HOME CHURCH LESSON SERIES

The Ministry of Jesus

Following the Master

"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching, proclaiming the gospel, and healing every affliction."

Matthew 4:23

A Home Church Resources Lesson Series

homechurchresources.org

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

Take the Prepwork Here

Names of Jesus

Introduction

Where did your parents get your name from?

- Maybe from a family member, someone famous, something totally different.

Today names are not often as associated with meaning as they used to be. In scripture, names often had significance, pointing to events in their lives or the lives of their parents.

What were some names in the Bible that had significant meaning?

- Abraham named his son "**he laughs**" (**Isaac**) in Gen 17:19 because he laughed at the news he would have a son.
- Isaac named his son "**he grasps the heel**" (**Jacob**). At birth he grasped Esau, his twin's, heel. To grasp someone's heel was an idiom for being deceitful. Jacob tricked several people during his lifetime.
- Or how about Isaiah's son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (try saying that three times really fast!) which means "quick to the plunder, swift to the loot" as a prophesy of Assyria plundering Samaria (Isa 8:1).

Names often connected someone with their father. The Hebrew word "Bar" means son. Barabbas means "son of Abbas" which could also mean the "son of his father". Barnabus means "son of encouragement."

Jesus

Matthew 1:21

Like other names in the Bible, Jesus' name connects him with his Father. "Jesus" is Greek for Joshua which basically means "God saves". His name connects him with his Father's purposes in bringing salvation to the world. "Jesus" is the only personal name we have for the son of God. Although we often refer to him as Jesus Christ, Christ wasn't his last name. Like Immanuel, Lord, and Messiah, Christ is a title that describes who he is.

What has the name "Jesus" meant to you?

Immanuel

Matthew 1:22-23 & John 1:14

What does Matthew say "Immanuel" means?

- God with us

Why is God being with us "good news?"

The word "Immanuel" is not in John 1:14 the principle is there.
What does John say Jesus had to do to be with us?

- He had to "become flesh"

What does it mean to "become flesh"

- To go from heaven to earth and put on mortality for us.

These words of John literally say Jesus "pitched his tabernacle among us." In Exodus 25:8 God says his purpose of the tabernacle is so he can "dwell among" his people.

How does Jesus' "becoming flesh" make his dwelling among us more significant than the tabernacle in the Old Testament?

- Jesus became flesh, he became like us so that he could save us from what we struggle with—sin and death.

It was essential that Jesus fully participate in humanity, live a perfect life, and die as the perfect sacrifice to take away our sins. But this could only happen because Jesus was willing to be "Immanuel", God with us.

What comfort do you find in the fact that God was willing to dwell among us in a personal way?

Lord

Lord was a term of respect for those in authority. Joseph was placed as "lord" over pharaoh's house (Gen 45:8) which meant he had authority to make decisions there. When Paul is blinded by a bright light on the road to Damascus he replies to the voice from heaven by saying "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). He didn't know it was Jesus but knew the voice was someone with authority and he showed the proper respect. The same is true of the woman at the well in John 4:11. In the New Testament the word translated "Lord" is elsewhere translated "sir." We see this same thing in Spanish where the word señor means "sir" or "Lord"

How do authority and respect go hand-in-hand?

- We have respect for those in authority.

How much authority does Jesus have (Matthew 28:18)?

How much of our lives should we surrender to the authority of the Lord?

- Everything. Every decision. Every action.

How does his resurrection show us the extent of his authority?

- He has authority over everything, even death.

John 20:28

How does Thomas show that the authority of Jesus as Lord is far more than

"sir?"

- He calls him "God"

How can our lives show a respect for the authority of Jesus as our Lord?

- By listening to his voice
- By living obediently
- By having respect for who he is and what he has done

Messiah & Christ

"Messiah" means "anointed." Messiah translated into Greek is "Christos" where we get the name "Christ." The Jews expected someone to come and be a deliverer of the people of God and usher in the kingdom of God. In John 1:41-42 we can see the excitement in Andrew's reaction to meeting Jesus as he goes to get his brother Simon Peter.

NIV—"We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ)."
NRSV—"We have found the Messiah (which is translated Anointed)."

Here we see that Messiah, Christ, and anointing are all connected. As we said before, Christ is a title. Saying he is Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus the Anointed is all the same thing.

