

Explore the Bible®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye are all
Je'-sus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.
Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that
he is risen from the dead; and, behold, I goeth
before you into Gal'-i-lee: there shall ye
see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did very
bring his disciples word.

9 ¶ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Je'-sus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Je'-sus unto them, Fear not: go tell 'my brethren that they go into Gal'-i-lee, and there shall they see me, as I said unto them.

11 ¶ Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled, with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave money unto the soldiers,

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples stole him away while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Jesus' Commission

16 ¶ Then said he unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

17 ¶ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but he said unto them, Touch not me, for I am yet clean from the blood of these men.

Matthew 14-28

Rodney Woo, General Editor

LIFE BY DESIGN

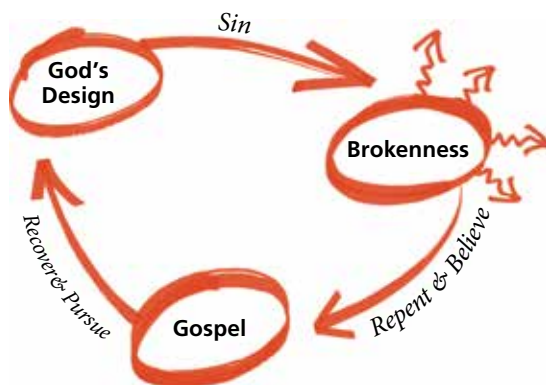
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make **LIFE work.**

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16; Colossians 2:14; and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

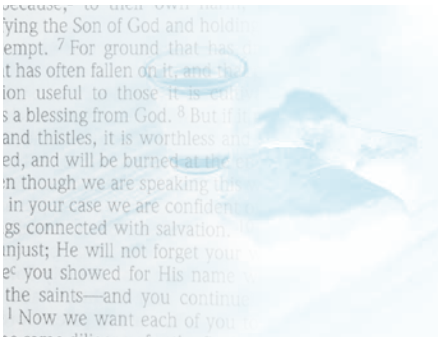
Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel.

CONTENTS

»» FEATURES

Bible Reading Plan	3
Accepting Christ	4
Introduction to Matthew 14–28	6
Word List	114
Leader Guide	117
Prayer Page	144



»» SESSIONS

	Title	Page
Session 1:	Who Is Jesus? (Matthew 16:13-28)	8
Session 2:	Is Jesus Fully God? (Matthew 17:1-13)	16
Session 3:	What Is Required? (Matthew 19:16-26)	24
Session 4:	More Than a Prophet? (Matthew 21:1-11)	32
Session 5:	If I Reject Jesus? (Matthew 21:33-45)	40
Session 6:	Offered to All? (Matthew 22:1-14)	48
Session 7:	Where Is Jesus? (Matthew 28:1-15)	56
Session 8:	What About the Future? (Matthew 24:36-51)	64
Session 9:	How Do We Remember? (Matthew 26:17-30)	72
Session 10:	Do I Have the Strength? (Matthew 26:36-46)	80
Session 11:	Loyal? (Matthew 26:63-75)	88
Session 12:	Crucified (Matthew 27:41-52)	96
Session 13:	What Do We Do Now? (Matthew 28:16-20)	104



» MEET THE WRITER



Jana Lollis is Deaf. She lives in Morganton, North Carolina. She grew up in South Carolina and later attended Gallaudet University. She is a teacher at the North

Carolina School for the Deaf where she has taught for nineteen years. She has gone on numerous mission trips to Central America and East Asia. She spent one year in China with IMB. She is a member of First Baptist Deaf Mission in Morganton.

This study was originally published as EXPLORE THE BIBLE: DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE (ISSN 2167-8820; Item 005075111) by Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN 37234, Copyright © 2015 Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Scripture taken from the New Century Version®. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

VOLUME 3 • NUMBER 3

Send questions/comments to
Explore the Bible: DEAF
Nashville, TN 37234
By email to
explorethebible@lifeway.com

Cover and inside images:
istockphoto.com

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- ☐ 1. Matthew 14:1-12
- ☐ 2. Matthew 14:13-21
- ☐ 3. Matthew 14:22-33
- ☐ 4. Matthew 14:34-36
- ☐ 5. Matthew 15:1-9
- ☐ 6. Matthew 15:10-20
- ☐ 7. Matthew 15:21-28
- ☐ 8. Matthew 15:29-31
- ☐ 9. Matthew 15:32-39
- ☐ 10. Matthew 16:1-6
- ☐ 11. Matthew 16:7-12
- ☐ 12. Matthew 16:13-20
- ☐ 13. Matthew 16:21-23
- ☐ 14. Matthew 16:24-28
- ☐ 15. Matthew 17:1-6
- ☐ 16. Matthew 17:7-13
- ☐ 17. Matthew 17:14-18
- ☐ 18. Matthew 17:19-21
- ☐ 19. Matthew 17:22-23
- ☐ 20. Matthew 17:24-27
- ☐ 21. Matthew 18:1-5
- ☐ 22. Matthew 18:6-9
- ☐ 23. Matthew 18:10-14
- ☐ 24. Matthew 18:15-20
- ☐ 25. Matthew 18:21-35
- ☐ 26. Matthew 19:1-6
- ☐ 27. Matthew 19:7-12
- ☐ 28. Matthew 19:13-15
- ☐ 29. Matthew 19:16-22
- ☐ 30. Matthew 19:23-30
- ☐ 31. Matthew 20:1-16

MONTH 2

- ☐ 1. Matthew 20:17-19
- ☐ 2. Matthew 20:20-28
- ☐ 3. Matthew 20:29-34
- ☐ 4. Matthew 21:1-7
- ☐ 5. Matthew 21:8-11
- ☐ 6. Matthew 21:12-13
- ☐ 7. Matthew 21:14-17
- ☐ 8. Matthew 21:18-22
- ☐ 9. Matthew 21:23-27
- ☐ 10. Matthew 21:28-32
- ☐ 11. Matthew 21:33-45
- ☐ 12. Matthew 22:1-14
- ☐ 13. Matthew 22:15-22
- ☐ 14. Matthew 22:23-33
- ☐ 15. Matthew 22:34-40
- ☐ 16. Matthew 22:41-46
- ☐ 17. Matthew 23:1-7
- ☐ 18. Matthew 23:8-12
- ☐ 19. Matthew 23:13-22
- ☐ 20. Matthew 23:23-28
- ☐ 21. Matthew 23:29-36
- ☐ 22. Matthew 23:37-39
- ☐ 23. Matthew 24:1-2
- ☐ 24. Matthew 24:3-8
- ☐ 25. Matthew 24:9-14
- ☐ 26. Matthew 24:15-22
- ☐ 27. Matthew 24:23-28
- ☐ 28. Matthew 24:29-31
- ☐ 29. Matthew 24:32-35
- ☐ 30. Matthew 24:36-44

MONTH 3

- ☐ 1. Matthew 24:45-51
- ☐ 2. Matthew 25:1-13
- ☐ 3. Matthew 25:14-21
- ☐ 4. Matthew 25:22-30
- ☐ 5. Matthew 25:31-40
- ☐ 6. Matthew 25:41-46
- ☐ 7. Matthew 26:1-5
- ☐ 8. Matthew 26:6-16
- ☐ 9. Matthew 26:17-25
- ☐ 10. Matthew 26:26-30
- ☐ 11. Matthew 26:31-35
- ☐ 12. Matthew 26:36-46
- ☐ 13. Matthew 26:47-56
- ☐ 14. Matthew 26:57-68
- ☐ 15. Matthew 26:69-75
- ☐ 16. Matthew 27:1-10
- ☐ 17. Matthew 27:11-14
- ☐ 18. Matthew 27:15-19
- ☐ 19. Matthew 27:20-26
- ☐ 20. Matthew 27:27-31
- ☐ 21. Matthew 27:32-37
- ☐ 22. Matthew 27:38-40
- ☐ 23. Matthew 27:41-44
- ☐ 24. Matthew 27:45-49
- ☐ 25. Matthew 27:50-56
- ☐ 26. Matthew 27:57-61
- ☐ 27. Matthew 27:62-66
- ☐ 28. Matthew 28:1-7
- ☐ 29. Matthew 28:8-10
- ☐ 30. Matthew 28:11-15
- ☐ 31. Matthew 28:16-20



ACCEPTING CHRIST



Bob Crowell

My first experience learning about Jesus was in kindergarten. I was a student at the Central Institute for the Deaf (CID) in St. Louis, Missouri. My teacher had a picture of Jesus on the wall. When I asked her who it was, I had to lip-read her saying, "Jesus."

At the same time, a hearing friend in my neighborhood invited me to go with him to church. We colored pictures of Jesus.

My father was a physician and did not go to church often. Sometimes my mother went to church. Another friend invited me to his church. It was different. I got a paper about creation. I took it home and asked my father about it. He told me that God made the world. After that our family started going to the church where one of my dad's patients was the pastor.

When I transitioned to a public high school, I went to a different church that had a Deaf Sunday school class. Many of the students in the class were my CID classmates. But I still did not hear about being born again.

In 1966, at a CID reunion, one friend told me about heaven and hell. He told me about the end times, and he told me if I didn't ask Jesus in my heart and be baptized, I would go to hell. I was very afraid. I knew I was a sinner and if I died I would go to hell. I told my mother that I wanted to be baptized. The pastor baptized me, and I felt peace. I was no longer afraid I would go to hell.

I graduated from high school and went to college. I met a new Deaf friend who lived near the college. He helped me learn sign language. He took me to a church where they used sign language. I learned most of my sign language from them.

A few years later, I went to England for one year and met other Deaf people who used British Sign Language. I went to church with my new friends. This

worship experience was very different. It was very formal. It was almost like going to a funeral.

When I returned to the United States, I married a woman who was Catholic. She was not a strong Catholic, but I thought it better to join the Catholic church for the sake of our children. I took a class and learned all about the Catholic beliefs. Some practices seemed strange and inside I still felt empty.

A friend told me about a new Deaf church. My wife and I visited it. We liked the church and decided to join it. During one Bible study, the pastor asked us to share our story about becoming a Christian. One story hit me. It was a hearing mother of a Deaf boy. She talked about accepting Jesus into her life because she felt His love. She kept talking about *love*. I was confused. I asked her if she felt fear. Wasn't she afraid of hell if she rejected Jesus. She answered she felt His love, not fear. Other people told me the same thing. I had to unlearn what I thought about God. I was like a baby Christian. I no longer felt emptiness inside. I learned a new way to relate to God. I grew stronger spiritually. Later I became a leader in the church.

There have been problems for me. There were conflicts in the church. My wife and I had a troubled marriage and eventually divorced. I resigned from being a leader in my church when we divorced. A Bible verse that has been important to me is Philippians 4:8, "Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected." In all of my searching, God never left me. God had a plan for me.

Many years later, I married a woman I met in England. We found a church home. I continued to grow spiritually by being involved in my church. After searching for God for many years in many different churches, I finally found a loving and forgiving God. He saved me and gave me a purpose for life.

Have you been searching for God? He is always near. He is always waiting for you to respond to His loving invitation. You can accept His free gift of eternal and abundant life. You do not need to search any longer. Follow these simple steps and you will have a new life:

1. Confess your sins. (Romans 3:23)
2. Believe that Jesus died for you. (Romans 10:9-10)
3. Ask Jesus to come into your heart (Romans 3:20)

Now you can praise God for your new life and share your story with other people.

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 14–28

➤➤ **After the last Old Testament book, Malachi, was written around 430 B.C., there was silence for 400 years.**

Perhaps the Jews wondered where God was. There was no prophet and no message from God. Then the 400-year silence was broken. First, God spoke to the priest, Zechariah, about the coming of John the Baptist, the forerunner for the Messiah.

➤➤ **Next, God spoke loudly by sending His Son, Jesus, as the Messiah.**

Matthew, one of Jesus' apostles, wrote to the Jews to explain how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies that it was impossible for anyone else to be the Messiah. This is what Matthew wanted to make clear to his readers. The prophecies overwhelmingly supported Jesus as the Messiah. Also, the lineage (or genealogy) of Jesus proved that Jesus was the last person who possibly could have been the Messiah. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., all the records of lineage (family tree) had been destroyed, too.

➤➤ **Who wrote the Book of Matthew?**

The Book of Matthew was written by one of the apostles, named Matthew, who was a tax collector before Jesus called him. In the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke, Matthew was listed as an apostle by his other name, Levi.

➤➤ **When was the Book of Matthew written?**

Many Bible scholars believe the Gospel of Matthew was written before 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed since Matthew did not mention this event. Many Bible scholars believe it was written approximately 55-60 A.D. The exact date was hard to determine, so Bible scholars do not all agree on the date. We do know it was written during the first century A.D. (before 100 A.D.).

➤➤ **Why was the Book of Matthew written?**

The Book of Matthew was written primarily for a Jewish audience. Matthew wanted the Jews to see that Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews had been looking for. Matthew wanted the Jews to realize that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah.

»» Who was the Book of Matthew written to?

The Book of Matthew was written to the Jews. We know this for several reasons. First, Matthew opened with the genealogy of Jesus back through David to Abraham. God had made covenants with both David and Abraham. This would be important to Jews. Secondly, Matthew referred to a lot of Jewish history and customs. These were not explained to the reader, so this points to a Jewish reader. Thirdly, Matthew quoted from the Old Testament far more than the other Gospel writers.

»» Important ideas.

The main idea of Matthew's Gospel was that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or Deliverer, that all Jews were waiting for. Jesus fulfilled the many Old Testament prophecies made about the coming Messiah. Another important idea was the "kingdom of heaven." None of the other Gospel writers used this term. Jesus was the Messiah, or King, of the Jews, so the "kingdom of heaven" would fit with writing about Jesus as Messiah and King. Jesus said He would return as King "in the clouds."



Session 1

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is the Christ to whom all of Scripture points.

MATTHEW 16:13-28

FIRST THOUGHTS

When a couple is expecting a baby, it is an exciting time for the family. Parents, grandparents, and relatives wait eagerly for the birth of the baby, especially if this baby is the first one in the family. People excitedly wait and count down the months and days until the baby is born. It was the same in the Bible with the coming **Messiah** or Deliverer of the Jewish people. In today's session, Jesus is formally recognized as that "Chosen One" for whom all Israel, and the world, were waiting.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus called His disciples and began His ministry on earth. Jesus had performed many **miracles** and taught His followers about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus taught about the kingdom through His Sermon on the Mount and through many **parables**. Jesus had been with His disciples for more than two and a half years by this point in His ministry. In Matthew 15, Jesus had just fed 4,000 men and their families.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 16:13-28)

1. Misunderstood Identity (Matthew 16:13-14)

VERSE 13

¹³ *When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His followers, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”*

When Jesus talked about the Son of Man, He was talking about Himself. Son of Man is one of the titles in the Bible that refers to Jesus. It comes from Daniel 7:13-14 and emphasizes Jesus being human. Jesus talked like a teacher here. Jesus asked His disciples this question, but He already knew the answer. He was testing His disciples to see how they would answer.

VERSE 14

¹⁴ *They answered, “Some say You are John the Baptist. Others say You are Elijah, and still others say You are Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

The disciples didn't answer with their own opinion. The disciples told Jesus what everyone else said about Him. Some people thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life again. Other people thought Jesus was really Elijah come back to earth. Other people thought Jesus was one of the Old Testament prophets.

Why did Jesus ask his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

What do people today believe about Jesus?

2. True Identity (Matthew 16:15-16)

VERSE 15

¹⁵ *Then Jesus asked them, “And who do you say I am?”*

Jesus wanted the disciples to think for themselves. What other people thought was not good enough for Jesus. The disciples had been with Jesus for more than two years. The disciples knew Jesus well. They saw Jesus heal people. They heard Jesus preach. Jesus wanted them to tell Him who He was.

Was Jesus just a man? Was Jesus a special man, like a prophet? Or was Jesus God Himself come to earth? It was time for the disciples to be honest with Jesus.

VERSE 16

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Peter answered for the group. We are not surprised that Peter answered first. What did Peter say? He said two things about Jesus. First he said, “You are the Christ.” To the Jews, Christ meant the **Messiah**. The Messiah was the promised Leader or Deliverer the Jews were waiting for. They were looking for someone to deliver them from Roman rule. Second, Peter said, “You are the Son of the living God.” Peter meant Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. These were the two most important titles that could be said about Jesus. Peter passed Jesus’ test with an “A”!

This statement Peter made about Jesus was very important to show what Christians believe. Peter’s statement about Jesus is often called “Peter’s confession.” It does not mean that Peter confessed some sin. Peter’s confession means Peter’s belief. Peter declared or said what he believed about Jesus. Peter believed that Jesus is God Himself, in the Person of God the Son. Peter also believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, come to free the Jewish people.

What was “Peter’s confession”?

How would you describe Jesus to your friends?

3. New Identity (Matthew 16:17-20)

VERSE 17

¹⁷ *Jesus answered, “You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because no person taught you that. My Father in heaven showed you who I am.”*

Simon, son of Jonah, was another name for Peter. Peter was the name Jesus had given Simon when they first met. Jesus told Peter that God showed this truth to Peter. God showed Peter who Jesus really was.

VERSE 18

¹⁸ *“So I tell you, you are Peter. On this rock I will build my church, and the power of death will not be able to defeat it.”*

This is the first time the word *church* appears in the New Testament. Jesus said the church is HIS church. People think the rock here is Peter, but that is not true. The rock refers to Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That confession, or belief, is the basis of the church.

Jesus said the power of death will not be able to defeat the church. Even if Christians are killed, the church will still survive. The church will never die. From time to time, people try to kill Christians. Whenever Christians have been persecuted and killed, the church survived and grew.

VERSE 19

¹⁹ *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; the things you don’t allow on earth will be the things that God does not allow, and the things you allow on earth will be the things that God allows.”*

What Jesus told Peter here, He also told all Christians. What does “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” mean? Keys allow access to something. If you have the key, you can enter the house or drive the car. We Christians have access to heaven. We can share the key with other people so they can also enter heaven.

VERSE 20

²⁰ *Then Jesus warned His followers not to tell anyone He was the Christ.*

Jesus was talking only to His disciples. He was sharing His heart with them. He didn’t want His disciples to tell other people yet.

What is the rock that Jesus talked about in verse 18?

Why do you think it is important to have the right foundation for the church?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Life Now and Life Later*

One of the key doctrines of Christianity is the temporary nature of this life on earth. Our lives here on earth are for a short time compared to eternity. We have to give up our lives here on earth and live only for Jesus. We will suffer here on earth for Jesus. We will have a reward in heaven and live there eternally.

4. Cross Identity (Matthew 16:21-28)

VERSE 21

²¹ From that time on Jesus began telling His followers that He must go to Jerusalem, where the Jewish elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of the law would make Him suffer many things. He told them He must be killed and then be raised from the dead on the third day.

When Jesus talked to His disciples before, He did not tell them He would suffer and die. From this time on, Jesus started telling His disciples clearly that He would suffer and die and be raised from the dead. This moment was a turning point in Jesus' conversations with His disciples. Jesus knew He would die soon. Jesus knew He had to prepare His disciples for what they would face.

VERSE 22

²² Peter took Jesus aside and told Him not to talk like that. He said, "God save You from those things, Lord! Those things will never happen to You!"

Peter understood immediately what Jesus was saying. Peter did not like what Jesus said. Jesus said He would suffer and die. Peter was upset. Peter did not want these things to happen to Jesus.

VERSE 23

²³ Then Jesus said to Peter, "Go away from Me, Satan! You are not helping Me! You don't care about the things of God, but only about the things people think are important."

Jesus had to rebuke Peter for what he said. Jesus knew that it was really Satan giving Peter those thoughts. Jesus knew He had to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus did not want anyone to stand in His way. Jesus was determined that He would follow God's plan for Him, even though God's plan meant suffering and death.

VERSE 24

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his followers, "If people want to follow Me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow Me."

Jesus told His disciples that it would not be easy to follow Him. They would have to give up what they wanted to do. They would have to pay a price to follow Jesus. What was that price? They would have to give up their plans and desires for their own lives, and follow Jesus and His plans for their lives.

VERSE 25

²⁵ "Those who want to save their lives will give up true life, and those who give up their lives for Me will have true life."

What does "save their lives" mean? That meant that people want to live for themselves. They want to have fun and not follow God. What is the result? They will not have God's life. They will not go to heaven when they die.

What does give up their lives mean? That means that people do not live for themselves. They follow Jesus completely. They let Jesus make the decisions about their lives. These are the people who will really live. They will go to heaven when they die.

Jesus compared two different groups of people: people who live for themselves and people who live for God.

VERSE 26

²⁶ "It is worthless to have the whole world if they lose their souls. They could never pay enough to buy back their souls."

If people live for whatever they want in this world—money, pleasure, sports, or for other people—then they will lose their souls. "Losing their souls" means they will go to hell when they die.

VERSE 27

²⁷ "The Son of Man will come again with His Father's glory and with His angels. At that time, He will reward them for what they have done."

The Son of Man is Jesus. Jesus will come back as the ruler that the Jews were looking for. When Jesus comes back to earth, Jesus will reward the people who lived for Jesus.

VERSE 28

²⁸ “I tell you the truth, some people standing here will see the Son of Man coming with His kingdom before they die.”

Some people thought that Jesus was just a man, not God. Jesus said that some people there would soon see Him with His real power.

What are some examples of living for yourself?

What are some examples of living for Jesus?

Write the struggles you have following Jesus and how you overcome them.

BIBLE SKILL: *Read About Others*

Following Jesus means giving up or losing our lives for God. That can mean we may die for Christ. That can also mean that daily we die to things we want to do. We serve God and not ourselves. Write down who gave up their lives for God in the verses below.

Acts 7:54-60 _____

Acts 12:1-2 _____

Romans 16:3-4 _____

Romans 16:12 _____

Colossians 4:12 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Though they did not fully understand, Jesus' disciples realized Jesus was the **Messiah** and also God. They did not expect Jesus would have to die on the cross. He was willing to give up His life to follow God's plan.

