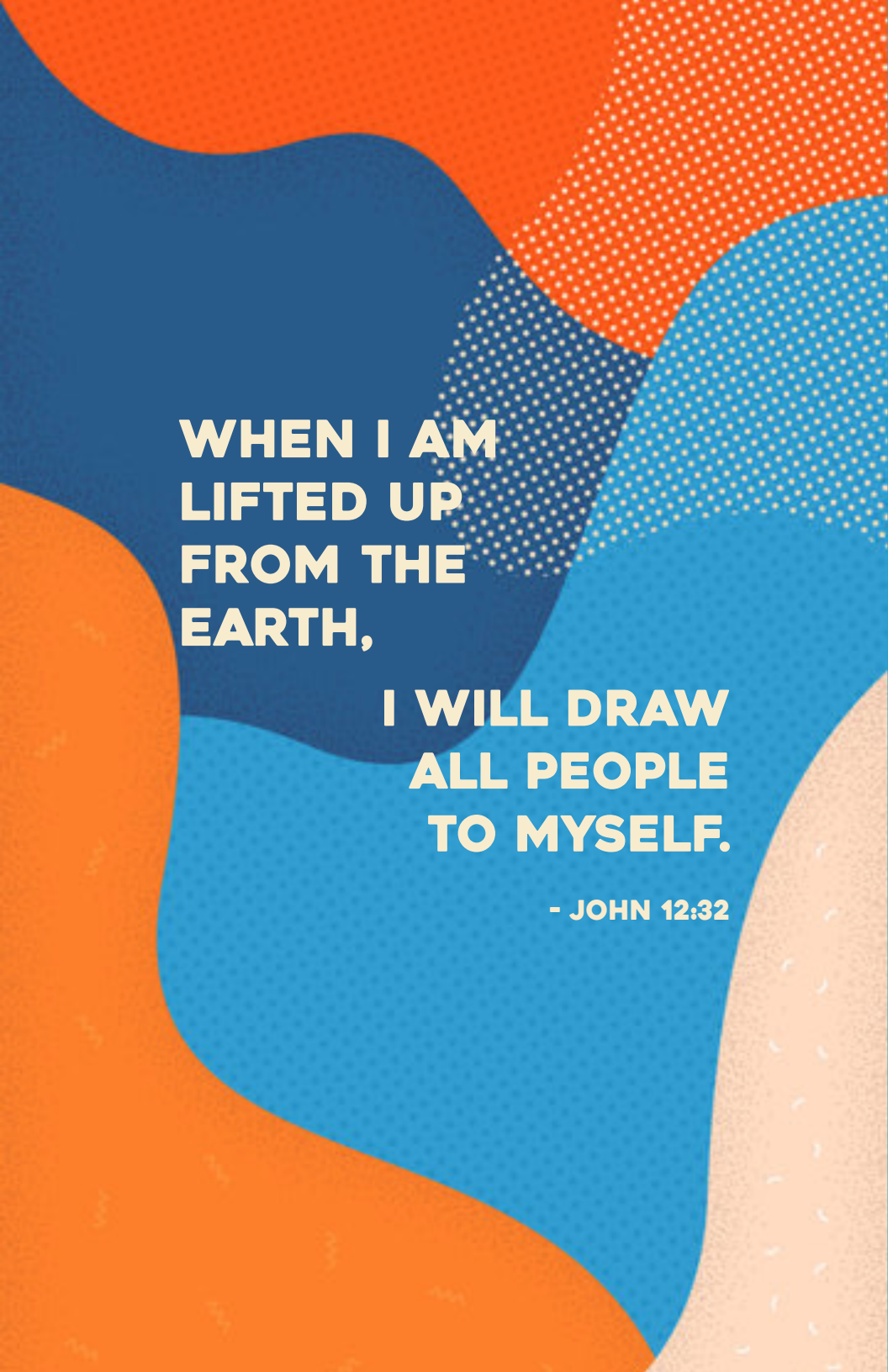




CLOSER TO JESUS

SIXTEEN WEEKS IN THE GOSPELS





**WHEN I AM
LIFTED UP
FROM THE
EARTH,**

**I WILL DRAW
ALL PEOPLE
TO MYSELF.**

- JOHN 12:32

CLOSER TO JESUS

JESUS IS THE MOST COMPELLING FIGURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

Jesus is the revelation of the invisible God (John 14:9)—wrapped in a body that knew hunger, pain, joy, and sorrow. He came into a broken world with a life-changing message: the kingdom of God is here. Not a future hope but a *present* reality.

Everyone who came close to Him was changed. The weary and burdened found rest (Matthew 11:28-30). The self-righteous were confronted with their pride and fear, which usually turned into seething anger (Matthew 12:14). Either way, no one left Jesus' presence the same.

When Jesus said, "follow me," it was an invitation to live His way in the world—to absorb injustice and return relentless kindness. He was unshakably good without shying away from confrontation. Yet, He never sought political power or revenge. His self-giving and, ultimately, life-giving love was the way that would change the world.

In His death, Jesus broke the death grip sin had over humanity. And His resurrection proved that nothing, not evil, fear, or even death, has the final word.

Our prayer is that through this sixteen-week journey through the stories of Jesus, we all draw closer to Him and live more fully in His way.



HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS JOURNEY.

In these pages you'll find a guide to the four narratives about Jesus' life. You've likely read these passages before—maybe hundreds of times. No matter how familiar you are with these texts, if you let the Spirit work, God will use them to reveal and renew your heart, drawing you closer to Jesus. Our goal and prayer is that after sixteen weeks, you'll be unmistakably and forever changed by Him.

First, you'll notice we didn't include journaling space this time. Why pay to print blank pages? Grab a notebook or buy a journal, and use it to record your thoughts, prayers, and questions as you go. Writing things down can transform the abstract into something tangible and actionable.

Second, each week's readings include an overview of the section to draw out key ideas, as well as a page of reflection questions. These are for personal use, but we encourage small groups to use these questions when they gather. If we are serious about life change, there's no better way to wrestle with Scripture than in community, especially when we get to hear and share how God is working in other's lives.

