelty. Note that Jesus was then sent to the high priest Caiaphas (John 18:24) and the Sanhedrin for further examination. Allow a volunteer to read Luke 22:66-71. Share that they charged Jesus with blasphemy, a crime that carried the death penalty.

TRANSITION: *That brings us to the start of today's session. Since the Jews needed the Romans to carry out a death sentence, they shipped Jesus off to the court of the Roman governor, a man named Pilate.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **John 18:28-32**, as the group listens for words and phrases that stick out to them. Spend a few minutes talking about those words and phrases. Point out the location of Pilate's praetorium on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*).

ASK: *Why did the Jews have to send Jesus to Pilate if they already convicted Him of blasphemy?* Explain that the Jewish leaders had no legal right to execute anyone, so they had to make their case before Pilate. Ask: *Why would the Jewish leaders be so eager to get rid of Jesus?* (p. 87)

- **(18:28-32)** Emperor Tiberias had appointed Pilate as governor of Judea in AD 26. Pilate showed himself to be an insecure, insensitive, and morally weak leader who responded to perceived threats with excessive brutality (Luke 13:1). His ruthlessness eventually led to his being removed from office after eleven years of service.
- **(18:31)** The Jews argued that it was “not legal” for them to “put anyone to death.” By “Jews,” John referred to the chief priests and Sanhedrin council that condemned Jesus. Granting conquered people limited governance was a typical Roman strategy for maintaining power in its far-flung provinces. However, the Sanhedrin lacked authority to carry out capital punishment. Determined that Jesus should die, they needed Pilate to step in.

EXAMINE: Place the group into teams of three or four and encourage them to read John 18:28-32 again as a team. Instruct them to discuss this question: ***What hypocrisy or contradiction do you see in these verses?*** After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they discussed. Highlight the Jews’ unwillingness to enter Pilate’s residence because of Passover. Emphasize that while they were committed to keeping the law of purity on one hand, they were more than willing to send an innocent man off to be executed on the other. *They were happy to keep the rules, as long as the rules fit their plans and schemes.*

- Arriving at Pilate’s compound, the chief priests did not enter the building but sent word to the governor about their purpose as they waited in the courtyard. They were concerned that entering the Gentile’s residence would leave

them defiled. As such, they could not eat the Passover. The Passover festival took place over several days. The leaders’ hypocrisy was exposed, as they cared more about contact with a Gentile than about falsely accusing Jesus and demanding His death. They ignored the prophets’ warnings about substituting rituals for justice (Isa. 1:11-17; Mic. 6:6-8).

READ: Note that Pilate had a private interview with Jesus, recorded for us. **Read John 18:33-38a**, guiding the group to understand that Pilate was not interested in Jewish religious matters but only things that might threaten Roman rule.

ASK: ***What did Pilate ask Jesus? What do you think his tone was?*** On a large sheet of paper, list Pilate’s questions: *Are you the King of the Jews? I’m not a Jew, am I? What have you done? You are a king then? What is truth?* Ask: ***What did Jesus ask Pilate? How does this show He was in control of the situation?***

REFLECT: Encourage the group to review verses 33-38a. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*) and review John 18:36 as the memory verse for this session. Contrast how Pilate understood kings and kingdoms and how Jesus understood kings and kingdoms. Allow some volunteers to share. Ask: ***How did Jesus’s response to Pilate point to His innocence?*** (p. 87)

SHARE: *Jesus’s answers may have confounded Pilate, but he recognized that Jesus was no political threat. Still, Pilate wondered what Jesus had done to inflame the Jewish leaders.*

EXPLAIN: Discuss why Pilate may have adopted such a cynical attitude when he asked, “What is truth?” Emphasize that while he questioned the truth, the very definition of truth was standing in front of him.

- **(18:38a)** Pilate’s experience with the political and religious intrigues in Rome and in Jerusalem had hardened him to assertions of truth. He may have considered philosophical aspects of the question, but more likely his question expressed cynical bewilderment. Some writers think he was merely dismissive of the question altogether.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud John 18:38b-40, as the group listens for how each person involved reacted to the situation. Emphasize that Pilate lacked a commitment to justice. *He believed Jesus was innocent of all charges, but he was not willing to set Him free.*

ASK: How should we characterize Pilate’s attempt to release Jesus? Why were the people so easily swayed to follow the Jewish leaders? (p. 87) Remind adults that even though the Romans and the Jews miscarried justice in Jesus’s case, He still controlled the situation. Emphasize that He knew everything He was experiencing and everything He would be facing were part of the Father’s bigger plan.