Have we thought seriously about who Jesus is? Jesus told the disciples that following Him requires a price. He said, "If people want to follow Me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). His disciples couldn't live for themselves. If they gave up their lives to follow Jesus, they would live forever in heaven. They would be rewarded later. If people follow the world, they will lose their souls.

How can you help others understand who Jesus is?

How would you explain who Jesus is based on today's story?

Are you following Jesus in all areas of your life?

What needs to change in your life?

MEMORY VERSE

Then Jesus said to his followers, "If people want to follow Me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow Me."

—Matthew 16:24



Session 2

Is JESUS FULLY GOD?

Jesus is fully God. When Jesus came to earth, He hid His heavenly glory, but at times He let that glory peek through.

MATTHEW 17:1-13

FIRST THOUGHTS

Imagine making a new friend. You get to know that friend better. You do a lot of things with that friend. You find out what that friend likes or doesn't like. All of a sudden two people come to town. You find out that your friend is a very famous person and you didn't know it! Your friend had been very humble and didn't tell you. How would you feel? Would your relationship to that friend change? Jesus' three closest disciples went through a similar experience in today's session.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In last week's session, Peter confessed Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. A few minutes later Jesus told His disciples about His coming death, and then Peter told Jesus that would not happen to Him. Jesus then

told His followers that those who follow Him must give up their lives for Him. Jesus said that some standing there would see Him coming in His kingdom before they die. In today's session, some of the disciples saw Jesus in His glory.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 17:1-13)

1. Presence (Matthew 17:1-6)

VERSE 1.

¹*Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, up on a high mountain by themselves.*

Whom did Jesus take with Him? These three disciples—Peter, James, and John—were Jesus' **inner circle**. Because of this, they had a special relationship with Jesus.

When you were a student at the Deaf School, you probably had one or two very close friends. When you had good news or problems, you knew you could trust your very close friends. You would tell them things that you would not share with all your classmates. Jesus often took Peter, James, and John with Him. Jesus trusted these three disciples. He knew they would be His witnesses. These three disciples had an amazing experience.

VERSE 2.

²*While they watched, Jesus' appearance was changed; His face became bright like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.*

The word *changed* is the same word used when a caterpillar changes to a butterfly. Wow, that means that Jesus went through an incredible **transformation**, or change! Jesus changed to His **glorified** body. That means that Jesus changed to His body like He would be in heaven. *Glorified* means "to show glory, or brightness."

On earth Jesus hid His bright glory from people. In the Old Testament, Moses talked with God on Mount Sinai. After talking with God, Moses took on some of the brightness of God. The Israelites couldn't stand to look at Moses when he was bright like this. In the same way, Jesus had to hide His glory so people wouldn't run from Him.

BIBLE SKILL: *Read Other Verses About The Glory of God*

Most of the time God did not let people see His actual glory. A few times people saw God's glory. The verses below tell when God showed His glory. Write down who saw God's glory and what the occasion was.

Exodus 33:17-23 _____

Deuteronomy 5:22-25 _____

2 Chronicles 5:1-14 _____

Isaiah 6:1-5 _____

Acts 9:3-9 _____

VERSE 3.

³*Then Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus.*

Why did Jesus talk with Moses and Elijah? Moses represented the Law in the Old Testament. Elijah represented the Prophets of the Old Testament. Luke tells us that they were discussing Jesus' death on the cross (Luke 9:31).

This story in which Moses and Elijah met with Jesus is a great example of the fact that when Christians die, we are still alive. Some people believe they will stop existing (being alive), but this is not true. We will all live eternally, either in heaven or in hell.

VERSE 4.

⁴*Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If You want, I will put up three tents here—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

Peter was famous for always talking and wanting to do something. Here, at this incredible event, Peter spoke up and wanted to build tents for them.

VERSE 5.

⁵*While Peter was talking, a bright cloud covered them. A voice came from the cloud*

and said, “This is my Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with Him. Listen to Him!”

Peter was still talking when God spoke. God interrupted Peter. God said Jesus is special. Jesus is God’s Son. Now God told Peter to listen to Jesus! We often try to make God’s plans for Him. God wants us to be quiet and spend time listening to Jesus. People prefer to be busy, like Peter wanted to build tents. God wants us to stop being busy and, instead, focus on Him. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and listen to what He has to say to us. If we are too busy, we’ll never hear Him speaking to us. Of course, Jesus doesn’t speak to people aloud, but Jesus speaks to us in the quiet place of our hearts. He speaks to us through the Bible. We can still listen to Jesus in our hearts even if we are Deaf. Our hearts must be prepared for Jesus to talk to us.

A bright cloud would have special meaning for the Jewish people. The disciples knew clearly the voice coming from the cloud belonged to God. Often God appeared to His people in the Old Testament in a cloud. God showed up in a cloud to Moses on Mount Sinai. A cloud filling the Tabernacle represented God’s glory. A cloud led the Israelites while in the desert. The cloud represented God’s presence and glory.

VERSE 6.

⁶When His followers heard the voice, they were so frightened they fell to the ground.

When God speaks, people are afraid. The Israelites at Mount Sinai were afraid when God spoke to them. These three disciples were so afraid that they fell down. Have you ever been so afraid that you fell down? That was the type of fear that these disciples had. God the Father spoke with such authority.

Who else saw a bright light, heard a voice speaking from Heaven, and fell down? This was a similar experience to that of Saul on the road to Damascus when he met Jesus. Saul was afraid, just like Peter, James, and John.

Why do you think Peter wanted to put up tents?

What emotions do you see expressed in this passage?

When do you feel those same emotions today?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus is God*

Jesus hid His glory as God while He was on earth. Jesus lived among people as a man. In this story, Jesus let His glory as God shine through. He did not hide His glory. He allowed His three disciples to see. Jesus wanted His disciples to see that He is fully God. Jesus is also fully man. Transfiguration is the word used when Jesus lets the glory of His Godhead shine through.

2. Purpose (Matthew 17:7-9)

VERSE 7.

⁷*But Jesus went to them and touched them and said, “Stand up. Don’t be afraid.”*

These disciples were scared to death and were on the ground. What did Jesus do? First, He touched them. They probably had their eyes closed because of the bright light. That’s like getting Deaf people’s attention when their eyes are closed.

Second, He told them, “Stand up. Don’t be afraid.” These three words, “don’t be afraid,” are so special. When people see the bright light, they become afraid. God’s messenger often used the words “Don’t be afraid” (Matthew 1:20; Matthew 28:5; Mark 16:6; Luke 1:13; and Luke 1:30). If you read through the Gospels, you will see many times Jesus encouraged people with these words, “Don’t be afraid.” Jesus is so kind to people and so thoughtful. We are so blessed to have Jesus as our **mediator** between God and people.

VERSE 8.

⁸*When they looked up, they saw Jesus was now alone.*

These disciples were now alone with Jesus. The disciples were amazed with Moses and Elijah. The disciples were terrified and fell face down when God the Father spoke. Now when they opened their eyes, they saw only Jesus. That's what we need, too. We should be focused only on Jesus and see Him alone. We are often distracted by many things and look at many things. We look at sports, we look at people, we look at fancy cars, and we look at our children. We forget to look at Jesus. We should desire to see Jesus only. It doesn't mean we don't see people and every day things. This means that we should worship only Jesus. Jesus should be first in our lives.

VERSE 9.

⁹ *As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.*

Now was not the time for the disciples to share with others what they had seen. They were to be quiet and keep this a secret. This truth about Jesus' **transfiguration** would be too much for people to understand. After Jesus died and was resurrected, it would be OK for the disciples to share about Jesus' glory. There is a right time for sharing deeper truths. Peter and John both wrote later about seeing Jesus in His glory. People would believe their story because they saw the transfiguration with their own eyes.

Why were the disciples afraid?

What do you do when you are afraid?

3. Perspective (Matthew 17:10-13)

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *Then His followers asked Him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"*

The disciples now expressed their confusion about Elijah. The disciples just saw Elijah. The disciples knew that Elijah must come first before God's kingdom would be established on earth. The disciples knew the Old Testament Scriptures.

VERSES 11-12.

¹¹ *Jesus answered, “They are right to say that Elijah is coming and that he will make everything the way it should be.*

¹² *“But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him. They did to him whatever they wanted to do. It will be the same with the Son of Man; those same people will make the Son of Man suffer.”*

Jesus told His disciples they were right. Elijah has to come first before the **Messiah** establishes His kingdom.

Jesus said that Elijah had already come. Elijah came in a spiritual way in John the Baptist. John the Baptist **fulfilled** the Old Testament prophecies as the **forerunner** (preparer) of the coming of the Messiah.

“They did to him whatever they wanted to do” meant that they killed Elijah (John the Baptist). Jesus referred to His coming death again. Jesus said that they would do the same to Him. Jesus would first suffer, then He would die. Jesus was trying to prepare His disciples for what would soon happen.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *Then the followers understood that Jesus was talking about John the Baptist.*

Finally the disciples understood what Jesus was trying to explain to them. They understood that John the Baptist was Elijah.

Why was it important for the disciples to understand Jesus’ crucifixion?

How did Jesus prepare His disciples for His crucifixion and death?

IN MY CONTEXT

This story showed that Jesus is fully God and shares the same glory as God the Father. The disciples fell down when God the Father spoke to them. What should our attitude be towards Jesus, God the Son? We should fear Him and respect Him. Jesus came to die for our sins, and live again so we can be **reconciled** to the Father.

Is it difficult for you to listen to Jesus? Why or why not?

How can we prepare our hearts to listen to Jesus every day?

It was Jesus' plan for the disciples to witness the **transfiguration**. They had to see this to be able to tell others. People believed them because they had seen and experienced God's glory first hand.

How have you witnessed God's glory?

Why is it important to share your experience with others?

Discuss these answers with your group.

MEMORY VERSE

While Peter was talking, a bright cloud covered them. A voice came from the cloud and said, "This is my Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with him. Listen to him!"

—Matthew 17:5



Session 3

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Jesus offers the gift of eternal life to those willing to follow Him.

MATTHEW 19:16-26

FIRST THOUGHTS

When a man and a woman get married, it is a big commitment. They have to give up being single. They make a promise not to have a relationship with another man or woman. They give up everyone else in the world to be committed to one person for the rest of his or her life. Following Jesus is like a marriage commitment. We cannot follow Jesus and follow other things at the same time. We can follow only Jesus. Our hearts are wholly committed to Jesus. Then Jesus will give us eternal life.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Matthew 18 Jesus continued to teach His disciples about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus shared with His disciples that the greatest in the kingdom of heaven must be as little children. Jesus told the **parable** of the lost sheep, in which God placed great value on one lost sheep. Jesus also told the parable of the king who had a servant with a huge debt. The king forgave the debt, but then the servant went and demanded payment from someone who owed him

a very small debt. The king was very angry with that servant and punished him. Jesus said God will forgive us only if we forgive others.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 19:16-26)

1. Expectation Defined (Matthew 19:16-20)

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ *A man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to have life forever?"*

The man here was a person of influence among the people, possibly a religious leader. He came to Jesus respectfully. He called Jesus "teacher." This was a sign of respect.

The man wanted to know how to have eternal life. The man asked Jesus what to do to get eternal life. He asked a good question. Many people today are not interested in eternal life. They want to have a good time here on earth. They don't think about life after death. This man was thinking deep questions.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *Jesus answered, "Why do you ask me about what is good? Only God is good. But if you want to have life forever, obey the commands."*

Jesus answered the man's question with a question. He wanted the man to understand what *good* meant. Jesus tried to help the man understand that he was a sinner. Also, Jesus said that only God is good. Jesus hoped the man would understand Jesus Himself is good; therefore, Jesus is God.

Jesus said the key to eternal life is to obey the commandments. Jesus knows that this is impossible. The man could not keep all of the commandments. This is sin when we fail to obey all the commandments. Jesus wanted this man to realize he was a sinner. The man could not earn eternal life by keeping all the commandments. This was impossible.

VERSES 18-19.

¹⁸ *The man asked, "Which commands?" Jesus answered, "You must not murder anyone; you must not be guilty of adultery; you must not steal; you must not tell lies about your neighbor;*

¹⁹ *honor your father and mother; and love your neighbor as you love yourself."*

The man didn't realize following all the commands was impossible. The man simply asked Jesus which commandments He was talking about. Jesus started with the Ten Commandments dealing with our relationship with other people.

Jesus listed the five commandments dealing with our relationships with people. Then Jesus gave the summary of what these commandments are about. We are supposed to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. That should make anyone realize his or her sin! What does "loving my neighbor as myself" mean? This means if I want to shovel the snow off my driveway so I don't fall down and get hurt, I should want the same thing for my neighbor. If my neighbors are elderly and unable to shovel their snow off their driveway, then I should love them enough to shovel their snow for them or find a way to get it done. If Deaf people in our community are going hungry, then we should help provide food for them. If someone has been in the hospital, then we should go check on him and help him. This may mean we will need to give up something we want to do.

VERSE 20.

²⁰ *The young man said, "I have obeyed all these things. What else do I need to do?"*

Although this man thought he was doing a good job obeying the commandments, his question "What else do I need to do?" shows that he still had doubts.

This young man still didn't see his need or his sin. The man thought he was doing a good job of obeying the commandments. He still didn't understand what Jesus tried to show him. This man was still blind spiritually.

The young man said that he obeyed all the laws. What caused him to ask Jesus, "What else do I need to do?"

2. Impossible to Keep Expectation (Matthew 19:21-22)

VERSE 21.

²¹ *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, then go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor. If you do this, you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."*

Jesus knew the heart of this man. Jesus knew all about this man. Jesus knew which commandments the man did not obey. Jesus waited and saved this commandment for last. Jesus didn't say the commandment, but the commandment was "You must not have any other gods except me" (Exodus 20:3). This commandment deals with the man's relationship with God. Jesus knew this man's sin was considering his wealth more important than God. The man was rich. His wealth had become his idol. He trusted his money. He did not trust God to provide for all his needs.

The word *perfect* means complete or whole. The man knew he was missing something in his life. He didn't feel complete. Jesus told him if he sold all his possessions and gave the money to the poor, then he would feel complete. The man would receive eternal life if he trusted Jesus. Jesus gave the man a choice—keep his riches or follow Jesus. The young man couldn't have both. The man could keep his riches and lose Jesus; or he could lose his riches and gain Jesus.

Does Jesus mean for all of us to sell all our possessions and give the money to poor people or charity? No. Jesus knew that this man's possessions were idols for him. His possessions were keeping him from a right relationship with God. This young man had to give up his idols before he could follow Jesus and have eternal life. There are many idols today. People may have idols of sports, their family or children, money, fame, clothes, or big houses. We must put God first in everything in our lives.

VERSE 22.

²² *But when the young man heard this, he left sorrowfully, because he was rich.*

Now the man understood what Jesus was saying. The young man realized he wasn't willing to give up his wealth to follow Jesus. His wealth stood in the way between him and God. The young man wasn't willing to sell everything and follow Jesus. He went away sad.

How would you respond if Jesus told you to sell everything you have?

What was the young man supposed to do after he gave his money to the poor?

Why was the young man sad after talking with Jesus?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read Other Verses*

People often have the idea that becoming a Christian is just making a decision. Many people may forget that being a Christian costs something. Here are verses where Jesus tells what it costs to follow Him.

Matthew 10:37 _____

Matthew 16:24-26 _____

Mark 8:34-35 _____

Luke 9:23 _____

Luke 14:33 _____

3. Provision for Expectation Success (Matthew 19:23-26)

VERSE 23.

²³ *Then Jesus said to his followers, "I tell you the truth, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Jesus used this **encounter** with the young man to teach His disciples a lesson. Jesus told them it is very hard for rich people to enter heaven. Why was this true? Rich people like to hold onto their wealth. They love their wealth more than they love God. People will spend money to buy coffee, but they won't put money in the offering plate. That's a sad example. Jesus' disciples just saw a sad example with the rich young man. The rich young man valued his wealth more than his relationship with God. This doesn't mean that Christians can't be rich. Christians must be careful not to love their money more than they love God.

VERSE 24.

²⁴ *Yes, I tell you that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”*

The camel was the biggest animal in Israel. A needle was an everyday item found in every Jewish home. Jesus wanted the disciples to imagine a camel going through the eye of a sewing needle. Possible? No! People knew that it was impossible for a big camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle. So, would it be easy for a rich person to enter heaven?

VERSE 25.

²⁵ *When Jesus’ followers heard this, they were very surprised and asked, “Then who can be saved?”*

The disciples were very surprised. Why? Jews had the idea that God showed His blessings on people by providing them with material blessings, such as wealth. They believed a rich person was someone God blessed. This was a shocking truth for Jesus to teach them. The disciples thought that wealth was a good thing. They didn’t realize that wealth wasn’t always good. It was not always a sign of God’s blessing. Just because a person had a lot of money didn’t mean they would go to heaven or that God was smiling on them.

This was a new lesson for the disciples. But they needed to understand that being rich was not the sin that made it difficult for this young man. The fact that this young rich man loved his money more than God was his sin. Paul warned Timothy about loving money more than God (1 Timothy 6:10).

VERSE 26.

²⁶ *Jesus looked at them and said, “For people this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”*

Jesus wanted His disciples to realize that salvation is only through God. It seems impossible for a person to change his or her heart and follow God, but God can do the impossible in people’s hearts. God can cause people to change and follow Jesus and become like Jesus. That is truly a **miracle**.

How do Jesus’ words serve as a warning to us today?

How do His words give us hope?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Nature of Salvation*

The rich young man in this story thought he could earn eternal life by doing something. Many people believe the same as this young man. We cannot earn salvation, though. Salvation is a free gift. We receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We can't earn this salvation through good works or by obedience to the Ten Commandments. Our faith must be in Christ's work on the cross as our substitute. His righteousness became our righteousness.

Write your thoughts or questions to discuss with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

Put yourself in this rich young man's place. Can you imagine going to Jesus and asking Him how to live forever? Now if Jesus told you the same thing He told this rich young man, how would you feel? Would you gladly obey Jesus and sell everything you own and give it to poor people, then go follow Jesus? Basically Jesus told this young man he couldn't continue worshiping wealth and go to heaven. How about us as Americans? We are rich compared to many Deaf people in other countries. Is our wealth keeping us from truly knowing God? There is nothing wrong with wealth as long as we do not love our wealth more than God.

What are some examples of idols that you see in America today?

What do you need to change in your life now so that God is always first?

How can you use the passage studied today to help a friend who needs Jesus?

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus looked at them and said, "For people this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

—Matthew 19:26



Session 4

MORE THAN A PROPHET?

Jesus **fulfilled** the prophecies associated with Israel's long-awaited King.

MATTHEW 21:1-11

FIRST THOUGHTS

Can you imagine if you went to a big Deaf convention and everyone was talking about a new Deaf person? You didn't know who that person was, but everyone was excited about that person. How would you feel? What kind of questions would you ask about that person? How would you decide if you accepted that person or not? This is what happened to Jesus in this session when He went into Jerusalem.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

It was almost time for Passover celebration, which started more than a thousand years earlier when Moses was ready to lead the Jewish slaves out of Egypt. Pharaoh wouldn't let the Jews leave Egypt. God used ten plagues to change Pharaoh's heart. The tenth, and last, plague was the killing of the firstborn sons. The Jews had to kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts so their firstborn sons would not die. They ate unleavened bread

and were packed, ready to leave Egypt forever. Every year after that night, the Jews celebrated the feast of Passover to remember how God delivered them out of Egypt.

At this Passover feast, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims. Jesus and His disciples were also traveling to Jerusalem. But Jesus' purpose was different than the other pilgrims' purposes for going to Jerusalem. Jesus knew what would happen to Him in Jerusalem. He knew He would be crucified and resurrected. Before He and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem, He spoke the words of Matthew 20:17-19. Jesus was preparing His disciples for what would happen in Jerusalem. Knowing that He would die did not keep Jesus away from Jerusalem. He was determined to fulfill His purpose. Jesus entered Jerusalem as a King. This was the highest point in Jesus' ministry.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 21:1-11)

1. The King's Choice (Matthew 21:1-5)

VERSES 1-2.

¹*As Jesus and His followers were coming closer to Jerusalem, they stopped at Bethphage at the hill called the Mount of Olives. From there Jesus sent two of His followers*

²*and said to them, "Go to the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will quickly find a donkey tied there with its colt. Untie them and bring them to me."*

Jesus was headed to Jerusalem. Jesus would not be turned aside. He was now as a man with His eyes on the finish line. Jesus knew that He would die soon. This would be the last time Jesus would enter Jerusalem. It was now time to publicly let the people know He was their King. It was also time to **fulfill** the Old Testament prophecies.

Why did Jesus tell them to get a donkey? He was **fulfilling** the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9, "Your king is coming to you. He does what is right, and He saves. He is gentle and riding on a donkey, on the colt of a donkey." Jesus knew exactly where the donkey and its colt were. Jesus told His disciples the details they needed for finding this donkey and its colt. If Jesus asks us to do something for Him, He will let us know exactly what to do.

VERSE 3.

³*"If anyone asks you why you are taking the donkeys, say that the Master needs them, and he will send them at once."*

Jesus knew the owner would be willing to give the donkey and its colt. It seems the owner was a disciple of Jesus. That's why the owner would immediately let Jesus borrow the animals.

Jesus was taking care of His disciples. Someone might think they were stealing the donkey and the colt, so Jesus told them what to say. Jesus was prepared for everything, and Jesus watched out for His disciples. Nothing caught Jesus by surprise.

VERSES 4-5.

⁴*This was to bring about what the prophet had said:*

⁵*"Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Your king is coming to you. He is gentle and riding on a donkey, on the colt of a donkey.'"*

In his gospel, Matthew often quotes Old Testament prophecies. He is like a lawyer. He provides facts about Jesus' activities and backs them up with Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. He provides clear evidence that Jesus is the Christ. In these verses, Matthew quotes from Zechariah 9:9. Jesus knew the Old Testament prophecies about Himself. Jesus was obedient to what He was supposed to do. The prophets told specific things about the **Messiah**, or the promised Savior of the Jews, who would come. See the Bible Skill on page 35 for more prophecies about the Messiah.

