



MAKING DISCIPLES

A Bible study guide for evangelism



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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

As we use these studies in teaching the Bible to people around us, what are we aiming to do? Are we trying to pass on knowledge? Are we trying to convince people to stop sinning? Are we trying to persuade people to accept our understanding of the Bible's teachings on salvation? While each of those is true in some way, none of them are the core of why we do what we do as disciples.

As we share our faith with those around us, we are declaring the praises of God who called us out of darkness ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). We are bringing good news to the lost ([Luke 4:18-19](#)), life-giving water to the thirsty ([John 4:13-14](#)) and freedom for slaves of sin ([Romans 6:6](#)). We are shining light into the darkness of this world ([2 Corinthians 4:6](#)) and offering truth that sets people free ([John 8:31-32](#)). We are trying to persuade those around us to hear the gospel and are warning them of the coming judgment ([2 Corinthians 5:10-11](#)).

If you are a disciple of Jesus, then God has moved powerfully in your life, reconciling you to himself, forgiving your sin and giving you a hope that the world so desperately needs. As Christ's ambassadors ([2 Corinthians 5:18-20](#)), God has committed to us that same message of reconciliation, and we now represent Christ in reaching the lost world. By God's design, the spread of the gospel always takes place through his disciples. That is why we "go and make disciples of all nations," sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with anyone who will listen! And that is the purpose of this series of studies. They are a tool, designed to help Christ's ambassadors make God's appeal and present the gospel to those around us.

NOT A FORMULA

It's important to remember that helping someone come to faith is a deeply spiritual and unpredictable process. Each person we study with is unique, and each has their own unique religious background. This study series is not some formula or process by which people can be converted. At times, you will need to tailor the studies to suit a specific need, and that is to be expected. The order of the studies has been carefully selected and they have been written with this order in mind. However, you may find it necessary to use them out of order. You may find it necessary to pause somewhere in the series to answer questions or to study a particular topic in greater depth. Remember that you are helping to bring them to the foot of the cross, and that path will be somewhat different for each person.

It's also important to remember that, as ambassadors, our representation of the gospel goes far beyond the content of these studies and our ability to teach sound doctrine. We chiefly represent Christ by living out his teachings and loving others as he has loved us. Helping someone become a Christian is more about showing than it is about teaching. Remember that as you use these studies to present the gospel, the most important part of your gospel presentation is the life you live!

WHERE TO BEGIN

The best place to start is to find out their religious background and their spiritual beliefs. It's crucial that you know them as a person and that you take the time to get to know their background. Find out about any spiritual aspects of their upbringing. What faith were they raised in? Were they a part of a church (or other religious community)? Find out about their beliefs concerning the Bible, God and Jesus. Find out where they see themselves now spiritually. Are they seeking God? Are they a disciple? What do they hope to gain from these studies? What do they believe regarding eternal life and where they stand with God?

One helpful approach is to write a timeline of significant spiritual events in their life. If they identify themselves as a Christian, ask about their conversion and how they became one. Your goal is to get any significant events on the timeline such as: particular prayers, worship experiences, baptisms or turning points of any kind. If they were baptized, what did it mean and why were they baptized?

As you discuss these things, it's important for you to remember that God works in our lives long before we come to take him and his word seriously. This is true even if our experiences reflect misunderstandings of scripture or trust in false doctrines. God was still present and was working through our experiences, relationships and circumstances to try to draw us to him, long before we came into a saving relationship with Christ. Thus, it's important as you discuss their background that you don't deny the significance of some spiritual event in their life. Look for ways in which you see God working and affirm those when you can. Of course, as you guide them through these studies, they will likely come to understand their religious background in a whole new way, but changing their perception of their background is not our focus. Jesus focused on adding to people's understanding and faith and that should be our approach as well.

BASIC CONCERNS TO REMEMBER

Have your friend into your home and get time in their home

- » Introduce them to your family or your roommates. Learn about their family and living arrangements. This will help them begin to know your real life and you will begin to know theirs.

Consider the location of your studies

- » It would be best to meet in a home. If you are meeting elsewhere, be sure to choose a place where you can talk freely.

Give them a Bible

- » If they don't already have a good Bible, it's a great gift to give them.

Share your own life

- » Tell about your own life and conversion, and talk about how God has moved in your life.

Remember to serve and love as Christ has done for you

- » Watch for opportunities to meet needs.

Introduce them to the church

- » Invite them to church events and show them what God's church is like.

Have one or two other disciples join you for the Bible studies

- » This will help foster other new relationships. We all need many good Christian relationships to remain faithful.

Don't do all the talking

- » Remember, conversion is a heart matter, not just the passing on of information. Make sure communication is two ways and that you give them every opportunity to answer the questions you ask and to ask any questions they may have themselves.

Teach them to pray

- » Prayer is a vital part of every disciple's life and is therefore a vital part of helping someone come to faith. Pray as a part of your times together.

Focus on what matters

- » At times, certain debatable or controversial matters come up as we teach the gospel, and sometimes discussing them is unavoidable. However, our goal as we teach the scriptures should be to focus on the core matters of life and doctrine ([Titus 3:9](#)).

THE DESIGN OF THE SERIES

As mentioned above, it may be necessary for you to use these studies out of order in studying with a particular person. However, the order of the studies has been carefully chosen and each study has been designed to fit well within that order.

We begin the series with two studies covering The Bible and Jesus, and there is no better place to start! We start with The Bible / God's Word in order to establish the scriptures as the authority on matters of faith and salvation. We finish that study with [John 8:31-32](#), pointing out that only by abiding in the words of Jesus will we be set free by the truth. That leads into the next study simply entitled Jesus. In that study, we focus on the "author and perfecter of our faith," illuminating who he was, some of what he taught and his call to "come follow me."

The next two studies (Sin and The Good News) focus on sin and the gospel message. We close the sin study with [Romans 7:24-25](#) which looks forward to God's answer for our sinfulness in Jesus. As in [Acts 2](#) and other places in scripture, this study series presents the problem of sin and the gospel message prior to giving the call to discipleship. When we present The Call to Discipleship in the fifth study, we are calling them to follow the man who came and paid the price for their sin.

The sixth study, entitled The Way of Salvation, focuses on repentance and baptism as the scriptural response to The Good News and The Call of Discipleship. It offers a chance to discuss false

doctrine concerning salvation and uses Saul's conversion as an example of both repentance and baptism. The final study, The Church, lays important foundational convictions concerning the family of God and speaks to the glory of true Christian fellowship. An eighth study, one that focuses on counting the costs and celebrating the blessings of becoming a Christian, is also provided and can be used as needed.

IN PREPARATION FOR EACH STUDY

The following list contains things that you should do in preparation for each study. Some of them may not be as necessary as you grow in your familiarity with these studies, but they are still great practices!

Pray

- » You and the person you are studying with are engaged in a deeply spiritual event. God is fighting for their soul and Satan will not let them go without a fight. Pray for them regularly!

Spiritually prepare yourself

- » Leading a Bible study is a spiritual task, led by the Spirit, and it's important that you are connected with God and walking with him. Make sure you are spending time with God and that you are ready to be used by him.

Read through the teacher's guide

- » Each study has a teacher guide that offers background, clarification and guidance.

Be familiar with the verses you will be teaching

- » As the teacher in this study, you need to know well the scriptures you will be teaching so that you can "correctly handle the word of truth" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)).

Be familiar with the study notes

- » Note the flow of the study and the main focus. Read through the questions you will be asking. This will help you be ready to lead the study with confidence and conviction. If you have any questions, ask for help!

Look through any relevant pages in the appendix

- » Several other helpful resources are available to supplement the studies.

Confirm with those who will be attending the study

- » It is wise to confirm the time and location with the person you are studying with, as well as with any other disciples who will be attending the study. Remind these disciples to be prepared for the study in these ways as well.

Be watchful

- » God has been working and moving in their life and heart long before this study will begin, and he is still working. Be watchful for how God is moving and be ready to respond to wherever they are and wherever he leads!

MAKING DISCIPLES

LEARNER GUIDE

THE BIBLE – GOD’S WORD

Purpose

To establish the scriptures as the standard for our lives.

