



LIFE-
CHANGING
BIBLE
STUDY
SERIES

THE
Friends
of Jesus
BIBLE STUDY

KAREN
KINGSBURY



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THERE IS A FRIEND WHO STAYS
CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.

PROVERBS 18:24



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Number one *New York Times* best-selling author Karen Kingsbury is America's favorite inspirational novelist, with more than 20 million copies of her books in print. Her last dozen titles have reached the top of national lists.

Karen calls her work Life-Changing Fiction™ because of the response she hears from readers. She believes God puts a story on her heart, but He has a world full of other hearts in mind. "Only He could do that," Karen often says.

Karen and her husband, Don, and their six kids have Bibles all over the house and Scripture verses on the walls in every room. But no Bible will ever mean as much as the one Don still has, the one with the split down the binding that marked their confrontation before she became a Christian. It is proof that God takes what is broken and makes it beautiful again.

A popular speaker at women's groups around the country, Karen spends her spare time playing tennis and family games with her children, taking walks with Don, and being on-air for her national Salem/FISH afternoon radio program: "The Karen Kingsbury Show," airing weekdays. Karen, with her daughter, Kelsey, also has a DaySpring card and gift line (Possibilities) in stores now. The line features favorite quotes from her books with Kelsey's designs.

Karen truly loves her reader friends, interacting daily with some 300,000 friends on Facebook and 50,000 followers on Twitter.

TENTS AND STAKES

My goal with this Bible study was simple: Use my storytelling to help all of us fall in love with the Bible. But I knew that along the way I would need to mix Scripture and fiction to tell a more complete story of the characters of the friends of Jesus.

So I began to look at this project as tent-building.

Scripture is very important to me. God's Holy Word is my absolute authority. For that reason, Bible verses on each of the friends of Jesus became my *tent stakes*. I anchored them deep into the ground and allowed nothing to move them.

Then I added a few more tent stakes—the historical and cultural absolutes of Jesus' day.

With those in place, it was time to paint the canvas. Tent material moves and billows between the tent stakes. With the tent stakes of Scripture and cultural relevancy deeply embedded in the ground, I allowed myself to dream and imagine. Soon I began to write stories more beautiful than any God has given me.

The question for each story, each scene became this: *Was it possible?* If it was possible for the tent canvas to billow in the way of my storytelling, then I let it billow. In *The Friends of Jesus Bible Study*, every time you see content that is screened and attributed to *The Friends of Jesus* book (Howard Books, 2015), you can know that it is part of my imagining, storytelling, tent-billowing process.

The tent stakes of Scripture and biblical history in this Bible study will take you deeper into what we do know about each friend of Jesus—some you may expect, some you may not. We'll learn lessons on how to be a friend and how to be a better friend to the ultimate Friend, Jesus Christ. Interactive questions, the group process, home study, and journaling all are vital parts of this study that can help you fall in love with Scripture.

Every story was reviewed for scriptural accuracy. Just to be sure the tent stakes were firmly in the ground.

What creates a strong friendship? How do we know when someone is a true friend? Jesus demonstrated friendship in a variety of ways with many kinds of people. *The Friends of Jesus Bible Study* explores six people in the life of Jesus and the depth of friendship that is found with each one. Those stories can be found in their entirety in my book *The Friends of Jesus* (Howard Books, 2015).

My stories resulted in this unbelievable Bible study—the one you are about to begin. The team at LifeWay filmed me in six unforgettable teaching and storytelling sessions before a live audience of women. In addition, I met with editorial experts at LifeWay to determine just the right Bible verses and questions to take you deeper into the friends of Jesus.

I hope this study will really speak to your group. As women, we want our friendships to be rich. We want to be a better friend as well as continue to make friends with the people we meet.

I believe God will use this time to change your heart forever and remind you that Jesus is the best Friend you could ever have.

So ... step into the tent and let the adventure begin.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

Elements of each session

YOUR STORY (START)—God desires to write His story on the hearts of His creation. Our stories are part of His story because He chooses to use us. So during this study I will be encouraging you to use wisely the days God has given you to write a well-crafted story with your life.

Be willing to share your experiences and insights with your group; they are important and will benefit other women. This opening time segment (approx. 15 min.) is when you get to know each other better. The bond that develops in your group will enrich your study and strengthen you spiritually.

THE BIBLE CHARACTER'S STORY; FOR EXAMPLE, SIMON'S STORY (WATCH AND DISCUSS)—During Session 1, for example, I teach about Simon for about 30 minutes on video. Because I am a storyteller, I share the big picture of what Simon's life might have been like and highlight several key principles from Scripture.