What three groups of people in the Old Testament were anointed for God's purposes?

- Prophets (1 Kings 19:16), Priests (Lev 7:35-36) and Kings (1 Sam 16:10)

How does Jesus fit the mold of prophet, priest and king?

- Jesus was the perfect prophet, priest, and king.

He came as the Messiah to usher in the kingdom of God. In Mark 8:29 Jesus asks his disciples "Who do you say I am?" Peter's response is that he indeed is the Messiah, the anointed one who was promised to come and deliver God's people.

Application

We have studied several of the titles given to Jesus. Each of them points in some way to who Jesus is. His personal name Jesus points to his relationship with his Father in saving mankind. As Immanuel, he is present with us. As Lord, we accept and respect his authority. And as Messiah or Christ we acknowledge his place as God's chosen redeemer.

How would living under the authority of Jesus' Lordship make our lives look different? What would we do more of and what would we do less of?

As Immanuel showed us God's presence on earth, how can we be a part of sharing God's presence with others in our communities?

Put it into Practice

This week, read Mark 8:27-38 in light of Jesus as Lord. As you read, think about the authority of Jesus and his call to follow him no matter what the cost.

Jesus' Mission

Introduction

What in your life are you most passionate about?

What in your life have you had a sense of mission for?

Luke 4:16-22

Text

Visiting teachers would often officiate part of the synagogue service. Scripture was read standing, out of respect for the word of God, and then the one officiating would sit to deliver a message. When Jesus sat, they would expect Him to deliver a lesson. Jesus read from Isaiah 61 and then began to teach. Isaiah 61 begins by mentioning anointing. In fact the word for anointing Isaiah uses is "MESHA" where we get the word Messiah and Christ.

As mentioned last week, anointing was done to select someone for a special purpose. Saul, David, and Solomon were all anointed for the purpose of being king (1 Sam 10:1, 16:12, and 1 Kings 1:34). Priests also received an anointing to show their special selection for their purpose.

What purpose was Jesus anointed and chosen by God to fulfill?

- To be the savior of the world and to set people free from their sins.

Mission

What five things does Jesus read from Isaiah that he identifies as his mission?

1. Proclaim good news to the poor
2. Proclaim freedom for the prisoners
3. Recover sight for the blind
4. Set the oppressed free
5. Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

How is Jesus the fulfillment of the scripture he read from Isaiah?

- He accomplished what Isaiah wrote about.
- He had the power to make good on these promises.

How does our mission reflect Jesus' mission mentioned in this passage?

- When we do as he did—help the poor, bring people closer to God, and sacrifice for others.
- We show others His love, compassion, and grace.
- We too look out for the poor and downtrodden
- We proclaim freedom for those who are enslaved to sin
- We help the spiritually blind to see again

- We are to help take burdens off of the oppressed
- We are to proclaim the Gospel of God's favor to a lost and dying world.

Proclamation

Part of Jesus' mission was proclamation.

What types of people does Jesus' proclamation go out to?

- God chooses the least of these to receive His message of good news—the poor and the prisoners.

If you were a prisoner, what reaction would you have when you heard the words "You are free!"?

- Excitement, joy, relief, etc.

How is our message about Jesus a message of freedom to those who are lost?

- It gives them hope that they can be released from the shackles of sin and death through the blood of Christ.

How would the poor Jesus mentions react be to the words, "your debts have been cancelled."?

How has Christ cancelled the spiritual debt that we owed?

- Sin comes at a cost that is too high for us to pay ourselves.
- Jesus paid the price for our sins.

Action

Jesus' mission was more than proclamation. It was also about action. He was not a passive messiah. He was able to accomplish God's purposes on earth, purposes we could never accomplish on our own. He was willing to step down on our level and reach out to heal our diseases. He was even willing to die. We also have a purpose from God and this purpose requires action.

How did the ministry of Jesus give sight to the spiritually blind?

- People living in darkness came to a knowledge of the truth.

Application

How can we carry out the same mission of bringing sight to the spiritually blind?

- By helping people see Jesus through scripture, our example and our speech.
- By being a light in a dark world and reflecting the glory of Christ.

What actions can we do that will reflect the ministry and mission of Christ?