Finally, Jesus' message wasn't meant to stay contained—it was meant to be shared. Think about Luke's story of the shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to track down the one. *Who is close to you, but far from Jesus?* Who is your **one**? Write their name down, and commit to praying for them. As you do, I guarantee you'll start noticing opportunities to share your faith naturally. Each week we'll check in and ask about your **one**. Let's see what God does with your prayers and your willingness to share His love.

Ready? Let's begin.

MONTH ONE / MATTHEW



WEEK ONE - 1-7

WEEK TWO - 8-14

WEEK THREE - 15-21

WEEK FOUR - 21-28

WEEK 1 MATTHEW 1-7

OVERVIEW | Matthew's Gospel is steeped in Hebrew history. From the very first line, Matthew weaves the story of Jesus into the story of Israel, showing that Jesus doesn't just emerge from the past—He both fulfills *and* redefines it.

For example, Matthew introduces Jesus as the son of Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1, 6); Jesus isn't merely related to these figures—He's fulfilling their legacies.

Jesus is a new and better Abraham, fathering a new nation that includes all peoples. He's a new and better Moses, delivering the law of the heart, "You've heard it said...but I say to you" (Matthew 5-7). He is a new and better David—the ultimate and eternal King. He doesn't erase the old, He completes it.

The genealogy has surprising names: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. These figures had complicated, even scandalous, stories (not to mention that women weren't typically included in official ancestries). Matthew is showing us that Jesus is doing something bigger and better than what humans usually do.

Matthew 4 gives us another pivotal Jesus/Israel connection: Jesus enters the wilderness for 40 days, like Israel's 40 years of wandering. But where Israel stumbled—grumbling, doubting, turning to idols—Jesus prevails, even quoting Deuteronomy to ward off Satan. He isn't just a new Israel, He's a better one, fulfilling the story Israel (and all of us) were meant to live.

As you read Matthew, keep a pencil or highlighter handy. Note the echoes of the Hebrew Scriptures. Matthew's Gospel is a bridge that connects the ancient story of Israel to the redemptive work of Jesus. Jesus is the answer to questions Israel didn't even know it was asking.

REFLECTION | Who is in your spiritual genealogy?

Grandparents? Mentors? Write down some names. Who are the unexpected people? What role did they play in your moving closer to Jesus? What role does your story play in your **one** moving closer to Jesus? Who are you bringing closer to Jesus?

Can you read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and not be challenged? Write down at least one statement that convicts you. How are you going to allow Jesus to change that in you?

Matthew 5:3-10 is known as the Beatitudes. Our very own Steve Countryman (quoting N.T Wright) suggests a more helpful translation for ‘blessed’ is “wonderful news for.” Read through them again, translating the word “blessed” with Steve’s suggestion. Which line of the Beatitudes do you resonate with? What does the corresponding promise mean for you?

We are “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16). Think about your non-church or non-believing relational network. Are you reflecting Jesus’ glory and goodness to them? How are you salt and light with your **one**?

Jesus emphasizes forgiveness and reconciliation (Matthew 6:14-15). Who in your life do you need to reconcile with? What concrete steps can you take to heal a relationship?

In Matthew 6:25-34, we’re told not to worry. What fears, anxieties, or concerns are occupying your mind right now? What spiritual truths can you tell yourself to alleviate those worries?

Jesus invites us to pursue God’s Kingdom and righteousness as our top priority (Matthew 6:33). Where specifically in your life does God have first place? Where in your life has God taken a backseat to something else? How can you do better?

WEEK 2 MATTHEW 8-14

OVERVIEW | These chapters might seem like a highlight reel of Jesus doing “Jesus things”—healing the sick, calming storms, casting out demons, and even bringing people back from the dead. But these chapters aren’t just a montage of impressive feats. Matthew has embedded all kinds of information within the text. Like all the Gospel writers, Matthew rarely makes his point directly. Instead, every action is a statement brimming with subtext. The stories are clues, each pointing to who Jesus is and why He came.

For example, the healing of the leper (Matthew 8:2-4) is Isaiah 35:5-6 in action. Isaiah speaks about how the Messiah will bring restoration. The moment Jesus calms the storm (Matthew 8:23-27)—it’s a callback to Psalm 89:9, where God alone stills the raging sea. It’s one of those moments when it begins to dawn on the disciples that Jesus is more than another teacher. They are compelled to ask, “What kind of man is this?” (Matthew 8:27). The feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21) echoes the manna story. Jesus is not just a provider—He’s the Provider. These aren’t cool tricks; they’re divine hints, proof that the kingdom of God is breaking into the world. And what’s more, the King is here.

But while the crowds grow in size, the religious elite grows hostile, even accusing Him of being in league with Satan (Matthew 12:24). We’ll see this conflict play out even more vividly in next week’s reading.

BUT GO AND LEARN WHAT THIS MEANS: ‘I DESIRE MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE.’ FOR I HAVE NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS.”

MATTHEW 9:13

REFLECTION | In Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus heals a man with leprosy, showing power and compassion beyond social barriers. How are things going with your **one**? What are the barriers in their way?

We can forgive someone when they sin against us, but people would rightly think we were crazy if we tried to forgive people for sins they'd committed against someone else. Yet in Matthew 9:2, Jesus tells the paralyzed man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." What does Jesus' authority over all sin, even sins committed against God, say about who Jesus is?

When Jesus calls Matthew, who was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9-13), He shows that no one is beyond redemption. What sins are "tax collecting" sins in your mind? Who is in the tax collector category for you?

Jesus offers a strange teaching about new wine and old wineskins in Matthew 9:16-17, pointing out that the newness of the Kingdom can't be contained within the confines of the old. What does it mean for us to embrace the new life Jesus offers? What old habits or mindsets might you need to leave behind?

In Matthew 14:22-33, Jesus walks on water and calls Peter to come to Him. It's hard to imagine what it felt like to actually step out of the boat. What areas of your life is Jesus calling you to a walk-on-the-water-like faith?

After Jesus feeds the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13-21, He shows that God's kingdom is one of abundance. Where in your life do you need to trust God's provision?



WEEK 3 MATTHEW 15-21

OVERVIEW | Jesus has never been interested in appearances—He’s after authenticity. He challenged religious norms that had turned into hollow surface-level obedience and dug into the deeper issues of the heart. He overturned traditions like tables (Matthew 21:12).