This time is the heart of the Bible study as, after the video, you interact with life-changing activities and questions prompted by the truth of Scripture. You will better see how each friend of Jesus learned to place his or her trust in Jesus, forging a life-changing friendship. Each screened portion of content comes from *The Friends of Jesus* book, giving your group a springboard for finding out more about this friend and for unpacking biblical truths and applications. If possible, allow 35 to 45 minutes for the video and group interaction segment.

LIVING IN GOD'S STORY (GOING DEEPER)—This time of delving more into each Bible character happens between sessions. Use the additional readings as daily devotions, as an opportunity to search other Scriptures, and as markers of how God is working in your relationships.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR ARTICLES—An extra feature of *The Friends of Jesus* is six articles adapted from *Biblical Illustrator* magazine. Feel free to ignore the articles or to read them for extra study. For the complete version of the articles or more information about the magazine, visit lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.

COMMITMENTS TO YOUR GROUP

Your experience with your group will be impacted by what you bring to it. Be willing to make personal commitments regarding preparation, confidentiality, respect, and accountability in order to have quality time together.

PREPARATION

To get the most out of each group session, try to read through the Watch and Discuss content each week as well as the *Biblical Illustrator* article at the end of each chapter and answer the questions so you are ready to discuss the material. You may also benefit from reading the hardback book *The Friends of Jesus* (Howard Books, 2015) for Karen's collection of short stories on each Bible person.

CONFIDENTIALITY

You may be prompted to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and must be able to trust the group to keep personal information strictly confidential. Accept each other without judgment.

RESPECT

Respect each other's thoughts and opinions, providing a safe place for those insights to be shared without fear of judgment or unsolicited advice. If advice is requested, then lend your opinion, but season it with grace and offer it in love.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Commit to support and encourage each other during the sessions and to pray for each other between meetings. Setting up an email list can help women keep in touch.

If you're on social media, please share what you're learning #friendsofJesus

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND
TOOK UP RESIDENCE AMONG
US. WE OBSERVED HIS GLORY,
THE GLORY AS THE ONE AND
ONLY SON FROM THE FATHER,
FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

JOHN 1:14

SIMON THE LEPER AND JESUS, THE COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

Simon closed his eyes. The other lepers kept to themselves. Here in the colony, everyone suffered in his own way. Missing family, aching for companionship. Too broken to notice the lepers on either side of him. And so Simon was alone. He who had been one of the most well-known men in Jerusalem had no one to love, no one to talk to, no one to care. His family had deserted him. He had no friends.

No one cares about Simon now. Not one.

Agony swept over him and he studied his hands. His fingers had turned to nubs—not that he could feel them. Leprosy took away the sense of pain everywhere but where it mattered most—in his heart. The pain of loneliness and desperation was more unbearable every day.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS, pages 1-2

YOUR STORY

START

Everyone has a story. Your group is where you can share your story and develop friendships in Christ, as you learn more about the friends of Jesus.

Think about the friends in your own life. Do you have many lifelong friends? Are some new friends? Are they your same age or from multiple generations? Do they live near you or far away?

We can have many friends or just a few—some who are acquaintances and some who know us better than we know ourselves. Friendship, however, is something that we all need in our lives. Jesus needed it in His life, too.

As a group, discuss the following questions.

What do you think makes someone a good friend?

Describe one or some of your closest friends. How did you meet?

What do you enjoy doing with your friends?

What qualities about you make you a good friend to have?

Perhaps you are doing this study with your friends. Maybe they're new friends. Maybe they're old friends. As you begin to learn about the friends in Jesus' life, think about the friendships you have in this small group. Pray that the Lord would continue to grow you closer and teach you to be a better friend as you learn from His example.

SIMON THE LEPER'S STORY

WATCH

Watch Simon's story from The Friends of Jesus Bible Study DVD and discuss the questions with your group.

1. *Simon didn't need the friendship of Jesus until he was desperate.*
2. *Jesus is the friend who comes to us in our brokenness.*
3. *Friendship is often forged in times of trial.*

If you can't get a miracle become one.

DISCUSS

As you listened to Simon's story, what did you learn from Jesus' actions as a friend?

How has Jesus stepped into your brokenness when others may have walked away?

Describe a friendship that was forged in a time of trial.

How can you be a friend who reaches out to people when they're broken?