EXAMINE: Write “Barabbas” on the board. Encourage the group to share what they know about this man from these verses. Briefly discuss the tradition of releasing a prisoner and why the crowd chose Barabbas over Jesus.

- **(18:40)** Barabbas was “a revolutionary” and a murderer (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19,25), so Pilate

may have assumed the crowd would choose Jesus over him.

CONCLUDE: *Like the authorities, some people reject Jesus regardless of the facts. Acknowledging that He is the Son of God requires them to recognize their sin and their need for a Savior. What serves as a comfort to those who follow Jesus becomes a stumbling block to those who reject Him.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Remind the group of the session’s summary statement: *Jesus was without guilt and sinless in every way* (p. 84). Allow some volunteers to share how that was revealed in today’s verses.

DISCUSS: Ask: ***Looking back at today’s passage, how did Jesus communicate with Pilate?*** Suggest the group dig into some areas of apologetics to prepare for encounters with individuals who misinterpret facts about Jesus. As time permits, allow a few volunteers to talk about times they defended their faith.

PRAY: Close with popcorn prayers of thanksgiving for Jesus’s endurance and willingness to endure trials and cruelty for our sake.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week, encouraging them to stand strong when they face skepticism about Jesus. Remind them to graciously respond to questions and doubts of others with the truth.

It Is Finished

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, point to a bucket you brought and ask: ***Do you have a bucket list? What's on it?*** Guide the group in a brief discussion of their bucket lists. Point out that a bucket list is a collection of goals you'd like to accomplish in your life.

DISCUSS: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 93. Encourage the group to respond to the question: ***On what types of unfinished business might a person focus if given a terminal diagnosis?*** Point out that "unfinished business" could include bucket lists that help people avoid dying with regrets.

TRANSITION: *Today's study focuses on the completeness of Jesus's life. He left no regrets because He left nothing undone. He perfectly finished His work as Savior.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to chapter 19 on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) displayed on the wall or on page 9. Direct the group to scan Understand the Context (p. 93) to provide an overview of Jesus's crucifixion and burial.

OVERVIEW: *Crucifixion was the most painful and degrading punishment in the ancient world. In*

some ways, it had been around for centuries, but the Romans "perfected" it as a tool of torture, humiliation, and execution.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud John 19:17-18, suggesting the group listen for details of the crucifixion. Explain that Jesus carried the crossbeam until Simon of Cyrene was compelled to pick it up.

HIGHLIGHT: Point out the two possible sites of Golgotha on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*) and note that the crucifixion site was known as "Place of the Skull." Talk about how it got such a morbid name. *Along with the dark name, Jesus was also flanked by two criminals.* Enlist a volunteer to read Isaiah 53:12 and share how this fulfilled prophecy.

- **(19:17)** The word *Golgotha* means "skull" in the Aramaic and Hebrew languages. Its Latin name was "Calvary." Scholars point to two modern sites that may have been ancient Golgotha. At one possible site, the topography actually gives the appearance of a ghoulish grin.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to recall a movie depicting Jesus's crucifixion. Ask: ***What impressed you most when seeing it acted out? How would you describe the horror and shame of the crucifixion?*** Point out that many

of us wear a cross to celebrate our relationship with Jesus. Talk about how a first-century resident might react to seeing a cross as jewelry or decoration. Identify images that would be similar and shocking in our culture.

READ: Call for another volunteer to read **John 19:19-22**. Share about the sign on the cross. Point out that the Jews wanted to change it. Ask: ***Why do some want to discredit the claims of Jesus?*** (p. 95) Emphasize the truth of the sign, even though Pilate did not know it.

- **(19:19-22)** Typically, a sign on a cross proclaimed the charges against the condemned. Sometimes, such a placard was carried in front of the executional procession so onlookers could associate the crime and punishment. While Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire, Greek was commonly used in writing. It also was spoken by most of the Gentile population. Aramaic actually translates the word for “Hebrew.” The Jews generally spoke Aramaic, a dialect of Mesopotamia carried back to Palestine after the Babylonian exile.