Take Chapter 15, for example. The Pharisees call Jesus out for not handwashing according to the Traditions. He calls them out for valuing human traditions over God’s commands (15:1-9). It’s easy to point fingers at the Pharisees, but we do the same thing. It’s easier to check the right boxes, look the part, and keep up appearances than do the hard work of life change. God isn’t fooled by outward pretense (and, for that matter, neither are most people). He cares about what’s happening beneath the surface, about the motives and desires that drive us.

Fast forward to chapter 21. When Jesus enters Jerusalem, He doesn’t come charging in on a warhorse waving a banner of conquest, He rides in on a donkey, embodying a Kingdom built on peace and humility rather than power. The crowds celebrate Him, but the religious leaders can’t see beyond their own expectations. They completely miss the significance of His arrival. What a moment to have missed?!

The supernatural, divine Son of God was right in front of their noses and they completely missed Him! How often do we think God is distant or silent?

These chapters are challenging. Are we clinging to traditions, appearances, or our own expectations? Or are we ready to embrace the Kingdom that flips our assumptions and calls us to a life of humility, authenticity, and radical love?

REFLECTION | In Matthew 15:1-9, Jesus calls out the Pharisees for prioritizing traditions over commandments. Most of us have inherited traditions. However, even well-intended traditions can be elevated above obedience and threaten the place God holds in our lives. What religious preferences would you struggle to give up, even if it threatened your (or someone else's) relationship with God?

In a particularly challenging story, Jesus heals a Gentile woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28). What makes the story off-putting? How can we understand this tough interaction in light of who we know Jesus to be?

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" How would you personally phrase your answer to this question?

In Matthew 17:1-9, Jesus is transfigured before His disciples, revealing His divine nature. It's a strange moment the disciples, at the time, don't fully get. What do you find confusing about this event? What do we learn about Jesus from this experience?

In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus teaches that greatness in His Kingdom is about humility, not power. Where do you most struggle with pride or grasping for power and control? What is a specific way you can let go of that pride?

In Matthew 19:16-30, Jesus speaks about the difficulty of entering the Kingdom for those who are attached to wealth. How's your relationship with money? Luxury? Stuff? What specifically comes to mind that would be tough to sacrifice if God asked you to? Would you consider giving it away?

In Matthew 21:28-32, Jesus tells the parable of the two sons, emphasizing the importance of obedience over words. Are there areas in your life where you're saying the right things but not following through with action?

WEEK 4 **MATTHEW 22-28**

OVERVIEW | As we reach the final days of Jesus' life in Matthew's Gospel, He redefines everything about power, love, and sacrifice. Jesus is going to conquer the world by dying; he's going to save the world by letting it destroy him.

In Matthew 22, the religious leaders attempt to trap Jesus with well-crafted questions, but He outwits them every time, transforming each challenge into a teaching moment. His answers are deceptively simple: love God *by* loving people.

The tension builds and Jesus begins to talk about His betrayal, His death, and ultimately, His return. In chapter 24, He warns His followers to be ready, using apocalyptic language that might sound like something straight out of a sci-fi thriller. Yet even in the middle of these heavy warnings, we're invited into stories of grace and redemption, where the Kingdom of God is open to all—yes, even the unlikely (20:1-16).

Then what in the text feels sudden, but in person likely felt inevitable: Jesus is betrayed, arrested, and crucified (26:47-27:56). His death, the ultimate act of love, tears open the temple curtain, and everyone now has access to the very presence of God.

After three days in the grave, Jesus conquers death itself. Before He ascends, He leaves His followers with a mission—to spread His love and message to the world (28:19-20).

**...GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL
NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE
FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...**

-MATTHEW 28:19

REFLECTION | In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus says the greatest commandment is to love God and love others. This is the ultimate stand of moral goodness. Are there areas where I need to grow in love or serve others more selflessly?

In Matthew 23, Jesus warns against hypocrisy. This is when we care more about what people *think* about us than what is *real* about us. Evidently, people-pleasing and pretentiousness isn't just a modern problem. What steps can you take to align your actions with your inner beliefs? What is something (appropriate) you can confess about yourself to someone you'd typically want to impress? Do it. Write down the response you get.

In Matthew 24:42-44, Jesus encourages His followers to be ready for His return. While I can get excited about the idea of "*the heavens being rolled back as a scroll*," 99% of the time, I live without giving the Second Coming a second thought. If we believed it actually might happen at any moment, what might be different about how we live this week?

In Matthew 26:39, Jesus prays, "Not as I will, but as you will." How do you respond when God's will differs from your desires? Is there an area of your life where you need to submit to His plan more fully?

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commissions His followers to make disciples of all nations. How are things going with your **one**? I think there are probably even more people who are close to you but far from God. Where are some specific opportunities to have unforced conversations with them about the impact Jesus has made in your life?

While we're dreaming a little - Who are people that your **one** knows that might be willing to hear about Jesus? What if your **one** started talking about Jesus? Dream a little about what Matthew 28:19 might look like in your **one**.

**MONTH TWO /
MARK**



WEEK FIVE - 1-4

WEEK SIX - 5-8

WEEK SEVEN - 9-12

WEEK EIGHT - 13-16

WEEK 5 MARK 1-4

OVERVIEW | Mark doesn't waste any time. His punchy, action-oriented gospel is a favorite of many. You'll see a lot of similarities to Matthew and Luke. There's a theory that those authors used Mark as a source material. It's also traditionally held that Mark represents the Apostle Peter's account of Jesus' ministry.

There's no slow build, no theological musing, no lengthy origin story. Jesus bursts onto the scene, baptized, tempted, and immediately proclaiming, "*The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*" (1:15).

Mark writes with an intensity cranked to 11: healings, exorcisms, and displays of divine authority that leave you wondering, *Who is this man?* Mark doesn't tell you about the Kingdom, he shows you.

The parables in Mark 4 are a gut check. Take the Parable of the Sower—how people respond to Jesus determines how much the Kingdom will take root in their lives. Is my heart ready for the Kingdom or will distractions and resistance choke it out?