What hope can we hold out to others through the resurrection of Christ?

- Freedom!
- There is life after death for those who are in him.
- God is willing to save them from their sin if they would put their trust in God.

How could you use proclamation and action in your neighborhood to reflect the ministry and purpose of Jesus?

- Invite others in, be people of service, look out for the weak and oppressed, etc.
- Show people grace
- Be self-sacrificial

What kind thing can we do for our neighbors that they would never expect from us in order to show them Jesus?

Put it into Practice

This week, do something for others that would reflect the ministry of Jesus. You could do something found in our passage for the day: proclaiming to someone good news about God, helping someone see better spiritually, or taking the burden off of someone who is oppressed.

Jesus' Baptism

Introduction

In the book of Matthew, the baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his ministry. John the Baptist had been baptizing many in the Jordan, fulfilling the prophesy that was spoken about him in Isaiah 40:3 "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

Text

Matthew 3:13-15

Why would John be hesitant to baptize Jesus?

- He knew Jesus didn't need repentance.
- It would be a little awkward to baptize the one who came to take everyone else's sins away.
- In John 1:19-28 John the Baptist clearly understood his role as subservient to the coming Messiah.

Fulfilling Righteousness

Why did Jesus say it was necessary for John to baptize him?

- To fulfill all righteousness.

We often think of righteousness as a moral quality. But it means more than that. It can also mean God's purpose for his people. In that sense, Jesus fulfills all righteousness because what he does is for God's purpose, not that Jesus needed baptism for repentance.

Matthew 3:16-17

Why was it important for God's Spirit to appear when Jesus came out of the water?

- It was a sign of God's approval of Jesus' mission.
- It was important for the people to know that Jesus came from God.
- It may have also been in fulfillment of Isa 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you."

Whose voice did the people hear from heaven and why was it important that it be heard?

- They heard the voice of God, "This is my Son."
- It was important for the same reason seeing God's Spirit was important, to show that Jesus was indeed from God as the Messiah.

Jesus is called "Son" by God. Israel was considered God's son in the Old Testament. Jesus' sonship is not as an adopted son but as the one and

only true Son sent from the Father (John 3:16).

What connection is there between Jesus wanting "to fulfill all righteousness" and God being "well pleased" with Jesus?

- Jesus did the will of his Father in being baptized.
- Righteousness is pleasing in God's sight.
- This marks the beginning of his earthly ministry and God is well pleased.

Jesus' mission is inaugurated with baptism and God being well pleased.

How is our baptism similar to Jesus' baptism by John as a beginning?

- Just as it marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry, our baptism marks the beginning of our Christian walk.

Baptism & Submission

In Luke 12:50 Jesus speaks of another baptism that he must undergo. Just as the first baptism marked the beginning of his ministry, this second, figurative baptism, will mark the end of his ministry.

Luke 12:50

Since Jesus has already been baptized, what figurative baptism is Jesus talking about when he says "I have a baptism to undergo?"

- He is talking about his death on the cross.
- Baptism involves submission and Jesus is speaking of his submission to death on a cross.

Life & Death

Paul also viewed baptism in terms of life and death. We are dead in sin. Baptism buries that past and raises us into new life.

Romans 6:1-7

Baptism connects us with the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we are lowered into the water, we are symbolizing his death and when we are raised from the water we symbolize his resurrection.

What does Paul say is the result of our dying to sin?

- We are set free from sin

How is our baptism the fulfillment of God's righteousness in our lives?

- He washes away our sins.
- It unifies us with God through Christ.

How does our baptism connect us with God as loved and well pleasing children?

- We are adopted by God as his children (Romans 8:14-17)
- We are born again through baptism as God's children (1 John 5:18-19)

Application

Just as John tried to stop Jesus from asking him baptize him, *What things have you tried to deter God from doing in your life?*

What in your life do you feel God is well pleased about?

As Paul compares baptism to death and resurrection in Romans 6, what areas of your life still needs to be put to death?

What encouragement have you received from others that you can pass on to those who need a boost in their week?

Put it into Practice

When you get home, write down two things you need to give over to God. Pray about those two things each day this week that God would give you the power to overcome them and that you would have the willingness to finally let go of those areas of your life and give the control back to God.

In the Wilderness

Introduction

How do you define temptation?