How was the King of the Jews going to show Himself for the first time? Was He going to be like a warrior-king sitting on a mighty horse? No, Jesus showed Himself as a gentle and humble Savior by riding on a donkey. Jesus didn't come to control the Jews like an earthly king. Jesus came as a gentle, lowly Savior to redeem His people.

Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey?

Why is it important that Jesus fulfill the prophecies about the Messiah?

BIBLE SKILL: Old Testament Prophecies

Jesus specifically did things to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about Himself. We will look at a few prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Look at the verses below and write what they prophesy about Jesus, as the Messiah.

Genesis 49:10 _____

Psalms 16:10 _____

Isaiah 7:14 _____

Isaiah 53:5-8 _____

Hosea 11:1 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

2. The King's Celebration (Matthew 21:6-9)

VERSE 6.

⁶*The followers went and did what Jesus told them to do.*

The disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them. They did not wait or delay. They did not have a long discussion about what they should do, or if they should obey Jesus or not. This was a strange command that Jesus gave them, to go grab a donkey and her colt. What in the world was Jesus thinking? No, the disciples didn't question Jesus. They immediately obeyed without discussion.

When Jesus tells us to do something, we should obey without delay. We shouldn't ask Jesus questions. We shouldn't think through what He said. We don't need to know all the details. We make Jesus happy when we obey. When children obey their parents quickly without arguing, the parents are happy. In the same way, we should simply obey without waiting. We should always be ready to do what Jesus tells us to do.

VERSE 7.

⁷*They brought the donkey and the colt to Jesus and laid their coats on them, and Jesus sat on them.*

The disciples used their coats so Jesus would have something to sit on. Mark, in his Gospel, said that no one had ridden on the colt before. The Jews knew that a king riding a donkey was a sign of peace. A king riding a horse is a sign of war. Jesus was coming in peace here, not to make war against the Romans.

VERSE 8.

⁸*Many people spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*

A very great crowd of people spread their coats on the road. Other people cut down branches from the trees, and put them down on the road. These trees were palm trees, so these were palm branches. That is why the Sunday before Easter is called Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday is a remembrance of this event when Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem and the people spread palm branches on the road before Jesus.

They used the palm branches to honor Jesus as a king. They were drawing attention to someone important coming down the road. They wanted Jesus to have all the attention.

VERSE 9.

⁹*The people were walking ahead of Jesus and behind him, shouting, "Praise to the Son of David! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise to God in heaven!"*

The people surrounded Jesus and walked along with Him. The people praised Jesus. Perhaps they remembered the story about David's son, Solomon, becoming king. David instructed Solomon to ride on his donkey as a sign that he was the new king (1 Kings 1:32-40).

The people recognized that Jesus was the Son of David. They quoted from Psalm 118:26, "God blesses the one who comes in the name of the Lord." This psalm was a **messianic** psalm. A messianic psalm is a psalm that tells about the coming **Messiah**, a ruler who will save the Jewish people. The people were saying that Jesus was their Messiah, the Chosen Deliverer sent from God.

What kinds of things can we do to honor Jesus?

How can we show other people that Jesus is the Messiah?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus the Messiah*

The Jewish people looked for a coming Messiah. Messiah means “Anointed One.” The coming Messiah would be the Deliverer of Israel, their Savior and King. Christ means Messiah in Greek, so Jesus the Christ means Jesus the Messiah. God told the prophets about the Messiah hundreds of years before Jesus was born. The prophets wrote the information in their books. The Jews knew about the prophecies. They could see that Jesus fulfilled what the prophets wrote about the Messiah. Jesus Christ fulfilled all the prophecies. In fact, Jesus is the only One who could fulfill these prophecies. However, some of the Jews did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They wanted a king to rule over them like King David did. Jesus was different. Jesus came to save us from our sins.

3. The People’s Confusion (Matthew 21:10-11)

VERSE 10.

¹⁰*When Jesus entered Jerusalem, all the city was filled with excitement. The people asked, “Who is this man?”*

Many people in Jerusalem saw the excitement of the crowd. Many who didn’t know Jesus were curious. They asked, “Who is this man?” This was a perfect opportunity for people to learn about who Jesus was. Jesus was the Messiah, who would save His people. The people were excited to think that Jesus could save them from Roman rule. They were expecting a military leader.

VERSE 11

¹¹*The crowd said, “This man is Jesus, the prophet from the town of Nazareth in Galilee.”*

Notice how the people quickly changed. At first they praised God in heaven, now they said that Jesus was a prophet from Nazareth. First, the people sang that Jesus came in God’s Name, as the Messiah. Now the people said Jesus was just a man, a prophet of God. What happened? They started listening to the people in Jerusalem who asked, “Who is this man?” Often people start

to question something, then doubt enters their minds. The people saw Jesus' **triumphal** entry into Jerusalem and sang with joy. Next they said Jesus was only a prophet.

Nazareth, being Jesus' hometown was important for several reasons. In the Gospel of Matthew, we see that being from Nazareth was fulfillment of prophecies (Matthew 2:23). However, you may remember at the beginning of Jesus' ministry there were other mentions of His being from Nazareth. In John 2:44-46, we read how Nathaniel had low expectations of a prophet from Nazareth, and until he met Jesus in person, he had doubts. But after Jesus told him something amazing, he became one of His disciples.

We know the people were wrong. Jesus was not only a prophet. Jesus was God Himself come to earth. Philippians 2:6-7 says, "Christ Himself was like God in everything. But He did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. But He gave up His place with God and made Himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant."

Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Jesus had come to save His people. The crowd will always be wrong. If we listen to the crowd, we will always get in trouble. The crowd always changes opinions. We have to stand apart from the crowd and proclaim God's Truth.

How did the people's attitude about Jesus change in this passage?

How do your people today express misunderstandings about who Jesus is?

Write your thoughts or questions to discuss with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how these verses apply to your life today. What would a crowd say about Jesus today? What would you do? Would you join the crowd and say that Jesus was just a good man, like a prophet? Or would you be willing to stand apart from the crowd and say that Jesus is God come to earth as a human? It is easy to follow the crowd or just be quiet about our belief. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the Good News (gospel)” (Romans 1:16). Pray that God will give you boldness through the Holy Spirit to stand strong and tell the Good News about Jesus Christ.

What task has Jesus given to you?

What has He provided to you so you can complete that task?

What are you doing to complete that task?

How are you honoring Jesus?

What can you do to show others that you worship Jesus?

Pray that God will give you an opportunity to share Jesus with others.

MEMORY VERSE

*The people were walking ahead of Jesus and behind him, shouting,
“Praise to the Son of David! God bless the One who comes in the name
of the Lord! Praise to God in heaven!”*

—Matthew 21:9



Session 5

IF I REJECT JESUS?

Jesus is central in God's plan of redemption.

MATTHEW 21:33-45

FIRST THOUGHTS

After Jesus rode **triumphantly** into Jerusalem, He went to the Temple and threw out all the people buying and selling things. He healed people who came into the temple. The Jewish leaders then challenged Jesus' authority. This would be Jesus' last discussion with the religious leaders before His death. Jesus replied to their challenge with three stories. The first story dealt with two sons. One promised to obey his father but then did not. The other son said he would not do what his father asked, but then did obey. Our session begins with the second story Jesus told the religious leaders.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Jews were familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews knew the passage in Isaiah 5:1-7. This passage was known as the "Song of the Vineyard." The story is about someone who built a vineyard with a wall, winepress, and watchtower. The vineyard is Israel, and God is the owner. In

Isaiah, God speaks about the vineyard, or Israel, producing only bad fruit and no good fruit. Jesus' **parable** of the vineyard in this session is a follow-up story to this passage in Isaiah.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 21:33-45)

1. The Son Sent (Matthew 21:33-37)

VERSE 33.

³³ *"Listen to this story: There was a man who owned a vineyard. He put a wall around it and dug a hole for a winepress and built a tower. Then he leased the land to some farmers and left for a trip.*

As in Isaiah, the vineyard here refers to the nation of Israel. The owner is God. The farmers are the Jewish leaders. It was the leaders' responsibility to guide the people in the right way, so that the people would bear spiritual fruit for God.

Notice the owner carefully prepared the vineyard before his trip. He made sure it was protected with a wall and tower. He built a winepress because he expected the vineyard to produce good fruit. In this parable, we can see the vineyard was very important to the owner.

VERSE 34.

³⁴ *"When it was time for the grapes to be picked, he sent his servants to the farmers to get his share of the grapes.*

Who were the servants that the owner sent to gather His crop? The servants represented the prophets that God sent to the Jews.

VERSE 35.

³⁵ *"But the farmers grabbed the servants, beat one, killed another, and then killed a third servant with stones.*

In this story, the farmers mistreated the owner's servants. They beat them up and killed them. In the same way, the Jews treated God's prophets in a bad way and rebelled against their message from God. In the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah, the vineyard did not produce good fruit. In this story, the fruit was good, but the farmers were not. Jesus blamed the Jewish leaders for their wrong actions.

VERSE 36.

³⁶ *“So the man sent some other servants to the farmers, even more than he sent the first time. But the farmers did the same thing to the servants that they had done before.*

What did the owner do? He sent more servants. What did the farmers do? They still beat and killed the servants. They did not change their ways. One example was the arrest and death of John the Baptist. The farmers were like tenants who refuse to pay their rent. A landlord today will not accept a tenant who doesn't pay the rent. God gave the Jews plenty of chances to change their ways and obey God.

VERSE 37.

³⁷ *“So the man decided to send his son to the farmers. He said, ‘They will respect my son.’*

The owner sent his son to the vineyard. Even so, God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to convince people to repent. God is very patient with people and wants people to follow Him. The son of the owner should have been respected by the farmers. In the same way, Jesus, God's Son, should have the respect of everyone around Him.

What do these verses teach us about God's patience?

What are some ways God has demonstrated His patience toward you?

BIBLE SKILL: *Vineyard Stories*

The Old Testament has a number of passages that talk about a vineyard. Look at these passages below and see what they say about a vineyard. Last, look at Jesus' other story about a vine. Think again about the story in today's session.

Psalm 80:6-16 _____

Isaiah 5:1-7 _____

John 15:1-17 _____

2. The Son Rejected (Matthew 21:38-39)

VERSE 38.

³⁸ *"But when the farmers saw the son, they said to each other, 'This son will inherit the vineyard. If we kill him, it will be ours!'"*

This was a **prediction** of Jesus' death. This story is like a movie with two **parallel** plots. In this story, the farmers decide they want to kill the son and get the vineyard for themselves. In Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders planned to kill Jesus to save their position.

It seems impossible to think farmers could inherit the owner's vineyard. However, when a man had no son to inherit his possessions, a servant would inherit what his master owned when he died (Genesis 15:2).

VERSE 39.

³⁹ *"Then the farmers grabbed the son, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him."*

The farmers went through with their evil plan and killed the son. Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders would plot against Him and kill Him soon. This was no surprise to Jesus. His coming death was part of God's plan for our salvation. God had planned this long ago. The Jewish leaders thought they were in control, but they were merely assuming their role in God's plan.

Why were the religious leaders planning Jesus' death?

How did Jesus know that the religious leaders planned to kill him?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

By his free choice, man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan, man transgressed the command of God. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.

3. The Son Proven Right (Matthew 21:40-45)

VERSE 40.

⁴⁰ *"So what will the owner of the vineyard do to these farmers when he comes?"*

The Jewish leaders listened to Jesus' story. They were deeply involved in the story. Jesus was getting ready to trap these Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders had no idea that Jesus was talking about them. Now Jesus asked them a question, "What will the owner do to these farmers?" This question is the trap. Just like a fisherman who uses a bait and a hook, Jesus threw the bait and hook to the religious leaders.

VERSE 41.

⁴¹ *The priests and leaders said, "He will surely kill those evil men. Then he will lease the vineyard to some other farmers who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."*

How did the religious leaders answer? They told Jesus that the owner "will kill those evil men." Then the owner will "lease the vineyard to some other farmers" who will act fairly. The religious leaders took the bait and hook!

VERSE 42.

⁴² *Jesus said to them, “Surely you have read this in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone. The Lord did this, and it is wonderful to us.’*

Jesus replied with two verses from Psalm 118, verses 22 and 23. Remember, we just saw a verse from Psalm 118, verse 26, when the people praised Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. Now, Jesus threw the religious leaders a curve ball. Jesus told the religious leaders they should already know about Psalm 118:22-23. These two verses state “the stone that the builders rejected became the **cornerstone**.” What did this mean? In 1 Peter 2:4, Peter explained this stone was Jesus. Jesus told the religious leaders that this stone they rejected (Him, Jesus) would be the most important stone in the building. It would be God’s doing and not the work of the religious leaders.

This unexpected event—the rejected stone becoming the most important stone, the cornerstone—would be “wonderful” and God would do it Himself. How would this happen? This unexpected event would begin first, with Jesus’ death and, second, with Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ death and resurrection became the cornerstone of our faith. Wow, how amazing!

Satan thought he had it all worked out. Satan thought he would win the battle when Jesus died on the cross. Instead, God had planned for a big surprise, a complete reversal! Jesus’ death led to Jesus’ greatest triumph! Jesus defeated death and Satan. Jesus’ resurrection became the basis of Christianity and our faith. (See Paul’s explanation of Jesus’ resurrection as the basis of the Christian faith in 1 Corinthians 15.)

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *“So I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people who do the things God wants in His kingdom.*

Jesus told the religious leaders their answer was right. The owner of the vineyard, who is God, will give His kingdom to another group of people. God will take His kingdom away from the Jews and open it to all people. Jesus foretold that the gospel will be for all people. The Jews thought only they would be blessed by God forever as His people. Jesus said that would not happen. God was going to bless all people and invite all people to come into His kingdom. This was foretelling the new era of the church.

VERSE 44.

⁴⁴ *“The person who falls on this stone will be broken, and on whomever that stone falls, that person will be crushed.”*

Jesus goes back to the picture of the stone. Jesus also went back to Isaiah, this time Isaiah 8:14-15. Isaiah here referred to Jesus as a stumbling block. What is a stumbling block? It's a stone that people trip over and fall down. In Matthew 11:6, Jesus said, "Those who do not stumble in their faith because of Me are blessed." In this verse, Jesus said those who stumble because of their unbelief in Jesus would be broken to pieces or shattered (other translations). In other words, a life apart from faith in Jesus will be ruined.

VERSE 45.

⁴⁵ *When the leading priests and the Pharisees heard these stories, they knew Jesus was talking about them.*

The religious leaders finally understood Jesus was talking about them. They knew Jesus had trapped them. They had judged themselves. They could not argue back against Jesus. Jesus made it clear. If you reject Jesus, God will not bless you. Your life will end up shattered. God designed us to have fellowship with Him. God wants to bless us, but we must obey Him. It's the same principle we see in Psalm 1. God will bless the person who loves His Word and obeys Him. The ungodly will wither away like the chaff. That's the same picture as the rock shattering a person into many little pieces. It's a choice. Either you follow Jesus or you reject Jesus. It is your decision. The consequences of rejecting Him are yours.

**Why does the Bible use the idea of "cornerstone" to describe Jesus?
What is a cornerstone?**

How is Jesus a stumbling block?

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how these verses apply to your life today. The word for *farmers* could also be translated as *tenants* or *stewards*. Our lives belong to God. He owns us. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.” We are **stewards** today of the talents and opportunities God has given us.

How are we using our talents and opportunities for God?

Are we living for His kingdom and life in heaven or are we living for pleasures and life today?

Are we living as He planned—doing good works? Or are we making our own plans?

What skills has God given to us?

How am I using my skills in my church?

What am I doing to advance God’s kingdom?

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus said to them, “Surely you have read this in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone. The Lord did this, and it is wonderful to us’”

—Matthew 21:42



Session 6

OFFERED TO ALL?

Though all are invited to join Jesus in God's kingdom, only those who respond to Him in obedient faith will be accepted.

MATTHEW 22:1-14

FIRST THOUGHTS

Suppose that a famous person prepared a big party and spent a lot of money. Suppose that he invited many Deaf people to come to the party. If the Deaf people invited didn't go to the party, what would you think? How do you think the famous person would feel? What do you think the famous person would do to the Deaf people?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the last chapter, Jesus told two **parables** directed at the religious leaders. The stories upset the religious leaders. At the end of the chapter, the religious leaders had decided that Jesus needed to die. In today's session Jesus tells a final story directed at the religious leaders about a wedding feast. These three stories actually go together even though this third story is in chapter 22. This third and final parable condemned the religious leaders for throwing away their privilege as God's chosen people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 22:1-14)

1. The Invited (Matthew 22:1-7)

VERSES 1-2.

¹ *Jesus again used stories to teach them. He said,*

² *"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son.*

Stories are a powerful tool for teaching. This is the last of three stories Jesus told the religious leaders. They doubted His authority as someone from God. Jesus told them these stories to prove His authority was from God. At the end of the second story, the religious leaders couldn't reply. They were **stunned** into silence. Now Jesus launched into his third story to make His final point. The king is worthy of honor.

The first two stories were about the vineyard, but in this story Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus talked about a king who prepares a wedding feast for his son. The king represents God the Father. Who is the son? Jesus, of course, is the son.

VERSE 3.

³ *"The king invited some people to the feast. When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to tell the people, but they refused to come.*

The king invited people to come to the feast. Jesus was referring to the Jewish people. God had a place for them prepared at the wedding feast of Jesus with His bride. The Jews were a **privileged** people and God had plans for them to be involved in His celebration. God sent His servants, the prophets, to tell the people to come to the celebration.

This invitation wasn't the kind you could choose to go or not to go. As God's people, the Jews were required to attend. They refused to go. They rebelled against God.

VERSE 4.

⁴ *"Then the king sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited that my feast is ready. I have killed my best bulls and calves for the dinner, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'*

Just like the owner in the previous story in the vineyard, the king sent more servants. The servants told how wonderful the feast would be. The king had killed the best bulls and calves. The wedding feast was very special. It was a

once in a lifetime event. It wasn't an event like a movie that you could go to again a second time. It was now or never.

VERSE 5.

⁵*"But the people refused to listen to the servants and left to do other things. One went to work in his field, and another went to his business."*

Again, the people refused to listen to the servants. Again, the Jews did not listen to the prophets. Jesus said this in both of His stories. When Jesus said something two times, people needed to pay attention. Jesus was making a very serious point here.

There were two different responses to the servants. First, some of the people went to do other things. What things could be more important than what the king commanded? These people ignored the king's command. Ignoring the king's command was the same as disobeying the king. Didn't they know they couldn't disobey the king without being punished?

VERSE 6

⁶*"Some of the other people grabbed the servants, beat them, and killed them."*

Second, some people beat and killed the servants. These people disobeyed the king and rebelled against him. Jesus knew exactly what happened to His prophets. Jesus cared about His prophets. They were His messengers. Jesus was not happy with the people who beat and killed His prophets. Jesus was emphasizing that the people ignored what the prophets had to say. Obviously, the people didn't like the prophets' messages since they killed them. The people would be punished.

God was displeased with both groups of people: the people who ignored His message and the people who killed His messengers. Both groups of people received the same punishment.

VERSE 7.

⁷*"The king was furious and sent his army to kill the murderers and burn their city."*

In the previous story, Jesus never said how the owner felt. In this story, Jesus shared the king's emotion. Remember, the king in the story represents God. So how did God feel when the people killed His prophets? God was very angry. The king told his army to kill the murderers and destroy their city. It's **ironic** that Jesus mentioned the king sent an army to kill the murderers and burn their city. That's what happened to Jerusalem approximately forty

years later. The Roman army came and killed many Jews. The Roman army also burned the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the Temple. Was Jesus foretelling what the Romans would do? We don't know, but we do know that Jesus shared the heart of God. God was angry in His heart for how the Jews treated His messengers.

Think about yourself. Are you more like the invited guests who refused to come, the invited guests who beat up the servants, or the servants? Why did you choose that group?

What needs to change in our lives?

Is there a story we can share with our unbelieving friends that would help them?

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Verses*

The Bible tells us about who will be let into Heaven. The verses below tell us about some of the people who will be in Heaven. These verses also tell us how we can or cannot get into Heaven. Write down below what people will be in Heaven.

Revelation 7:9 _____

Revelation 21:7-8, 27 _____

Matthew 8:11 _____

Matthew 7:21 _____

2. The Gathered (Matthew 22:8-10)

VERSE 8.

⁸ *"After that, the king said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready. I invited those people, but they were not worthy to come.'*

The king gave the people chance after chance to go to the wedding feast. The king wanted to honor his son. The people were stubborn and rebellious and did not go. Now the king said to forget them.

Israel was unworthy because it did not accept Jesus as the **Messiah**. God would not force them to come. When anyone decides Jesus isn't worth the effort, then they are not worthy of being His followers.

God is not obligated to keep inviting us. He is patient but there comes a time when no more chances are given. Now is the time...

VERSE 9.

⁹ *"So go to the street corners and invite everyone you find to come to my feast."*

At first, the king had only special invitations to the wedding feast. Now the king threw out an open invitation to everyone else to come to the feast. The king told his servants to go out and invite everyone they saw. The guest list was wide open now. Anyone could get in. You didn't have to be a special person to get in. Jesus was telling the religious leaders that God had given up on the Jews; they weren't on God's special list anymore. God planned to open up the door for all people to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Jews thought they had a **monopoly** on the Kingdom of God. Not any more.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *"So the servants went into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad. And the wedding hall was filled with guests."*

Everyone was invited to the feast. All kinds of people showed up at the wedding feast. Some of the people were good. Some of the people were bad. Now the wedding hall was full of people. The king was happy.

God opened His invitation to everyone. How does that make you feel?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation Offered to All*

A key doctrine in Christianity is that salvation is offered freely to everyone. God openly invites everyone to accept His salvation. Jesus explained to the Jews that God opened the door for the Gentiles to be saved, too. It was hard for the Jews of Jesus' time to accept this fact. People don't have to work or buy their way into heaven. God doesn't look at your past, your race, or how much money you have or don't have. Salvation is free for everyone who trusts and obeys Jesus.