Then there's the cost of discipleship. Jesus doesn't invite people to follow Him with a shiny brochure of easy living. Somehow we modern Christians have gotten this exactly backward. Jesus acts surprised that the disciples are afraid of the storm and equate it without having faith. The subtext isn't that Jesus will always calm the storm. He is in charge of the weather, as He proves with a single word, but He expects us to not have fear.

REFLECTION | What does Jesus' declaration in Mark 1:15 mean —“The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” How far have you gotten in sharing this good news with your **one**?

Jesus called people to literally “leave everything” (Mark 10:28, 29). What might “leaving your nets” look like in your own life? What are you holding onto that might keep you from fully following Him?

Jesus demonstrates authority over sickness, evil, and nature in these chapters. How does understanding His power impact your trust in Him during life's challenges?

Mark often highlights Jesus' intentional time in prayer (Mark 1:35). How does this challenge your own habits of prayer? What would have to be true for you to spend time daily in prayer? Would you have to wake up earlier? Set reminders? Do it.

Even Jesus' family struggled to understand what he was doing; they literally called him crazy (Mark 3:21)! In what ways do you relate to their confusion?

The disciples, who were seasoned fishermen, were scared of dying in the storm. After Jesus calmed it, they were “terrified” (Mark 4:41). What were they terrified of? Read Psalm 89:9. What is Mark trying to communicate about the identity of Jesus?

Throughout these chapters, people are amazed at Jesus' authority. How would you say His authority has marked your life? What does His authority mean for your life? Are there areas where you need to surrender more fully to His leadership?

WEEK 6 MARK 4-8

OVERVIEW | This section, like its counterpart in Matthew, is a tour through the power of Jesus' ministry. He has authority over nature, demons, illness, and even religious systems. Mark, of course, moves at lightning speed, but without losing subtle layers of meaning and contrast that make it distinct from the other Gospels.

Chapter 4 begins with parables, including the well-loved parable of the sower. Mark doesn't just explain the parable but the *why* of parables. Parables are both an invitation and a filter—they reveal truth to seekers and hide it from the hard-hearted. Mark underscores his focus on the tension between seeing and not seeing, hearing and not understanding.

By chapter 5, we're exposed to Jesus' response to human desperation: a man possessed by demons, a chronically ill woman, and a dying girl. Mark deliberately connects the story of the bleeding woman interrupting Jairus' plea as a vivid way of Jesus caring for both the powerful and the outcast.

In chapter 6, we witness Jesus' rejection in his hometown and his sending out of the Twelve—it's a contrast between the risk and the reach of his mission. Mark uniquely combines these with the chilling account of John the Baptist's execution, a stark reminder of the cost of the mission.

Chapters 7 and 8 give us the insiders misunderstanding (the disciples) and the outsiders believing (a Syrophenician woman). Only Mark records the two-stage healing of a blind man (8:22-26), a living metaphor for the slow journey of spiritual clarity.

REFLECTION | Each miracle displays both Jesus' authority and His care for individuals and their unique needs. Think about your **one**; what is it that they need from Jesus? How can you help point them to Him?

When have you experienced a desperate and determined faith like the woman in Mark (Mark 5:27)? Reflect on moments when you reached out to God with nothing but hope. How did those experiences shape your relationship with Him?

Why do you think the disciples struggled to grasp Jesus' identity despite witnessing His miracles? Think about how their cultural expectations of a Messiah might have blinded them. Are there ways your own expectations of God might limit your understanding of Him?

What does Peter's confession in Mark 8 reveal about who Jesus is and what He expects of His followers? How does acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah (the Hebrew word for anointed king) inform your relationship with Him?

How do you personally react to Jesus' call to "take up your cross and follow me"? Where do you feel resistance or hesitation in embracing this call?

When have you experienced God's provision in a way that felt miraculous or unexpected? Like the feeding of the 5,000, how has God met your needs in surprising ways? How did it impact your faith?

What is one specific area in your life where you feel challenged to trust Jesus more fully? Identify a place where fear, doubt, or control hold you back. What steps might you take to surrender that area to Him?

WEEK 6 MARK 9-12

OVERVIEW | Mark leads us deep into the tension of Jesus' ministry. The disciples are still grappling with who He is, even as He reveals more of His mission. On the mountain of transfiguration, Peter, James, and John get a glimpse of Jesus' divine glory, but moments later, they're back in the valley of confusion and doubt. This is so relatable. One moment, we have clarity, faith, and boldness, and the next, we're overwhelmed by some relatively petty distraction.

Jesus keeps teaching about His coming death, but the disciples argue about their greatness. It's humbling to see how slow they are to understand—and maybe a little too familiar. Jesus redefines greatness, showing it comes through serving others. This upside-down kingdom continues to challenge us today.

By the time we get to Mark 12, Jesus is confronting the religious leaders, exposing their hypocrisy, and teaching in parables that reveal God's heart for His people. The widow's offering is a powerful picture: it's not how much; it's a heart that's willing to give it all. These chapters remind us that following Jesus means surrendering pride, embracing humility, and trusting God with everything.

Are we willing to trust Jesus with what we don't understand, or do we prefer to trust ourselves and feelings of control? Are we giving God our all, or do we prefer to trust our resource management strategies? Are we serving others or do we prefer to be served and be recognized? These are the types of questions that break us and build us in order to live for His glory.

REFLECTION | In the parable of the soil (Mark 4:26-29), Jesus highlights four kinds of soil. What kind do you consider yourself to be? What kind of soil is your **one** currently?

The man possessed by Legion (Mark 5:1-20) begs to follow Jesus but is told to stay and share his story instead. Think about that. It was better for him to share his story of redemption than to physically follow Jesus. How about your story? What is your redemption story? Do you believe in the power of your redemption story? Do you share it?

The healing of the bleeding woman is wrapped around Jairus' story (Mark 5:21-43). Why might Mark have linked these two events so tightly? What do they reveal about Jesus' approach to urgent needs and interruptions?

Jesus marvels at the unbelief in his hometown in Mark 6:6. What does it mean for Jesus to "marvel," and how might our expectations of faith limit what God can do in our lives?

The healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment (Mark 7:31-37) is performed in such a tactile, personal way. Why do you think Jesus chose such an intimate method for this healing? What might this tell us about how He meets our unique needs?