- When our desires entice us to do something that isn't pleasing to God.

Following Jesus' baptism and inauguration of his ministry he is lead by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The First Test

Matthew 4:1-4

Satan knows us well and knows our vulnerability. After forty days of fasting Satan picks his time to come and tempt Jesus. The temptation? He tempts Jesus to use his God-given power to fill his own stomach. Notice the appeal Satan makes to trap him, "If you are the Son of God, then...." He is basically saying if you cannot turn these stones into bread, you must not be who you say you are.

What is so tempting about the first temptation?

- Jesus is hungry and vulnerable—bread sounds really good.
- Satan appeals to Jesus' power and authority as the Son of God.
- Satan questions Jesus identity as Son of God.

Philippians 2:6 says "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage." Matthew 20:28 says "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

How do these two passages shed light on why it would be wrong for Jesus to turn the stones into bread?

- Jesus did not come to use his power to his own advantage.
- He came for self-sacrifice and not self-service.

How can we do people wrong by using our position and authority at others' expense?

Jesus' Answer

What two things does Jesus rely on to give Satan an answer?

- Scripture and God

How does Jesus' appeal to scripture give us a model that we can use when we are tempted?

- If we know God's word, we can use it to face trials and temptations.

How can we rely more on God and less on temporary things like food?

- By spending more time in his word and through fasting

The Second Test

Matthew 4:5-7

Satan takes Jesus to a very public place and asks him to perform a very public act with an appeal that God will rescue him in front of all of the people in the temple. Additionally, Satan also appeals to scripture to trap Jesus into sinning. Satan knows just what we need to hear in order to get us to fall into his trap.

How Satan use pride to tempt Jesus to jump from the temple?

- If Jesus let his pride get in the way, he would have put God to the test by jumping down.

How does Satan use similar tactics to use our pride to get us to sin?

If Satan can even use scripture to fool us, what other innocent looking things might Satan use to trick us into think sinning is alright?

- whatever he knows we are vulnerable to, Scripture, peer pressure, culture

Jesus' Answer

In verse 7, how does Jesus respond to the second temptation?

- He appeals to scripture again.
- Jesus knows his time to die is at the cross. By jumping from the temple he would have put God to the test and forced God into a decision that was not in the plan.
- Jesus submits himself to God and does not put God at the mercy of his own decisions.

When are times we put God to the test?

- When we sin. When we procrastinate in turning to him.

The Third Test

Matthew 4:8-11

What does Satan offer Jesus in exchange for his loyalty and worship?

- All the kingdoms of the world.

What makes that an attractive offer?

- He wouldn't have to worry about a cross.
- He wouldn't have to worry about food
- He wouldn't have to worry about anything here on earth.

What was the cost to Jesus?

- To worship the devil meant to turn his back on God and put an end to their plan to save humanity.

What about this temptation would you find most attractive?

Application

What makes you most glad that Jesus' refused Satan's offer?

- He was loyal to God and was then able to rescue us from our sin.

In what areas of your life is temptation the strongest these days?

What can we learn from Jesus to help us deal with temptation in our lives?

How can spending more time in scripture give you a reply to Satan's temptation in your life?

What steps can you take this week to resist the temptations you are facing?

One final point. We often use this passage as a model of how to handle temptation but there is more to it than that. Jesus was blazing a trail for us. In Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2 Jesus is referred to as the author or pioneer of our faith. Through his battle with Satan he is blazing a trail for us to follow and brings defeat to the powers of darkness. No other person has been able to firmly resist all that the devil had just thrown at Jesus and that is where we find our hope. We follow the One who has already won the victory. Because of that, we know that too will be victorious.

Put it into Practice

Set aside 20 minutes each day this week to read the Bible. As you read, look for ways you can use what you read to battle Satan's temptations in your life.

"Fishers of Men"

Introduction

What did you leave behind when you decided to follow Jesus?

- Friends? Family? Habits?

What important things has someone called on you to do in the past?

The call of Jesus for us to be disciples is by far the most significant calling we will ever receive. It is more important than becoming president of a major company or even of a country.

What makes Christ's call on our lives the most important call we will ever receive?

- It is a call to an eternal identity and to be who we were created to be.
- The results last far longer than any position we can be called to here on earth.