READ: Read **John 19:23-24** aloud, guiding the group to note that Jesus was stripped, and His clothes were divided among the soldiers. Point out that this was another humiliating aspect of crucifixion.

EXPLAIN: Use the information in the first paragraph on page 98 to briefly share the significance of Jesus’s seamless tunic. Emphasize that it was similar to the type worn by the high priest, reminding us that Jesus is our High Priest.

ASK: ***Why was it important for John to point to Psalm 22 when recounting Jesus’s crucifixion?*** (p. 95) Share that John included the detail about the tunic because it fulfilled prophecy in Psalm 22:18. Point out that fulfillment of Scripture validated John’s claim that Jesus was the Messiah and that His death made salvation possible for those who believe in Him.

SHARE: *It also affirmed that God was in complete control. Jesus’s suffering and death were no surprise to God. He had planned on this moment since before time began. So, everything was playing out just as He intended.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud **John 19:25-27**, as the group notes the contrast between the soldiers’ cruelty and Jesus’s compassion.

ASK: ***What do you think Mary was feeling as she watched Jesus die on the cross?*** Remind that group that Simeon had prophesied this pain that would lead to salvation when Jesus was dedicated in the temple as a baby (Luke 2:34-35).

DISCUSS: Allow a few volunteers who have cared for elderly parents to share their experiences. Talk about what went into their decisions and why it was important for them as children to honor their parents. Ask: ***How did Jesus honor His mother on the cross?*** Emphasize that as the oldest son, Jesus was responsible to care for His mother, who was likely widowed. Note that Jesus may have given John the task of caring for Mary because His half-siblings had not yet placed their faith in Him.

READ: Direct the group to read John

19:28-30 and to consider how the passage points to Jesus's humanity. Talk about the sponge of vinegar. Share that this was no act of compassion but another example of cruelty by the Romans.

- **(19:28-29)** Keeping in mind that Jesus was totally human while also being wholly divine, we can understand why He was thirsty. Jesus had been hanging on the cross for hours, losing bodily fluids and being exposed to the burning sun. The final moments were at hand. In stating He was thirsty, Jesus not only spotlighted His humanity but also fulfilled Psalms 22:15 and 69:3,20-21.
- **(19:28-29)** The soldiers' behavior was not one of compassion but of contempt and ridicule. Communal latrines were common in the first century. The "toilet paper" of the day was a sponge on a stick, which the user would dip in water that ran through a gutter near his feet. Even if the sponge had never actually been used for that purpose, the visual of holding it up to the parched lips of this crucified rebel would have certainly elicited mocking laughter from both the Romans and Jews who stood nearby.

ASK: *How would you characterize Jesus's final declaration from the cross?* (p. 95)

Share that Jesus knew His mission was complete and that His finished work represents the most important truth in today's session. Emphasize that He had fully endured God's wrath and fully atoned for the sins of the world. Ask: ***How does this passage prove that Jesus was in full control until the end?*** Point out that Jesus decided when His work was finished and when

it was time to die. Talk about why that should comfort believers.

SHARE: *Jesus did everything necessary for our salvation. We can do nothing on our own. His death brings us life.*

CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: Direct the group to the Apply the Text section on page 95. Encourage the group to create a list of people who do not know that Jesus's death is part of God's redemptive plan. Ask:

What can the group do to help others know and understand this reality? (p. 95)

PRAY: Close the session by encouraging the group to silently thank Jesus for His finished work on the cross. Challenge them to consider what He did for them and why He deserves to reign over their lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week and encouraging them to let Jesus reign as King in every area of their lives. If appropriate, share areas where you struggle to let Him be King of your life. Encourage them to identify areas in their own lives where He may not be King and to pray about those areas. Share a way you have made Him first in an area of your life.

Reach Out Your Hand

ENGAGE

BEGIN: As the group arrives, encourage them to share what they know about Ripley's Believe It or Not. Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 101. Share that Ripley-related content has been created for radio, television, comic books, a chain of museums, and a book series. *Robert Ripley found a niche with stories so unusual that people couldn't help but notice.*

ASK: *What's the most unbelievable thing you have ever seen?* (p. 101) Take a few minutes to discuss responses and to consider what makes each experience so unbelievable. Challenge the group to imagine how the disciples felt in the aftermath of the resurrection.