3. The Unprepared (Matthew 22:11-14)

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *"When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man who was not dressed for a wedding.*

The king saw a man who didn't have the right clothes for the wedding. In other words, the person wasn't fit to enter into the kingdom of heaven. God doesn't just accept anyone. Only people who are clothed in Jesus' righteousness can enter heaven.

VERSE 12.

¹² *"The king said, 'Friend, how were you allowed to come in here? You are not dressed for a wedding.' But the man said nothing.*

The king addressed the person as *friend* and gave the person a chance to explain why he wasn't properly dressed. The man did not answer. Obviously, he had no excuse for not being prepared.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *"So the king told some servants, 'Tie this man's hands and feet. Throw him out into the darkness, where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain.'*

This unprepared man was thrown out into the darkness. The wedding feast was a place of light. The man was thrown out into darkness. Apart from God and His kingdom, everything else is darkness. The darkness was also a place

of sadness and pain. The man did not have to go there, but he went into the wedding feast without the right clothes. Jesus Christ died for us so we can be clothed in His righteousness. Through Jesus' righteousness, we can enter heaven.

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ *"Yes, many are invited, but only a few are chosen."*

Many were "invited, but only a few are chosen." God knew that not everyone would choose to go to heaven. Many people ignored the invitation to the wedding feast. In the same way, many people ignore God's invitation to enter His kingdom. Jesus said the road to Heaven is narrow and few find it (Matthew 7:14). It's up to you to accept His invitation and enter, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. It's also up to you to share God's invitation with those around you.

What kind of "clothes" do you need to enter the kingdom of heaven?

What does it mean that the road to heaven is narrow?

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how these verses apply to your life today. Jesus Christ invites all people to enter God's kingdom. Everyone has equal opportunity to accept His invitation. Jesus explained the way to the kingdom when He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through Me" (John 14:6). Have you accepted His invitation? Do you invite people to enter God's kingdom?

There are people who believe they will go to Heaven after they die because they do good things. If you told this story to other people, how would you explain what the right clothes would be? How do you feel about what happened to the man without the right clothes? He suffered because he did not have the right clothes. In the same way, our friends who do not accept Jesus' invitation will suffer apart from God forever.

Why did Jesus tell this story to the religious leaders?

What choices do you think people have about where they will spend eternity?

How can you share God's invitation with others?

How can you help them understand that faith in Jesus is the only way into heaven?

MEMORY VERSE

As the Scripture says, "Anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved"

—Romans 10:13



Session 7

WHERE IS JESUS?

Jesus was resurrected to reign forever as the King.

MATTHEW 28:1-15

FIRST THOUGHTS

Suppose a friend of yours recently died. Later, someone told you that your friend wasn't dead anymore. How would you feel? What would you do? In this session, this happened to two women. Read on to see how they reacted.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Since the last session, Jesus was betrayed, captured, tried, and killed on the cross. A rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, took Jesus' body and put it in his own tomb. The religious leaders were afraid that Jesus' disciples would steal Jesus' body and say that Jesus rose from the dead. The religious leaders went to Pilate and asked that soldiers guard the tomb for three days. The religious leaders wanted the soldiers to prevent anyone from stealing Jesus' body. Our session starts on the morning of the third day that Jesus was in the tomb. Soldiers still guarded the tomb.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 28:1-15)

1. The Grave Opened (Matthew 28:1-4)

VERSE 1.

¹*The day after the Sabbath day was the first day of the week. At dawn on the first day, Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary went to look at the tomb.*

This important passage started with the first day of the week. It wasn't the Sabbath, which for the Jews is on Saturday. It was on Sunday.

Who first showed up at Jesus' tomb? It was two women. Both of the women had followed along, watching Jesus' body removed from the cross and carried to the tomb. They knew which tomb held Jesus' body. They loved Jesus deeply and wanted to see His tomb right away. When the Sabbath was finished, they could come and prepare Jesus' body after His death.

VERSES 2-3.

²*At that time there was a strong earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, went to the tomb, and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone.*

³*He was shining as bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.*

Was the earthquake a coincidence? No, it was part of God's plan. An angel came down from heaven. What did the angel do? The angel rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. The stone was very heavy. It would have taken several men to move the stone. One angel was able to move the stone. Wow!

Why did the angel move the stone? Was it so Jesus could escape from the tomb? No, remember when Jesus later met with His disciples, Jesus walked through a wall. Jesus did not need the stone to be moved in order to get out of the tomb. The stone was moved so that people could look inside the tomb and see that it was empty. People would know that Jesus was no longer dead. He was alive!

Why did the angel sit on top of the stone? The angel showed that he had moved the stone and that he was waiting for something. Clearly, the angel was waiting for the women to show up.

The angel was very bright, like lightning. The angel had white clothes, white like snow. White represents purity, or cleanness. The scene blended heaven's purity and glory.

VERSE 4.

⁴*The soldiers guarding the tomb shook with fear because of the angel, and they became like dead men.*

Soldiers were guarding the tomb so that no one could steal Jesus' body. The Jewish leaders were afraid that if someone stole Jesus' body, the disciples would say that Jesus rose from the dead. The soldiers were very afraid when they saw the angel. They were so afraid of the angel, they went into shock and became like dead people. They couldn't move or talk. They were **stunned**. It is possible they fainted or fell to the ground.

How does this scene show God's power?

What other stories do you remember when angels appeared to people?

How did those people feel?

Discuss these answers with your group.

BIBLE SKILL: *Read Other Verses*

Jesus rose from the dead to show that He had power over death. He showed that God accepted His sacrificial death for our sins. Because Jesus died and lives again, we too will live again. We may not die if Jesus returns before our death. Look at these verses that tell about the believer's resurrection and new body.

Job 19:26 _____

Romans 2:7 _____

1 Corinthians 15:53-54 _____

2 Timothy 1:10 _____

2. The Risen King Announced (Matthew 28:5-10)

VERSES 5-6.

⁵*The angel said to the women, “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified.*

⁶*He is not here. He has risen from the dead as He said He would. Come and see the place where His body was.*

The two women obviously were afraid of the angel, just like the soldiers were. The angel told the two women, “Don’t be afraid.”

The angel also told the women Jesus wasn’t there. The angel knew that the women were looking for Jesus. The angel said that Jesus rose from the dead just like He had told them. The angel wanted the women to see for themselves that Jesus wasn’t there. The angel told them, “Come and see.”

VERSE 7.

⁷*“And go quickly and tell his followers, ‘Jesus has risen from the dead. He is going into Galilee ahead of you, and you will see him there.’” Then the angel said, “Now I have told you.”*

The angel told the two women to go quickly and tell Jesus’ followers that Jesus was alive. Jesus knew His disciples were heartbroken and upset. Jesus didn’t want the women to wait. He wanted the women to tell His disciples this wonderful news quickly.

Also, the angel told the two women where they would find Jesus. Jesus would be in Galilee. Next, the angel said, “Now I have told you.” The angel told the women everything that Jesus wanted to share.

VERSE 8.

⁸*The women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very happy. They ran to tell Jesus’ followers what had happened.*

What did the women do? They obeyed the angel immediately. They left the tomb quickly. They ran. The women wanted Jesus’ followers to know this great news as soon as possible. The women ran to share this great news. Do we hurry like the women did to share Jesus’ great news of salvation to the people we know and love?

VERSE 9.

⁹*Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings.” The women came up to Him, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him.*

It is often when we are busy obeying Jesus that Jesus comes and reveals Himself to us. The women were on the way to tell the disciples. All of a sudden Jesus showed up. What did Jesus say? Jesus said, “Greetings,” which is the same as our *hello*. The women went up to Jesus and grabbed Jesus’ feet. Then they worshiped Jesus.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Go and tell My followers to go on to Galilee, and they will see Me there.”*

Jesus told the two women the same thing the angel said, “Don’t be afraid” and “Go and tell my followers.” When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples’ world was turned upside down. They were heartbroken. Jesus cared about His followers. Jesus would meet them in Galilee, away from the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders.

What has Jesus done for you?

Can you think of a time when you worshiped Jesus because of what He did for you?

Write a few words to tell how you felt about Jesus then.

Discuss these answers with your group.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Resurrection of Jesus*

Christianity is the only religion in the world with a living Savior. No other religion believes in a Savior who died and came back to life. Because of Jesus’ resurrection, we also will be resurrected and live again with new bodies. Jesus’ resurrection gives us the hope and assurance of eternal life.

3. The Cover-Up Planned (Matthew 28:11-15)

VERSE 11.

¹¹ While the women went to tell Jesus' followers, some of the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went into the city to tell the leading priests everything that had happened.

Now that the women had left the tomb, who was still there? The soldiers were still there. Now the soldiers were no longer in shock. They knew they were in big trouble. The soldiers went into the city to tell the priests everything.

The soldiers were in a bad situation. The seal on the tomb had been broken. The soldiers had orders to watch the tomb so no one would steal Jesus' body. The soldiers were not able to deal with angels from heaven. The soldiers failed at their job. Now the tomb was open. Jesus' body was not in the tomb. Who was responsible? The soldiers were responsible. They could be killed for failing in their job. The soldiers couldn't go to their boss, so they went to the Jewish religious leaders. The soldiers hoped the religious leaders could help them.

VERSES 12-13.

¹² Then the priests met with the elders and made a plan. They paid the soldiers a large amount of money

¹³ and said to them, "Tell the people that Jesus' followers came during the night and stole the body while you were asleep.

The religious leaders listened to the soldiers. They came up with a plan that would help both the soldiers and the religious leaders. The religious leaders gave the soldiers a lot of money to tell a lie.

What was the plan? The religious leaders told the soldiers to lie to people and tell them Jesus' followers came and stole Jesus' body. The soldiers would lie and say they fell asleep and that Jesus' followers came and moved the stone and stole Jesus' body.

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ "If the governor hears about this, we will satisfy him and save you from trouble."

The religious leaders said they would take care of everything if the governor said anything. The soldiers didn't need to worry about anything.

How did this plan help both the soldiers and the religious leaders? First, this plan would keep the soldiers alive. They would not be killed. Second, the religious leaders did not want the good news about Jesus to spread

throughout Jerusalem. The soldiers' lie would help convince everyone that Jesus was truly dead.

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ So the soldiers kept the money and did as they were told. And that story is still spread among the people even today.

The soldiers liked the religious leaders' plan. They got money, plus the governor didn't kill them. The soldiers lied about Jesus' body being stolen. Everything ended well for the soldiers and the religious leaders. Some people today still believe that someone stole Jesus' body and hid it somewhere.

This story in Matthew confirms the tomb was empty. The soldiers knew the tomb was empty. The religious leaders believed the soldiers' story was true. If they didn't believe the story, they would not have told the soldiers to lie about it. The religious leaders didn't want people to think that Jesus rose from the dead. The religious leaders wanted people to believe a lie that Jesus' body was stolen.

Why did the religious leaders want to cover up the resurrection?

Why is the resurrection important to Christians?

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how this story applies to your life today. The resurrection of Jesus is a very important teaching. Paul said, “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is worth nothing, and your faith is worth nothing... But Christ has truly been raised from the dead—the first one and proof that those who sleep in death will also be raised” (1 Corinthians 15:14,20). Jesus’ resurrection is the foundation for our faith and hope for eternal life in Heaven.

Do you meet people who don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

How do you feel about the resurrection?

How can you celebrate the resurrection of Jesus?

Your friends need to know that Jesus is alive. He did not stay in the grave. We celebrate this fact each Sunday.

How do your friends feel about the resurrection?

Do they believe Jesus is alive?

How can you share the resurrection with them?

What would your life be like today if Jesus had not been resurrected?

MEMORY VERSE

He is not here. He has risen from the dead as He said He would. Come and see the place where His body was

—Matthew 28:6

Session 8

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Jesus will return at the end of time, so preparations must be made.

MATTHEW 24:36-51

FIRST THOUGHTS

Have you ever tried to sell your house? Before putting a “For Sale” sign in the front yard, you probably did a lot of work on the house to fix things and get it ready. After the sign was in your yard, you probably made sure the house was clean everyday before you left for work because you hoped someone would want to see it. How important was it for you to be prepared to show your house at a moment’s notice?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus talked with His disciples about the end times. Jesus said the Temple would be destroyed. Jesus’ followers asked Jesus when these things would happen. Jesus told them many things that would happen. Jesus said the Son of Man would come on clouds in the sky. The *Son of Man* is a title for Jesus. Jesus will come back. Jesus told the story of the fig tree. When the green leaves show up, we know it will soon be summer. We know Jesus will come soon when the things Jesus said would happen come to pass.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 24:36-51)

1. Be Reminded (Matthew 24:36-41)

VERSE 36.

³⁶ *“No one knows when that day or time will be, not the angels in heaven, not even the Son. Only the Father knows.*

What was Jesus talking about? What does “that day or time” mean? Jesus was talking to His disciples about when He will come back. Jesus told His disciples He couldn’t tell them when He would come back to earth. Jesus said no one knows the exact time He will return. Only God the Father knows when Jesus will come back to earth.

You may remember stories in the Bible when angels announced special events to people. They brought messages directly from God. Maybe the disciples thought angels knew God’s plans because they are with God. Jesus emphasized that even the angels, who are with God, do not know when Jesus will come again. Only God the Father knows when Jesus will come back to earth.

VERSE 37.

³⁷ *“When the Son of Man comes, it will be like what happened during Noah’s time.*

Jesus gives one clue as to when He will return to earth. Jesus said that when He returns, it will be like the days of Noah. What did Jesus mean by Noah’s time? What was it like when Noah was living on earth? Jesus answers that question in the next verse.

VERSES 38-39.

³⁸ *“In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving their children to be married, until the day Noah entered the boat.*

³⁹ *They knew nothing about what was happening until the flood came and destroyed them. It will be the same when the Son of Man comes.*

What was special about Noah’s time before the flood? Jesus said during Noah’s day people were doing normal things. People were eating, drinking, and marrying. What was special about that? Nothing. Nothing was special. People were living every day without any thought about God. God was not in the center of their lives. They were in the center of their lives. Everything they did focused on themselves. They lived for themselves, and not for God. They ignored Noah’s warnings. They didn’t change their lives.

Noah and his family, on the other hand, spent their lives obeying God. They listened to God's warning. They knew God said He would punish the earth, but they didn't know when this would happen. They worked to be ready for God's coming judgment. When the rains came, they were ready.

The people did not believe that they would soon be in danger. They lived for pleasure. They did not listen to Noah's message. The flood came as a surprise. Jesus said it will be the same when He comes again. People will be surprised. People will not expect Jesus to come. They will be so busy living that they will not be prepared for Jesus' coming.

VERSES 40-41.

⁴⁰ *"Two men will be in the field. One will be taken, and the other will be left.*

⁴¹ *Two women will be grinding grain with a mill. One will be taken, and the other will be left.*

Jesus described how quickly things will happen. Two people will be busy working. One person will continue working. The other person will suddenly disappear. Jesus described the rapture. This is when Jesus will return to earth to take His church back to heaven with Him. People will be doing their normal every day work when Jesus comes. People will not expect it. In the middle of work, one person will be gone. One person will remain. Jesus gives another example with two women. The same thing will happen again. Two women will be working. Suddenly, one woman will disappear. There will be no warning. There also will be no time for people to change their minds and decide to follow Jesus.

Why is it important to be reminded of Jesus' promise to return?

What can we do to prepare for Jesus to come back?

Discuss your answers with your group.

2. Be Alert (Matthew 24:42-44)

VERSE 42.

⁴² *"So always be ready, because you don't know the day your Lord will come.*

Jesus told His followers what they needed to do. What did they need to do? Always be ready. What were they to be ready for? Jesus' coming. Jesus said that His followers would not know when He will return, so they should be ready all the time. If you follow Jesus, you should also be ready all the time. Jesus could come today.

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *"Remember this: If the owner of the house knew what time of night a thief was coming, the owner would watch and not let the thief break in.*

Jesus gave an example so the people could understand what He meant by being ready. If people knew they could prevent something terrible from happening, they would prepare themselves and be ready. If people knew a burglar was planning to break into their home, they would stay up all night and watch. They would be prepared. They would protect their home.

Jesus wanted the people to understand that He would come back. People need to be prepared ahead of time. If people wait to prepare, it will be too late. There will be no warning before Jesus returns. Just like the burglar will not warn the people ahead of time.

VERSE 44.

⁴⁴ *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at a time you don't expect Him.*

Jesus made this very clear to the people. Jesus said He would come when people do not expect Him. Many preachers in the past tried to predict when Jesus will return. They were wrong. Jesus said no one knows when He will come back. It's best to be prepared now. Jesus warned the people then and He's warning us now.

Why are we supposed to be ready?

If someone predicts the day that Jesus will return, how will you respond?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Second Coming of Christ*

Jesus died on the cross and rose again. Jesus promised His disciples that He would come back to earth. Jesus' disciples were to watch and be ready for Jesus to come back. Jesus gave His followers a task to do. Jesus' followers should obey Jesus until He returns.

3. Be Faithful (Matthew 24:45-47)

VERSES 45-46.

⁴⁵ *"Who is the wise and loyal servant that the master trusts to give the other servants their food at the right time?"*

⁴⁶ *"When the master comes and finds the servant doing his work, the servant will be blessed."*

Jesus gave another example. Jesus talked about a master and his servant. The master gave a job to his servant. The servant was responsible to feed the other servants. The master trusted the servant to do the job right. The master trusted the servant to feed the other servants at the right time.

The master was not there to watch the servant all the time. But the master could show up at any time. When the master shows up and the servant is doing his job right, the master will bless him. The servant doing a good job is working because he respects the master. That is more important than the reward.

The point Jesus made is that the servant didn't know when the master would return. This is the same for us. We don't know when Jesus is coming back. We should be serving Jesus and obeying His Word. If we do, we will be ready for His return. We work for Jesus because we love and respect him. That is more important than the blessing.

VERSE 47.

⁴⁷ *"I tell you the truth, the master will choose that servant to take care of everything he owns."*

Jesus emphasized that the servant doing his job right when the master returns will really be blessed. The master will be so thrilled that the servant is working faithfully even though the master is not there. The master will give the servant even greater responsibilities and privileges.

As a servant of God, what responsibilities has God given you?

What should we be doing while we wait for Jesus to return?

How does our service to Jesus demonstrate our love for Him?

4. Be Warned (Matthew 24:48-51)

VERSES 48-49.

⁴⁸ *"But suppose that evil servant thinks to himself, 'My master will not come back soon,'*

⁴⁹ *and he begins to beat the other servants and eat and get drunk with others like him?"*

Jesus contrasted the good servant with a bad servant. Suppose the servant thought the master wouldn't come back soon. The servant decided his master wouldn't know what he was doing. He decided to be bad and beat up the other servants instead of feeding them. He ate and got drunk with other bad servants. He didn't care about obeying his master. He thought the master would not find out.

VERSE 50.

⁵⁰ *"The master will come when that servant is not ready and is not expecting him."*

The servant was wrong. The master came back when the servant didn't expect him. The master saw all the wrong things the servant had done.

VERSE 51.

⁵¹ “Then the master will cut him in pieces and send him away to be with the hypocrites, where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain.”

The master punished the bad servant severely and sent him to suffer in hell. The bad servant will suffer with the **hypocrites** in a terrible place. The punished people will cry and grind their teeth in pain.

BIBLE SKILL: Bible Search

Jesus referred to hell as the place of punishment for those who reject God. Hell is a real place. Look at these verses to see what Jesus said about hell.

Matthew 5:29 _____

Matthew 7:13 _____

Matthew 10:28 _____

Luke 16:21-23 _____

Jesus wanted people to know they have a choice. People can live and obey as the good servant or they can live the same as the bad servant. The good servant prepared for his master's return. He was ready every day. He did what the master asked. The bad servant didn't prepare for his master's return. He did not do what the master asked. The master rewarded the good servant very well. The master punished the bad servant in a terrible way.

What kind of servant are you?

What actions do you need to change?

IN MY CONTEXT

How can you be prepared for Jesus' return? It is important that we be ready when Jesus comes back. He calls us to be faithful. It is not the time to be weak or straddling the fence.

What does "waiting faithfully for Jesus' return" mean?

Jesus gave us a job to do while we wait for Him to come back. Do you know Deaf people who do not follow Jesus? You can make a plan to talk with those people and tell them about Jesus. Imagine that you are sharing Jesus with a person when Jesus comes back. Jesus would be so pleased! You can explain to others about what happens when we die. Many people don't believe in heaven or hell.

What would you tell someone if they asked you what happens after we die?

Discuss your answers with the group.

How can you explain heaven and hell to your friends?

Do you think you're ready for Jesus to come back? Why or why not?

What do you need to do to be ready?

MEMORY VERSE

So always be ready, because you don't know the day your Lord will come.

—Matthew 24:42



Session 9

How Do We REMEMBER?

Jesus' sacrifice is to be reverently remembered through the observing of the Lord's Supper.

MATTHEW 26:17-30

FIRST THOUGHTS

Every year, members of my church plan a special worship service and time of fellowship. My church calls this special day *Homecoming*. It is a day to remember the beginning of our church and the people who were the first members. My church invites a guest preacher or music leader who grew up in the church. The members of the church bring food to share with each other. People who used to be members come back and visit on this special day. It is a day to remember and celebrate.