This lesson we will look at the calling of some of Jesus' disciples to learn about how he calls and how we are to respond.

Text

Mark 1:16-20

Here Jesus calls his first four disciples. Peter is referred to as Simon until Mark 3:16 when Jesus gives him the name Peter. This passage has two primary focuses. The first is about the call. The second focus is their response to the call.

Which three of these men became part of Jesus' inner circle of friends?

- Peter, James, and John

Jesus' First Call

Notice that before Jesus can call them, he has to go and meet them where they are at. Jesus doesn't expect for them to seek him out but goes to them, in their everyday life and calls them to be his disciples.

What were the two things Jesus told them to do?

- "Come" and "follow me"

What de he say would be their mission once they followed Jesus?

- They would fish for people instead of for fish.

The call does not stop at the disciples. Their mission will be to present others with the calling of God. Fishing for people is a powerful meta-

phor. It was used multiple times in the Old Testament (Jer 16:14-16, Ezek 29:4, Amos 4:2, Hab 1:14-17). When a fish is hooked or caught in a net, its life will never be the same again. The same holds true for people whose lives come into contact with the call of Christ through the mission of these disciples and now through our mission.

Christ's call came with authority. It came with authority because of who he was as God's son.

First Response

How did Peter and Andrew respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him?

- It was immediate and obedient.

How does following someone else's lead put us in a humbling position?

- Many people don't like following someone else's rules. We like to do things our way.

How much did they know about who Jesus was?

- We don't exactly know but Peter is not certain he is the messiah until Mark 8:29
- They didn't have to know everything about him before they followed him.

What lesson in faith can we learn from the obedience of these men who had only known Jesus for such a short time?

- You don't have to have your life all together to start following Jesus.
- You don't have to know everything about the Bible or Jesus or God to start following.
- You just have to be willing to come and to follow and the rest will grow from there.

Christ's Second Call

In verse 19, Jesus calls James and John to follow him. *How long did Jesus hesitate before he called them to be his disciples?*

- Mark says it was "without delay"

What can we learn from verse 19 for when we feel the need to invite others to follow Jesus?

- We cannot delay. We need to make the move.

When we first felt the need to respond to Christ, what pulled at our heart the most that got us to follow him?

Second Response

Matthew 4:23 says they "immediately" left everything to follow Christ. There are things in our life that if we hold onto them they can prevent us from following Christ. What if they stayed with the boat or with their father. What if the rejected Jesus' call for friends or vocation?

Application

What have you let go of because you knew it would keep you from following Jesus?

What are you holding on to in your life that keeps you from following Jesus like you should?

Who in your life would benefit from the call of Christ and how can you go about being a "fisher of men" in their life?

This second calling shows that sometimes following Christ is more than giving up certain things but can also mean leaving behind relationships. This doesn't mean we leave behind our obligations as later we see Peter still has a house and mother-in-law (Mark 1:29) and Paul remarks that Peter took his wife with him (1 Cor 9:5).

While we were not sitting in a boat on the sea and had Jesus personally invite us from the shore, we all have received a calling from him. Revelation 3:20 says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me."

What a wonderful picture of invitation. Christ is doing his part to knock on the door and to give the offer of life. Our obligation is to answer his call, open the door, and give our lives to him starting with baptism. It is in our baptism that we allow him to enter in, remove the old man of sin, raise us to walk a new life, and from that point on we have fellowship with him around his table. But it all starts with a call.

Leaders: Take a moment to pray with your group about being the kind of disciples he wants us to be. This is a prayer that the group members can let go of what hinders them from following Christ and that they would grow in their efforts to be "fishers of men."

Put it into Practice

Take inventory this week of the people, habits, or things that keep you from walking with Jesus as you should. Pick two of those things and find godly replacements for them to fill in the gap with righteous things.

Whole Again

Introduction

When has God answered your prayers for a loved one to get well?

When was a time in your life you prayed to God and you didn't get what you asked for...his answer was even better?

One of the most striking things about Jesus' ministry is his ability to heal. We look all around us and see sickness and disease and wish there was more we could do about it. We constantly have prayer requests for those who are sick. Wouldn't it have incredible to see Jesus heal so many people?

Text

Mark 2:1-5

What would your first thoughts have been about these men who just dug through your friend's roof?