TRANSITION: *In this study, we will take a look at the doubts that people had about Jesus's resurrection, particularly Thomas's demand for hard evidence of a supernatural reality. As you dig into his story, confront your own doubts and ask God to help you resolve them.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to John 20 on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) or on page 9. Direct the group to scan Understand the Context (p. 101) to identify who saw Jesus after His resurrection and their reactions.

OVERVIEW: Write the titles and references for today's session outline on the board or on a large sheet of paper: *Commissioned* (John 20:19-23), *Demands* (John 19:24-25), and *Believed* (John 19:26-29). Explain that these points provide the foundational outline for this study.

ASK: *Why was it so important for Jesus's followers to embrace His resurrection?* Share that if we're going to carry out Jesus's mission, we need confidence that He has triumphed over the grave. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus*) and point out the two appearances that will be examined in today's verses.

TRANSITION: *As we look at the disciples' reactions, we will probably see a reflection of ourselves. We all have doubts and struggles, but the words we hear from Jesus can help us navigate those questions.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **John 20:19-23**, as the group considers unique things about Jesus's appearance to His disciples. Emphasize that the setting was the evening of the first Easter.

- **(20:19-23)** This passage is closely paralleled in Luke 24:33-49. John mentioned that "the disciples were gathered together." Only later did John mention that Thomas was not in the

group (John 20:24). Luke recorded that “the Eleven and those with them” were present in the room (Luke 24:33). This would have included the two men who had returned from Emmaus, and it probably also included some of the women who had returned from the tomb (v. 10).

ASK: What was the significance of the locked doors? Highlight that the disciples were afraid. They had seen what the leaders had done to Jesus and knew those leaders might come for them next.

- **(20:19)** The locked doors played another role as well. They demonstrated that although Jesus’s body could be recognized by the disciples and physically touched, things were different. Jesus’s body had passed through the grave clothes (v. 7); now His body passed through a wall, and He stood miraculously in their midst.

REFLECT: Point out that they were gathered with the doors locked even though they had heard reports that Jesus was alive and that Peter and John had seen the empty tomb with their own eyes. Ask: ***What does that tell you about the disciples’ confidence in the resurrection?***

EXAMINE: Direct individuals to find a partner. Instruct them to read verses 19-23 again and to identify what Jesus initially did and what He initially said. Encourage them to talk about how the disciples responded. After a few minutes allow the pairs to report on their work. *Jesus was not hindered by a locked door or the disciples’ fears. To their credit, the disciples overcame their doubts and rejoiced that Jesus was alive.*

ASK: What are some things you do to manage stress? Discuss responses. Affirm that doing something meaningful is a great way to keep our minds and bodies healthy. Ask: ***What did Jesus tell His followers to do?*** (*Tell the good news about Him.*) Explain the importance of Jesus breathing on the disciples and the meaning of sins being forgiven or retained. Ask: ***How does the joy of knowing Jesus is resurrected motivate believers to tell others about Him?*** (p. 103)

- **(20:22)** The Greek word translated “breathed” is used only here in the New Testament. The same Greek word was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when God “breathed the breath of life” into Adam (Gen. 2:7). The word was also used when God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the winds and “breathe into these slain so that they may live!” (Ezek. 37:9). By breathing on His disciples, Jesus was providing a visible preview of the Spirit’s arrival in Acts 2.

TRANSITION: *While Jesus’s appearance was great for the disciples who were there, one disciple missed the reunion.*

READ: Read John 20:24-25 aloud. Ask: ***If Thomas was a college student today, what do you think his major would be? Why?*** Allow a few volunteers to offer suggestions.

SHARE: *Thomas often gets criticized because of his doubts, but he could also be very loyal to Jesus.* Enlist a volunteer to read John 11:16.

ASK: What evidence did Thomas demand? Why? Remember that the other disciples weren’t confident either until they saw Jesus. Ask: ***What***

evidence might a person today demand prior to believing in Jesus? (p. 103) List the responses on the board.

EMPHASIZE: Point to the list the group created. Encourage them to suggest effective ways to address those objections. Remind them that God has never been afraid of doubts, but He does want us to point people back to Him.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud **John 20:26-29**, noting that Jesus greeted them just as He had the week before.