The two-stage healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-26 is puzzling. Why does Jesus heal in two steps here, and how might this reflect the spiritual "partial sight" of the disciples in the surrounding passages?



WEEK 8 MARK 13-16

OVERVIEW | Mark 13 opens with a bang, similar to Matthew 24. It can feel dark and gloomy if read from the wrong perspective. Seen from a redemptive lens of ultimate justice, it's full of hope.

We're introduced to the woman who spent more than a year's wages in a simple act of honor of Jesus. Think about that: when was the last time you spent money glorifying Jesus?

Jesus predicts the temple's physical destruction, which got him killed. It was too hard for them to understand how the temple wasn't being demolished; it was making room for a new and greater temple (Acts 2; Cor 6:16-18). Jesus warns His disciples about the challenges of faithfulness in an unpredictable and chaotic world.

Mark's version of Jesus' suffering and death is raw and unfiltered. Mark doesn't shy away from showing the vulnerability of the disciples or the brutality of the cross. The disciples—who had promised loyalty—scatter when things get tough. Yet, in contrast, Jesus shows resolve. His love surpasses human failure.

Chapter 16 delivers the defining moment: the empty tomb. The women, expecting to grieve, are met with an angel's proclamation: "He has risen!" But Mark ends abruptly, leaving us with questions.

Unlike the other Gospels, Mark doesn't offer post-resurrection appearances or resolutions. It's as if Mark is turning to look at us, the reader, and saying, "Now, it's your turn; how *will you respond?*"

REFLECTION | In Mark 13, Jesus warns about staying watchful amid distractions and challenges. What do you think Jesus is asking us to “watch” for? Would you consider yourself spiritually alert? Why or why not?

Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane is a powerful moment of surrender and trust. What does His vulnerability in that moment teach you about the tension of bringing your fears and struggles to God while still submitting to His will?

Like we mentioned before, Mark likely developed his Gospel from the testimony of Peter. This makes the highlighting of Peter’s (and the other disciples’) failures that much more poignant. Where do you relate to their weaknesses?

Jesus faced rejection and suffering with quiet strength and resolve. How often I wish He’d just let everyone have it; why do you think He doesn’t protest the injustice? How does His response challenge you to approach adversity in your life, especially when you feel misunderstood, betrayed, or alone?

Mark’s abrupt ending leaves the story open, as if inviting readers to carry it forward. How are things going with your **one**? Maybe things have gone well, and you’re already onto the next **one**. What are you currently praying for your **one** about? What are the challenges you’re running into? When is the next time you’ll have some interaction with your **one**?

THE HIGH PRIEST ASKED HIM, “ARE YOU THE MESSIAH, THE SON OF THE BLESSED ONE?”

“I AM,” SAID JESUS

MARK 14:61, 62

MONTH THREE / LUKE



WEEK NINE - 1-5

WEEK TEN - 6-10

WEEK ELEVEN - 11-16

WEEK TWELVE - 17-24

WEEK 9 LUKE 1-5

OVERVIEW | Right away, you can tell Luke's version of Jesus' story is going to be different. Matthew's is focused on Jewish history and Mark's is known for directness. Luke's Gospel is thoroughly focused on the rest of the world, *especially* the outsider.

You see this emphasis right from the beginning. Luke is the only Gospel that mentions Zechariah and Elizabeth, the shepherds, the Magi, Simeon (Luke 2:25), and the prophet Anna (Luke 2:36). Luke *doesn't even get to the birth of the main character until Chapter 2!* All of this sets Luke apart as a gospel of reversals—highlighting the lowly and marginalized.

We get an in-depth look at John the Baptist in Luke 3, calling for repentance and paving the way for Jesus. While Matthew emphasizes John's confrontation with the Pharisees and Mark gets straight to the action, Luke lingers on the broader message: leveling the spiritual playing field (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Luke, like Matthew, includes Jesus' genealogy, but where Matthew focuses on the Hebrew connections, Luke traces His lineage back to Adam, emphasizing His connection to all humanity (Luke 3:38).

Chapters 4-5 showcase Jesus stepping fully into His mission. From facing down Satan in the wilderness to declaring Himself the fulfillment of Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:16-21), Luke paints a picture of Jesus as both determined and compassionate. His rejection in Nazareth foreshadows the tension between His radical message and the world's resistance. Meanwhile, His miracles and call to the disciples reflect His heart for the broken and ordinary. Unlike John's theological depth or Mark's action-packed pace, Luke focuses on Jesus' accessibility—a Savior for all people, breaking barriers with grace.

REFLECTION I Go back and write down all the otherwise unknown and sometimes unnamed characters that Luke includes in Jesus' origin story. Luke loves to highlight the outsider and the outcast. What do you think God might be calling you to do that you've ignored because you feel unqualified or inadequate?

Your **one** might feel like a spiritual outsider, not realizing that, like Luke emphasizes, the door for everyone is wide open. How can you help your **one** realize there's a place for them in the kingdom?

Luke emphasizes that true repentance leads to tangible change (Luke 3:8). This call mirrors the call of the prophets (Isaiah 1:16-17; Micah 6:8), who urged Israel to live out justice, mercy, and humility. Imagine you heard John's call to repentance; what areas of your life come to mind?

Jesus resists Satan by standing on God's Word, quoting Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3, 6:13, 6:16). Similarly, Paul reminds us to put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17) to stand firm against the enemy. What are some powerful passages that help guide you away from temptation?

Jesus' declaration of Isaiah 61 confronts His audience's expectations, leading to rejection (**Luke 4:18-30**). This parallels Jeremiah's experience (Jeremiah 20:8-9). Where in your life might speaking God's truth require boldness despite potential rejection?

Back when we read through Mark, you were asked, "What are you holding onto that might keep you from fully following Him?" What have you done with those answers over the last month? Anything? Why or why not?

WEEK 10 LUKE 6-10

OVERVIEW Luke 6-10 will feel familiar—after all, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels for a reason. There are miracles, healings, and a radical sermon that mirrors the famous Sermon on the Mount, though this one takes place on a plain. But look closer and you'll notice Luke's unique angle. Every familiar story seems to have a fresh twist as if it's written with an eye toward drawing in those outside the Hebrew world.