- "Who do you think you are that you can cut in line like that!?!"
- "How rude to smash a hole in the ceiling!"
- "What makes you more important than everyone else in here?"

Why had his friends lowered him through the roof?

- To get his body healed from his disease.

Everyone else saw these men's actions, what did Jesus see?

- Their faith that was even willing to push to the extreme for a chance to encounter Christ.
- Jesus saw the *inside* while the crowd may have seen the *outside*.

What did Jesus say to this man once he was on the ground?

- "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Once Jesus forgave his sins in verse 5, was he able to walk yet?

- No.

How would you feel if you came to Jesus for healing and he forgave your sins but left you paralyzed?

- Some may feel cheated. The point is, that was the bigger problem.
- Sin is more deadly than a paralyzed body. A sick soul is more harmful than non-functioning limbs.
- You can go to heaven paralyzed but you cannot go to heaven with sin.

But Jesus didn't leave him paralyzed. Jesus goal was not to heal eyes and limbs but to make him, and others like him, whole again. He came to reverse the effects of sin on our world and eventually to even put an end to death itself (Revelation 21:4).

As this man had friends who helped him get to Jesus, who in your life helped bring you closer to Jesus?

Mark 2:6-12

What did these teachers of the law accuse Jesus of in their thoughts?
- Blaspheming, acting as if he were God himself.

How would you have reacted if someone just read your mind and told you what you were thinking?

By forgiving sins, Jesus was showing them that his status was equal to God.

What misunderstanding did they have about who Jesus was and his authority?
- That Jesus was indeed God and that he did have the authority to forgive sins.

Why do you think Jesus took time to heal him of his sins before healing his body?
- Jesus did the most important thing first.
- Jesus could see his deepest need and handled that first.
- Verse 10 says, So they would know that he could forgive sins.

How did Jesus show that he did indeed have the ability to forgive sins?
- When Jesus healed him of his paralysis, it was evident that Jesus had power to do what he said he was able to do.

Jesus came to make all things new. He came to make our broken world whole again and to transform our broken lives into who he made us to be, "new creations" (2 Cor 5:17). What Jesus did was so different that the response of the crowd was that they "had never seen anything like this!" *What has God done in your life that was so amazing it took your breath away?*

Application

How can we let God be glorified through our weaknesses?
- By giving him glory even in our weakest moments.
- By letting him take care of things in our lives that we could never do on our own.

If you were the paralyzed man, which would you be more excited over, having your legs healed or your sins forgiven?
- While it might be more amazing to the eye to see a paralyzed man walk, it should be more amazing to our hearts and souls to know Jesus forgave his sins. The visible tends to be more spectacular because

you can see it. The reality is the spiritual need is the most important.

The paralytic and his friends had a great deal of faith. Jesus recognized that and not only healed his legs but also his sin.

What specific steps can you take this week to show your faith in Christ?

What broken area of your life will you ask God to heal and make whole?

Following the example of the paralytic's friends, how could you go out of your way to help another believer who is experiencing pain or suffering?

Put it into Practice

Growing our faith requires situations that are impossible for us to handle on our own. Find an area in your life that has been difficult to handle and ask God to make your life whole again.

Leaders: Have a prayer that we will grow in our faith for what God is trying to do in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Sowing Seed & Softening Soil

Introduction

What experience have you had on the farm or in the country?

The world of the first century was agrarian (centered on agriculture). The pages of the New Testament reflect the fact that the majority of people engaged in farming or herding. When Jesus told stories about tenant farmers and shepherds he was using illustrations from everyday life. In the previous chapter, Jesus had a confrontation with his family and with the religious teachers. Jesus tells this parable about how different people can respond to his teaching.

Sowing Seed

Mark 4:1-9

From what setting does Jesus teach this parable?

- Sitting in a boat, surrounded by the crowds.

Where is the crowd situated as they listen to Jesus' teaching?

- They are crowded around the shore

What similarity is there between the people hearing Jesus' teaching and the soil receiving the farmer's seed?

- It is the same thing. The seed represents the teaching. The soil represents the people. Jesus is doing the very thing his parable is about.

How is Jesus' teaching similar to seed?

- When it impacts our lives, it is designed to produce a crop and a harvest.