LIVING IN GOD'S STORY

GOING DEEPER

Home study can help you better understand God's work in the life of Simon the Leper—as well as how God is working in your life. As you learn to love Jesus more by studying the friends who encountered Him, you will discover more about forgiveness and recovery, mercy and grace, and authentic friendships.

For more insights about Simon the Leper in The Friends of Jesus, read chapter 1 (pp. 1-40).

DAY 1

FROM HONORED TO OSTRACIZED

Simon sat on the rocky ledge, not moving, not sure what to do. You must be very angry at me, God. You have taken my livelihood, my place of honor, my family and my friends. My wife is probably a different person now. My girls have forgotten me. It's been nearly a year. And yet here You leave me in this leper colony to watch my body decay piece by piece? I just want to know why.

His rants toward God were nearly constant now. God could heal him—Simon believed that. Yet God had left him here, as if He had forgotten entirely about Simon and his awful disease.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS, pages 17-18

How do you relate to Simon's feelings and questions of God? When have you experienced feelings of utter loneliness?

Of all of the diseases in the Bible, none was more serious than leprosy. Leprosy was a terrible skin and nerve disease believed to be caused by sin against God. Because of the contagiousness of the disease during that time period—and because those with the disease were considered unclean—lepers were banished to isolation, away from their family, friends, and community. They were no longer permitted to worship with their community—an isolation with spiritual ramifications.

Read Leviticus 13:45–46.

⁴⁵ The person afflicted with an infectious skin disease is to have his clothes torn and his hair hanging loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, “Unclean, unclean!” ⁴⁶ He will remain unclean as long as he has the infection; he is unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

Have you ever felt abandoned or ostracized by your friends, especially if you didn't have control over the situation? Explain.

How did you respond in your time of isolation?

Did you draw closer in your relationship with God or did you feel distance in that relationship too? Why?

Read Psalm 38.

¹ LORD, do not punish me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. ² For Your arrows have sunk into me, and Your hand has pressed down on me. ³ There is no health in my body because of Your indignation; there is no strength in my bones because of my sin. ⁴ For my sins have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy for me to bear.

⁵ My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. ⁶ I am bent over and brought low; all day long I go around in mourning. ⁷ For my loins are full of burning pain, and there is no health in my body. ⁸ I am faint and severely crushed; I groan because of the anguish of my heart. ⁹ Lord, my every desire is known to You; my sighing is not hidden from You. ¹⁰ My heart races, my strength leaves me, and even the light of my eyes has faded. ¹¹ My loved ones and friends stand back from my affliction, and my relatives stand at a distance. ¹² Those who seek my life set traps, and those who want to harm me threaten to destroy me; they plot treachery all day long. ¹³ I am like a deaf person; I do not hear. I am like a speechless person who does not open his mouth. ¹⁴ I am like a man who does not hear and has no arguments in his mouth. ¹⁵ I put my hope in You, LORD; You will answer, Lord my God. ¹⁶ For I said, "Don't let them rejoice over me—those who are arrogant toward me when I stumble." ¹⁷ For I am about to fall, and my pain is constantly with me. ¹⁸ So I confess my guilt; I am anxious because of my sin. ¹⁹ But my enemies are vigorous and powerful; many hate me for no reason. ²⁰ Those who repay evil for good attack me for pursuing good. ²¹ LORD, do not abandon me; my God, do not be far from me. ²² Hurry to help me, Lord, my Savior.

Highlight or underline some of the emotions that the psalmist expressed.

Describe a time in your life when your prayers were similar to the psalmist's.

This psalm expresses the anguish that many lepers, and those suffering with unclean skin diseases, felt. Not only was their physical pain intense, but they were emotionally tormented by the physical and social rejection they experienced from others.

Where did the psalmist continue to place his hope?

Jesus' compassion changed many lepers' lives. The Gospels are filled with examples of Jesus' healing, including lepers. Many were amazed and astounded at His power and compassion. Jesus did not hesitate to touch lepers, where others would run away from them. Jesus, of course, recognized that a person's outward condition is not what made someone unclean; rather, it is a person's heart that determines his or her standing with God.¹

Read Luke 5:12–15.

¹² While He was in one of the towns, a man was there who had a serious skin disease all over him. He saw Jesus, fell facedown, and begged Him: “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” ¹³ Reaching out His hand, He touched him, saying, “I am willing; be made clean,” and immediately the disease left him. ¹⁴ Then He ordered him to tell no one: “But go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses prescribed for your cleansing as a testimony to them.” ¹⁵ But the news about Him spread even more, and large crowds would come together to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

What did Jesus demonstrate to the leper by touching him before healing him?