Luke has a way of spotlighting the people on the margins. Women take center stage here—Luke highlights their vital role in Jesus' ministry, even naming some who supported Him (Luke 8:1-3). The famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) positions an outsider as the hero, flipping cultural expectations and driving home the point that God's grace knows no bounds.

And then there's the mission of the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-24), a unique glimpse into the expansive nature of Jesus' kingdom. This isn't just about Israel—it's a preview of the Gospel's reach to every nation. When the seventy-two return, they're thrilled by their success, but Jesus gently redirects their joy. The real celebration isn't what they've done but that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

These chapters remind us that Jesus' mission was never small or exclusive. They challenge us to widen our understanding of love, grace, and forgiveness, making space for the outsiders in our lives—because that's exactly what Jesus did.

REFLECTION | Jesus, when accused of violating the Sabbath, said, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5). What point is He making about Himself here? What point is He making about the Sabbath?

Go back over Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49). What stands out as different from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)? What challenges you personally?

She's only known as the “sinful woman” in Luke's version of this story (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus turns her action into a powerful lesson on forgiveness. Her actions carry echoes of the broken and contrite heart of Psalm 51:17. The Pharisee, also unnamed, is scandalized and judgmental. Can you think of some times when you identified with the Pharisee? How about times you identified with the sinful woman?

Jesus casting “Legion” out of the demon-possessed man is a wild story that, for a moment, peels back the curtain on the unseen, spiritual world. Look at Luke 10:18 and Ephesians 6:12 (And how many of you remember that strange reference to fighting the Prince of Persia from Daniel 10:13 from our Exiles series?) What do we learn about these unseen forces from these passages?

Jesus' call to take up your cross daily in Luke 9:23-25 reveals the cost of following Him. Compare this call to discipleship with Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1 to offer our lives as living sacrifices. What does it look like for you to surrender daily?

Jesus sends out the 72 in Luke 10:1-20 with power and authority. We have been sent out as well. What are you intentionally doing to reach your **one**?

WEEK 11 LUKE 11-16

OVERVIEW Jesus really leans in with His teaching—comforting the humble and making the self-assured downright uncomfortable. Much of what he teaches here is both memorable and challenging.

In Luke 11, Jesus gives us the Lord’s Prayer—a beautifully simple reminder to trust God for our daily needs. It’s less about getting the words perfect and more about living in dependence on Him. Then He calls out the Pharisees for their focus on appearances while neglecting what really matters (Luke 11:39-44).

Luke 12 shifts the focus to priorities. The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) is a gut check, warning us not to build our lives around things that won’t last. It’s Proverbs 11:4 in story form: “Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”

Then we get to Luke 15, where Jesus tells three of His most famous parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. These stories are a window into God’s heart, showing His relentless pursuit of anyone who’s lost. It’s Ezekiel 34:11-12 come alive, with God Himself searching for His scattered sheep.

Finally, Luke 16 hits hard with the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It’s unsettling to say the least. Interestingly, it’s the only parable where Jesus gives the characters names, which makes some wonder if it’s not just a parable but a glimpse of reality. Either way, it’s a wake-up call to live with eternity in mind.

REFLECTION I Read through the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2-4). Rewrite it in your own words. What stands as a particular need in your life?

Jesus' critique of the Pharisees in Luke 11:39-44 is sobering. In what quality, habit, or virtue do you really find yourself deeply caring what others think? Religion? Parenting? Physical appearance? Knowledge? What area of life do you find yourself cultivating your image? What specifically can you do to be authentic and vulnerable in that area?

Each story in Luke 15 highlights the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. It's like Ezekiel 34:11-12, where God promises to search for His lost sheep. This story is where we have been getting our language for the **one**. If you've taken this seriously, the likelihood is that you have a lot of **ones**. Once you start to open your eyes, you see who God has been putting right in front of you. Who are some other **ones** in your life?

In what circumstances do you find yourself most like the older brother (Luke 15:25-32)? Who do you withhold mercy toward? Who do you judge more harshly than others?

In Luke 16:10-13, Jesus emphasizes faithfulness with little as a prerequisite for greater responsibility. How does this principle challenge you in other areas—for example how you spend your time, your money, or manage relationships?

How do these chapters expand your understanding of God's justice and mercy working together? Psalm 89:14 describes God's throne as founded on righteousness and justice, with mercy and truth accompanying Him. How do these characteristics converge in the teachings and actions of Jesus in these chapters?

WEEK 12 LUKE 17-24

OVERVIEW Luke's version of the Jesus story reaches a crescendo in these chapters—rich, intense, and deeply moving.

In Luke 17:6, Jesus talks about faith as small as a mustard seed. It's both humbling and encouraging. He's not asking for a perfect, polished faith—just enough to take the next step.

By the time we get to Luke 19, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Luke 19:28-40), a humble King bringing peace. The crowd's shouts of "Hosanna!" are powerful, but we know that shouts of "Crucify him!" are coming.

Chapters 22-24 hit like waves. The Last Supper, the gut-wrenching prayer in Gethsemane, and the horrors of the cross with all of its layered meaning. But even in His suffering, Jesus shows extraordinary grace: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). That statement stops you in your tracks; it's a forgiveness we all long for.

And then the resurrection in Luke 24—Jesus and hope are alive! Luke ends with a story that is only found in his Gospel. Two disciples, confused and hurting, and Jesus walks with them. It's a fitting end to this Gospel, a sign that the Gospel moves beyond borders and moves in people, changing them.

JESUS CALLED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE BREATHED HIS LAST.

LUKE 24:46

REFLECTION | The parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 shows us a version of prayer as a one-request prayer list. James later wrote about “fervent prayer” (James 5:16). If you limited your prayer to one thing to pray over and over, what would it be?

When Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), it reveals His profound love for those who resist Him. His compassion is reminiscent of Hosea’s longing for Israel to return to God (Hosea 11:8). In what areas of your life do you find yourself resisting Jesus?

The cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:45-48) is a bold act of prioritizing authentic worship over empty ritual. Jesus tears down distractions that threaten a connection with God. What “tables” in your life might Jesus flip?