ASK: *How did Jesus respond to Thomas?*

Emphasize that Jesus invited him to do the very thing he had demanded. Note that Jesus often meets us right where we are, even in our doubts. Ask: **How did Thomas respond to Jesus?** Highlight Jesus's promise for those who believe without seeing—and how that relates to us today.

- **(20:28)** The confession by Thomas is one of the clearest examples of belief in the deity of Jesus. Jews would have recognized Thomas's pronouncement as affirming Christ's divinity and thus would have been offended by his words. Romans would have also been offended by Thomas's statement. The Romans built temples throughout the Empire in honor of the emperors. There, priests erected statues of the emperors, sang hymns praising their virtues, and lit candles and incense as acts of worship. John likely penned his Gospel during Emperor Domitian's reign (AD 81-96). Domitian claimed for himself a title almost identical to Thomas's declaration, "Our Lord and God."

DISCUSS: Point out that people can get hung up on Jesus's claim to be Lord and God. Ask: **How**

does Jesus address people's doubts about Him? (p. 103) Challenge the group to think of people they know who have doubts and how they can introduce them to Jesus.

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Read this session's summary statement: *Believers can be confident that Jesus is resurrected* (p. 100). Remind the group that as Christ followers, we're commissioned to tell others about Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

DISCUSS: *What should we do when we encounter the doubts of others?* (Possible answers: Listen, pray, show kindness and respect, emphasize God's love, and so forth) Mention that the group can be a safe place for sharing doubts about salvation. Briefly use the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover of the DDG to share the gospel. Let the group know that you will be available to speak with anyone who wants to know more about following Jesus.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God that we can know for sure that Jesus is alive and that we are saved.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week. Invite individuals to share any concerns or doubts they have about their own salvation. Reassure them that God intends for us to know that we have eternal life (see 1 John 5:12-13). Share how they can overcome any doubts about their own salvation.

Do You Love Me?

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Welcome the group as they arrive. Write the following on the board: *Do you love me? Circle one: Yes or No.* Ask: ***When you were a kid, did you ever get a note like this? Did you ever send a note like this?*** Allow volunteers to share their experiences. Talk about whether this is a good measure of love.

DISCUSS: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 109. Encourage the group to respond to the question at the end of the paragraph: ***What makes asking someone about their love for you dangerous?*** (p. 109) Emphasize that talking about love can be tricky—unless you’re certain of the answers you’ll get.

TRANSITION: *On the night of His arrest, Peter had denied Jesus three times. The experience devastated Peter and likely stuck with him after the resurrection. But in today’s verses we’ll see that Jesus wasn’t through with Peter—and He wanted Peter to understand that.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Point to chapter 21 on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John’s Gospel*) displayed on the wall. Note that this lesson moves into the final stage of John’s Gospel and will wrap up this study. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Post-Resurrection*

Appearances of Jesus) and highlight the disciples by the Sea of Galilee.

EXAMINE: Direct the group to scan Understand the Context (p. 109) to discover why Peter was in Galilee and why he might have gone fishing. Instruct the group to scan John 21:4-14. Ask: ***When John identified Jesus, what did Peter do? What invitations did Jesus extend once they got to shore?*** Lead the group in a brief discussion to set the context for Jesus’s conversation with Peter.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **John 21:15-17**, leading the group to listen for key words or phrases related to Jesus’s post-breakfast conversation with Peter.

ASK: ***What was Jesus’s first question for Peter?*** Explore possible meanings of “more than these.” Highlight how each could relate to Peter’s boasting at the Passover meal and his denials later.

- **(21:15)** By “these,” Jesus may have been referring to the other disciples—whether Peter loved Him more than the other disciples loved Him. Before the denials, Peter had bragged that he would die for Jesus, implying that his passion outshone the passion of others (John 13:36-38). Another possibility was that Jesus was pointing toward the boat, the catch

of fish, and the nets that lay nearby. Jesus may have been asking if Simon loved Him more than the things he had once left behind.