Why did Jesus tell the healed leper to go to the priest?

According to the Law, a leper must present himself before a priest, and only the priest could declare him clean and reunite him back into the community (see Lev. 14:1-32). Jesus told the leper to go the priest to offer visual proof that he had been healed.

How has God's healing power impacted your own life?

When you see the evidence of God's power in your life, how do you respond?

How are you encouraged by the stories of others when they share about God's power and healing?

Who in your life is ostracized because of their differences—their health, status, or even sins they've committed? How can you show them love in Christ?

Just as Simon went from honored to ostracized, we sometimes have relationships that are not what they once were.

Think about the relationships in your own life that need restoration. What bitterness or anger do you need to let go?

In what ways can you work to restore those relationships?

Pray for those friends now and that you might be a source for reconciliation.

FOR MORE BACKGROUND, READ THE ARTICLE "A LEPER'S STATUS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL" ON PAGE 31.

DAY 2

THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

Read John 1:14.

The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.
We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son
from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Who is the Word, and what did He do?

Jesus was the Messiah.

Suddenly Simon was absolutely convinced. The evidence of his eyes was too great to ignore. But at the same time a grievous thought occurred to him. He had missed his chance! ...

If he ever had another chance, if Jesus ever happened by the leper colony again, he would run to Him with all his strength. Simon looked at the distant storm clouds retreating along the horizon. "Please, God ... give me another chance. I'm sorry. I believe. I do believe."

No matter what happened next, Simon knew this much.

He would never doubt Jesus again.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS, pages 25-26

Simon was not alone in initially missing out on Jesus' identity. His friends and peers—the religious authorities he so closely associated with—were the ones who scoffed, disparaged, and planned ways to harm or trick Jesus in front of the crowds.

Jesus did not meet their expectations of the Messiah; He was challenging the Law the Pharisees were responsible for upholding. Their Savior would come in power, overcoming the oppression of the Romans forever—not as a carpenter with a rag-tag group of followers. Or so they thought.

Do you ever wonder whether you've missed your second (or third or fourth) chance on something important? Or even in your relationship with God? Why?

How would your life change if you lived like you believed Jesus is the Messiah?

Many Pharisees, like Simon, thought they had done everything right because they served God with all the “right” people and in all the “right” ways. Yet their hearts were not right.

In the space below, list some examples of how people think they may be serving God with the “right” people and in the “right” way.

How have you been guilty of this misdirected attitude?

Read Matthew 15:1–20.

¹ Then Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked,
² “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat!” ³ He answered them, “And why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition? ⁴ For God said:

Honor your father and your mother; and, The one who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.

⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, “Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift committed to the temple”— ⁶ he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have revoked God’s word because of your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said:

⁸ These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁹ They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.”

¹⁰ Summoning the crowd, He told them, “Listen and understand: ¹¹ It’s not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” ¹² Then the disciples came up and told Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard this statement?” ¹³ He replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father didn’t plant will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Leave them alone! They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵ Then Peter replied to Him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶ “Are even you still lacking in understanding?” He asked. ¹⁷ “Don’t you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a man. ¹⁹ For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are the things that defile a man, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

What is Jesus’ main issue with the Pharisees?

Fill in the missing words from Matthew 15:18-20:

¹⁸ But what comes out of the _____ comes from the _____, and this defiles a man. ¹⁹ For from the _____ come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are the things that _____ a man, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

How can we sometimes reflect the attitudes and behavior of the Pharisees in this passage?

Following the rules, striving for perfection, being the best—nothing really matters if we don't recognize why we do what we do and who we do it for. The Pharisees, including Simon, had a heart problem. This heart problem affected every area of their lives. Where they thought they were honoring God by upholding the Law, they missed the opportunity to worship the God they thought they were serving. They worshiped rules over relationships. Jesus saw through their haughty behavior into their hearts, and He was pretty saddened.

Think through your motivations for what you do. Are you serving somewhere for the attention or praise? Have you neglected your relationships with others or with God?

What's one area of your life where your heart and mouth need to better align with Christ's example?

In the space below, journal about an area (or areas) where God may be asking you to change your motivation for service or asking you to step back because of a wrong motivation.

Close with a prayer, asking God to give you another chance and a better focus on Him.