Jesus wanted His disciples to remember what He did on the cross. He used the **Passover** meal to help them always.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Before the events in this session, Jesus told two more stories. The first story was about the ten bridesmaids, five were wise and five were foolish. Next, Jesus told a story about three servants with bags of gold to take care of for

their master. Afterwards, Jesus talked about how God will judge everyone and divide them into two groups. God will send the unbelieving people to hell, and He will welcome the believing people to heaven. Later, Jesus visited a man and ate at his house. A woman came and poured expensive perfume on Jesus' head while He was eating. Jesus said this was to prepare His body for burial. The Jewish religious leaders met and planned to trap Jesus and kill Him. Judas later went to them and accepted money to betray Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 26:17-30)

1. Preparation (Matthew 26:17-19)

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the followers came to Jesus. They said, "Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover meal?"*

This was the beginning of the Passover week. Jesus and His followers would soon celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. What was the Feast of Unleavened Bread? It was a seven day festival that began the day before Passover. At sunset of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover would be observed. The Passover feast started when the Jews were in Egypt. Remember Pharaoh didn't want Moses and the Jews to leave because the Jews were slaves in Egypt and did a lot of work for the Egyptians. God helped His people, though, and delivered them out of Egypt in a mighty way. The night before they were delivered out of Egypt, God told them to prepare a special feast. They couldn't eat any bread with leaven in it. Leaven is like our yeast. Leaven makes the bread rise and become fluffy. Unleavened bread is flat and requires less time to fix.

The disciples went to Jesus and asked Him where He wanted to eat the Passover. The disciples had been with Jesus for three years. They knew He followed the Jewish traditions and would celebrate the Passover. The disciples had learned to depend on Jesus and ask Jesus what He wanted. They didn't decide things on their own without first asking Jesus.

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ *Jesus answered, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: "The chosen time is near. I will have the Passover with my followers at your house."'"*

Jesus knew exactly where He wanted to have His last meal with His disciples. This meal is what we now call the "Last Supper." It was a very important time for Jesus. Jesus knew it would be the last meal and **Passover** with His

disciples. Jesus told His disciples specific instructions about where to go and who to meet. Jesus already planned where they would eat.

VERSE 19.

¹⁹The followers did what Jesus told them to do, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Jesus’ followers obeyed Jesus and did exactly what He told them to do. They did not doubt or question Jesus’ instructions. The disciples were able to prepare the meal now that they knew the house where they would eat.

Why do you think Jesus chose the Passover meal to be the last supper with His disciples?

BIBLE SKILL: Biblical Background

Read Exodus 12:1-28, then answer the following questions:

What animal were the Israelites supposed to kill and eat? _____

Read John 1:29. Who was our Lamb? _____

What were the people supposed to do with the Lamb’s blood?

Where was Jesus’ blood spilled? _____

When God saw the blood, what did He do? _____

When God sees Jesus’ blood cover our sins, what will He do?

_____ (1 John 1:7b).

What kind of bread did the people eat? _____

Jesus is the _____ that gives life (John 6:35).

Leaven or yeast represents sin. Jesus had no sin in Him.

Christ, our _____ has been sacrificed (for us)

1 Corinthians 5:7.

2. Betrayal (Matthew 26:20-25)

VERSES 20-21.

²⁰ *In the evening Jesus was sitting at the table with His twelve followers.*

²¹ *As they were eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will turn against Me."*

Matthew gives us specific details about this event since it is a very important part of our Christian faith. It was evening time. Jesus and all twelve of His disciples were together. None of the people in the crowd who followed Jesus were there. It was a very private and special time for Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus obviously had many things on His mind. Jesus knew He would soon die. Jesus also knew that someone would betray Him to the religious leaders. What did Jesus talk about first? Jesus talked about the person who would betray Him.

VERSE 22.

²² *This made the followers very sad. Each one began to say to Jesus, "Surely, Lord, I am not the one who will turn against You, am I?"*

The followers were sad when Jesus said one of them would betray Him. Who was the person who would betray Jesus? It was Judas. The other disciples probably did not have any idea that Judas was planning to betray Jesus. They couldn't imagine one of them would turn against Jesus and betray Him. This just blew their minds, so they asked Jesus, "Is it me?"

Betrayal is different from denial. When Jesus was arrested, Peter denied knowing Him three times before the rooster crowed. *Betrayal* means "to do something intentionally to hurt someone who trusts you." It is the same as backstabbing. It is strange that each disciple asked the question, "Is it me?" Surely each of them knew what was in his own heart. Maybe they thought they would betray Jesus accidentally. They loved Jesus and would never wish to cause Him harm.

VERSE 23.

²³ *Jesus answered, "The man who has dipped his hand with Me into the bowl is the one who will turn against Me."*

Jesus gave a hint who would betray Him. In Jewish culture, people dipped their bread into a bowl, like we would put chips into a bowl of dip. Eating together like this meant the people were friends. Jesus said the person who dipped his bread into the bowl at the same time as Jesus did, that person would betray Him.

VERSE 24.

²⁴ *“The Son of Man will die, just as the Scriptures say. But how terrible it will be for the person who hands the Son of Man over to be killed. It would be better for him if he had never been born.”*

Jesus said He would die, as the prophets told in the Old Testament. Jesus did not bring attention to His own death. Jesus said the person who would betray Him would be better off if he had never been born. Judas would have a horrible punishment for betraying Him.

VERSE 25.

²⁵ *Then Judas, who would give Jesus to His enemies, said to Jesus, “Teacher, surely I am not the one, am I?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.”*

Judas heard what Jesus said. Judas asked Jesus, “I’m not the one, right?” Jesus was blunt with Judas. Judas didn’t fool Jesus. Jesus knew Judas’ heart. We can never fool God. We may do good things, but God knows our hearts. He can see if our hearts are good or not. Samuel the prophet was told that God looks on the heart, not on outward appearances. Judas thought he could keep God from seeing into his dark heart.

Why do you think Judas decided to betray Jesus?

What do you think Judas was thinking and feeling when Jesus answered “Yes, it is you”?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper*

The Christian church, and Baptists in particular, celebrate two ordinances. What is an ordinance? An ordinance is something that a church practices in obedience to Jesus’ commands. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the ordinances. These ordinances are not necessary for salvation.

3. Remembrance (Matthew 26:26-30)

VERSE 26.

²⁶ *While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it and broke it. Then He gave it to His followers and said, "Take this bread and eat it; this is My body."*

The **Passover** meal started. Jesus took the bread first. Jesus first prayed and thanked God for the bread. Jesus explained to His disciples that the bread represented His body. Just as Jesus broke the bread, His body would be broken and die.

Today Christians remember Jesus' death and resurrection by participating in the Lord's Supper. When we eat the bread, we remember that Jesus' body was broken for us. Ever since this night when Jesus ate this final Passover meal with His disciples, Christians have participated in the Lord's Supper to remember Jesus' death on the cross for us.

VERSES 27-28.

²⁷ *Then Jesus took a cup and thanked God for it and gave it to the followers. He said, "Every one of you drink this."*

²⁸ *This is My blood which is the new agreement that God makes with His people. This blood is poured out for many to forgive their sins.*

Secondly, Jesus took the cup and prayed again. Jesus thanked God for what the cup represented. Jesus told His disciples to drink what was in the cup.

Jesus said the cup represented His blood that would soon be shed on the cross. Jesus said He would bleed and die on the cross so that God would forgive our sins.

Jesus also explained that the blood represented a new agreement with God. What was that agreement? God shed His own blood, so that we can become His children. Because of this, we are to walk a new path with Jesus and be forever grateful that Jesus died for us. This is why the Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The *New Testament* means "New Agreement or Covenant." God made a new covenant with us through Jesus' death on the cross. Through Jesus' death, our relationship with God **radically** changed. We can now have a close personal relationship with God.

VERSE 29.

²⁹ *"I tell you this: I will not drink of this fruit of the vine again until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

What was the fruit of the vine? It was grape juice or wine. The grape juice or wine represented Jesus' blood. Jesus said He would not drink or eat this **Passover** meal until we are all in heaven with Him. Jesus won't enjoy Himself in heaven and have a feast until we are there with Him. Wow, what love He has for us!!

VERSE 30.

³⁰*After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

The last thing they did was sing a hymn. Can you imagine that? Jesus had been talking about His death, then they finished the Passover meal with singing a hymn. The singing was what was done at the end of the meal. Jesus set a great example for us.

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

What did Jesus' actions in this passage reveal about His mission?

IN MY CONTEXT

God planned for the forgiveness of our sins through His Son's death. Think about the words Jesus said to His disciples. Jesus said to eat the bread and drink from the cup to remember Him and His death. What do these words mean to you? When we celebrate the Lord's Supper and remember Jesus' death, it is a good time to thank God for providing for our need for a Savior.

Talk about the Lord's Supper with your group. Share your answers with each other.

Can non-Christians participate in the Lord's Supper? Why or why not?

When was the last time you participated in the Lord's Supper?

How did you feel?

Was it a special time between you and God? Why or why not?

How can you prepare your heart for the next time your church celebrates the Lord's Supper?

MEMORY VERSE

Then Jesus took some bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the apostles, saying, "This is My body, which I am giving for you. Do this to remember Me."

—Luke 22:19



Session 10

DO I HAVE THE STRENGTH?

Jesus willingly submitted to the Father's redemptive plan.

MATTHEW 26:36-46

FIRST THOUGHTS

If a father and a son have plans to do something together, do you think it is OK for the son to change his mind and not follow the plan? Should the son honor the father and carry out their plans, or does the son have the right to change his mind? God made a plan to redeem, or save, sinful people. God wanted people to fellowship with God like Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Jesus, the Son, would have to suffer and die as part of this plan.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus and His disciples had just finished the Last Supper. They went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus warned His disciples that they would all leave and scatter that night, and He would be attacked. Peter said that he would never leave Jesus. Jesus told Peter that before the night was over, Peter would say he didn't know Jesus three times. Peter replied, "I will never say I don't know You, I will even die with you!" (Matthew 26:35). The other disciples told Jesus the same thing.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 26:36-46)

1. Committed to the Task (Matthew 26:36-39)

VERSE 36.

³⁶ *Then Jesus went with His followers to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."*

Jesus went to Gethsemane with His disciples after the **Passover** meal. Jesus and His disciples went to Gethsemane often. Gethsemane was also called the Garden of Gethsemane. It was on the Mount of Olives. Jesus prayed often so it did not surprise the disciples that He wanted to pray. One time after the disciples saw Jesus pray, they asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). They could see that talking with the Father in prayer was important to Jesus. They wanted to know how to pray as He prayed. Jesus also prayed for His disciples (John 17). He prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35). Jesus set an example for us. We need to develop a habit of prayer.

VERSE 37.

³⁷ *He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him, and He began to be very sad and troubled.*

Jesus had not kept any secrets from His disciples. At the supper He told them one of them would betray Him, He would be crucified, and they would all scatter and act like they did not know Him. If I knew all of these things would happen, I would have already been very sad. But Jesus only began to be sad and troubled in the garden.

Jesus took the three disciples closest to Him: Peter, James, and John. These were the same disciples who went with Jesus on the mountain and witnessed the **Transfiguration**. At that time, they saw Jesus' glory. However, this time in the garden was a dark hour for Jesus. Jesus was very sad and troubled. The Bible tells us how Jesus was feeling at that time. It was a difficult time for Jesus.

VERSE 38.

³⁸ *He said to them, "My heart is full of sorrow, to the point of death. Stay here and watch with Me."*

Jesus told the three disciples exactly how He felt. Jesus said His heart was full of sorrow. Jesus didn't say He was sad or had some sorrow. Jesus said He was FULL of sorrow. Jesus was so sorrowful that He felt like the sorrow

would kill Him. Jesus had one favor to ask His disciples. Jesus asked them to stay with Him and watch with Him. What did Jesus mean by “watch with Him”? Jesus wanted them to stay awake and pray with Him.

VERSE 39.

³⁹ After walking a little farther away from them, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, do not give Me this cup of suffering. But do what You want, not what I want.”

Jesus moved away from the disciples a little bit. Jesus wanted to talk privately to His Father, but obviously the disciples heard what Jesus prayed. Jesus knew He would experience a lot of suffering soon. He would be beaten and crucified. He would bear the sins of the whole world. Jesus wasn’t looking forward to this. He was fully man and knew this would be terribly painful. Jesus asked the Father if there was another way to save sinners. Jesus is also fully God. He told His Father that He was still willing to suffer and die. Jesus would do whatever the Father wanted Him to do.

Notice that when Jesus prayed with His Father, Jesus was honest in how He felt. Jesus told the Father that He didn’t want to suffer. Jesus didn’t hide His true feelings from His Father. Jesus had a very close relationship with His Father and told Him how He felt. We should do the same thing when we pray to God. We should be honest when we go to God and not use empty words with no meaning. We should talk to God just like we would talk openly with our best friend.

What does Jesus’ prayer show us about His trust in the Father?

What kinds of emotions did Jesus experience?

Which is easier, to follow God’s plan or your plan? Why?

BIBLE SKILL: Read Additional Verses

Jesus prayed to His Father during the darkest night of His life. Prayer is telling God how you feel and what you are going through. People in the Bible went through hard times and prayed to God during those difficult times. Read the passages below and write down who prayed and what they were going through.

Genesis 32:6-12 _____

1 Samuel 1:1-16 _____

2 Kings 18:28–19:19 _____

Psalms 59:1 _____

Matthew 14:22-31 _____

2. Asleep on the Job (Matthew 26:40-43)

VERSE 40.

⁴⁰ *Then Jesus went back to His followers and found them asleep. He said to Peter, “You men could not stay awake with Me for one hour?”*

Jesus asked just one thing from His disciples. Jesus was getting ready to face the most difficult day in His life. This was a rare moment when Jesus asked for help from His disciples. His disciples, however, didn’t do the one thing that Jesus asked from them. How do you think Jesus felt?

VERSE 41.

⁴¹ *“Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation. The spirit wants to do what is right, but the body is weak.”*

Jesus again asked His disciples to stay awake with Him. Jesus told them what to pray for specifically. Specific prayer is the most effective type of praying. Jesus told the disciples to pray for strength against temptation. What temptations would they face? First, they would face the physical temptation to sleep. Second, they would face the spiritual temptation to leave Jesus and deny Him.

Jesus wasn't talking about physical strength, like an athlete would have. Jesus wasn't saying His disciples were weak. By the "body," Jesus meant the flesh, the part of us that gives in to worldly temptations. Jesus knew His disciples were willing to do the right thing, but their fleshly bodies were weak. It was easy for them to give in to temptation. Jesus knew they needed to pray for strength to resist temptation.

VERSE 42.

⁴² Then Jesus went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this painful thing to be taken from Me, and if I must do it, I pray that what You want will be done."

Jesus went back to where He had prayed. Jesus prayed again to the Father. He asked the Father if it were possible not to go through suffering and death. Jesus wanted more than anything to do the Father's will. Jesus knew doing the Father's will meant suffering and death for Him, and Jesus was willing to obey His Father.

Sometimes when we pray for something, God's answer is "No." We may not understand why God doesn't answer in the way we want. We must trust that He knows best. We want to follow His plan and obey Him just like Jesus did.

VERSE 43.

⁴³ Then He went back to His followers, and again He found them asleep, because their eyes were heavy.

Jesus went back to His disciples a second time. Were the disciples awake and praying this time? No, the disciples had fallen asleep again. The disciples didn't understand what they were about to face.

Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples to stay awake with Him?

What can be done to have enough strength to serve God when we are called upon by Him?

Discuss your answers with your group.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Redemption*

One of the key doctrines of Christianity is the doctrine of redemption. Redemption means to buy back something. When Adam sinned, people fell under the rule of Satan. Jesus bought people back through His death on the cross. Jesus paid the price for our lives. The story of Ruth is another beautiful picture of a Redeemer. Boaz took the role of Kinsman-Redeemer. A Kinsman-Redeemer was a family member who acted on behalf of another family member who was in trouble, danger, or need. When Boaz redeemed Ruth, his actions showed a picture of how our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ, redeems us.

3. Realizing the Moment (Matthew 26:44-46)

VERSE 44.

⁴⁴ *So Jesus left them and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing.*

Jesus went back a third time to continue praying. Jesus repeated His same prayer to God the Father. Some people say we shouldn't ask God for the same thing over and over, but Jesus prayed the same prayer to the Father three times. Luke tells us that Jesus prayed so hard He began to sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

VERSE 45.

⁴⁵ *Then Jesus went back to His followers and said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? The time has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to sinful people."*

After Jesus prayed a third time, He went back to His disciples. Jesus didn't ask them to pray with Him again. Jesus was finished praying. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him soon. Jesus told His disciples that sinful people would soon capture Him. Jesus knew it would soon be time for Him to die on the cross for our sins. God often offers us opportunities to join with Him in His work. We can lose these opportunities if we don't grab them when they happen. God may not give us a second chance. The disciples lost their opportunity here to watch and pray with Jesus.

VERSE 46.

⁴⁶ “Get up, we must go. Look, here comes the man who has turned against Me.”

Jesus had to tell His disciples to get up from sleeping. Jesus told them it was time for them to go. Jesus told them the man who betrayed Him was coming. There was no more time for praying. Events moved along very quickly then.

Why was it important for us to know what Jesus prayed each time?

What does Jesus' prayer tell us about Him and His love for the Father and for us?

Discuss your answers with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how much Jesus wanted His disciples to pray with Him in Gethsemane. We often think about what God can do for us, but we almost never think about what we can do for God. Think about ways you can make God happy and serve Him. Discuss this in your Bible study group and write down your ideas. Use the questions below to guide your discussion.

In what ways does your church reach out to children with no fathers and to widows (women whose husbands have died)? (Read James 1:27.)

In what ways does your church help the people in your church who don't have jobs?

What is your church's vision and plan for reaching the Deaf in your community who don't know Jesus?

What is your church's involvement with missions?

What do you do to help in your church?

How are you faithful in what you do?

MEMORY VERSE

After walking a little farther away from them, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, do not give Me this cup of suffering. But do what You want, not what I want."

—Matthew 26:39



Session 11

LOYAL?

Following Jesus demands loyalty in the face of risk.

MATTHEW 26:63-75

FIRST THOUGHTS

The disciples faced some difficult times. They promised they would be loyal to Jesus, but were they willing to stand firm? We also face difficult times as a follower of Jesus. Jesus demands our greatest loyalty to Him. We should be totally loyal to Jesus, who died for us.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The last session ended with Jesus finishing his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Immediately after that, the leading priests and Jewish elders sent a large group of people to find Jesus. Judas was with them. Judas went up to Jesus and kissed him. This was the signal Judas planned to show the men who Jesus was. The people then grabbed Jesus and arrested Him. One of the disciples cut off one of the men's ear. This man was a servant of the high priest. John tells us that the disciple was Peter and the servant's name was Malchus (John 18:10). Jesus told His disciple to put up his sword. Jesus said His Father could have sent armies of angels to rescue Him, but Jesus wanted

the Scriptures to be **fulfilled**. At this point, all the disciples ran away. Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. The teachers of the law and the Jewish elders gathered together. Peter came and stayed far off to see what would happen. The high priest began asking Jesus questions.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 26:47-27:32)

1. Affirmed by Scripture (Matthew 26:63-64)

VERSE 63.

⁶³ *But Jesus said nothing. Again the high priest said to Jesus, “I command you by the power of the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”*

Jesus said nothing because He didn’t need to defend Himself. This was **fulfillment** of prophecy. (See today’s Bible Skill on page 90.) The high priest wanted Jesus to say something, so the high priest commanded Jesus to reply. It would be like being under oath today. The high priest wasn’t interested in the truth. The high priest only wanted Jesus to say something that would make Himself look guilty.

VERSE 64.

⁶⁴ *Jesus answered, “Those are your words. But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, the Powerful One, and coming on clouds in the sky.”*

Jesus answered the high priest with two **Messianic** prophecies. Remember, the Son of Man is a title Jesus used to refer to Himself. Jesus answered the high priest saying that He was the fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming **Messiah**. Jesus knew these words would bring about the death sentence for Himself. The Jews would say that Jesus was blaspheming against God. **Blasphemy** is “to say something bad against God, to not show respect to God, or to insult God.”

Why was it important for Jesus to use Scripture in response to the questions?

How does Scripture continue to be the authority on who Jesus is?

BIBLE SKILL: *Research Old Testament Prophecies*

The Old Testament is full of prophecies about the coming Messiah, or Savior, of the Jewish people. Read the verses below and write what they say about how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Isaiah 53:7 _____

Psalms 110:1 _____

Daniel 7:13-14 _____

2. Denied by His Enemies (Matthew 26:65-68)

VERSE 65.

⁶⁵ *When the high priest heard this, he tore his clothes and said, “This man has said things that are against God! We don’t need any more witnesses; you all heard Him say these things against God.*

Jesus didn’t have a fair trial. The high priest already wanted Jesus to die. The high priest didn’t care what the witnesses said. The high priest heard Jesus’ answer and decided Jesus’ words were enough to convict Him. The high priest decided that Jesus was guilty. He wrongly accused Jesus of **blasphemy** against God. Jesus and God are one. The high priest did not understand that Jesus was right to say what He did.

VERSE 66.

⁶⁶ *“What do you think?” The people answered, “He should die.”*

The high priest excited the people and asked them what they thought. The people in this passage were the religious leaders. How did the religious leaders respond? They wanted Jesus to die. They did not realize that Jesus was the **Messiah**. They thought the Messiah would be a political ruler, not the Savior, the One who would save us from our sins. The religious leaders completely misunderstood Jesus and what the Scriptures said about the Messiah. They didn't see Jesus as the Suffering Servant prophesied in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:6 explains, "We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way. But the Lord has put on Him the punishment for all the evil we have done."

VERSE 67.

⁶⁷ Then the people there spat in Jesus' face and beat Him with their fists. Others slapped Him.

The religious leaders showed what their hearts were like on the inside. They hated Jesus. They spit on Jesus, hit Him, and slapped Him. Jesus did not have to let them do this to Him. But He accepted the punishment for you and me.

VERSE 68.

⁶⁸ They said, "Prove to us that you are a prophet, you Christ! Tell us who hit You!"

The religious leaders often asked Jesus to prove He was God. Now they demanded Jesus prove who He was. They must see to believe. That is not God's way. God wants us to believe first, then He will show us. Faith comes first, then sight. The people here didn't have faith in Jesus. The people mocked Jesus. They did not respect Him. The people didn't really believe that Jesus was God.