Jesus’ humility at the Last Supper (Luke 22:14-20) is enshrined in the song of Philippians 2:5-8. Jesus is modeling a new way of moving through the world. What’s our modern version of foot-washing? Whose feet would you not wash?

In Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46), Jesus’ submission to the Father’s will (“Not my will, but yours be done”) is incredibly challenging. What outcomes do you want in life? What are you not willing to give up if it’s different than God’s plan? (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Peter’s denial (Luke 22:54-62) and later restoration (John 21:15-19) show that failure isn’t the end. Instead, God’s grace turns brokenness into redemption, reminding us of Psalm 51:17—God does not despise a contrite heart.

The faith of the criminal on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) highlights the simplicity of salvation. His cry, “Remember me,” underscores Ephesians 2:8-9: we are saved by grace through faith, not by works.

**MONTH FOUR /
JOHN**



WEEK THIRTEEN - 1-5

WEEK FOURTEEN - 6-10

WEEK FIFTEEN - 11-15

WEEK SIXTEEN - 16-21

**THERE WILL BE MORE
REJOICING IN HEAVEN
OVER ONE SINNER WHO
REPENTS**

**THAN OVER 99
RIGHTEOUS PERSONS
WHO DO NOT NEED TO
REPENT.**

-LUKE 15:7-

WEEK 13 JOHN 1-5

OVERVIEW | John does *not* start small. There's no baby in a manger, no angels and shepherds. Instead, John launches us into the cosmos: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). It's not a birth story, but the blueprint of existence.

As you try to wrap your mind around the magnitude of the Word, John tells us the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Then the Word is walks dusty roads with regular people and does things like turning water into wine.

And speaking of water to wine, why is John the only Gospel to record this unusual story? The miracle isn't just water to wine; it's that the "Word" cares about the quality of wine at a party of an unnamed couple in a mostly forgotten town and provides an abundance of the very best. And notice, as far as the text reveals, only the wait staff knew (John 2:9).

John's Jesus baffles the religious elite. A confused Nicodemus asks questions about being "born again" (John 3:3). John's Jesus crosses every cultural line imaginable when speaking with a Samaritan woman (John 4). He's a rebel with a cause, showing that He is the Living Water, the Light of the World, and the Way, Truth, and Life.

John describes himself as the "apostle who Jesus loved." Unlike the other Gospels, John's approach is less linear and more like a mosaic. John selects different stories and sometimes places events in a different chronological order to arrange a unique and magnificent picture of Jesus.



REFLECTION | An entire book could be (and probably has been) written about John 1:1-14. It's dense and rich with layer upon layer of mind-blowing and mind-bending theology. Read through this section carefully, line by line, and write down your reflections on these questions.

-What does it mean that Jesus was "the Word"?

-What does it mean that the "Word was with God"?

-What about "the Word was God"?

-What does it mean that the "Word became flesh"?

John 1:5 tells us that the light of Christ shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. We tend to fixate on the things in our world that are getting worse, but where do you see things getting better? Where do you see the light of Jesus breaking into our world?

One of the first examples of personal evangelism in the Bible is when Phillip told his friend Nathanael to "come and see" Jesus (John 1:46). What personal experience could you invite your **one** to? A small group? A church service? A prayer?

Jesus tells Nicodemus that to enter His kingdom he must be "born again" (John 3). Nicodemus is understandably confused. Life in Christ is about complete renewal. What specific life-change have you witnessed God make in your life?

In John 5, Jesus heals the man who had been an invalid for 38 years, asking him, "Do you want to get well?" Do you think you have areas of your life that, in some ways, you don't want to experience getting closer to Jesus? Why?

In John 5:19, Jesus says He only does what He sees the Father doing. What does it mean for you to follow Jesus' example of humility and obedience? How can you align your will with God's will, and what does that look like in the everyday moments of your life?

WEEK 14 JOHN 6-10

OVERVIEW | John drops profound clues throughout this section. Jesus walks on water, He says He's the Bread of Life, He's the Living Water, He's the Light of the World.

Jesus keeps making these polarizing statements. For example, people did not know what to do when he said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51). That statement was so loaded that the people who understood it couldn't believe what he was claiming (6:42) and the people who didn't thought he might be talking about cannibalism (6:52). Statements like these caused people to stop following Jesus, not because they didn't know what He meant but because they did and they couldn't accept who He was claiming to be (6:62).

In John 7, Jesus shows up at the Feast of Tabernacles, a time when Israel celebrated God's provision in the wilderness. But Jesus flips the script by saying, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" (7:37), offering *living water* in a context steeped in Old Testament history (Isaiah 55:1, Ezekiel 47). It's not just a promise of physical water; it's an invitation to a new kind of life that flows from Him.

And there's an absolutely hilarious story where Jesus heals a man born blind. The blind man can see, but the Pharisees are blind to the truth (John 9). Look for the clues!

The disciple who Jesus loved wants us to see Him and love Him like John does. What truth are the stories, signs, and sayings all telling?

REFLECTION | In John 6, Jesus declares, "I am the Bread of Life," what does it mean to rely on Jesus as the sustenance for life? Are there areas of your life where you're seeking satisfaction apart from Him?

In John 7, Jesus' brothers pressured Him to reveal Himself publicly, but He responded, "My time has not yet come." How do you handle waiting on God's timing in your life? Are there areas where you're tempted to rush ahead instead of trusting Him to lead?

Jesus promised rivers of living water for those who believe in Him in John 7:37-39. This promise connects to Isaiah 44:3, where God promises to pour out His Spirit on a thirsty land. How has the Holy Spirit brought life and renewal to you? In what ways can you allow that living water to overflow into the lives of others, sharing His grace and love?

In John 9, the man born blind can "see" Jesus but gets entangled with the religious rulers who are spiritually blind. John 9 is packed full of theological truths; read through it again and jot some observations down.

In John 10:16, Jesus speaks of "other sheep" that are not yet part of His flock. Jesus was referring to the Gentile world, but it's convicting that you know people who don't know Jesus. It's *more* convicting that God intends to use you to draw them to Himself. What movement have you seen in your **one**? What are you praying about for them?



WEEK 15 JOHN 11-15

OVERVIEW | These chapters record a shift. We see who Jesus is, not so much through his signs, teachings, and miracles, though there's still plenty of that, but through *relationships*.