DAY 3

A NEW WAY

Simon probably thought he had it all together. He was respected by his peers, fulfilling God-ordained religious responsibilities. He was honored in the community and loved by his family. Yet his fellow temple leaders were worried about Jesus, plotting ways to keep His influence from spreading. As Simon tried to cope with his leprosy, he must have thought: *I am a Pharisee. I could not possibly be unclean.*

Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees as hypocritical, enforcing heavy burdens on people while overlooking the more important matters of justice, mercy, and faith (see Matt. 23:23-24). What an indictment! They seemed righteous on the outside but inside they were “full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt. 23:28).

This time there was no hiding for Simon. He wanted Jesus to see him, all of him. His broken, lonely heart and his diseased body. He came up to Jesus and fell at His feet. “I need You, Lord! Have mercy on me. You are Master and Savior. Please heal me. I am desperate.”

Simon closed his eyes and held out his hand. Maybe this was only a dream. How could Jesus be standing inches from him? He trembled, unable to draw a breath, and then when he thought he must’ve been imagining the moment, he felt it.

The touch of the Master’s hand. ...

What he saw was the most beautiful sight in all his life. Jesus was still holding his hand. “Simon, your faith has healed you. Go show yourself to the priests.”

“Yes, Lord. I will. Yes.” Simon stayed on his knees. He was in the presence of God. He could feel it to the depths of his soul.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS, pages 29-30

To what extent are you willing to show yourself to Jesus? To let Him see every part of you? (He knows anyway.)

What have you tried to hold back from God? Why?

While Simon found a compassionate, perfect Friend, he also found the Savior he needed. While Jesus had healed him, Simon realized that the only thing he needed to be right about was Jesus. And gratitude flooded his soul. He wanted to be with Jesus, to learn from Him, to serve Him in his home, to shout to others that Jesus really is the Messiah. Simon wanted to show the same concern for other people that Jesus showed.

What do these verses teach you about compassion?

Romans 12:10 _____

1 Corinthians 13:3 _____

Galatians 6:2 _____

Ephesians 4:32; 5:21 _____

Philippians 2:8, 13; 4:7 _____

What blessings can you actively focus on to find more gratitude in your daily life?

Gratitude doesn't come naturally. Many days we tend to focus on the things we lack and forget about all the blessings God has given us.

Read these Scriptures and choose the action that most challenges you.

² My soul, praise the LORD, and do not forget all His benefits.

³ He forgives all your sin; He heals all your diseases.

PSALM 103:2-3

Give thanks to Yahweh, call on His name; proclaim His deeds among the peoples.

PSALM 105:1

⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

COLOSSIANS 3:17

Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us hold on to grace. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe.

HEBREWS 12:28

Commit to practice one or more of these Scripture verses this week. Write the verses you choose on a note card and put it in a place you'll see often.

DAY 4

NO GREATER LONGING

Back before his illness, Simon had to be perfect. His friends at the Temple, the religious leaders, only enjoyed his company because he was a Pharisee. Because his performance was up to their standards. Because he followed the letter of the law.

Jesus asked about none of that. ...

Jesus was the sort of friend Simon had never known before. He didn't expect perfection from Simon. He only wanted Simon to believe. Jesus was the way, the truth and the life. He only wanted to show Simon this new way.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS, pages 38-39

Jesus was the kind of friend to Simon that we all need in our lives. He was loyal despite the circumstances. He was available, even when it probably wasn't convenient. And He was compassionate when the easy solution would have been to run away from a contagious disease.

Think about the friendships in your own life. What characteristics of Jesus do you express in your own friendships?

What characteristics do you value in your friends?

What do your friends value in their relationship with you?

Are you willing to take risks for deeper relationships? To not expect others to be perfect? To reach out to make new friendships? Are you encouraging? Honest? You may be asking yourself, *how do I become a friend like Jesus? I'm human and imperfect.* But the Bible gives us practical ways that we can strengthen our friendships.

Read the following passages and note ways Scripture tells you to be a friend.

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

PROVERBS 27:17

⁹Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. ¹⁰For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

⁸Above all, maintain an intense love for each other, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.

1 PETER 4:8-10

What other Scriptures would you add to this list that remind you how to be a faithful and Christlike friend?

Pray and ask God to help you be a friend like Jesus was to Simon. Then identify specific ways you need God's help to be a better friend to others. Use the following characteristics as a starting point for your evaluation.