THE BIBLE – GOD’S WORD

- » Is the greatest selling book in history
- » Contains 66 books (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament)
- » Was written over a period of about 1,500 years
- » Was written by more than 40 authors from varied backgrounds (shepherds, fishermen, kings, theologians, a doctor, a tax collector, etc.)
- » Contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies
- » Is historically accurate – archaeology continues to affirm the biblical story

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

- » Through scripture, we learn about faith and salvation.
- » The Bible is God-breathed – from God himself; communicated through the personalities of chosen men such as Moses, Paul, John and Luke.

Q: What does it mean for scripture to be “God-breathed”?

Q: Do you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God?

- » The scriptures are useful – they teach, correct, rebuke and train us in righteousness.
- » The scriptures equip us – they can be used in every aspect of our lives: areas such as marriage, parenting, work, finances, decision-making, relationships, etc.

Q: Do you see the Bible as relevant and useful to you?

JAMES 1:21-25

- » A call to humility – humbly let the word of God expose our imperfections.
- » A call to action – God expects us to look intently into his word and obey it, and he blesses those who do this.
- » A call to examine – the Bible, like a mirror, exposes who we really are.

Q: What is the function of a mirror and how does this apply to our spiritual lives?

MATTHEW 15:1-9

- » Many of us have grown up learning and practicing religious traditions, some of which may contradict scripture.
- » Following scripture is always more important than honoring our traditions. If our traditions contradict scripture, Jesus says we are worshipping “in vain.”
- » God wants more than lip service and religious traditions. He wants our hearts! God is looking for hearts that value his commands over man-made traditions.

Q: How might tradition come between us and doing the will of God?

ACTS 17:10-11

- » What qualities listed in this passage indicate that the Bereans were noble?
 - Eagerness** – they were eager to hear God’s word.
 - Digging deep daily** – they examined the scriptures every day.
 - Personal pursuit of truth** – they did not just accept what the religious leaders were saying; they checked the scriptures themselves.
- » Take the “Berean Challenge” and imitate these characteristics.

1 TIMOTHY 4:16

- » God cares about our life (how we live and the choices we make) and our doctrine (what we believe). So we need to pay careful attention to both.

Q: Consider an airplane in flight. Which of the two wings is most important?

- » If we are to be saved and to help save those around us, we must persist in knowing the truths of the scriptures and living out those truths in our daily lives.

JOHN 8:31-32

- » Holding to his teachings goes beyond mere obedience – it is to “abide” or “remain” or “continue” in his word. We hold God’s word close to our hearts and live our lives immersed in it.

Q: Jesus claims that his words are a source of truth and freedom. Do you see the teachings of Jesus as a source of freedom or constraint?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

Q: Are you willing to humbly let the Bible expose your heart?

Q: Are you willing to accept the Bible as the standard for your life?

Q: Are you willing to eagerly study God’s word every day?

FURTHER READINGS

Psalm 119:97-104	The word of God gives us tremendous wisdom
Isaiah 66:1-2	The word of God is worthy of deep respect
Romans 10:17	Faith is developed through reading God’s word
1 Peter 1:22-25	We are born again through the word of God
2 Samuel 22:30-32	The word of God is flawless
Isaiah 55:6-11	God’s ways are higher than our own

JESUS

Purpose

To understand who Jesus is and the amazing life he lived

MATTHEW 16:13-16 | WHO IS JESUS?

- » Jesus' identity was hotly debated in his day, and still is to this day! This study will focus on who Jesus is and the amazing life he lived.

Q: Who do you say Jesus is?

JOHN 1:1-4 | JESUS WAS BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE

John is speaking of Jesus as "the Word." Jesus was with God in the beginning, but more than that – he "was God". Through him all things were made, and he brought the light of God into the darkness. Jesus spoke the very words of God.

- » Jesus was also fully human! He could be heard, seen and touched. His followers walked with him, and their message was about all they experienced of his very human life.

Note: Jesus' teaching and his miracles speak to his divinity ([Matthew 4:23-25](#)).

MARK 1:1-8 | JESUS WAS EXPECTED

- » Many scriptures written long before the time of Christ looked forward to his coming ([Isaiah 40:3](#) is referenced here). God's people had expected and looked forward to a messiah for many generations!
- » John's God-given role was to prepare the way for Jesus. Imagine hearing the teaching of John – the Messiah was about to arrive!

Q: After generations of waiting, how might it have felt to know that the Messiah was about to arrive?

MATTHEW 4:18-25 | JESUS CALLED PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM

- » Jesus called people to follow him, to walk with him, to learn from him and to imitate his life. People of all walks of life and lifestyles followed him. His calling is no different for people today.
- » Jesus' life and teachings inspired people to leave everything else behind and follow him.

MATTHEW 7:24-29 | JESUS WAS A REVOLUTIONARY TEACHER

- » Jesus' teachings set him apart, and those who heard him were often amazed! He taught unlike anyone else because he taught with authority.

Let's look at some of what he taught:

- His teaching on purity ([Matthew 5:27-30](#))
- His teaching on loving your enemies ([Matthew 5:43-45](#))
- His teaching on the love of money ([Matthew 6:24](#))

Q: How are Jesus' teachings still revolutionary for our world today?

JOHN 4:4-9 | JESUS DREW ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE TO HIMSELF

- » According to the prejudices of his day, Jesus shouldn't even have been in Samaria, and he certainly shouldn't have been talking to a Samaritan woman!
- » Jesus welcomed and spent his time with children, lepers and social outcasts such as the Samaritans and tax collectors. He loved those who many considered unlovable. He was often ridiculed for the time he spent with "sinners." Jesus drew all kinds of people to himself, and he is drawing you!

Q: How do you feel about the idea that Jesus is drawing you to himself?

JOHN 13:1-5, 34-35 | JESUS LOVED BEYOND MEASURE

- » Washing feet was a humble act of service, a dirty job reserved for lowly household servants. Jesus humbled himself greatly by doing this for his disciples.
- » Jesus taught a new standard of love by his actions and called us to that same love.

Q: How is this kind of love different than what we see in the world around us?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- » What strikes you the most about the life of Jesus and who he is?
- » Going back to Jesus' question in [Matthew 16](#), who do you say Jesus is? Do you believe in him?

Note: *Encourage the person you are studying with to read the Sermon on the Mount in its entirety.*

FURTHER READINGS

[Matthew 5-7](#)

Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount

[John 3:14-17](#)

Jesus came to save the world through his death

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#)

Jesus will come back for his followers

[Hebrews 4:14-16](#)

Jesus was tempted as we are

[Matthew 11:28-30](#)

Jesus offers rest for the weary and burdened

[John 7:37-38](#)

Jesus offers to quench our spiritual thirst

[Colossians 1:15-20](#)

Jesus was and is supreme in every way

SIN

Purpose

To understand the nature of sin, its costs and how God feels about it.

Introduction

In this study, we'll look at several verses that help us understand the biblical picture of sin. We'll see what sin is and what it produces in us. We'll also talk about the source of sin and how God feels about it.

Q: What do you think it means to sin?

ROMANS 3:21-24 | THE DEFINITION OF SIN

- » The Bible defines and describes sin in different ways. Sin is referred to as a weight that we carry, a burden we bear, a debt that we owe, and as a stain that must be cleansed. Sin is also described as turning away from God and going our own way.

Note: *Verse references are in the teacher's guide*

- » In this verse, sin is defined as falling short, a departure from the will of God. When we sin, we act in ways that oppose God and his will. We fall short in our efforts to be like God, and instead we act according to the impulses of our flesh.
- » Each and every one of us is guilty of sin. We're all in this together, and every one of us desperately needs the redemption that comes through Christ.

ROMANS 6:20-23 | THE WAGES OF SIN

Q: What do you think is meant by the "wages of sin?"

- » Sin enslaves those who are living in it and it results in spiritual death. Without Christ, those in sin miss the gift of eternal life!
- » Sin is very costly and reaps no benefits. It is terribly damaging to every area of our lives (families, communities, relationships).

EPHESIANS 4:17-19 | THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF SIN

Q: What effects of sin do we see in this passage?

- » Over time, sin hardens our hearts and desensitizes us to God.
- » Sin darkens our understanding and hardens our hearts, resulting in ignorance. After a while, sin makes it difficult to even see and understand God! As a result, our sin separates us from the life of God.