Notice that in the parable, the seed is the same but the soil is different just as God's word remains the same, while different people receive it in different ways.

Softening Soil

In Greek the same word is used here for the "shore" the crowd is standing on and for the "soil" that the farmer is sowing the seed onto.

What four types of soil does Jesus say the farmer sowed seed onto and what happened to each?

- Path—birds ate it
- Rocky places—Shallow soil—Scorched by the sun
- Thorns—choked by the thorns
- Good soil—grew very well and multiplied.

Spiritual Harvest

What is sowing seed intended to do?
- It is intended to produce a harvest.

How does God's word produce a spiritual harvest in our world?
- It gets into our hearts and begins to grow and change us from the inside out.
- By producing a good and healthy spiritual crop that God will harvest.

Is it possible for someone to change from rocky soil to good soil? If so, how?
- Yes it is. Their heart has to be softened to what God is trying to do in their life.

What determines the type of soil someone is?
- Situation — Someone going through a difficult time may be more receptive to listen to God. Other people who are comfortable in their lives may feel they do not need God.
- Personality—We all handle things differently. Some people are laid back and others uptight. This can make us more or less susceptible to God's word.

Which types of soil produce the harvest God is looking for?
- Only the good soil. The rest did not produce any harvest.

Mark 4:10-13

When Jesus speaks of seeing and hearing, how is he using those terms metaphorically?
- These people really have eyesight but some lack spiritual perception.
- They have the gift of hearing but some are unable to hear what God is trying to tell them.

What does Jesus say is the difference between those on the outside and those on the inside?
- The outsiders appear to be able to see/understand but cannot
- The insiders will understand what Jesus is teaching.

Parable Explained

Mark 4:14-20

How does our life, as soil, make a difference to how we receive God's word?
- If we are hard and calloused toward God, we will not be able to receive what he has for us.
- If our hearts are tender, he can use us to produce a harvest.

Jesus says that the seed sown in rocky places is received with joy but the joy is short-lived because it has no root. *What in your life anchors the joy you have from receiving God's word?*
- Faith provides an anchor that helps us get through the tough times.
- Christian friendships are an anchor.

- Scripture is an anchor.
- God is the ultimate anchor who provides us with everything we need.

How does Satan take away the word before it has a chance to root?

- He gets us to discredit it or casts doubt on the truth about God.
- He convinces us that we don't need it.

Application

Eph. 4:27 warns not to let the devil get a "foothold" in your life. *What are some ways we allow Satan to creep into our lives?*

How can you make sure that the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the other desires of the world will not choke the life out of your Christian walk?

What can you do to increase your fruit as a Christian?

In what area of your life do you need to start listening to God?

What is one biblical truth that you want to cultivate in your life this week?

Put it into Practice

Identify one area in your life where you have been robbed of your joy in Christ. Pray about that this week that God would give you deeper roots so that no one can steal your joy.

Leaders: We often use these verses to talk about evangelism. Tonight we have focused on how God's word has impacted each of us as individual types of soil. Have a prayer that God would soften the soil of each person heart and that God would give us a renewed since of joy. Also pray that God would bring about a harvest that starts with each one of us.

"Who is the Greatest?"

Standard of Greatness

Who is the "greatest" person you ever met?

What was it about that person that made them great?

What standard does our culture use to define who is great and who is not?

- Power/Influence—money, fame, accomplishments

Matthew 18:1-2

The disciples finally got up the nerve to ask Jesus an awkward question, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Were they asking Jesus for the name of a particular person? They knew of Abraham, Moses, and now Jesus—who is the greatest? Or perhaps they were wondering which of themselves would be the greatest. While we are not certain what response they were looking for, we can relate to what their standard of greatness was.

What criteria do you think the disciples would have used to define spiritual greatness?

- Spiritual accomplishments and ability
- Obedience to the law

The Least of These

What does Jesus use as an object lesson for his disciples?

- A small child

What do you think the disciples thought Jesus could teach them about greatness from a child?

- Probably very little.
- They may have even thought he would use this child as an example of what greatness is not!

Why do children normally lack worldly greatness?

- They do not typically have all the accomplishments of adults to be viewed by adults as great.