Notice the progression of the headings in this session. First is "**Affirmed** by Scriptures." The Old Testament prophecies predicted the coming Messiah. These prophecies were **fulfilled** in Jesus. The second heading, "Denied by His Enemies" meant the people turned against Jesus and denied Him. The third heading is "**Abandoned** by His Friends." *Abandoned* means "left behind or **forsaken**." This was probably the toughest of all for Jesus. It would be toughest for any of us. If an enemy denies us, we can understand that. If a friend denies us and leaves us, that is tough to endure.

Why didn't Jesus argue with His enemies?

3. Abandoned by His Friends (Matthew 26:69-75)

BIBLE SKILL: *Read Verses About Persecution*

The Bible never promised that following Jesus would be an easy life. In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. The Bible teaches us to expect people to persecute us for following Jesus. Look up these verses and write what they say about persecution. Include any promises you find.

Matthew 5:11-12 _____

Matthew 5:44 _____

Luke 21:12-13 _____

John 15:20 _____

John 16:33 _____

2 Timothy 3:12 _____

VERSE 69.

⁶⁹ *At that time, as Peter was sitting in the courtyard, a servant girl came to him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee."*

Remember what Jesus told Peter? Jesus told Peter that he would deny Jesus three times. Let's see what happened. Who challenged Peter first? A simple servant girl told Peter he was with Jesus. Surely Peter wasn't afraid of this servant girl? How did Peter answer her?

VERSE 70.

⁷⁰ *But Peter said to all the people there that he was never with Jesus. He said, "I don't know what you are talking about."*

Peter told this servant girl and the people around her that he was never with Jesus. This was the first time Peter denied Jesus. Peter even added that he didn't know what the girl was talking about, meaning he didn't even know who Jesus was.

VERSE 71.

⁷¹ *When he left the courtyard and was at the gate, another girl saw him. She said to the people there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."*

Maybe Peter thought it was not safe to stay in the courtyard after the servant girl recognized him. He moved to the gate, but then Peter was faced with another girl who recognized him. Can you imagine? Peter said he would never deny Jesus, but who made him deny Jesus? Two girls! Not even two men made Peter fall; two girls made Peter fall and deny Jesus.

VERSE 72.

⁷² *Again, Peter said he was never with Him, saying, "I swear I don't know this man Jesus!"*

Peter now denied Jesus and swore that He never knew Jesus. This is the second time Peter denied Jesus.

VERSE 73.

⁷³ *A short time later, some people standing there went to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of those who followed Jesus. The way you talk shows it."*

Now some other people went up to Peter and said that he was with Jesus. The people said that Peter talked like the group from Galilee. You know people from different parts of our country who talk and sign differently than people from other parts. Jesus and His followers from Galilee talked differently. He didn't talk like the people in Jerusalem. These people caught that Peter had an accent. Surely Peter had to be one of Jesus' followers.

VERSES 74-75.

⁷⁴ *Then Peter began to place a curse on himself and swear, "I don't know the man." At once, a rooster crowed.*

⁷⁵ *And Peter remembered what Jesus had told him: "Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you don't know Me." Then Peter went outside and cried painfully.*

This was the third time that Peter denied Jesus. He cursed again and said he didn't know Jesus. What happened next? The rooster crowed.

Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. Jesus told him that he would deny knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. Peter was upset that he had denied Jesus. Peter went outside and cried very hard. Later Jesus forgave Peter and gave Peter a new job to do. We may think that, like Peter, we have messed up things very badly. We may feel that Jesus is finished with

us. But Jesus is not done with us. Jesus forgives and brings us back to a good relationship with Him. First John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done.”

Why might a person deny that he or she is a Christian?

How do we deny knowing Jesus?

Write your thoughts or questions to discuss with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

This passage gave an example of when it was a tough time to follow Jesus. Peter wanted to be near His best friend, but Peter couldn't handle the pressure. He did not want people to know that he was with Jesus.

Are you sometimes afraid to talk about Jesus? Why or why not?

Peter was afraid for people to know that he was a friend of Jesus. Peter was afraid the Romans would kill him, too. Later Peter became a very bold witness for Jesus. He suffered persecution for following Jesus. We are living in a time when it's becoming more difficult to be a Christian. We could go to jail in the future for our belief in Jesus. We could face persecution for following Jesus. Some people today already face persecution for their Christian faith.

What kind of persecution can we face today for following Jesus?

Have you faced any persecution for your belief in Jesus? If yes, explain.

How can you remain loyal to Jesus if you face persecution in the future?

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus answered, "Those are your words. But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, the Powerful One, and coming on clouds in the sky."

—Matthew 26:64



Session 12

CRUCIFIED

Jesus willingly sacrificed His life to pay the price for all of humanity's sin.

MATTHEW 27:41-52

FIRST THOUGHTS

Most communities in the United States have police and fire departments. The men and women who work in these departments are willing to put their lives in danger to protect their neighbors. There have been times they have entered unsafe situations. They rescue people from fires. They keep us safe. They are willing to sacrifice their own lives for us to be safe. Jesus willingly died on the cross to save people from their sin.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Our session last week ended with Peter denying Jesus. The next morning the religious leaders took Jesus to Pilate, the governor. Pilate tried to get Jesus to talk to him. Jesus refused to defend Himself. Finally Pilate asked the people if they wanted him to release Jesus or Barabbas, a prisoner. The religious leaders convinced the people to ask for Barabbas to be set free. The people told Pilate to crucify Jesus. Pilate ordered Jesus to be beaten, then crucified. Jesus is now on the cross.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 27:33-66)

1. Mocked (Matthew 27:41-44)

VERSE 41.

⁴¹ *The leading priests, the teachers of the law, and the Jewish elders were also making fun of Jesus.*

The high priest wanted Jesus dead. Now the leading priests, teachers of the Law, and the Jewish elders all came against Jesus, too. They made fun of Jesus. They mocked Him. Jesus had no one to support Him. Jesus was alone on the cross.

VERSE 42.

⁴² *They said, "He saved others, but He can't save himself! He says He is the king of Israel! If He is the king, let Him come down now from the cross. Then we will believe in Him.*

The leaders made fun of Jesus. They didn't believe Jesus was really a king. Jesus appeared to be helpless on the cross. They mocked Jesus and said if He was really a king, He could come down from the cross. If He performed for them, then they would believe Him. The religious leaders did not understand what the **Messiah** would do. They thought the Messiah would be a political Savior, not a spiritual Savior to take away our sins.

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *"He trusts in God, so let God save Him now, if God really wants Him. He Himself said, 'I am the Son of God.'"*

The leaders continued to mock Jesus. They said Jesus trusted in God. Let God help Jesus now. They were quoting from Psalm 22:8. They even used the Scriptures as part of their mockery of Jesus.

This had to be very difficult for Jesus. Satan was using these religious leaders to tempt Jesus, but Jesus had prayed during the night and had set his mind to completing God's will. By trusting God, Jesus could carry out the plan to save all the people of the world. He was not interested in saving Himself. Jesus knew His Father, God, could be trusted.

VERSE 44.

⁴⁴ *And in the same way, the robbers who were being crucified beside Jesus also insulted Him.*

There were two robbers being crucified at the same time with Jesus. These robbers joined the religious leader in mocking Jesus. Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53:3, “He was hated and rejected by people. He had much pain and suffering.” The people **despised** Jesus. Jesus wasn’t going to win a popularity contest. Imagine how the two robbers being crucified with Jesus joined in to make fun of Jesus. They were suffering terribly with Him, but they chose to make fun of Jesus, too.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that one robber believed in Jesus. Jesus told the robber, “...today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Even in His suffering, Jesus offered forgiveness.

What types of pain did Jesus face?

Which type do you think weighed the most? Explain.

Discuss your answers with your group.

BIBLE SKILL: *Search for Similar Verses*

Sin always separates us from God. The Bible has different stories about how people’s sins separated them from God. Identify the person(s) in the passages below who experienced separation from God because of sin.

Genesis 3:22-24 _____

Genesis 4:13-16 _____

Psalms 51:9-12 _____

Isaiah 6:12-13 _____

Jonah 1:1-10 _____

Acts 5:1-11 _____

2. Forsaken (Matthew 27:45-49)

VERSE 45.

⁴⁵*At noon the whole country became dark, and the darkness lasted for three hours.*

Jesus' death was the most significant event of human history. The darkness was supernatural. We can't explain the cause of that darkness, but the darkness fit the terrible occasion. Christ, the mighty Maker, died for sinful people. It was like the whole world was thrown into darkness at this horrible time.

VERSE 46.

⁴⁶*About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" This means, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?"*

Abandoned means "to leave someone alone, to walk away from that person." It's the same meaning as our heading for this section—**forsaken**.

At three o'clock, the darkness ended. At three o'clock, Jesus cried out. Jesus cried out in Aramaic. Matthew wanted us to know exactly what Jesus said, so Matthew put the Aramaic words in his letter. We have it translated into English, "My God, my God, why have You abandoned Me?" Oh, what a cry! Jesus had never been separated from God the Father since the beginning of eternity. Now was the first time ever that Jesus experienced separation from the Father. How terrible that must have been!

Why was Jesus separated from the Father? The Father turned away from His Son because Jesus now bore our sins upon Himself. Jesus, the righteous holy One now became sin for us, that we can become righteous in the sight of the Father. "Christ had no sin, but God made Him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). What love Jesus had for us that He was willing to endure separation from the Father! Oh, that we would show some of this love back to Jesus because of what He has done for us!

This cry from Jesus to the Father is the only one recorded by Matthew. Jesus made seven different statements from the cross, but this is the only one Matthew wrote down for his readers.

VERSE 47.

⁴⁷ *Some of the people standing there who heard this said, "He is calling Elijah."*

In the previous verse, the Aramaic starts off "Eli, Eli, lama...." The people standing around weren't familiar with Aramaic, so they misunderstood and thought Jesus was calling for Elijah.

VERSE 48.

⁴⁸ *Quickly one of them ran and got a sponge and filled it with vinegar and tied it to a stick and gave it to Jesus to drink.*

The vinegar was sour wine. One person showed compassion to Jesus by offering Him the wine to drink. Nobody else did anything to help Jesus, but this one person did offer Jesus a drink.

VERSE 49.

⁴⁹ *But the others said, "Don't bother Him. We want to see if Elijah will come to save Him."*

When one person tries to do good things, others will be quick to discourage that person. The other people standing near Jesus told the person who tried to offer Jesus a drink to leave Jesus alone. They didn't care about Jesus' suffering. They wanted to see if Elijah would show up and do a mighty **miracle** and save Jesus. They didn't care about Jesus. They just wanted to see something dramatic. How many people get upset when nothing dramatic happens in the church? People want to be entertained.

What do the three hours of darkness teach us about sin? about God?

How is the darkness of sin seen today?

DIG DEEPER: *Jesus as God and Man*

Jesus is both God and man. God's plan required that Jesus suffer all the physical pains and temptations that we experience. His victory over death and sin is the only way He could be our Savior. Throughout the gospels, we see examples of times that Jesus showed his humanity, but other times we notice actions that only God could do.

Write the word human when Jesus acted as a man. Write the word God when Jesus acted as God.

Jesus died on the cross. _____

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. _____

Jesus won over Satan in his three temptations of Jesus. _____

Jesus fed the 5000. _____

Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery. _____

Jesus healed the paralyzed man lowered down through the roof. _____

Jesus wept when Lazarus died. _____

Jesus turned the water to wine. _____

Jesus obeyed His parents as a boy. _____

3. Sacrificed (Matthew 27:50-52)

VERSE 50.

⁵⁰ *But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and died.*

Jesus shouted His last cry and died. John tells us that after Jesus drank the vinegar, He said His last words, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus didn't die in defeat. Jesus cried out in victory. Jesus was in complete control of His moment of death. Jesus could have at any moment called all the angels in heaven to help Him, but Jesus didn't. Jesus picked the moment He would die. Jesus wanted to die for us so that, through His death, we would have eternal life.

VERSE 51.

⁵¹ *Then the curtain in the Temple was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. Also, the earth shook and rocks broke apart.*

Matthew recorded three **miraculous** signs that happened right after Jesus died. First, the curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom. The curtain in the Temple was very thick and separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only once a year. The curtain was also very tall. It was humanly impossible for it to tear from top to bottom. So that meant that God Himself ripped the curtain from the top down, showing that now access was possible to God Himself. People no longer needed to approach God through the high priest. Can you imagine how this made the high priest and other religious leaders feel? This **miracle** was a message from God to them.

Second, an earthquake happened and rocks broke to pieces. That was the second miraculous sign. This miracle was for everyone else. Have you ever been in an earthquake? It can be a frightening experience. That this earthquake happened at the same time that Jesus died was not just coincidental. God has total control over nature.

VERSE 52.

⁵² *The graves opened, and many of God's people who had died were raised from the dead.*

The third miraculous sign was the opening of the graves. Many of God's people were raised from the dead and walked out of their tombs. They were seen walking around in Jerusalem. That had to be a terrifying sight to see, dead people walking around alive.

What were the three miraculous signs that happened after Jesus died?

How do you think the people near Jesus felt?

What does it mean to us that the curtain was torn in the Holy of Holies?

Discuss your answers with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

Can you imagine how you would have felt if you had been standing there at the foot of the cross? Or if you had been standing in the Temple when the huge curtain ripped from top to bottom? It would be obvious that Jesus' death was not an ordinary death. Jesus was not an ordinary person. Jesus was God's Son, the **Messiah**, the King of Israel.

Jesus' death provided our salvation. Jesus' death also gave us open and unlimited access to the Father. We can talk with the Father at any time. What is your prayer life like? Are you going to God often in prayer? Are you praying for the people around you? Do you pray for your family, your friends, your co-workers, your bosses, government leaders, missionaries? God gave us the privilege of prayer. We have a huge responsibility to pray for others.

Do you know someone who needs Jesus?

Write his or her name down and begin to pray for that person.

Jesus' suffering and death bought your salvation. How often do you thank Jesus that He died for you?

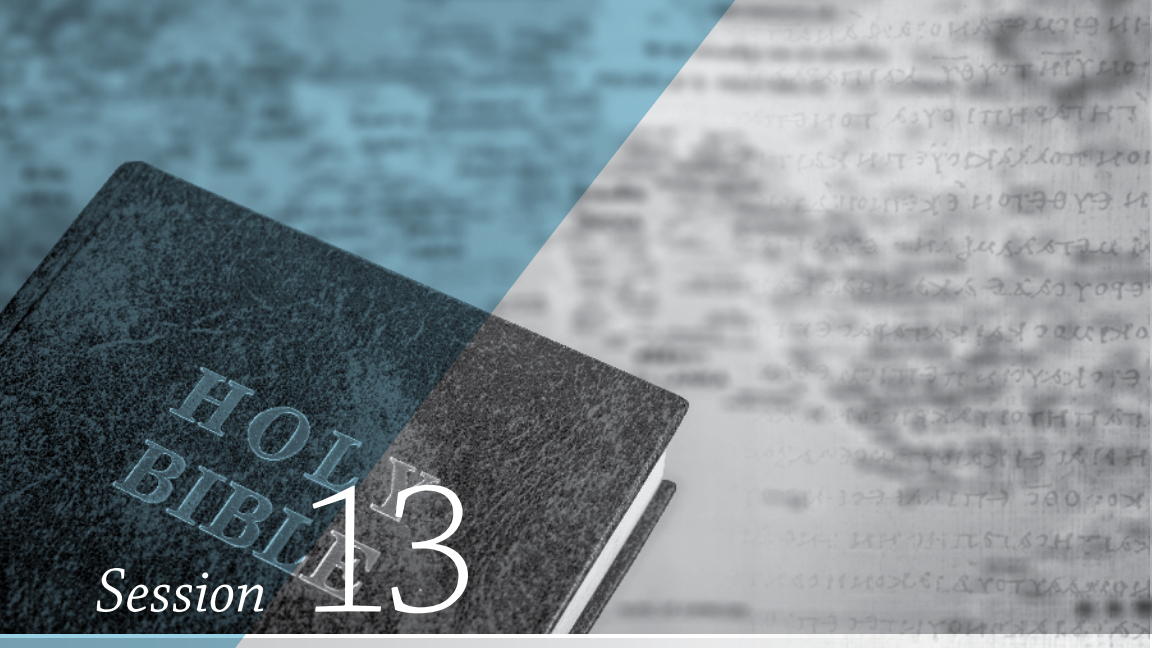
How can you share about Jesus' death and salvation with others?

What person on your prayer list can you share with this week?

MEMORY VERSE

When the army officer and the soldiers guarding Jesus saw this earthquake and everything else that happened, they were very frightened and said, "He really was the Son of God!"

—Matthew 27:54



Session 13

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Jesus expects His followers to seek to be disciple-makers of all people.

MATTHEW 28:16-20

FIRST THOUGHTS

When young people receive a **commission** as officers in the U.S. military, it's a proud day and a wonderful honor. What is a *commission*? When they are given their commission, they receive a task to defend their country and to lead young soldiers. We have a higher honor as Christians. We serve a living King who has given us a spiritual commission. What commission has Jesus given us? This session is about our commission as Jesus' followers.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus was crucified on Friday. After Jesus' death, Jesus' followers hid. They were afraid of being arrested for their connection with Jesus as His followers. Then on Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead. Two women went to His tomb and an angel told the women the great news that Jesus was alive. The two women went and told Jesus' followers. This session starts where the followers go to meet Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 28:16-20)

1. Worship (Matthew 28:16-17)

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ *The eleven followers went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.*

The eleven disciples obeyed Jesus. Jesus had told them to go to a specific mountain. The Gospel of Mark tells us Jesus explained, before His death, where the disciples were to meet Him after He rose from the dead (Mark 16:7). Galilee was a familiar place for the disciples. They must have felt safe and comforted to meet Jesus again in a familiar area. The disciples went there to meet with Jesus again.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshiped Him, but some of them did not believe it was really Jesus.*

The disciples saw Jesus on the mountain. What was the first thing they did when they saw Jesus? They worshiped Jesus. What does it mean to worship Jesus? *Worship* means “to praise Jesus and thank Him for what He has done for us.” Worship means to focus on Jesus and tell Jesus how wonderful He is. The disciples were in awe of Jesus. Jesus had died and come back to life again. What a wonderful Savior and Lord! What a wonderful hope Jesus gave to His disciples and to us, too. We can experience eternal life! We will not stay dead. If we are Jesus’ followers we too will rise from the grave and live forever.

It is important to understand that the disciples worshiped Jesus because they realized that Jesus was God. When the disciples saw that Jesus was risen from the dead, the disciples understood that Jesus was not just a man. Jesus was God Himself.

Note the sad contrast—the disciples worshiped Jesus, but some did not believe that it was really Jesus standing there with them. Worship and doubt cannot go together. If you have doubt in your heart, then you cannot truly worship Jesus. The writer of Hebrews said that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We must have faith in Jesus to make God happy with us.

True worship also leads to obedience. The disciples saw that Jesus was truly God and worshiped Him. Next, the disciples were ready to obey and serve Jesus. Jesus had brought joy and hope into their lives. The disciples were willing to do whatever Jesus wanted them to do, even if it meant dying for Jesus. Jesus soon told the disciples what He wanted them to do for Him.

Can you worship Jesus and doubt that He is God? Why or why not?

How did knowing Jesus was alive change the disciples?

How should knowing Jesus is alive change how we live?

Discuss your answers with your group.

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Verses*

The word *Trinity* is not in the Bible, but the concept is clear. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one. Matthew 28:19 mentions all three persons of the Trinity. There are some other places in the Bible where all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned or where the plural nature of God is mentioned. Look up these verses and write down what they have to say about God as Three persons.

Genesis 1:26 _____

Genesis 11:7 _____

John 14:26 _____

2 Corinthians 13:14 _____

Ephesians 1:17 _____

Hebrews 9:14 _____

1 Peter 1:2 _____

1 Peter 3:18 _____

2. Power (Matthew 28:18)

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All power in heaven and on earth is given to Me.*

What was the first thing Jesus told His disciples? Jesus said all power in heaven and earth was His. Wow! Jesus had all the power in the whole universe! That power was given to Jesus because of His death on the cross and His triumphant resurrection. Remember when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness? Satan tried to offer Jesus a shortcut to power, but Jesus refused. Jesus was patient and obeyed God completely. Jesus suffered and died for us. In the end, God rewarded Jesus and gave Jesus all power.

Wait a minute! Some disciples might have been tempted to argue with Jesus. It would have been easy for people to say, “I thought Jesus already had all power in the world and the universe?” What was Jesus talking about here? Because Jesus has always been God from the beginning and still was God, how could Jesus have more power? The issue here is that when Adam sinned and fell, the whole human race came under the control of Satan. When Adam sinned, he placed himself under Satan’s rule. Ever since Adam, all humans have been in bondage to Satan’s rule and no one could defeat Satan. Jesus was the first and only man who came along who lived a perfect life and was able to defeat Satan. However, for that victory to be complete, Jesus had to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. When Jesus died and rose again, He forever destroyed Satan’s rule over people. This is what Jesus meant that all power was now His. Jesus was talking about authority. Satan no longer had authority to rule over humans. Jesus now rightfully had that authority.

Paul called Jesus the last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Because of Paul’s explanations about the last Adam, many Bible scholars call Jesus the **Second Adam**. The first Adam brought death. The Second Adam (Jesus) brought life. Satan tempted the first Adam and Adam fell into sin. Satan tempted the Second Adam (Jesus) and Jesus defeated Satan. With Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection, Jesus took back the authority that Adam lost.

Jesus said He has all power. What does this mean?

Why was it important for Jesus to remind the disciples of His authority?

Discuss your answers with your group.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Making Disciples*

God expects healthy Christians to reproduce. **Reproduce** means “to create new life.” A healthy apple tree will produce apples. Apples have seeds that can grow new apples trees. God expects Christians to reproduce by leading others to faith in Jesus. This is called making disciples. Christians should also accept their responsibility to care for these new Christians. Caring for new followers means teaching these new followers how to grow in their faith. It means being involved in their lives, praying for them and guiding them. It is not enough to be born again, but Christians need to grow and become mature believers.

3. Mission (Matthew 28:19-20a)

VERSE 19.