MARK 7:20-23 | THE SOURCE OF SIN

Q: What is the ultimate source of our sinfulness?

- » Sin comes from within – from our hearts and not from our circumstances. We can't blame our sin on our environment, our upbringing or our society.

- » Jesus is very specific here about some of the sins that come from within and that make us “unclean.” God wants us to be able to clearly identify the sin in our lives so that we can repent and deal with our hearts.

GALATIANS 5:19-21, JAMES 4:17 | TYPES OF SIN

- » Notice the different types of sin in this list: sexual sins, relational sins and sins of indulgence. For definitions of these sins, see the appendix.
- » Those who live like this will not inherit God’s eternal kingdom. Instead, they forfeit their inheritance!
- » When we don’t do the good we know we should do – that is also considered sin.

Note: Now is a great time for you who are leading the study to share openly about the sin you had to face in becoming a disciple. Invite the person you are studying with to share as well.

GENESIS 6:5-6 | GOD’S HEART IN REGARD TO OUR SIN

- » Sin isn’t just breaking the rules. It actually pains God (grieves him) when we sin and hurts our relationship with him.

Q: Is this how you’ve understood God’s feelings about your sin?

ROMANS 7:24-25 | RESCUE FROM SIN

- » The only sufficient answer to the terrible costs and damage of sin is Jesus Christ!

CLOSING COMMENT

- » Like Paul, seeing our own sinfulness can be overwhelming. In our next study, we’ll look at God’s answer to sin and how he rescues us.

Note: *Encourage the person you are studying with to read the following verses that further describe sinful behavior and write out a personal sin list.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Colossians 3:5-10, Ephesians 5:3-7, 2 Timothy 3:1-5

FURTHER READINGS

<u>John 3:19-21</u>	Facing our sin honestly can be painful
<u>Proverbs 28:13</u>	He who confesses and renounces his sin finds mercy
<u>James 5:16</u>	We are called to confess our sin to one another
<u>Romans 1:18-32</u>	The progression of sin
<u>1 John 3:4</u>	Sin is breaking God’s law

THE GOOD NEWS

Purpose

To understand God's answer/solution to the sinfulness of mankind.

Introduction

God is grieved by sin ([Genesis 6:5-6](#)), but he is also moved by his love for us. In this study, we will examine the good news of God's love.

JOHN 3:16-18 | THE OFFER OF SALVATION

Q: What is God's motivation in sending his Son?

- » **For God so loved the world.** God's love is the driving force behind the good news!
- » **He gave his only Son.** God gave his Son unconditionally, regardless of what we would do with his gift. God paid an incredibly high price to give us this opportunity!
- » **To save us from our sin.** God desires to rescue each of us from our sin and give us eternal life.

ISAIAH 53:5-6 | THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

- » **Jesus was pierced, crushed, punished for our sin.** As we will see, Jesus suffered terribly on the cross, and he did it all because of our sin! He took upon himself the punishment we deserved to redeem us for God.
- » **We are healed by his wounds.** The only healing available for our sinfulness is found in Jesus. The only real peace any of us can have is in turning to Christ.

Note: Let's take a deeper look at what happened to Jesus on the cross. More than anything, what he experienced on the cross can be summarized as pain.

MATTHEW 26:36-56 | THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CROSS

- » **His soul was overwhelmed.** Jesus felt great sorrow and fell with his face to the ground. His stress was so great that he may have suffered from a medical condition called hematidrosis (the blood-like sweat recorded in [Luke 22:44](#)).
- » **He was betrayed.** Judas, one of his closest friends, betrayed him with a kiss.
- » **He was deserted.** All the disciples deserted him and fled. He was left to face this trial alone.

MATTHEW 27:22-50 | THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CROSS

- » **He was flogged.** Stretched out over a tree or rock, victims were struck repeatedly – purposefully bringing them close to the point of death.
- » **A flagrum was used** – a leather whip with pieces of metal or rock woven into the tips.
- » Many would go into shock or even die from such a beating, which left one's back bruised, swollen and torn into shreds.

- » **He was crowned with thorns.** Soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head and drove the thorns deeper into his skull by striking him with a staff.
 - » **He was beaten and spat upon.** Jesus was beaten further, spat upon and mocked by a group of soldiers.
 - » **He was crucified.** Jesus was nailed to a wooden beam and suspended from another, forming a 'T.'
 - » The first nails were driven between the two main bones of the wrist (the ulna and the radius), in a very sensitive pressure point.
 - » The last nail was driven through the feet and into the vertical beam of the cross. Jesus hung on the cross with his weight placed on those nails.
 - » Most people died from suffocation, as carbon dioxide built up in the lungs.
- Note:** For a detailed description, see The Medical Account in the appendix.

ISAIAH 52:14 | HE WAS MARRED BEYOND HUMAN LIKENESS

- » Given the beatings he received and the massive trauma to his body, Jesus would hardly have resembled a normal person.
- » His head and body would have been swollen, severely bruised and covered in blood. His back, already in ribbons from the flogging, would have been further damaged by the wood of the cross.

MATTHEW 27:45-50 | HE EXPERIENCED DEATH

- » Jesus cried out in anguish to God as he faced the pain of death. Jesus, as God and Man, felt the nearly unbearable pain of death for the first time in all eternity.
- » The anguish Jesus felt was intense and he used a quote from [Psalm 22](#) to express how he felt.

Q: How do you feel about all that Jesus went through for you?

MATTHEW 27:51-61 | THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS DEATH

- » **The miraculous testimony.** The sky grew dark in midday; an earthquake shook hard enough to split rocks.
- » Many righteous people rose from the dead and appeared to many.
- » The curtain of the temple (a 60-foot high, 4-inch thick curtain, used to set off the most holy place in the temple) was torn in two. Jesus' death broke down the barrier, illustrating the opportunity for everyone to have intimate access to God (Hebrews 10:19-20).
- » Even Roman soldiers took note of these extraordinary events.

1 PETER 2:21-24 | THE ULTIMATE SIGNIFICANCE

- » Jesus took on the sins of the world and bore them in his body as he went to the cross.
- » By his wounds, we can be healed (refer back to [Isaiah 53:5-6](#)).

MATTHEW 28:1-10, ROMANS 6:1-7 | THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

- » **Jesus was raised with power.** The story didn't conclude with Jesus' death, but with a dramatic resurrection!
- » An angel, an earthquake and an empty tomb brought both fear and joy.

Q: What must it have been like to follow Jesus, watch him die, and then see him alive?

Q: What is the significance of the empty tomb?

ROMANS 5:6-10 | A DEMONSTRATION OF HIS LOVE

- » **While we were still sinners.** Jesus died for us when we were at our worst – weak, ungodly, sinners and enemies of God. He didn't die for us because we are good people!
- » **We are justified and saved from wrath.** Because of the blood of Jesus, we can be justified and saved from the wrath of God – the wrath and punishment that our sin deserves.

Q: Why is God willing to sacrifice so much when he's receiving so little in return (John 3:16-18)?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- » Given the problem of sin revealed in our last study, why is all of this good news?
- » What response to the cross of Christ would honor all that he has done? (Surrender)

Note: *The next time we get together, we will take a closer look at the life Jesus calls each of us to live.*

Note: *Encourage the person you are studying with to watch "The Passion of the Christ" before the next study.*

FURTHER READINGS

[Philippians 2:1-11](#)

Jesus' death was an act of great humility

[Romans 3:21-26](#)

Jesus' death was a sacrifice of atonement

[2 Corinthians 5:16-21](#)

God made Jesus our sin offering on the cross

[1 Corinthians 15:3-8](#)

The resurrection was witnessed by hundreds

THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Purpose

To understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

ACTS 2:36 | LORD AND CHRIST

» This is the heart of the first gospel sermon.

Q: What do you think it means to call someone Lord? (King or Master)

Q: What do you think it means to call someone Christ? (Savior)

» **Jesus is both Lord and Christ.** We cannot accept him as our savior if we aren't also willing to make him Lord of our lives.

MARK 1:14-18 | CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS

» From the beginning, Jesus' message was a call to follow him and be a fisher of men. Over the next 2-3 years, his disciples would learn what this meant.