- **(21:15-17)** The Greek text uses two words for love. Referring to Peter's love, Jesus employed a verb form of the Greek word *agape*. In this sense, Jesus could have been asking Peter if he loved his Master with the highest form of love. Simon, Peter, knowing how he had denied knowing Jesus, used a different word for love. Instead of *agape*, he used a form of the word *phileo*. This kind of love is what we might call "brotherly love." The third time Jesus asked the question (v. 17), He used Peter's word *phileo*. While the two words for love can be used in a way that is distinct from each other, they can also be used as synonyms.

EXPLAIN: Highlight the commands in these verses to care for the sheep. Ask: ***Why did Jesus ask Peter the same question three times?*** Remind the group that Peter had denied Jesus three times on the night before His crucifixion. Share that many scholars believe Jesus gave Peter three opportunities to affirm his love and loyalty.

- **(21:15-17)** Peter was to take care of Christ's flock by feeding them with His Word. The term *lambs* emphasizes the dependence of new believers. They need shepherds who will guide them, provide for them, and protect them, following the example set by the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). Using the phrase "shepherd my sheep," Jesus was giving Peter a commission to serve the church. When we love Jesus, we have a responsibility to care for His people.

SHARE: *Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd (John 10:14), and He expects His followers to reflect His love for others. Peter was going to be a major figure in the early church, so Jesus needed him to understand that he was still useful. He was restored.*

ASK: ***Why do we easily think that if we have faltered then the Lord is no longer able to use us?*** (p. 111) Affirm that Jesus's grace in restoration is so important because people are imperfect and will fail. *But even when we fail, Jesus is ready and willing to forgive us and restore us to His purposes.*

READ: Read John 21:18-19 aloud, guiding the group to think of how God used Peter after this conversation.

EXPLAIN: Share that the image of Peter stretching out his hands likely referred to crucifixion. Point out that church tradition states Peter was crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die as Jesus did. Emphasize that while we don't have historical proof of this, we know that Peter died as a martyr because of his faith.

ASK: ***Would knowing you would be a martyr for Christ cause you joy or anxiety?*** (p. 111) Allow some volunteers to share their responses and explain why they would feel that way. Note that "martyr" comes from the same Greek word as "witness." Lead the group to briefly discuss the relationship between the two words.

HIGHLIGHT: Guide the group to find Jesus's command in these verses: "Follow me." Direct a volunteer to read Matthew 4:18-20. Remind the group that Jesus's relationship with Peter began

with similar words. Note that Jesus was again reminding Peter that he was going to be used by God. Emphasize again that while failures will happen, our lives should be marked by obedience and following Jesus's leadership in our lives.

TRANSITION: *Sometimes in difficult conversations, we're tempted to change the subject. Jesus had given Peter some hard truths, but Jesus would not let him shift gears.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud John 21:20-23, as the group identifies how Peter tried to change the subject.

EXAMINE: Place the group in teams of three or four and give each team an index card and pen. Direct them to read verses 20-23 and the information on pages 114-115 to create a summary paragraph of the verses. After a few minutes, allow the teams to share their work. Encourage the group to use these summaries to create a one- or two-word summary for what Jesus was teaching Peter.

ASK: *What was Jesus's ultimate command for Peter?* Highlight that Jesus called Peter to follow Him—without worrying about what He was doing in the lives of others. Suggest that “follow Me” would be a great summary statement, as well as a good mission statement for our own lives. Ask: ***What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to other believers?*** (p. 111) (*Possible answers: pride, distractions, judgmental spirit, doubts, and so forth*) ***How do we stay focused on Jesus's call for our life?*** (p. 111)

EMPHASIZE: *God had a personal plan for both Peter and John. Both were important for the*

kingdom. God also has a personal plan for each of us, and we should focus on personal obedience. As we fulfill our calling, the kingdom grows stronger and other believers are encouraged. What's more, the world will see our love for Jesus and be drawn to Him.

CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: Remind the group of this session's summary statement: *Believers are offered God's grace even when they fail* (p. 108). Ask: ***How would you answer if Jesus asked if you really loved Him?*** Remind the group that failure does not have to define their walk with Jesus. Challenge them to turn to Jesus when they fail and to ask Him to help them stay focused on His call.

PRAY: Close in prayer, focusing on God's forgiveness and giving thanks for His love. Ask Him to help each person to know and follow His plan for their lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group during the week and encouraging them to reflect on the relationship between Jesus and Peter in this session's verses. Remind them that even when they are not faithful to Jesus, He is ready and willing to receive us back, forgiving and restoring us. Challenge them to pray that God will help them be open to what He wants to teach them from the passage.