¹⁹ *“So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus gave His disciples a command. Jesus did not tell His disciples to make followers of only Jewish people. He commanded them to go to all people in the world. Maybe this did not sink into the disciples’ minds immediately, but later the early church would have to interpret and apply Jesus’ command.

This command applies to us, too. What did Jesus say to do? Jesus said to “go and make followers of all people in the world.” What does that mean? We are to share the Good News of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection with everyone. We are to convert people to Christianity everywhere we go. When people decide to follow Jesus, we are to baptize them in the name of our **Triune God**—meaning in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

VERSE 20a.

²⁰ *“Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you,*

Jesus continued His command to His disciples and to us. His disciples were

to teach the new believers to obey everything that Jesus taught them. We have the same responsibility. First, we are to obey everything that Jesus taught. Second, we are to teach others to obey everything that Jesus taught in the Scriptures.

Jesus' followers are supposed to be obedient followers. People cannot follow Jesus without obeying His commands. Many people have a wrong concept of what it means to follow Jesus. People think attending church is the same as following Jesus. That is not true. Followers of Jesus study the Bible to learn everything they can about Jesus and God. Then the followers obey everything they have learned. Jesus requires obedience from His followers. That is the true test of a follower of Jesus—obedience. The Bible teaches us that you will know Jesus' followers by their fruit. Jesus said, "You should produce much fruit and show that you are my followers, which brings glory to my Father" (John 15:8). That fruit will be their obedience to God's Word.

Sometimes churches are weak in teaching new believers how to follow Christ. New believers need help so they can learn how to study the Bible. They need help learning how to pray. They need tools so that they can grow strong in their Christian lives. It is difficult to obey if we do not know what God wants from us. Christians need to help each other so that we can follow God's plan and obey His will. If you are a new Christian, ask another Christian to help you become a strong follower. If you have been a Christian for a long time, find someone that you can help to grow as a Christian.

Jesus' command in verses 19 and 20 is called the **Great Commission**. What is a **commission**? It is "an order to do something and includes the authority to complete the task." A person joining the military may receive a commission, a position and authority to perform certain duties. An artist may be **commissioned** to do a painting. Churches commission missionaries to go and share about God with the people of the world. God **commissions** Christians to make disciples and to train them.

4. Presence (Matthew 28:20b)

VERSE 20b.

²⁰ *"and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age."*

Jesus followed up His command with a promise. What was that promise? Jesus told His disciples, "I will be with you always." What a promise! The disciples knew obeying the command from Jesus would not be easy. They knew it could be dangerous. Seeing Jesus alive again, and having this promise from Him made the task easier.

Jesus will always be with us! We do not have to walk this Christian path alone. Jesus is with us every step of the way in our journey of life. This

promise isn't for everyone. This promise is only for those who follow Jesus and obey His commands.

How are the things Jesus told the disciples to do being carried out today?

How are you helping carry out these actions?

How does knowing Jesus will be with us give us courage to make disciples?

Discuss your answers with your group.

IN MY CONTEXT

Think about how the disciples felt. Think about how their world had been turned upside down. What was Jesus' last command to them? Jesus would soon be returning to heaven. How would the disciples feel about Jesus' last words to them? How do those last words affect you today and your church? What are you and your church doing to obey Jesus' command to make new followers? Answer the questions below and discuss them with your group to think about how your church is **fulfilling** the **Great Commission**.

Does your church have a mission statement? YES NO

What is the mission of your church?

How is your church's mission connected with the Great Commission?

What are some specific ways you and your church are obeying the Great Commission?

Are there some new ways you and your church can obey the Great Commission?

MEMORY VERSE

So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age"

—Matthew 28:19-20

TIME LINE OF JESUS' LAST WEEK



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Triumphal Entry <i>Matthew 21:1-10;</i> <i>Mark 11:1-10</i>	Barren Fig Tree Cursed <i>Matthew 21:18-19</i>	Debates at the Temple <i>Matthew 21:23–23:39;</i> <i>Mark 11:27–12:40</i>	Anointing of Jesus at Bethany <i>Matthew 26:6-13;</i> <i>Mark 14:3-9; John 12:3-8</i>
At the Temple Complex <i>Matthew 21:14-16;</i> <i>Mark 11:11a</i>	Temple Cleansed of Moneychangers <i>Matthew 21:12-13;</i> <i>Mark 11:12-19</i>	End-Time Discourse at the Mount of Olives <i>Matthew 24:1–25:46;</i> <i>Mark 13</i>	
Return to Bethany <i>Matthew 21:17;</i> <i>Mark 11:11b</i>	Greeks Seek Jesus <i>John 12:20-26</i>		



THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<p>Passover Celebrated; Lord's Supper Inaugurated <i>Matthew 26:17-30</i></p> <p>Jesus' Farewell Discourses <i>John 14-16</i></p> <p>Jesus' Intercessory Prayer <i>John 17</i></p> <p>Prayer of Agony in Gethsemane <i>Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42</i></p> <p>Jesus' Betrayal and Arrest <i>Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50</i></p>	<p>Jesus' Trials in Jerusalem <i>Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1-2,11-26</i></p> <p>Jesus' Crucifixion and Burial <i>Matthew 27:27-61; John 19:16-42</i></p>	<p>Jesus in the Tomb <i>Matthew 27:62-66; Luke 23:56b</i></p>	<p>Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances <i>Matthew 28:1-10,16-20; John 20-21</i></p>

WORD LIST

Abandon; Abandoned—Left behind or forsaken, to leave someone alone, to walk away from that person.

Affirm; Affirmed—To say something is true.

Blasphemy—To say something bad against God, to not show respect to God, or to insult God.

Commission—It is an order to do something and includes the authority to complete the task.

Cornerstone—A stone that is a foundation stone at the corner of a building.

Deity—God.

Despised—Hated.

Encounter—A planned or unplanned meeting between one or more people.

Forerunner—A person who goes before another to prepare the way.

Forsaken—See Abandoned.

Fulfill; Fulfilled—To complete, or when something is completed.

Furious—To become very angry.

Glorified—To show glory or brightness.

Great Commission—A specific commission that Jesus gave to His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples.

Hypocrite; Hypocrites—A person who pretends to be different than he or she really is.

Inner circle—A few people who are the closest trusted friends.

Ironical—Something that happens that is opposite of what is expected.

Mediator—A person who goes between two people who don't get along and tries to make them friends.

Messiah—The "Anointed One." The expected King and Deliverer that God promised to send to the Jews. It is a title, not a name. It is a Hebrew word. The Greek word is Christ and the English word is Savior.

Messianic—Having to do with the Messiah.

Miracle—An event that can't be explained by natural law or science.

Miraculous—Having to do with miracles.

Monopoly—Having complete ownership or control.

Ordinance—The practice of something within the Church that demonstrates the faith of the person doing it. Baptist churches have two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are not required for salvation.

Parable—A short story illustrating a moral teaching or religious principle.

Parallel—Following the same direction, side by side, or happening at the same time.

Passover—Celebration of the day the death angel passed over Jewish families in Egypt.

Pilgrims—People who travel from their home to another place. In this session, people traveled to Jerusalem.

Plague—A disaster that causes destruction such as famine, illness, or death.

Prediction—Telling what will happen in the future.

Privileged—To have special rights or advantages that other people do not have.

Provision—Something that is given to meet a person's physical, emotional, or spiritual need.

Radically—Very new or different from what is traditional.

Reconciled—Two people who were enemies or at disagreement with each other have become friends.

Reproduce—Create new life. Christians reproduce by witnessing to people and leading them to faith in Christ and helping them to grow into mature Christians.

Second Adam—Jesus is known as the Second Adam since Jesus brings life to all who died because of the first Adam.

Standard—A measurement of what is expected.

Steward—A person who manages or takes care of another person's property or things.

Stunned—To be surprised or upset by something.

Torment—To cause very bad physical or mental pain.

Transfiguration—A glorifying or spiritual change.

Transformation—To show a change.

Triumphal; Triumphantly—Celebrating or remembering a triumph or victory.

Triune God—One God in Three Persons—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND LEADERS

- On-Line Commentary: <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/index.htm>
- Bible verses in this publication are from the New Century Version (NCV).
- The ASL Bible is produced by Deaf Missions and available at www.deafmissionsstore.com
- The ASL Bible for mobile devices is available at www.DeafBible.com or www.Bible.is/Deaf
- Let's Sign Hymnal and the ASL Bible are available on Amazon



Explore the Bible®

LEADER GUIDE

women, fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Je'-sus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, ^aas he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Gal'-i-lee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 ¶ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Je'-sus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Je'-sus unto them, be not afraid: go tell ^amy brethren that they go into Gal'-i-lee, and there shall they see me.

11 ¶ Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave money unto the soldiers,

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Jesus' Commission

16 Then the eleven disciples went into Gal'-i-lee, into a town, whither he had appointed them.

17 ¶ And when they were assembled, he shipped him, and came to them, and said,



Matthew 14-28

Session 1

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is the Christ to whom all of Scripture points.

MATTHEW 16:13-28

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will understand clearly who Jesus is.
- Ask _____ to study the Introduction to the Book of Matthew and summarize it for the group.
- Locate the map of Israel in the New Testament on the inside back cover and find Caesarea Philippi. This is where today's session takes place.
- Make the session come alive! Bring a set of keys with you for the session. You will use these for a picture session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Jesus had been with His disciples for a while. Beginning in chapter 16, He began to prepare His disciples for the work they would do after His death and resurrection. They needed to understand who He really is. It is equally important that Christians today understand who Jesus is as well.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 16:13-28)

1. Misunderstood Identity (Matthew 16:13-14)

Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. Ask _____ to read from Daniel 7:13-14. This is the first time in the Bible that the **Messiah** was called the Son of Man. Jesus used this title for Himself 81 times in the Gospels. Revelation 1:13 also uses this title for the Messiah.

Ask the group to read Matthew 16:13-14. *What did people say about Jesus? Who did they think He was? When you talk with people today, what do they say about Jesus? Who do they think He is?* Encourage discussion.

2. True Identity (Matthew 16:15-16)

People had different ideas about Jesus. They knew He was important but they didn't have the right idea. Discuss "Peter's confession." Who did Peter say Jesus is? Use material from this section of the Personal Study Guide to discuss the meaning of Christ and Son of the Living God. These titles are important because they show that Jesus is the Messiah.

3. New Identity (Matthew 16:17-20)

Jesus said that He would build His church on this rock. *What did Jesus mean by rock?*

Jesus talked about the keys to the kingdom. Hold up the keys that you brought to group. Explain that these are the keys to your house or your car. Tell someone in the group that you would like for them to go to your car/house and get something from it—but don't give them your key. How can you get into the house or car without the key? You can't. Ask _____ to read Romans 10:14. *How will people hear about Jesus?* Someone must tell them. Explain that Christians have the key—the information that gives others access to a relationship with God. We can share Jesus with other people. When those people understand who Jesus is and decide to follow Him, they can have eternal life. The news we have to share is powerful.

4. Cross Identity (Matthew 16:21-28)

Up until this time, Jesus had taught his disciples and groups of people using stories and parables. Beginning here, He began to prepare His disciples for His suffering and death. Imagine that you were with Jesus like the disciples. You traveled with Him. You listened to Him teach often. You knew He had power. Perhaps you thought He would become a king, and you would be there to help Him. Now He begins to explain how He will suffer and die. *Is Peter's response a surprise to you? Why or why not?*

Discuss the group members' answers to the questions in this section about giving up one's life for Christ.

IN MY CONTEXT

Spend time discussing how group members can tell others who Jesus really is. Ask them to think of friends and others they know who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ. Pray for those people.

Session 2

IS JESUS FULLY GOD?

Jesus is fully God. When Jesus came to earth, He hid His heavenly glory, but at times He let that glory peek through.

MATTHEW 17:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will understand that Jesus is fully God.
- **Story:** Read and study the story for today's session. Practice signing the story from Matthew 17:1-9 so that you can sign the story without reading it from the Bible. Remember you can use the ASL Bible for ideas of how to sign the story.

FOCUS ATTENTION

At the end of last week's session Jesus told the disciples, "...Some people standing here will see the Son of Man coming with His kingdom before they die." Many Bible teachers believe Jesus was talking about the **transfiguration**, which happens in today's session. Three of the disciples saw Jesus in His glory and heard God the Father speak.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 17:1-13)

Tell the story. Sign the story from Matthew 17:1-9. (You will discuss verses 10-13 later.) This will help the group to have a complete picture of what happened. Check to see if the group remembers most of the story. If they don't, sign the story again. Then discuss the topics below.

1. Presence (Matthew 17:1-6)

Why do you think that Moses and Elijah were with Jesus? (Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the prophets.) Why did Peter want to build tents for

Jesus, Moses and Elijah? (Perhaps to stay longer and postpone Jesus' suffering, to hold on to the glory.) God interrupted Peter. *What did God say about Jesus?* (That Jesus was His Son and He was pleased with Him. God said this same thing when Jesus was baptized. God also told the disciples to listen to Jesus.) The disciples were afraid when God spoke. They showed their reverence for Him by falling to the ground. *How do we show reverence today?*

2. Purpose (Matthew 17:7-9)

Jesus touched the disciples and told them not to be afraid. Moses and Elijah were not there anymore. *As Jesus and the disciples came down from the mountain, what did Jesus tell them?* (He told them not to tell anyone about this experience until after His resurrection.) *Why do you think Jesus said this?*

There are other times that Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about an event. If you have time, ask members of the group to read some of these. Mark 1:40-45 (Jesus healed a man of a skin disease); Matthew 9:27-30 (Jesus healed two blind men).

3. Perspective (Matthew 17:10-13)

Ask a member of the group to read verses 10-13. Jesus made it clear John the Baptist **fulfilled** the role of Elijah in a spiritual way. Then again Jesus told the disciples He would suffer and die like John the Baptist did.

Why was it so important for the disciples to understand that Jesus would suffer and die? Some people believed the **Messiah** would come as a king and rule over Israel. They thought He would free them from Roman rule. That was not Jesus' plan. We will learn more about this during our study of Matthew.

IN MY CONTEXT

As a group, discuss the questions from this section of the session. Remind members it is important for us to understand that Jesus shares in God's glory because He is fully God. We should show reverence to God always. Pray together and ask the Father to help us listen with our eyes and hearts to what the Son tells us to do.

Session 3

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Jesus offers the gift of eternal life to those willing to follow Him.

MATTHEW 19:16-26

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will practice putting God first in their lives.
- Make the session come alive! Ask two of the group members to study the story for today's session. One will take on the role of Jesus, the other will take on the role of the rich young man. They can act out the story from Matthew 19:16-24. Ask a third member (or you can do this) to sign verses 25-26.
- Find or make a poster with a list of the Ten Commandments.

FOCUS ATTENTION

During the time in between the **Transfiguration** and today's session, Jesus healed people and taught on several different topics. He had just allowed people to bring their children to see Him. Then a man came up to Him. Ask the two volunteers to act out the story of Jesus and the rich young man. After the third volunteer (or you) signs the last two verses, discuss the topics below.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 19:16-26)

1. Expectation Defined (Matthew 19:16-20)

Point to the poster of the Ten Commandments. Ask members to share which commandments Jesus listed for the rich young man. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is found in Leviticus 19:18b. Check off the commandments Jesus mentioned. *Which commands did Jesus not say?* (Don't have any other gods/

idols, do not covet/want things that belong to others) *Why do you think Jesus left those out?* (He knew which ones were a problem for the young man.)

2. Impossible to Keep Expectation (Matthew 19:21-22)

The rich young man knew there was something more. That is why he asked, “What else do I need to do?” *What did Jesus tell him to do?* (Sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus.) *Why do you think the young man left sad? Why didn’t he do what Jesus said?* (He loved his money.) *What are some things people may love more than they love Jesus?*

3. Provision for Expectation Success (Matthew 19:23-26)

Why did Jesus say it is hard for a rich person to go to heaven? Our memory verse from two weeks ago was Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus said to His followers, ‘If people want to follow Me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow Me.’” *What kinds of things might we need to give up?*

So is money evil? Ask a group member to read 1 Timothy 6:10. *What causes evil?* We can use money for good things. And it is important for us to work to get money to support ourselves and our families. We should also share with others. But money should never be first place in our lives. Jesus explained in Matthew 6:19-24 that people cannot serve both God and money. He must be first in our lives.

IN MY CONTEXT

Jesus made it clear that people cannot DO enough to have eternal life. We must BE followers of Christ. The disciples wondered about all of this when they asked, “Who then can be saved?” *What was Jesus’ answer?*

Discuss the questions at the end of the session in the group study material.

Session 4

MORE THAN A PROPHET?

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies associated with Israel's long-awaited King.

MATTHEW 21:1-11

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will learn to obey Jesus quickly.
- Ask _____ to prepare to sign Luke 19:39-40.
- Locate Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives on the map on the inside back cover.
- **Story:** Study the story in today's session. Practice signing the story so that you can tell it without looking at the Bible. If there is a group member who enjoys signing Bible stories, ask him or her to tell the story this week.
- Bring a picture of a donkey to group.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Remind the group that Jesus had done many miracles. He healed people. John wrote about Jesus bringing Lazarus back to life. Jesus showed that He had power. People were excited and wanted Jesus to be their king.

Sign the story for today's session. Then discuss the topics below.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 21:1-11)

1. The King's Choice (Matthew 21:1-5)

Show the group a picture of a donkey. *What do we normally think about a donkey's character?* (Stubborn—even the sign for donkey is similar to the sign for stubborn.) Imagine Jesus riding on the donkey. This was an important symbol for the Jews. Jesus **fulfilled** a prophecy by riding the donkey. *What*

did it mean for a king to ride on a donkey? (It showed that the king was peaceful. He was not coming to fight.)

Take time to discuss some of the other prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Group members can share their answers from the Bible Skill portion of today's session.

2. The King's Celebration (Matthew 21:6-9)

Talk about verse 6. *How did the disciples respond?* They obeyed Jesus quickly. The Bible has many stories about how people responded to God and to Jesus. Some of them obeyed quickly. Isaiah told God, "Here I am, send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Abram moved when God told him to and didn't ask for an explanation (Genesis 12:1-4). Others struggled with obedience. Jonah ran away from God (Jonah 1:3). Moses asked many questions and finally asked God to send someone else (Exodus 4:13). Ask volunteers to read the verses. *What about us? Do we obey quickly like the disciples did here? Why is it hard to obey quickly?* (Not enough faith, fear of failure, fear of what other people will think, selfishness...)

When Jesus rode through Jerusalem, how did the people respond? Explain that the people's praise showed they recognized Jesus as king, as the Son of David. But not all of the people in the crowd agreed.

3. The People's Confusion (Matthew 21:10-11)

Many of the people thought Jesus was only a prophet. They did not recognize Him as the **Messiah**. Ask _____ to sign the verses from Luke 19:39-40. *How did the Pharisees feel? Why did they want the people to stop praising Jesus?* The Pharisees knew the Old Testament prophecies. They did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and they didn't want the people to follow Him. They were already making plans to kill Him. Jesus knew the people were right to praise Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask members what they learned from today's session. Discuss how they would answer if someone asked them, "Who is this man?" Practice some ways we can explain who Jesus is. Share answers to the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide. Pray together; ask God for boldness to share Christ.

Session 5

IF I REJECT JESUS?

Jesus is central in God's plan of redemption.

MATTHEW 21:33-45

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will continue to grow in their understanding of God's plan of salvation.
- Ask _____ to study the **parable** of the vineyard and God's Son. They should practice signing the story so that they can sign the story for the group.
- Make the session come alive! Find a picture of a **cornerstone**. There are several good pictures online. Bring the picture to show the group. Be ready to explain what *cornerstone* means.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Explain that Jesus was in the Temple teaching. Some of the leading priests and elders came to Jesus. They asked Him questions. Jesus told them a story about two sons. Then He told them the story of the vineyard. Ask _____ to sign the story for the group (Matthew 21:33-39). After he/she signs the story, discuss the topics below. Ask the questions in italics.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 21:33-45)

1. The Son Sent (Matthew 21:33-37)

Why did Jesus use picture stories for teaching? (He used picture stories to help make important points using every day examples.) In today's session, Jesus used the story of a vineyard. In this story the characters represented other

people. *Whom did the farmers represent?* (They were like the Jewish leaders). *Whom did the land owner represent?* (God the Father) *Whom did the servants represent?* (The prophets) *Whom did the son represent?* (God's Son, Jesus) *Why did the farmers kill the servants?* (They wanted all the grapes for themselves.)

2. The Son Rejected (Matthew 21:38-39)

The land owner decided to send his son. He thought the farmers would respect his son. *What did the farmers do to the son? Why?* (They killed him. They thought they would be able to take everything that belonged to the son.)

Do you think the Pharisees knew Jesus was talking about them? Why or why not?

3. The Son Proven Right (Matthew 21:40-45)

What do you think the owner should do to the farmers? Encourage discussion. *What did the Jewish leaders answer?* (Sign verse 41 or ask a group member to sign it.) Clearly, the Jewish leaders understood the idea Jesus taught. They knew the farmers should suffer punishment.

Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22. He knew the leaders were familiar with this verse from the Old Testament. That verse was talking about the **Messiah**. Sign Matthew 21:42. *What is a cornerstone?* (Be ready to explain and show the picture.) A *cornerstone* is “a rock that is used as a foundation.” It can also be a rock that is the beginning of a building that all other rocks line up with. Jesus told the leaders that He is the cornerstone. Ask members to read Isaiah 28:16 and 1 Corinthians 3:11 for more about Jesus as the cornerstone.

At this point, Jesus made it clear that He was talking about the leaders. They were the ones who rejected the cornerstone. They rejected Jesus. Sign verses 43-44. *How did the Jewish leaders respond?* (Guilty, angry, afraid...) They wanted to arrest Jesus.

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage members to discuss what they learned from today's session. Rejecting Jesus is a dangerous decision. We should help people understand that it is important to follow Jesus.

Discuss the questions and the answers from In My Context in the group material.

Session 6

OFFERED TO ALL?

Though all are invited to join Jesus in God's kingdom, only those who respond to Him in obedient faith will be accepted.