<i>Compassionate</i>	<i>Honest</i>	<i>Faithful</i>	<i>Loyal</i>
<i>Respectful</i>	<i>A good listener</i>	<i>Encouraging</i>	<i>Helpful</i>
<i>Prayerful</i>	<i>Kind</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Other: _____</i>

DAY 5

GIVING GLORY TO GOD

Luke 17 records how ten lepers approached Jesus, calling Him “Master” and begging for mercy. When Jesus saw them, He told them to go show themselves to the priests. As they went, they found themselves healed. One of the ten returned to find Jesus.

Read Luke 17:15–16 to see what happened next.

¹⁵ But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. ¹⁶ He fell facedown at His feet, thanking Him. And he was a Samaritan.

Not only did the Samaritan fall on his face before Jesus, he gave glory to God by his response. The Greek word used here, *doxazo*, means *to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate; to honor, do honor to, hold in honor; to make glorious, adorn with luster, clothe with splendor.*²

Read Luke 9:28–36 in your Bible and then John 1:14,18 below.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son—the One who is at the Father’s side—He has revealed Him.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6.

^{3:18} We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit. ... ^{4:6} For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Read Ephesians 1:17–18.

¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ I pray that the perception of your mind may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints.

What do you notice about these New Testament descriptions of God's glory? Underline or highlight the words and phrases that stand out to you and then write a summary here.

God has revealed Himself completely through Jesus. And we give glory to God by believing in Jesus and living in relationship with Him. If we profess to love Jesus, we love and serve even the least of those He loves (see Matt. 25:35-36). We bring Him glory through our relationships with other people.

They still called him Simon the Leper.

It was a name Simon didn't care for. He wanted his name to reflect who he was today, not the putrid, rotting person he'd been in the leper colony. But now ... now Simon felt a sense of joy at the title. If he was Simon the Leper then everywhere he went, every time he left home, people would see the obvious.

Simon the Leper wasn't a leper anymore. He was healed. His life was being used to bring glory to God.

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Rather than resenting people who continued to call him Simon the Leper long after he was healed, Simon embraced the reality that God could use him for His glory. He became a devoted follower and friend of Jesus.

Are there some behaviors toward certain people that you need to change? Explain.

How do your current relationships bring glory to God?

Is there someone you need to befriend because you know God will use you in that person's life?

End this week by spending some time in prayer.

- Pray for your current friendships that the Lord would strengthen them and show you how to be a compassionate and devoted friend.*
- Pray for any future relationships. Ask the Lord to show you someone you may need to befriend.*
- Finally, ask God to show you how to bring glory to Him through your friendships.*

A LEPER'S STATUS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

BY RICK JOHNSON

Clearly the victims of unclean skin diseases would show unsightly physical blemishes. In all ages people have commonly reacted to these afflictions with revulsion, if not outright horror. Consequently the sick are often isolated. The simple lack of social contact is a depressing condition for most people.

The regulations in Leviticus 13:45-46 prescribe that such persons wear torn clothes, keep unkempt hair, live alone outside the camp, and cover their mouths and cry, "Unclean, unclean!" when others approach. Other passages, however, indicate that those with skin disorders had to live apart from others (see 2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chron. 26:21).

This requirement imposed a severe hardship on their daily lives. They may have had a dwelling outside the city. More serious was the problem of obtaining food. If the men could not enter the city, they could not go to the marketplace. They would be dependent on the help of gracious people and their own resourcefulness. Hunger could have been a constant pain.

Perhaps as devastating as anything else would be the judgment of others and their own minds that their condition was a punishment for some sin. It is true that Moses' momentary unclean skin condition was given as a sign and not as a punishment, and Job's suffering was not because of his sin. Nevertheless, the cases

of Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah demonstrate that sometimes God did send this affliction because of wrongdoing. The attitude of Job's friends, although mistaken in his case, was the normal reaction of many people. These four men would have been told, "Confess your sins and God will heal you." The message would be, "It's your own fault." It would be natural if they constantly thought of all their past misdeeds and blamed themselves for what they now had to endure.³

Likely concerned with unclean skin disease, Psalm 38 expresses the anguish many of these poor unfortunates felt.³ In addition to the physical pain and the emotional torment of unjustified attacks by other people, the afflicted likely felt threatened by God Himself. They would cry, "Lord, do not punish me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. For Your arrows have sunk into me, and Your hand has pressed down on me." (Ps. 38:1-2). The same song confesses sin (38:18) and claims the singer is opposed for doing good (38:20). The inner conflict would be typical of those who are physically sick.

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