» The earliest disciples left everything behind to follow Jesus!

Note: *In this study, we will look at what following Jesus and being his disciple means.*

LUKE 9:23-26 | CALLED TO DENY SELF

» **"If anyone"** – Jesus' call of discipleship is the same for all of us.

» **"He must deny himself and take up his cross daily"** – following Jesus requires surrender and an absolute denial of self.

» **"Whoever loses his life"** – only when we surrender our lives and deny ourselves will our lives be saved – a great paradox. If we try to hold onto our lives, we ultimately lose them!

Q: How do you think they would understand Jesus' call to take up their crosses daily?

Q: Is this a decision that you have made in your life?

LUKE 11:1-4 | CALLED TO LEARN FROM JESUS

» The disciples looked to Jesus for instruction in prayer.

» This is a model of how we need to look to Jesus for instruction in every area.

» It is obvious that prayer should be a vital, daily part of every disciple's life.

Q: What is your prayer life like?

LUKE 14:25-33 | CALLED TO PUT JESUS FIRST

» **"Disciple"** – following Jesus is to be his "disciple." Jesus didn't use the word "Christian."

Disciple means "follower, learner or apprentice."

Q: What do you make of Jesus' teaching here to "hate" our families? What does this mean?

- » **Jesus before family** – a disciple’s relationship with Christ must come before all other relationships, even family relationships. Jesus also teaches that we should love our families and care for them, but he comes first!
- » **“Anything and everything”** – following Jesus is an all-consuming commitment and takes everything we’ve got. Only total surrender is sufficient in the eyes of God.
- » **“Counting the cost”** – Jesus gives two examples to illustrate the need to count the cost of such a serious commitment. The call of discipleship is not one to be taken lightly!

MATTHEW 28:18-20 | CALLED TO MAKE DISCIPLES

- » **“Go and make disciples”** – Jesus gave his followers a new purpose in life—making disciples of all nations. Just like when he initially called them ([Mark 1:14-18](#)), Jesus makes it clear that a disciple’s purpose is to teach others about him!

Q: Have you ever embraced the call of Jesus to make disciples?

- » **“Teach them to obey everything”** – Jesus spoke with all the authority in heaven and on earth, and every one of his teachings is important. Being a disciple is to pay close attention to and strive to obey all the teachings of Jesus.
- » **“I’ll be with you always”** – disciples of Jesus are never alone!

MATTHEW 22:34-40 | CALLED TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS

Q: What does God ultimately care about most?

- » When asked about what matters most in all the Law, Jesus spoke of love—love for God and love for our neighbors. Love is why disciples do what they do!
- » More than anything else, God wants a relationship with you. He loves you and he wants you to love him. Being a disciple is first and foremost about loving God with all of your heart, soul and mind. Self-denial and putting Jesus first is an outpouring of that relationship.
- » Jesus loved beyond measure and he calls us to love those around us as well. Disciples of Jesus compassionately love and serve those around them, both in meeting needs and in sharing the gospel of Jesus.

Q: Has this kind of love characterized your relationship with God and how you treat and view those around you?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- » Do you feel God calling you to a life of discipleship? How do you feel about that call?
- » Have you ever made the decision to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- » Are you ready to follow Jesus as his disciple?

FURTHER READINGS

Psalm 63:1-6	David had great love for God, and it shows
John 13:34-35	We must imitate Jesus in how he loved
1 John 2:3-6	We must walk as Jesus did
Acts 11:19-26	Disciples were called Christians first at Antioch
1 Corinthians 11:1	Follow the example of Christ

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Purpose

To teach the biblical way of salvation.

ACTS 2:36-41

- » When we grasp what happened at the cross, our response is “What shall I do?”
- » Peter sums up the teaching about salvation: repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.
- » Peter stresses that this is for salvation.

Q: Why do you think there was such a sense of urgency in their response?

1 PETER 2:9-10

- » **Called out of darkness** – becoming a Christian is to move from darkness to light, and it results in a dramatic change in one’s identity.
- » There is no grey area or middle ground.

LIGHT

People of God
Received mercy
Royal priesthood
Holy nation

DARKNESS

Not a people of God
Not received mercy

Q: Are you in the light or in the darkness?

REPENTANCE

Q: What does the word ‘repent’ mean to you?

- » Repentance is: to change one’s mind, to feel remorse, to turn away from sin and turn toward righteousness.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11

- » Repentance begins with godly sorrow, but continues beyond that. It results in real change and ultimately leads to salvation without regret.
- » Worldly sorrow does not bring about real change.

Q: What does godly sorrow produce?

ACTS 17:30-31, 26:20

- » God commands everyone to repent, and all will be judged accordingly.
- » True repentance is ultimately demonstrated by one’s deeds.

BAPTISM

Q: What is your understanding of baptism?

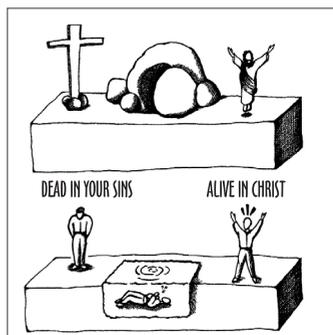
- » The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) means “to dip, plunge or immerse.”

ACTS 2:36-38

- » After we’ve repented, we are commanded to be baptized.
- » What purpose does Peter give for baptism? (Forgiveness and the Holy Spirit)

ROMANS 6:1-7

- » Baptism is our participation in the death, burial and resurrection.
- » We are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to live a new life.



ACTS 9:1-19, 22:6-13 | THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

Note: Make a list of everything Saul (Paul) did on the way to salvation.

Saw a light	Fasted three days
Heard the voice of Jesus	Prayed three days
Believed in Jesus	Had a vision
Confessed Jesus as Lord	Received a miracle
Obedied Jesus’ command	Was baptized

Q: What do we see here that demonstrates Paul’s repentance?

- » Paul immediately changed from being a persecutor and murderer of Christians to a faithful Christian himself – he turned back from his sin.
- » He was obedient to the instruction he received from Jesus.
- » He fasted and prayed for three days – Saul’s conversion was a deeply spiritual event and he took it seriously.

Q: When might people say that Saul’s sins were forgiven and he was saved?

ACTS 22:14-16

- » In both accounts, the culmination of Paul’s conversion to Christianity was his baptism.
- » Paul’s sins were forgiven (washed away) at baptism.

ACTS 2:39-41, 17:24-28 | A PROMISE FOR ALL

- » This promise of salvation is available to all.
- » God is calling you!

QUESTIONS

- Q: In what ways do you see God calling you now?
Q: Are you ready to accept his call to repent and be baptized?

FURTHER READINGS

<u>Acts 8:26-40</u>	The Ethiopian eunuch's baptism
<u>Acts 16:25-34</u>	The Philippian jailer's baptism
<u>Galatians 3:26-29</u>	In baptism, we become sons of God and heirs of the promise
<u>Deuteronomy 30:1-10</u>	The promise of blessings that come with repentance
<u>Luke 3:1-14</u>	Bear fruit that shows repentance
<u>Luke 13:1-5</u>	We will perish without repentance
<u>Acts 3:19-20</u>	Repentance leads to times of refreshing

THE CHURCH

Purpose

To understand God's intent for the church and how each of us can contribute to its overall impact.

ACTS 2:42-47

- » The first disciples were devoted to God and to one another.
- » They were devoted to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- » They spent time in each other's homes and worshipped together.
- » They were sincere and looked to meet each other's needs.

Q: How does this picture compare with your experiences of church life?

COLOSSIANS 1:15-18

- » Jesus is supreme in the universe and in the church. He is the head and the church is his body.
- » In the church we strive to follow his teachings and imitate his life.

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

- » Here the church is spoken of as a family, as a kingdom, and as a building.

Q: Which of these most connects with you?

- » As the cornerstone, Jesus is the perfect stone by which every other stone is shaped.

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

- » God loves unity and wants his family to be unified.
- » We maintain unity by being humble, gentle, patient, and full of love.
- » All believers everywhere are bound together and share one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and one Father.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

- » God gives gifts and puts people in roles to build up and strengthen his church.
- » God's aim is unity, maturity and protection from false teaching.
- » Through honest and loving conversation, and each part doing its work, the church grows and is built up in love.