VISUAL IDEAS

These items are available in the **Explore the Bible: Leader Pack** (see goExploreTheBible.com) or you can use these descriptions to create your own..

Item 1: Sessions 1-13

Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem

Use the map on the inside back cover of this resource or locate a similar map in a Bible atlas to highlight the locations of events that took place in the week leading up to Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection.



Explore the Bible: Leader Pack Sample

Item 2: Sessions 1-13

Poster: Outline of John's Gospel

Refer to the outline for the Gospel of John on page 9 of this resource.

Item 3: Sessions 3, 5, 10

Poster: "I Am" Sayings in John's Gospel

Use a Bible handbook or Bible dictionary to create a list of the "I Am" statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John.

Item 4: Sessions 1-13

Poster: Jesus's Last Week

Use a Bible handbook or Bible dictionary to create a chart of the events that happened on each day during Passion Week.

Item 5: Sessions 9-10

Poster: The Trials of Jesus

Use a Bible handbook, Bible dictionary, or another source to create a chart listing the various trials Jesus experienced on the night of His arrest.

Item 6: Session 3

Key Verse: John 14:6

Create a poster that shows John 14:6:

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Item 7: Sessions 1-13

Handout: John Time Line

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events found in John 12–21. Use it as a reference as you study these chapters of John's Gospel.

Item 8: Sessions 1-13

Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark

Make a list of these suggested memory verses to distribute to your group:

- John 12:17
- John 12:32
- John 14:1
- John 14:27
- John 15:5
- John 20:8
- John 16:8
- John 17:20-21
- John 18:11
- John 18:36
- John 19:30
- John 20:29
- John 21:22

Item 9: Sessions 3, 5, 10

Handout: "I Am" Sayings of Jesus

Use a Bible handbook, Bible dictionary, or another source to create a chart that lists each of the "I Am" sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel, along with their references.

Item 10: Session 3

Handout: Is Jesus the Only Way?

Use a Bible handbook, dictionary, or commentary to create a handout that explains the unique nature of Jesus and His superiority to other religious figures.

Item 11: Sessions 1-2

Handout: First-Century Sabbath Laws

Use a Bible handbook, dictionary, or commentary to create a handout that

lists several Sabbath laws and provides background for how such laws developed and came to be revered within Judaism during the first century.

Item 12: Sessions 8, 11

Handout: The Prayers of Jesus

Use a Bible handbook, dictionary, or other source to create a chart that lists the topics and references of Jesus's prayers throughout the Gospels.

Item 13: Sessions 12-13

Handout: Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

Use a Bible handbook, dictionary, or other source to create a chart that lists Jesus's post-resurrection appearances in each of the Gospels.

GOSPEL	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Matthew	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Mark	1st	Unknown	Unknown
Luke	1st	Unknown	Unknown
John	1st	Unknown	Unknown