MATTHEW 22:1-14

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will live a life that is ready to serve the Lord.
- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Prepare to share the ideas from the passage with the group.
- Read and prepare to sign the verses from the story or ask a member to share in signing the verses.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Have you ever gotten a card that says, "Save the Date"? Sometimes couples plan a wedding and send a card to their friends with the date for the wedding. They want their friends to save the date. Later they send a formal invitation. A tradition in the Ancient Near East was to invite people for an event and later let the people know it was time for the event.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 22:1-14)

1. The Invited (Matthew 22:1-7)

Sign Matthew 22:1-7 and discuss. *Why did the people refuse to go to the wedding feast?* (They had other plans.) Notice in verse 6 some people beat the servants. *Why do you think they were violent about the invitation?*

Why was the king so angry?

What kinds of excuses do people give today for refusing Jesus' invitation?

2. The Gathered (Matthew 22:8-10)

Sign Matthew 22:8-10. This story repeats an idea that we saw in last week's story. The owner of the vineyard would bring in other people to take care of his vineyard. In this story, the king invited people but they refused to come. So the king decided to invite others, good and bad. In both stories the first group of people did not honor the owner/king or the son. A new group of people had an opportunity to be with the owner and the king. *What do you think Jesus meant by this?* Read Acts 13:46 to see an example.

Jesus offers salvation to all people. *Does this mean God could forgive a murderer, a liar, a robber, and people like us?* Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. *What does God do for us?*

3. The Unprepared (Matthew 22:11-14)

Sign verses 11-14. *Does it seem strange that the king expected the guests to have the right clothes?* They came to the banquet quickly with no time to prepare. *Why would the king be surprised that the man didn't have on the right clothes?* Some Bible teachers believe the king gave the guests the right clothes to wear. If this is correct, it means the man refused the clothes from the king. By refusing to wear the clothes the king gave him, the man was thrown out into the darkness. In the same way, when people refuse to accept God's plan for salvation—Jesus' death on the cross for our sin—they will spend eternity separated from God.

Matthew used the phrase “where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain” in other places (Matthew 8:12; 13:42,50; 24:51). In each of these verses, Jesus talked about how terrible it will be for the people who reject God. *What does this mean for us? Because people will suffer terribly without Jesus, what should Christians do?*

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask members to share something important they learned from today's session. Discuss their answers to the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide.

Remind members that as Christians, we expect Jesus to return. Share the ideas from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. *Will we be ready when He comes for us?*

Session 7

WHERE IS JESUS?

Jesus was resurrected to reign forever as the King.

MATTHEW 28:1-15

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that Easter will have special meaning for them this year.
- Ask three different members to help with today's session. Each one will take a section of the session. Ask them to practice signing their part of the story. Each section is just a few verses and this is a good way to let others have an opportunity to lead. They can also ask the discussion questions and lead the discussion.
- Make the session come alive! Make a video. Ask church members, friends and family members to tell you briefly what Easter means to them. Record their answers. Have this ready to show the Bible study group when you meet.

FOCUS ATTENTION

The session for this week jumps ahead in Matthew. Because it is Easter, we will focus on the resurrection of Jesus but will go back to Matthew 24 next week. Later in the quarter we will study the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus. Today's session starts on the third day after Jesus was buried.

Begin the session by showing the video you made. Then introduce the session by asking if members have experienced the death of a loved one. *How did you feel? How would you describe the grief?* Encourage discussion so they can imagine how Jesus' disciples felt.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 28:1-15)

1. The Grave Opened (Matthew 28:1-4)

Ask the first volunteer to sign his or her part of the story. Then discuss the following questions. *How do you think the women felt as they walked to the tomb?* (Full of grief, doubt, fear, wondering...) *Have any of you experienced an earthquake?* *What do you think it means that the soldiers became like dead men?* (They were shocked, couldn't move, maybe they fell down.)

2. The Risen King Announced (Matthew 28:5-10)

Ask the second volunteer to sign verses 5-10. Then ask the following questions. *When did Jesus tell the disciples about His death and resurrection?* (Matthew 16:21 tells us that Jesus explained what would happen.) *How did the women feel as they left the tomb?* (They were afraid but very happy.) *What changed from when they were going to the tomb?* (They knew Jesus was alive.) When the women saw Jesus, the first thing they did was worship Him. *What does worship mean to you?*

3. The Cover-Up Planned (Matthew 28:11-15)

Ask the third person to sign verses 11-15. Then ask the following questions: The priests said they would help the soldiers stay out of trouble. *Why would the soldiers be in trouble?* (They did not do their job.) *Why did the priests feel they must lie about what happened at the tomb?* (They didn't want others to believe in or follow Jesus.)

It is surprising that even though the religious leaders KNEW Jesus rose from the dead, they chose not to follow Him. Some people today admit that Jesus is real but they choose not to follow Him. They think following Jesus Christ means they must change their lives.

IN MY CONTEXT

The resurrection is one of the most important stories we can share. Paul explained how important it is in 1 Corinthians 15:14,20. Discuss answers to the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide. Pray together and ask God to help us to spread the joy of the resurrection.

Session 8

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Jesus will return at the end of time, so preparations must be made.

MATTHEW 24:36-51

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will live knowing Jesus could return at any time.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Introduce the session using material from Understand the Context in the Personal Study Guide. Jesus talked with the disciples about things that would happen during the end times. People are still curious about the end and when Jesus will return.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 24:36-51)

1. Be Reminded (Matthew 24:36-41)

Sign Matthew 24:36-41. The disciples wanted to know when the end would come. *What did Jesus say about it?* (That only the Father knows when it will be.) *What was it like in Noah's time?* (Look at verses 37-39). *How does that compare to our world today?* Encourage discussion. *How do you think it will feel for the people who are left behind?*

2. Be Alert (Matthew 24:42-44)

Sign verses 42-44. Christians have been waiting a long time for Jesus to come back. *What are we supposed to do while we wait?* (We should be ready, always watching for Him to return.)

3. Be Faithful (Matthew 24:45-47)

What does faithful mean? Sign verses 45-47. Describe what the faithful servant does.

Have you ever had a job to do while your parents were away? Or a job to do while your boss was away? Did you complete the job even though no one was there to watch you? Encourage discussion.

Jesus is always with us but sometimes we become busy with our lives and forget that He is with us. We may forget to be faithful in doing His work. We can help each other by reminding each other that Jesus WILL come back. We can remind each other that we serve Jesus because of our love for Him.

4. Be Warned (Matthew 24:48-51)

Sign verses 48-51. In these verses we see what will happen to the servant who is not faithful. Discuss the verses about hell from the Bible Skill in the Personal Study Guide. In Matthew 24:51 we see the phrase again “where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain.” Hell is a terrible place.

IN MY CONTEXT

Christians have a choice. We can be faithful servants and enjoy fellowship with God. We can obey as we wait for Jesus to return. God will bless us when Jesus returns. We can also choose to focus on ourselves. We can be busy with our wants and desires. But when Jesus comes we will not be able to fool Him. He knows our hearts. We will be ashamed and embarrassed. *Are you ready for Jesus to return? What do you want to do when He comes back? Do you need to make changes in your life so you will be ready?*

Session 9

How Do We Remember?

Jesus' sacrifice is to be reverently remembered through the observing of the Lord's Supper.

MATTHEW 26:17-30

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.
- If you observe the Lord's Supper in your group, discuss the first two sections first. Then observe the Lord's Supper together following your church's practices. Normally during the Lord's Supper, the pastor or deacon will read the verses from Matthew or from 1 Corinthians 11. You may want to choose a song to sing together for a closing.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Jesus knew His time of suffering and death was coming soon. He wanted to spend this time with His disciples. Eating together was a time of fellowship for them.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 24:17-30)

1. Preparation (Matthew 24:17-19)

Sign verses 17-19. *How did Jesus help the disciples prepare for the Passover?* (He told them how to find the room. Perhaps Jesus already made plans with the man who had the room, or He knew the room would be available because He knew all things.) The disciples obeyed quickly and prepared the meal. This probably meant they got a lamb, herbs, wine, and bread with no yeast.

Jesus knew what the disciples needed. *Does Jesus know what you need? How has He provided for your needs?*

2. Betrayal (Matthew 26:20-25)

Sign verses 20-25. During the meal, Jesus surprised the disciples. He announced that one of them would betray Him. *How did the disciples feel? What did they say to Jesus? How did Jesus know which disciple would betray Him?*

The disciples dipped their food in the same bowl together. *What did this mean?* (They were friends and would not hurt each other. This made it even worse—that a friend would betray Jesus.) *When Judas realized Jesus knew he was the betrayer, how do you think Judas felt?* Jesus told the disciples it would be better if the betrayer had not been born. *What did He mean?* (Judas would suffer punishment forever.)

3. Remembrance (Matthew 26:26-30)

He wanted to prepare the disciples for His death. He explained it to them several times. As Jesus broke the bread and shared the wine, He gave the disciples a clear picture of how He would give up His life.

Why do you think Jesus chose the time of the Passover meal to begin the tradition of the Lord's Supper? (He would become the final sacrifice, the Lamb of God.)

At this time have the Lord's Supper. If you were not able to plan that, sign verses 26-30 and discuss.

IN MY CONTEXT

The Lord's Supper is an important action in the church. It is a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Paul said, "Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are telling others about the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Discuss the answers to the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide. Close with prayer, thanking God for giving His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins.

Session 10

DO I HAVE THE STRENGTH?

Jesus willingly submitted to the Father's redemptive plan.

MATTHEW 26:36-46

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will understand the importance of obeying God at all times.
- Locate the Garden of Gethsemane on the map on the inside back cover. This is where Jesus took His disciples to pray.
- **Story:** Practice signing the story for today's session. Work on it so that you can include the emotion that Jesus felt at this time.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Sign the story. Then discuss the topics below.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 26:36-46)

1. Committed to the Task (Matthew 26:36-39)

Jesus took His closest disciples with Him for this time of prayer. Peter, James, and John were the same three disciples that were with Jesus during the **Transfiguration**. Jesus wanted them with Him during this difficult time.

Jesus was strong minded about obeying His Father. Philippians 2:8 states, "And when He [Jesus] was living as a man, He humbled Himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused His death—death on a cross." As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He made it clear that the Father's plan was the most important. Jesus knew the pain and suffering that would come. He lived in a human body. He prayed for another way. But He planned to obey more than anything else.

Have you ever struggled to obey God? Perhaps you wanted to do something

different from His plan but you knew His plan was right. Share your experience.

2. Asleep on the Job (Matthew 26:40-43)

When you pray, do you sometimes fall asleep? Maybe you know exactly how the disciples felt. They were tired. But Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that their prayers were important. Jesus knew the disciples would face temptation. Terrible things would soon happen. He wanted them to be strong.

How does prayer help us become strong?

3. Realizing the Moment (Matthew 26:44-46)

This third time Jesus let the disciples rest. He understood they were tired. And, a third time Jesus prayed the same thing to the Father. After this He woke the disciples and warned them that the betrayer was coming.

IN MY CONTEXT

Challenge the group to consider ways of thanking Jesus for His obedience. How does His obedience demand our respect? How can the way we live be a way of showing thankfulness to Jesus?

Discuss the questions from In My Context from the Personal Study Guide..

Session 11

LOYAL?

Following Jesus demands loyalty in the face of risk.

MATTHEW 26:63-75

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will grow strong in their faith so they can face persecution.
- Ask _____ to study the story in John 21:15-17. He or she should prepare to sign the story for the group.
- Make the session come alive! Sign the story of Peter denying Jesus from Matthew 26:69-75. Practice it so that you can sign the story without looking at the Bible.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Review briefly the events that happened after the prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane. You can use the information from Understand the Context in the Personal Study Guide. Ask, *How did Judas show the people which person was Jesus?* (He kissed Jesus and greeted Him.) Read verses 55-56. Jesus speaks about the prophecies. He **fulfilled** all the prophecies about the **Messiah**. *What did the disciples do after Jesus said this?* (They all ran away.) Remind the group that Peter stayed close by to see what would happen to Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 26:63-75)

1. Affirmed by Scripture (Matthew 26:63-64)

At first Jesus didn't respond to the questions that the religious leaders asked. *Why do you think He didn't answer?* Sign verses 63-64. *Why did Jesus answer this time?* Jesus answered with two Old Testament prophecies (Psalm 110:1 and

Daniel 7:13—these are in the Bible Skill in the Personal Study Guide).

2. Denied by His Enemies (Matthew 26:65-68)

The religious leaders became very angry about His answer.

How did the High Priest show his anger? (He tore his clothes. He said that Jesus talked against God.) *What does blasphemy mean?* (Blasphemy means “to talk against God, or to insult God’s authority.” When Jesus said He was the Messiah, it meant that He had the same authority as God. The Jewish leaders were angry about this.)

The religious leaders did not believe Jesus. They had their own idea of what the Messiah should be. Jesus did not fit their plan.

What did the religious leaders expect from the Messiah? (They wanted a Messiah to defeat Rome. They wanted a new king.)

3. Abandoned by His Friends (Matthew 26:69-75)

Sign the story of Peter from these verses. Ask the group how this story made them feel. *Why did Peter say he didn’t know Jesus?* (afraid, embarrassed...) *How do you think Peter felt after the rooster crowed?* (He was very sad, he cried. He remembered that Jesus said this would happen.) *How do people today deny Jesus?*

Ask _____ to sign the story of Peter from John 21. Ask the group how this story made them feel. *Why do you think Jesus asked Peter “Do you love Me?” three times?* (Perhaps because Peter denied Jesus three times.)

Jesus may have felt very hurt because of what Peter did. But Jesus forgave Peter. This is wonderful for us to know. We fail, too. Jesus will forgive us.

IN MY CONTEXT

Discuss the verses in the Bible Skill for this session. *What can Christians expect? Will it always be easy to follow Jesus? What promises did you find in the verses?* (Matthew 5:12, Luke 21:13, John 16:33)

Close in prayer. Pray that Christians will remain strong in the Lord.

Session 12

CRUCIFIED

Jesus willingly sacrificed His life to pay the price for all of humanity's sin.

MATTHEW 27:41-52

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will be thankful for Christ's sacrifice.
- Find a picture of Golgotha to show the group.
- Make the session come alive! Write the following verses on slips of paper. Give them to members of the group to look up and sign for the group. These are the seven things Jesus said while on the cross. Matthew records one of them. 1. Luke 23:34; 2. Luke 23:43; 3. John 19:26-27; 4. Matthew 27:46; 5. John 19:28; 6. John 19:29-30; and 7. Luke 23:46.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Remind the group that Jesus was arrested. After that the high priests and religious leaders had a "trial" for Jesus. They were not honest in the trial. And they broke their own laws by having the trial at night. Then they sent Jesus to Pilate. He was beaten and whipped. His disciples had left Him. People asked Pilate to crucify Jesus. They even chose a criminal, Barabbas, to go free instead of Jesus. While Jesus was on the cross, soldiers gambled for His clothes. People insulted Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 27:41-52)

1. Mocked (Matthew 27:41-44)

Sign verses 41-44. The religious leaders made fun of Jesus. They insulted Him. They even used Scripture to insult Him. Verse 43 is a quote from Psalm 22:8. They said He should save Himself. *Could Jesus save Himself?* Read Matthew 26:53-54. *Why didn't Jesus come down from the cross? Why did He stay*

and suffer? He didn't defend Himself. He knew the Father's plan included His death.

2. Forsaken (Matthew 27:45-49)

Ask the members who have verses to read them. These are the words Jesus said while on the cross. Encourage discussion of these quotes. Now draw the attention back to Matthew 27:45-49. Perhaps Matthew only recorded this one saying from Jesus because it was so painful. It must have been terrible for Jesus to feel God, His Father, turn away from Him. Jesus took on all the sin of the world. God could not watch this. Some Bible teachers feel that God caused the darkness so other people could not watch Jesus go through this painful experience either.

Jesus spoke in Aramaic, a language common in the area. Matthew translated it for his readers. *Why do you think it was so terrible for God to look away from Jesus?*

Discuss the comments members wrote in the Bible Skill in the Personal Study Guide. The verses focus on how sin separates us from God.

3. Sacrificed (Matthew 27:50-52)

Sign verses 50-52. *What happened when Jesus died?* (The curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom, there was an earthquake, and graves opened. Some of God's people who had died came to life.) *What did it mean for the curtain in the temple to tear?* (This showed that people who follow Jesus do not need a high priest anymore. Christians have access to God. Jesus was the final sacrifice.)

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask members what they learned from today's session. If they learned something new, this would be a good way to start talking with their friends about Jesus. They can start with, "I learned something new about Jesus this week!" That might give them an opportunity to continue sharing about what Jesus did for us.

Discuss the answers to the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide. Close with a prayer for boldness to share Christ with others.

Session 13

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Jesus expects His followers to seek to be disciple-makers of all people.

MATTHEW 28:16-20

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will understand the **Great Commission**.
- Ask one or two members to share their baptism experience.
- Locate Galilee on the map on the inside back cover. This is where Jesus told the disciples to go.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Remind the group that we learned about the resurrection of Jesus on Easter. Today's session continues that story. It is only five verses, but these verses are very important. They include the Great Commission, which is the job God gives all of His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 28:16-20)

1. Worship (Matthew 28:16-17)

Sign verses 16-17. *When the disciples saw Jesus, what did they do first?* (They worshiped Him.) The verses say that some of the disciples doubted. *What do you think that means?*

Because we know who Jesus is and what He did, how should we respond? (We should worship Him and obey Him.) *What does worship mean?* (It means to love, adore, honor, serve...) *How can we worship God?* Give examples and encourage discussion.

2. Power (Matthew 28:18)

Sign verse 18. Jesus tells the disciples that He has all power. *How much power does Jesus have?* (Power over heaven and earth—all of creation.) Jesus always had power. He was reminding them that He has the power, the right, to tell them what to do.

3. Mission (Matthew 28:19-20a)

Sign verses 19-20a. Jesus gives the disciples clear directions. It is not complicated. *Are these directions meant for Christians today too? How do we make followers?* (We share Jesus with others and help them understand how to follow Him.) Notice that we are supposed to baptize the new believers. *Why is baptism important?* (It is a picture to others that we made the decision to follow Christ.) Often when a pastor baptizes a new believer, he will say, “I baptize you, my brother/sister, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Buried with Him in baptism, raised to walk in the newness of life.” Have you seen this before? It is a good way to remember the Trinity, and to understand our old life is gone and we are new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Ask the volunteers to share their baptism experience.

4. Presence (Matthew 28:20b)

One of the most wonderful promises in the Bible is this one. Jesus promised to be with us always. We are never alone. Jesus lives in His followers. We can trust that He will never leave us.

Are there things you are afraid to do by yourself, but you will do those things if someone is with you? Give examples. We may be afraid to talk about Jesus. We may worry that people will make fun of us. It would be hard to do this alone, but Jesus promised to be with us. We can also take another Christian friend with us when we talk with others about Jesus. We will feel stronger together.

IN MY CONTEXT

Discuss the questions from In My Context in the Personal Study Guide. They are excellent topics for your church to think about.

Spend time praying for pastors and missionaries who serve in other countries. Pray for pastors and missionaries who serve in the United States. Pray for pastors in your state. Pray for each other. Pray that all will spread the Good News of salvation.

Tell group members that the next lessons will be on different psalms. Encourage them to review the session about Psalm 1.

PRAYER PAGE

This is a detailed, hand-drawn map of the city of Hsinchu, showing its layout, walls, gates, and various landmarks. The city is divided into Upper City and Lower City sections. Key features include the Gate of the Emperor, Garden Gate, Palace, Golden and Golden Temple, Holy Place and Holy of Holies, Temple Area, and various gates like the Fish Gate, Sincro Gate, Beautiful Gate for East Gate, and Market Gate. The map also shows the Pool of the Dragon, Pool of the Stream, and the Fountain Gate. The city is surrounded by a wall with battlements and is situated near a river and a lake.

Labels on the map include:

- To Berrilukon
- Agarwood
- Hsinchu Valley
- Dung Gate
- Fountain Gate
- Pool of Stream
- Lower City
- Upper City
- Gate of the Emperor
- Palace
- Garden Gate
- Golden and Golden Temple
- Holy Place and Holy of Holies
- Temple Area
- Beautiful Gate for East Gate
- Market Gate
- Pool of Heaven
- Sincro Gate
- Section of Heaven
- Fish Gate
- Pool of Dragon
- To Berrilukon

"New Testament Jerusalem" by Abe Goolsby, Principal, Officina Abrahamae, is taken from HCSB Study Bible © 2010 B&H Publishing Group, pp. 1784-1785. Used by permission.

Matthew 14–28

Spring is like a deep sigh. After the cold darkness of winter months, it feels as if we can breathe again. We hear the birds singing and watch the trees bud and flowers emerge to the growing warmth. Color fills the landscape—a welcome sight after the gray of winter. In the middle of the season comes the pinnacle of the Christian year as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection. We sing the joyous refrain "He is risen!" and shout in reply "He is risen indeed!" The living Christ is more than a historical reality; He is a personal vitality. This study involves the final chapters of Matthew's Gospel. They include accounts of Jesus' marvelous teaching, His miraculous works, and the moving story of His resurrection. He has given us a message to proclaim to the world: "He is risen!"



Let the Word dwell in you.

And, waters u
herein is
en; and ev
die.

The Prom

18 But v
enant; an
thou, and
wives with

19 And o
of every so
keep them
and female

20 Of fove
ter their k
earth after
come unto

here, and its
tions includ
then the tex
inches over

dow," then i
four sides of

6:17 Only a
did God tell
a flood—a te
all-destroyin
earth shall o

in Genesis 6
covered the e
this [2 Pet. 2
dominant C
remains so

explain the f
also tackle
quired to floo

reeflood geo
have needed
the flood to

in this light
gested that
ography. Spe
was flatter i

to flood and
geographical
ent approach
phy is largely
greater quan

that by an u
as greatly d
6:18 The ter
ment between
trans
6:18 God's