ROMANS 12:4-8

- » Just as in the human body, each member of the church is essential.
- » God calls us to use our gifts to bless the church.

Q: What do you think your gifts are and how do you think you can use them to glorify God and build up his church?

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

- » We enter the body of Christ in baptism.
- » We all need each other in the same way the body needs all of its parts!
- » Members of the body share in each other's joy and suffering.

MATTHEW 6:19-21, MARK 12:42-44

- » In the church, we give generously to meet the needs of the church and to help spread the gospel.
- » When we give sacrificially, as this widow did, we store up treasures in heaven—treasures that last!
- » Giving is a heart matter. Our giving reflects where our hearts are invested.
- » Giving is a faith matter. As we give to meet the needs of the church, we trust that God is able to meet our needs.

HEBREWS 3:12-14

- » In the church, we strive to give and receive daily encouragement to protect us from the deceitfulness of sin.

Q: How has the encouragement of the church helped you in your own fight against sin?

HEBREWS 10:23-25

- » The fellowship helps us to be unswerving in our commitment to Christ.
- » Do not give up meeting together – consistent fellowship needs to be a priority in our lives.

Q: What will you need to change in your schedule to make the body (the church) a top priority in your life?

FURTHER READINGS

[Philippians 2:1-4](#)

We are called to be one in spirit and purpose

[Galatians 6:10](#)

The church is a family of believers

[Acts 4:32-35](#)

Members of the church help to meet one another's needs

[Matthew 22:34-40](#)

Loving your neighbor can be displayed in the church

[2 Corinthians 9:6-9](#)

We give to meet needs and spread the gospel globally

THE COSTS AND BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Purpose

To ensure that we have done a good job of teaching and that our friends have done a good job of learning, prior to their baptism. We also want to emphasize the blessings that occur in our lives when we decide to follow Jesus.

LUKE 14:25-33 | COUNT THE COST

- » Jesus is very concerned that we count the cost of following him.
- » He uses two parables to communicate his concerns – the tower builder and the over-matched king.
- » We must be prepared to surrender absolutely to Jesus.

Q: Why do you want to become a disciple?

LUKE 8:11-15 | THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

- » People respond differently to God's Word, even those who initially receive it with joy and enthusiasm (Luke 8:13).
- » Like the rocky and thorny soils, many things can prevent us from continuing in the faith and stop us short of finishing the Christian race.
- » Two things can derail our faith – pressures from outside and desires from within.
- » The key to persevering in our faith is to hear, retain and obey the word.

THE COSTS

Note: *In this section, we will do a quick review of key points from each of the seven previous studies.*

Q: Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word? Are you willing to make it the standard for your life from this point on?

Q: What are some of the things that you most admire about Jesus?

Q: Is there any sin of which you are unwilling to repent? What will be your most daunting challenges in this area?

Q: What does the cross mean to you?

Q: Are you prepared to walk the narrow road and follow Jesus in specific ways? What do you think will be most challenging to you (openness, commitment to the body, evangelism, potential family conflict)?

Q: What is your understanding of baptism?

Q: Are you prepared to be fully committed to God's family, the church? Do you have any questions or concerns about the normal church schedule?

THE BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

Q: What do you see as the greatest blessings of following Christ?

ACTS 2:36-39

- » **The complete forgiveness of every sin ever committed** – a totally clean slate.
- » The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - Power to live a new life (John 14:15-17).
 - Experiencing the immediate presence of God within us.

ACTS 2:42-47

- » **Priceless truths from God's Word** – inspiration and practical direction for all aspects of our lives (Psalm 119:97-104).
- » **Worship** – praising God, communion and fellowship.
- » **Daily relationships** – deep and meaningful friendships.

Q: How have your relationships with disciples been a blessing up to this point? How do these relationships compare with those you have outside the church?

- » Purpose in life – helping other people to find God.

Q: Who are the people you'd like to share the good news with?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-57

- » The promise of resurrection from death – the hope of eternal immortality.
- » A perfect, imperishable body.

FINAL QUESTIONS

- Q: Is there any issue about which you are unclear?
- Q: Do you understand that this is a lifelong decision?
- Q: Do you have any reservations about following Jesus?
- Q: When do you want to be baptized?

MAKING DISCIPLES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: A MEDICAL ACCOUNT

Note: *This is a simplified medical account of Jesus' crucifixion adapted by Douglas Jacoby, with assistance from Alex Mnatzaganian, in December 1989, and is used with permission. For a full version with additional notes, go to www.douglasjacoby.com.*

INTRODUCTION

Hanging, electrocution, knee capping, gas chamber: these punishments are feared. They all happen today, and we shudder as we think of the horror and pain. But as we shall see, these ordeals pale into insignificance compared with the bitter fate of Jesus Christ – crucifixion.

No one is crucified today. For us, the cross remains confined to ornaments and jewelry, stained-glass windows, romanticized pictures and statues portraying a serene death. Crucifixion was a form of execution refined by the Romans to a precise art. It was carefully conceived to produce a slow death with maximum pain. It was a public spectacle intended to deter other would-be criminals. It was a death to be feared.

SWEAT/BLOOD

Luke 22:24 says of Jesus, “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” The sweat was unusually intense because his emotional state was unusually intense. Dehydration coupled with exhaustion further weakened him.

BEATING

It was in this condition that Jesus faced the first physical abuse – punches and slaps to the face and head while blindfolded. Unable to anticipate the blows, Jesus was badly bruised, his mouth and eyes possibly injured. The psychological effects of the false trials should not be underestimated. Consider that Jesus faced them bruised, dehydrated, exhausted and possibly in shock.

FLOGGING

In the previous 12 hours, Jesus had suffered emotional trauma, rejection by his closest friends, a cruel beating and a sleepless night during which he had to walk miles between unjust hearings. Despite the fitness he must certainly have gained during his travels in Palestine, he was in no way prepared for the punishment of flogging. The effects would be worse as a result.

A man to be flogged was stripped of his clothes and his hands were tied to a post above his head. He was then whipped across the shoulders, back, buttocks, thighs and legs, the soldier standing behind and to one side of the victim. The whip used – the flagellum – was designed to make this a devastating punishment, bringing the victim close to death: several short, heavy

leather thongs with two small balls of lead or iron attached near the end of each. Pieces of sheep's bone were sometimes included.

As the scourging proceeds, the heavy leather thongs produce first superficial cuts, than deeper damage to underlying tissues. Bleeding becomes severe when not only capillaries and veins are cut, but also arteries in the underlying muscles. The small metal balls first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by further blows. The fragments of sheep's bone rip the flesh as the whip is drawn back. When the beating is finished, the skin of the back is in ribbons, and the entire area torn and bleeding.

The words chosen by the gospel writers suggest that the scourging of Jesus was particularly severe. He was certainly at the point of collapse when he was cut down from the flogging-post.

MOCKING

Jesus was allowed no time to recover before facing his next ordeal. Made to stand, he was dressed in a robe by jeering soldiers, crowned with a twisted band of thorny twigs, and to complete the parody, given a wooden staff as a king's scepter. Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff. The long thorns were driven into the sensitive scalp tissue producing profuse bleeding, but even more terrible was the re-opening of the wounds on Jesus' back when the robe was torn off again. Further weakened physically and emotionally, Jesus was led away to be executed.

CRUCIFIXION

The wooden cross used by the Romans was too heavy to be carried by one man. Instead, the victim to be crucified was made to bear the detached crossbar across his shoulders, carrying it outside the city walls to the place of execution (the heavy upright portion of the cross was permanently in position here). Jesus was unable to carry his load – a beam weighing around 75 to 125 pounds. He collapsed under the burden, and an onlooker was ordered to take it for him.

Jesus refused to drink the wine and myrrh offered him before the nails were driven in (it would have dulled the pain). Thrown down on his back with arms outstretched along the crossbar, nails were driven through Jesus' wrists into the wood. These iron spikes, about 6 inches long and 3/8 inch thick, severed the large sensorimotor median nerve, causing excruciating pain in both arms. Carefully placed between bones and ligaments, they were able to bear the full weight of the crucified man.