*Explore the Bible:
Leader Pack Sample*

Item 14: Sessions 4, 5, 7

Handout: The Role of the Holy Spirit

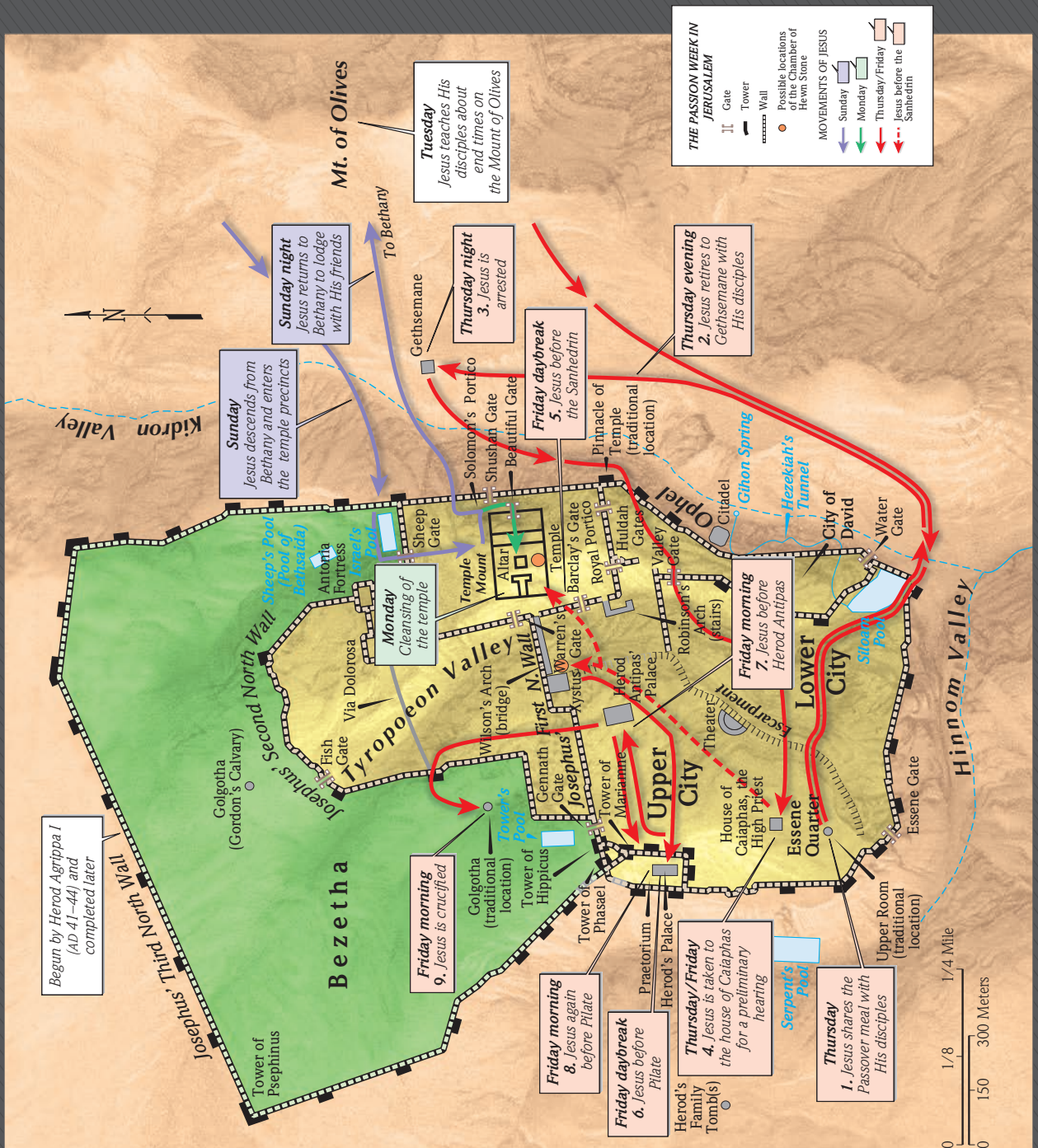
Use a Bible handbook, dictionary, or commentary to create a handout that explains the nature and work of the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments, emphasizing Jesus's teachings in the Gospel of John.

COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

- Session 1.....**Prepares** • Jeremiah 1:4-19
- Session 2.....**Judges** • Jeremiah 2:1-13
- Session 3.....**Personal** • Jeremiah 7:1-15
- Session 4.....**Exclusive** • Jeremiah 12:1-13
- Session 5.....**Shapes** • Jeremiah 18:1-12
- Session 6.....**Rules** • Jeremiah 23:1-12
- Session 7.....**Present** • Jeremiah 29:4-14
- Session 8.....**Redeems** • Jeremiah 31:23-24
- Session 9.....**Worthy** • Jeremiah 35:5-19
- Session 10.....**Speaks** • Jeremiah 36:19-31
- Session 11.....**Trustworthy** • Jeremiah 42:7-22
- Session 12.....**Just** • Jeremiah 50:11-20,33-34
- Session 13.....**Good** • Lamentations 3:19-33

The Passion Week in Jerusalem



"The Passion Week in Jerusalem" is adapted from the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary: Revised and Expanded* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 234. Used by permission.

JOHN 12-21

The apostle John spent roughly 40 percent of his Gospel focusing on the week leading up to Jesus's death and resurrection. That was part of John's plan to help readers accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In these chapters, we find Jesus teaching His disciples so much about being a Christ follower in a hostile world. Christians still need to understand and embrace those principles, which makes studying John 12-21 imperative.

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