John 11 contains one of the most moving stories showing Jesus's deeply personal side—when Jesus's friend, Lazarus, dies. He deftly navigates the family's frustration, grief, and anger. One of Lazarus's sisters says, "If you had been here, he would not have died." He weeps with the grieving family; he comforts them by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). He commands that his dead friend "come forth" from the grave, and, shockingly, he does.

Things move fast here. Jesus is anointed as King by a friend (John 12:3). He enters Jerusalem as a King, but on a donkey (John 12:4). He then promptly predicts His own death (John 12:23-25). He leaves the crowd confused and deflated (John 12:37).

None of Jesus' moves could be anticipated—washing their feet (John 13:1-17), predicting their betrayal (John 13:21, 38)—and promising the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

John deeply emphasizes love but a new standard for love, "A new command I give you: Love one another" (13:34). His call is simple yet revolutionary: the mark of His followers will be how they love, not how they worship or even what they believe.



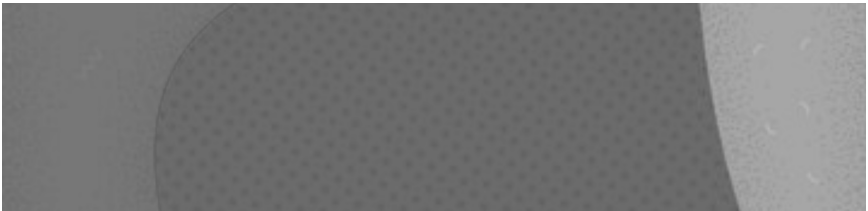
REFLECTION | In John 11, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life," He's calling Martha (and us) to trust and hope in Him. How does this truth reshape how you view grief, death, or even your own struggles with the fear of death?

When Mary anoints Jesus' feet in John 12, she's criticized for her extravagant act of devotion, yet Jesus defends her. Her worship required vulnerability and sacrifice. Are there areas in your life where fear of judgment holds you back from authentically worshipping or giving glory to Jesus? What would extravagant worship look like for you?

In John 14, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, calling Him an Advocate who will teach, remind, and bring peace. The Spirit is the breath of God within us, guiding and empowering. Stop and ask how the Spirit might be leading you.

In John 14:6, Jesus declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This exclusive claim can feel both comforting and challenging—no one comes to the Father but through Jesus. Are there areas where you struggle to fully embrace Jesus as *the* way? How can this exclusive claim impact the way you think about your **one**?

In John 15, Jesus describes Himself as the true vine, calling His disciples to abide in Him and bear fruit. Abiding isn't about striving but staying connected. How do you cultivate that connection with Jesus in the busyness of life? What kind of fruit is growing in your life right now, and how can you nurture it to glorify God?



WEEK 16 JOHN 16-21

OVERVIEW | Jesus moves from teaching to preparing His followers for his departure. You'll notice a sense of somberness and finality in this section.

In John 16, Jesus speaks to His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit, who will guide and comfort them after He leaves (16:7). This marks a shift in the relationship between Jesus and His followers—where once they relied on His physical presence, now they'll be empowered by His Spirit. Jesus prepares them for the pain and grief they will endure, but He promises that their sorrow will turn to joy (16:20). He hints at the profound truth that His death will bring life, a truth they won't fully grasp until after the resurrection.

In John 17, we hear Jesus pray. This is a profound passage. We hear Jesus' inner dialogue with the Father. It's intimate and passionate, and we learn deep truths about His desires for His followers, unity, the mission, and the world. His prayer is a powerful reminder that Jesus' concern isn't just for His disciples but for all who will come to believe through their message (17:20). His mission is global from the beginning.

Then, in the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus (John 18-19), we encounter the culmination of His sacrificial love, with the iconic moment when He says, "It is finished" (19:30). These words signal the completion of the work He came to do, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies and sealing the new covenant.

Finally, in John 20, the resurrection of Jesus shatters the finality of death and ushers in the ultimate hope of eternal life. Jesus' appearance to His disciples, especially His conversation with Thomas, underscores the significance of belief and the power of seeing with faith. Thomas finally and fully recognizes Jesus as God (John 20:28).

REFLECTION | In John 16, Jesus speaks of the sorrow the disciples will face but promises that their grief will turn to joy. Pain can lead to something beautiful. Have you experienced this pattern of sorrow turning to joy in your own life?

In John 17, Jesus prays for His disciples and for all believers, asking the Father to unify them. He prays for us to be one as He and the Father are one. Where is there division in your life between you and other believers? What steps can you take to foster unity with other believers?

In John 18, Peter denies Jesus three times, a moment of failure that many of us can relate to. Yet later, Jesus restores Peter. How do you handle moments of failure in your faith? How does Peter's story encourage you to trust in Jesus' forgiveness and restoration?

As Jesus stands before Pilate in John 18:36, He declares, "My kingdom is not of this world." What does this reveal about the nature of Jesus' reign and His call to His followers? How does this shape the way you engage with the world's priorities, politics, or cultural pressures?

In John 20, Jesus appears to Thomas, inviting him to touch His wounds. Jesus doesn't shame Thomas for his doubts but meets him where he is. How does this moment challenge your own struggles with doubt? How can you honestly bring your questions to Jesus, trusting that He will meet you with grace?

In John 21, Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" and commissions him to feed His sheep. This is a powerful moment of restoration and purpose. How is Jesus calling you to respond to His love through action? What does it mean for you personally to "feed His sheep" in the life He's placed you in?

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-JOHN 21:25-

WE MADE IT!

You've walked alongside Jesus—hearing His words, witnessing His miracles, and glimpsing His heart for the lost and broken. But this isn't the end of the story; it's just the start. The same Jesus who called fishermen to leave their nets and follow Him is calling you, too. What will your next step of faith be?

The beauty of the Gospels is that they don't just tell us about Jesus—they invite us to follow Him. As you move forward, remember that you're not walking alone. Our entire church family is taking their next step closer to Jesus.

So take a moment and ask this question, "Lord, what's next?" And then take the next step, knowing that He who began this good work in you will carry it on to completion. The adventure of faith has just begun!





**WHAT
IS
YOUR
NEXT
STEP?**

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