In preparation for the nailing of the feet, Jesus was lifted up and the crossbar fixed to the upright post. Then with legs bent at the knee, a single nail was used to pierce both feet, one foot being placed over the other. Again there was severe nerve damage and the pain caused was intense. It is important to note, however, that neither the wounds to the wrists or feet caused substantial bleeding, since no major arteries were ruptured. The executioner took care to ensure this, so that death would be slower and the suffering longer.

Now nailed to his cross, the real horror of crucifixion began. When the wrists were nailed to the crossbar, the elbows were intentionally left in a bent position so that the crucified man would hang with his arms above his head, the weight being taken on the nails in the wrists. Obviously this was unbearably painful, but it had another effect: it is very difficult to exhale in this position. In order to breathe out, and then take in fresh air, it was necessary to push the body up on the nailed feet. When the pain from the feet became unbearable, the victim would again slump down to hang by the arms. A terrible cycle of pain began: hanging by the arms, unable to breathe, pushing up on the feet to inhale quickly before again slumping down, and on and on.

This tortured activity became more and more difficult as Jesus' back was scraped against the upright post, as muscle cramps set in because of the inadequate respiration, and as exhaustion grew more severe. Jesus suffered in this manner for several hours before, with a final cry, he died.

DEATH

Many factors contributed to Jesus' death. A combination of shock and suffocation killed most victims of crucifixion, but in Jesus' case, acute heart failure may have been the final trauma. This is suggested by his sudden death following a loud cry, after only a few hours: a quick death, it seems (Pilate was surprised to find Jesus already dead). A fatal cardiac arrhythmia (or perhaps, cardiac rupture) are the likely candidates.

SPEAR

Jesus was already dead as the executioners broke the legs of the criminals crucified alongside (in order to speed their deaths). Instead, we read that a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear. Where on his side? The word chosen by John suggests the ribs, and if the soldier intended to make Jesus' death certain, a wound to the heart was the obvious choice.

From the wound came a flow of "blood and water." This is consistent with the spear blow to the heart (especially from the right side, the traditional site of the wound). Rupturing the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart) released a flow of watery serum, followed by blood as the heart was pierced.

CONCLUSION

The detailed accounts given in the gospels, combined with the historical evidence on crucifixion, bring us to a firm conclusion: modern medical knowledge supports the claim of the scriptures that Jesus died on the cross.

APPENDIX B: SINS OF GALATIANS 5:19-21

SEXUAL IMMORALITY: Fornication, any sexual union outside of marriage. Denotes ungodly sexual acts and relationships – prostitution, rape, homosexuality, petting, adultery, child abuse, bestiality.

IMPURITY: Any sinful thinking, anything vulgar, wrong thoughts, lust, masturbation, wrong motives, pornography, fantasy.

DEBAUCHERY: Any misuse of the body. Usually referring to sexual excesses, but in general refers to a readiness to indulge in any pleasure. In this state, man is at the mercy of his passions, impulses, emotions, etc. He is completely undisciplined (i.e. gives in to gluttony, laziness, smoking, cravings, masturbation, unlimited pleasure).

IDOLATRY: Worshipping anything other than God. Giving or devoting one's time, substance, talents, and/or self to anything that keeps one from obeying and following God in every way (i.e. status symbols, investments, engrossing sports or hobbies, selfish ambitions, relationships, property, possessions, pleasure and wants, school, work, pride). Also includes praying to anyone other than God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

WITCHCRAFT: Seeking or being involved in any spiritual realm other than God's. Includes astrology (i.e. the stars control – consequently, saying God does not rule), horoscopes, Satan worship, the occult, magic spells, good-luck charms or pictures, praying to saints, drug use, tarot cards, palm reading, channeling (the New Age movement), Ouija Board, etc.

HATRED: Wishing ill or harm on anyone, looking down on anyone, bitter feelings, resentment, wanting revenge, murder, abortion.

DISCORD: Anything that breaks up relationships, stirring up trouble, an inability to get along with people, arguing, slander, gossip, malicious talk, criticalness.

JEALOUSY: Possessiveness, not sharing.

FITS OF RAGE: Uncontrolled anger, losing your temper, temper tantrums, quick temper, angry shouting, cussing, profanity, fighting.

SELFISH AMBITION: Living to please self, wanting one's own way, getting what one wants at any cost, desiring to be first at any cost, overly competitive spirit. Not willing to do menial or demeaning tasks, refusing to admit being wrong, arrogance, doing things for honor or glory, wanting to look good for others, refusing to compromise, pride, selfishness and independence.

DISSENSION: Rebelling against authority, not submitting, habitually disagreeing, arguing, causing division, starting arguments, stirring up trouble.

FACTIONS: Feeling superior to others, cliques, refusing to associate with anyone because they are different or for any other reason, wanting to be with "own" kind, prejudice, bigotry, racism.

ENVY: Desiring something another person has while wishing that they did not have it at all (i.e. wealth, status, ability, physical features, spirituality, relationships).

DRUNKENNESS: Anything that causes one to lose control – intoxication, alcohol, drug abuse.

ORGIES: Living without restraint. Includes partying, sexual parties, unrestrained sex, vandalism, carousing.

AND THE LIKE: Lying, stealing, cheating, deceit, etc.

SINS OF COMMISSION – Breaking God's laws (1 John 3:4). Sin is lawlessness, going beyond God's boundary. Sin is doing wrong.

SINS OF OMISSION – Sin is not doing right. Not doing the good we are asked by God to do (James 4:17); for example – evangelism, discipleship, service, contribution, attendance, quiet times, prayer, Bible study, etc.

APPENDIX C: MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

WHERE ARE THE ORIGINALS?

Like nearly every ancient piece of literature, the originals of the biblical texts have been lost to the passage of time. However, many copies were made, for the most part by very careful copyists. Handed down and copied many times, these ancient texts have been preserved. Whenever there is a difference between one copy and another, historians and paleographers do their very best to reconstruct the original version accurately. Of the differences between the manuscripts (and there are many), the vast majority of them (over 99%) are of no consequence at all. Spelling errors and typographical errors are easily identified and corrected, and they do nothing to change the meaning of a phrase. Those variations that remain and that do impact the meaning of a text are noted in many Bibles as footnotes so that the modern reader can know where scholars disagree as to the original version of a passage. This remarkable amount of agreement as to the original version of the biblical text is only possible because of the vast amount of manuscript evidence for the Bible.

Of course, the older a copy is and the closer it is to the original document, the more valuable it is. These oldest copies are the best evidence that an ancient text has been accurately handed down. Consider the manuscript evidence for Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher:

Aristotle wrote around 340 BC. The oldest copy of his work that we currently have is from 1100 AD. That means that 1,440 years passed from the time he wrote till our oldest copy was made! We currently have just five ancient copies of Aristotle's work. The following chart shows that for many widely accepted ancient texts, the manuscript evidence is pretty thin when compared with that of the Bible.

Author	When they wrote	Date of our oldest copy	Years from the original	# Of ancient copies found
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1440 years	49
Demosthenes	383-322 BC	1100 AD	1400 years	200
Julius Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	950 years	10
Herodotus (History)	480-425 BC	900 AD	1325 years	8
Homer (Illiad)	900 BC	400 BC	500 years	643
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	800 AD	1200 years	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 AD	1100 AD	1000 years	20
Thucydides (History)	460-400 BC	900 AD	1300 years	8
Old Testament	1500-500 BC	150 BC	350 to 500 years for most books	1000
New Testament	50-90 AD	325 AD*	250 years	5560

**The oldest complete copy*

A STAND-OUT ANCIENT TEXT

Among ancient documents, the manuscript evidence for the Bible is impressive! It far exceeds the quality and volume of many other ancient texts that are widely accepted as reliable representations of the originals. While none of these ancient authors have a single manuscript in the first 300 years after they wrote, we have dozens of such manuscripts of the New Testament. For many of these ancient authors, the manuscripts of their work have huge gaps (segments of their work for which we have no manuscript at all). We have no such gaps in our manuscript evidence of the Bible. We have every reason to trust that the text of the modern Bible is an accurate copy of what its authors originally wrote.

OTHER FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS

- » The earliest full copy of the New Testament is from 325 AD, and the earliest full individual New Testament books date from 200 AD, but some fragments are dated much earlier. One such fragment of the Gospel of John is dated to about 100 AD. It's called Papyrus 52, and it contains a few verses of John chapter 18. The dating of other early fragments, though still debated, may provide even earlier examples of the Bible's reliability.
- » The most significant biblical find of the century is undoubtedly the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were discovered in 1947 next to the Dead Sea, not far from Jerusalem. The scrolls contain many religious writings, including partial or complete biblical texts from every book of the Old Testament dating back to the third century BC. Before this incredible discovery, the oldest surviving manuscripts were from a thousand years later!
- » Early on, the Bible was translated into other languages in an effort to spread the gospel. It was translated into Latin, Coptic, Syriac and many other languages. Including ancient copies in other languages, there are more than 40,000 complete and partial manuscripts of the New Testament.
- » The New Testament is also widely quoted by early writers in commentaries and other pieces of literature. We have tens of thousands of these quotes, and nearly all of them are dated earlier than the earliest of our New Testament manuscripts. Thus, this gives even greater credibility to the accuracy of what we have in our modern Bibles. These quotes are so substantial that it would be possible to reconstruct most of the New Testament just from these references.

MAKING DISCIPLES

TEACHER GUIDE

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THE BIBLE: GOD'S WORD

Purpose of Study

In this study, we reflect on the scriptures as the breath of God and the guide to our salvation. We access God's amazing wisdom by actually opening up the Bible, reading it and seeking to put it into practice in our daily lives. With Jesus as the ultimate guide, we cling to his teachings and seek to have a complete Christian life, abiding in his words.

In discussing beliefs about the Bible, some people may express doubts concerning its inspiration. If that happens, don't panic! Keep discussing their conclusions and how they came to them. Don't feel the need to finish the study. Consider using the manuscript evidence in the appendix, other studies or reading the Gospel of John.

ISSUES REGARDING TRADITIONS

As we talk about traditions with our friends, it's important we don't quickly seek to make any dogmatic distinctions along denominational lines. Traditions are not inherently wrong, and we celebrate some on a regular basis. Taking the communion every week is a good tradition. There are many other meaningful traditions that are not explicitly biblical (Christmas, Easter, etc.), but they lead us to God and a godly life. There are man-made traditions that lead people away from biblical practices (i.e. only attending worship services on "Holy Holidays" like Christmas and Easter). Remember, we are in a mode of relationship building, and correcting false religious practices during the first study isn't the way to win friends for Christ. As well, we should affirm God's work in a person's life prior to our studies. You may be studying with someone whose entire religious experience was based on traditions. We can affirm God's work and show that God was still present and working in their lives.

CORBAN

κορβᾶν (*korban or corban*): That which has been set aside as a gift to be given later to God, but which is still at the disposal of the owner—"gift to God, offering, corban." The word "Corban" is a Hebrew word, and it refers to a gift or offering to God. The rabbis allowed a man to keep whatever money should have been given for the support of his parents, if he would declare it as a gift to God. He could keep the money and justify withholding it from his parents. This was in defiance of God's command by which a son was required to honor his parents by providing for their necessities.

ABIDING IN THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST (JOHN 8:31)

μένω (*menō*) means to remain, stay, abide, wait for, continue to exist, keep on. In the New Testament, the word is an important one relative to the permanence of God in contrast to human and earthly uncertainty. In John's writings, μένω becomes a more personal abiding in Christ or in God as the converse of God's abiding in Christ or Christ in them (John 6:56). Other uses in John's writings are for abiding in God's word (John 8:31), in love (1 John 3:17), in truth (2 John 2), in the anointing (1 John 2:27), in God's house (John 8:35), in light (1 John 2:10) and in doctrine (2 John 9). Unbelievers, however, abide in darkness (John 12:46) and death (1 John 3:14).

JESUS

Purpose of Study

Now that you have covered The Bible: God’s Word, you are in a unique and firm position to lift up the one whom the whole story (and study series) is all about – Jesus Christ! Perhaps the biggest key to teaching this study powerfully will be the enthusiasm of you, the teacher. We want people to be amazed by our Lord and Savior. Therefore, as the teacher, you should be amazed by him as well.

CAESAREA PHILIPPI

Caesarea Philippi was a stronghold of pagan worship during the time of Jesus. The city was host to an ancient shrine of Pan, guardian of Hades, known to the Greek world as “All God.” The city was also a primary center of emperor worship, and the emperor was known to the Roman world as the “son of God.” The city was the crossroads of divinity, so with this as the background, think about Jesus’ question again, “Who do you say that I am?”

DATING OF ISAIAH 40:3

Scholars date these words between 700-540 BC. The Jewish people had been waiting hundreds of years for their messiah. Imagine the sense of anticipation felt by those finally witnessing the coming of the Christ!

LOVED BEYOND MEASURE

Assuming that Jesus wore the traditional robing of a teacher in the first century, the fact that he took off the distinguishing garment of honor and authority and then wrapped himself in the garment of a servant is shocking. And as you can tell from Peter’s response in [John 13:6](#), it was also quite disturbing. It would be pretty amazing for a rabbi in that day to have made himself a servant to his disciples, for that would have been a complete reversal of roles. But when you then consider that Jesus is God, the thought of this moment is mind blowing!

COME FOLLOW ME

It is very important to note that this was not the first time the would-be disciples had met Jesus. The passage in [John 1:35-42](#) demonstrate this point clearly. But when Jesus called them to come and follow him, their response was not out of the ordinary. Since the time of Elijah and Elisha, a disciple did not follow a rabbi simply as a student. They desired to gain the rabbi’s knowledge, but for a much greater goal – they wanted to become just like the rabbi himself.

SIN

Purpose of Study

In this study, we look at the desperate human condition and shed light on sin and our need for Jesus and redemption. The study culminates with [Romans 7:24-25](#) which reflects the heart we hope this study will foster – one that looks forward to the good news of Jesus Christ. Be sure to be prayerful as you prepare for this time.

WHAT IS SIN?

The Bible uses other pictures to illuminate the nature of sin that we aren't looking at in this study. The following verses are not meant to be added to the study, but they can help you as the teacher to be reminded of the terrible nature of sin. Sin is a weight and a burden ([2 Timothy 3:6](#), [Leviticus 16:21-22](#)). Sin is spoken of as debt ([Luke 7:43-50](#)) and as a stain ([Psalm 51:1-7](#), [Jeremiah 2:22](#)). Sin is turning away from God and going our own way ([Isaiah 53:6](#)). Sin is not simply naughty behavior!

COSTS OF SIN

The highest cost and greatest damage of sin is certainly spiritual in nature, and we discuss that with [Ephesians 4:17-19](#). However, sin is also costly in our daily lives and is the cause of many ills in our society. In discussing the wages of sin, keep in mind the following: divorce and the damage it causes can be traced to sins of adultery, pornography, deceit, alcohol abuse, mismanagement of money, etc. Sins of hatred and prejudice fuel terrible acts of violence and racism. Family relationships (parents, children, siblings, etc.) are often hindered, severely damaged or even destroyed because of sins like selfishness and pride. Because of greed, the poor and hungry remain poor and hungry in our wealthy society. Violent sins such as rape and murder greatly damage the lives of the victims and their families.

OPENNESS – CONFESSION PRIMER

This study presents an opportunity for you (and any other disciple who is joining your Bible study) to share openly about the sin you had to face in becoming a disciple. One way to do so would be to walk through the sins of [Galatians 5:19-21](#) and note which of them were a part of your life and the effect they had on your heart. The goal here is to model openness and to create an environment in which your friend feels safe to be honest about their own sin. Invite them to share as well. Keep in mind that this may be the most profound conversation they've ever had about their sin. For them to be open in this way is a huge step. Be sure to encourage them and thank them for sharing openly.

GOD'S GRIEF

The purpose of using [Genesis 6:5-6](#) is to illustrate how sin actually pains God. God looked at his creation, riddled with sin and turning their backs on him, and he was deeply grieved. This verse is not to say that every time we sin God wishes he hadn't created us! However, it does illustrate that God is emotionally invested in us and that our sin is more in his eyes than just the breaking of one of his commands.

THE GOOD NEWS

Purpose of Study

Our focus is to capture the amazing notion of God’s great love for us, expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“FOR GOD SO LOVED”

John 3:16 may be one of the best-known passages in the Bible, but what does it mean? In context, Jesus is describing the problem of sin (which was discussed in the last study) from heaven’s perspective. Our problem is that we have fallen in love with our sin, because “men loved darkness instead of light.” So God, in love, set out to win back the hearts and minds of those precious to him by sending Jesus – with no guarantee that the world would respond in love.

THE NEWS SHOULD BE GOOD

As we cover the passion account, our tendency may be to try to evoke a certain response out of our friends. But our role in this study is to reveal the depths of God’s love for us shown on the cross and then to proclaim with power Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. We need not try to prompt a certain emotion with our presentation. Rather, we should simply focus our energies on sharing the realities of Jesus’ sufferings and the ultimate victory of the empty tomb.

A WORD ABOUT HEMATIDROSIS

“His sweat became like drops of blood...” There is a real chance that Jesus could have experienced the medical condition known as hematidrosis (bloody sweat), but it is not a forgone conclusion that this is what Luke was trying to infer.

GETHSEMANE – “THE OLIVE PRESS”

The word Gethsemane is from an old Aramaic word meaning “Olive Press.” Olive oil was a vital part of everyday life in the first century, and the pressing process would have been well known to those who first heard the gospel. The press was an ingenious device that placed tremendous weight on stacked baskets of crushed fruit. This process was accomplished in three stages: The first press produced a finer quality of olive oil and was placed under a lighter amount of weight. In the second pressing, more weight was added, squeezing out a functional but lesser quality of olive oil for everyday use. Then, during the third press, the baskets were left under the weight of the press for several days to make sure the pressing was accomplished to the very last drop.

In the same manner, Jesus prayed three times in the garden of the “olive press.” He bore the weight of sin with increasing intensity and continued to wrestle with the great pressure he faced. It is incredibly inspiring to see his surrender to God as he wakes his sleeping disciples and says, “Rise let us go! Here comes my betrayer.”

THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Purpose of Study

Each study in this series builds on the ones preceding it. Thus far, you've covered The Bible, Jesus, Sin and The Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection. Each of these is an important part of the call to discipleship, and it is here in the series when we present Jesus' call to "come follow me".

BOTH LORD AND CHRIST

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah and our Savior, and we've discussed that in the previous studies. In this study, we focus on how he is Lord (King and Master). We cannot accept him as the one and not the other! We point to six passages that all illuminate what it means to really be a follower of Jesus. And since Jesus is our Savior, and since he has come to rescue us from our sin, why wouldn't we want to be his disciple?

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS DAILY

We point out in [Luke 9:23-36](#) that a disciple takes up their cross daily. What does that phrase mean? It certainly meant a lot more to Jesus' original audience than it typically does to us. When you ask the person you are studying with how they think these people would have understood Jesus' call to take up their crosses daily, take that opportunity to remind them about the previous study (The Good News). Those hearing Jesus state these words would have seen crucifixions like that of Jesus. They would know that carrying their cross wasn't simply to put up with inconveniences or deny themselves some desire. To carry our cross is a death sentence, and one that involves a complete annihilation of self.

IF ANYONE DOES NOT HATE . . .

The Greek word for "hate" in [Luke 14:25:26](#) certainly does mean to "hate" or "have a strong aversion to." However, it is also used in the New Testament where it seems to have the sense of "disregard or disfavor," where preference of one thing is held over another. God is to be held over money ([Matt 6:24](#)). We should live for the eternal life over the present life ([John 12:25](#)). Jacob was chosen over Esau by God ([Romans 9:13](#)). This is indeed a very strong word, and "hate" is an appropriate translation. But as in these other uses, the point is that Jesus comes before even family!

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Why do we follow Jesus, learn from him, put him first in our lives and deny ourselves? Why do we go and make disciples? Because we love God and love our neighbors! [Matthew 22:34-40](#) is a great verse to conclude a study on discipleship. When asked what matters most, Jesus spoke of love. It's what matters most to God, and it is the reason we do all that we do as disciples.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Purpose of Study

This study is designed to present a clear picture of how someone goes from being lost to being saved. Because this study shows the path to salvation culminating at the point of baptism, be prepared to discuss some of the false understanding they might have about salvation and at what point in the past they believe they were forgiven of their sins. Don't be discouraged if you come to an impasse at this point. Additional studies will help you confront false beliefs.

URGENCY

Help the person you are studying with to realize how important it is to be urgent about repenting and getting baptized. Give examples of how people in the world show urgency in important matters (i.e. going to the doctor with a severe health situation, studying for a test, etc.). Discuss how Satan loves to offer excuses to people at this point – anything to keep them from doing the things they need to do to be saved.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

It is important to make the distinction here that there is no middle ground on whether a person is saved or lost, in the darkness or in the light. While much progress and change has taken place by now with the person you are studying with, they still aren't saved and they need to grasp that truth. You should give them great encouragement about what has happened up to this point, but that only by following God's specific plan and direction for coming into the light can they be saved.

REPENTANCE

In this study, we are focusing not only on baptism, but also on repentance as a part of the salvation process. We want to present a well-balanced picture of both truths. As you teach on repentance, beware of turning [2 Corinthians 7:10-11](#) into a legalistic checklist or saying that godly sorrow is merely an emotional response. Repentance is not a formula but a change of mind and heart that ultimately produces a change of behavior.

BAPTISM

Baptism is one of the clearest teachings in the Bible, yet still one of the most debated and confused in the religious world. As you discuss their thoughts on baptism, do your best not to criticize any of their past misunderstandings or applications of the topic. Most of the people who have been baptized at some point in their life have done so believing they were doing what God wanted them to do. Remind them that, like the other studies, you simply want them to know what God says about the subject and for them to have the opportunity to be obedient to his direction.

THE CHURCH

Purpose of Study

The church study is designed to present in a positive manner what the New Testament teaches and exemplifies in regard to God's design for his community of believers, the church. The study begins with specific principles and moves toward practical instruction.

A NEW SENSE OF COMMUNITY

It is important to note that the biblical concept of community is much different than we typically see in churches today, where most are concerned with what the church can do for them. In contrast, early disciples understood that the community of the church took precedence over their individual plans and ambitions. Their focus was on how the church functions together as the body of Christ, working together toward a common purpose.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

In [Ephesians 2:19-22](#), Paul describes the church using an architectural analogy. In building, the cornerstone is the first stone laid, from which the foundation will take shape, and that cornerstone is Jesus. The foundation to which Paul refers points to the ongoing revelation of God, seen in such things as the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament writers, others with the first-century gift of prophecy as well as the ongoing work of the Spirit (seen vividly in the book of Acts).

UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Our aim in teaching [Ephesians 4:1-6](#) is not to confront denominationalism, though it may come up. In keeping with the nature of this study, we recommend that the focus remain on the six unifying doctrines found here and the amazing power of unified Christians.

GIVING

There has been much discussion on the practice of tithing as it relates to the New Testament and the expectations of disciples now. Tithing is a principle held up high in the Old Testament, and many believers today still hold to a tithe as the standard of their giving. Jesus didn't speak of a tithe, but honored great sacrifice, which for many goes well beyond a tithe. In this study, we focus on teaching the heart behind our financial giving. The New Testament teachings focus on generosity, sacrifice and meeting needs both inside and outside the church. It would be wise to walk through some of the financial practices in our community: weekly giving, monthly HOPE offerings and yearly missions' contributions.

CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

The focus from [Hebrews 3](#) and [Hebrews 10](#) should be on the importance of Christian relationships and how they are an absolute key to staying faithful, growing and thriving as disciples. Let the verse speak for itself, but be sure to highlight the weekly schedule and how we must adjust our schedules with a new set of priorities.



ChicagoChurch OF CHRIST

The hope with this study series is to provide a valuable tool for each and every disciple of Jesus. In the spirit of Ephesians 4:12 this manual helps to “equip the saints,” bringing confidence as we strive to seek and save the lost world around us. These studies were designed to provide the disciples of the Chicago Church of Christ with a modern and thorough guide to help others come to know Christ. Let us all pray that the gospel message rings out far and wide to the glory of God and that many choose to enter into a relationship with Him!

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