In the first century, children were raised by the women of the household in the women's living quarters. As best we understand, men had very little to do with raising their children until they were adolescents. Sons faced stern discipline and testing from their fathers to prepare them for manhood. Greatness would hardly be the term used for a small child like the one Jesus ushers into their midst.

Making a Change

Matthew 18:3-4

You may look at the disciples and think they already acted like children at times but that is not what Jesus was talking about. *What word did Jesus say they had to do to become like children?*

- Change

This word literally means to turn or to change the position of something. in relation to something else.

How is humility similar to a change in position?

- Humility requires an attitude of making ourselves less.
- Humility is also a change in relation to something else—God and others.

How does God respond when we change our position and thinking of ourselves to a lower position?

- God then changes our humble position and makes us more than we ever could on our own.

Redefining Greatness

How does Jesus' statement about becoming like a child turn their expectation of greatness upside down?

- They thought greatness was based on performance and ability. Jesus showed them that the least able are the greatest.

Jesus doesn't answer their question with the name of some spiritually great person. Instead he reveals to them the pathway of how to live out kingdom greatness in their own lives. Jesus did this by redefining their view of greatness. He corrects our manmade view of greatness and shows us what greatness looks like from God's perspective. In God's eyes, total dependence on God's grace, is considered great.

Why is it that the least able and totally dependent are best equipped to accept God's grace?

- They know they could never achieve it in the first place.
- People with a great amount of natural talent are tempted to think they don't need grace.
- Children don't have clout. They don't have a long track record or resume.
- People the world sees as great have a bigger challenge to accept God's grace because what they have can more easily cloud their view of what is important.

How does this new view of kingdom greatness change the way we see people who are different or less able than ourselves?

- It makes us less judgmental and more gracious toward people society will have nothing to do with.

Matthew 18:5-6

Jesus so thoroughly identifies himself with those who are not able to fend for themselves: the helpless, the downtrodden, the "little ones" and insignificant of the world that he says welcoming them is like welcoming him. If Jesus were here in our midst, we would all gladly welcome him without hesitation.

What makes it difficult to welcome or help the "insignificant" ones of the world?

- You know you will never get paid back.
- It is humbling.
- You have to be unselfish.

Jesus is saying, once you learn how to help those who can never help you back, you have really learned what it means to be great in the kingdom. And once you learn to lower yourself in humility you are then ready to receive God's gift of grace.

Application

What in your life has gotten in the way of being great in God's kingdom?

What lessons have you seen in children that can help you be more godly?

What areas of your life do you still see the need for constant humility?

What "little ones" has God placed in your life that he wants you to be patient with?

Put it into Practice

This week try to help someone who is not able to help you back. I am not necessarily talking about helping someone with money. Help someone with your time and talents or by being present for them in a difficult time. Help someone who is maybe even just a little difficult to be around and you will find God will humble you in a profound way.

The Greatest Commandment

Tough Questions

How well do you respond to commands from others?

What is the most difficult question you have ever been asked?

Tonight we are going to study a question that the Pharisees asked Jesus. We find this story in Matthew 22. Matthew 22 is a chapter of questions. Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet in 22:1-14 clearly angered the religious authorities so they set out to trap Jesus with three questions asked by three different groups:

Question #1—Should we pay taxes(22:15)? The Herodians asked this question, trying to get him in trouble with the Romans.
Question #2—Question on Marriage and the resurrection (22:23). The Sadducees asked this question because they did not believe in resurrection.
Question #3—Which is the Greatest Commandment (22:34)? The Pharisees asked this question to try to get him to leave out important parts of the law and have grounds to accuse him.
Question #4—Jesus then asks them a question that perplexes them all Whose son is the Messiah (22:41)?

In this study we will focus on the third and final question they asked Jesus—"Which is the greatest commandment?"

Text

Matthew 22:34-40

What scriptures did they have in Jesus' day?

- The Old Testament

What books in the Old Testament do we normally associate with commandments ?

- Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Take a guess of how many commandments Jesus had to choose from in the Old Testament?

- 613 commandments
- 365—prohibitions—"thou shall nots"
- 248—mandates—"thou shalls"

Greatest Commandment

From all of these possibilities Jesus is asked to pick the "greatest." It is a

trick question. If he leaves something out, they can accuse him of thinking less of those commandments. They believed that any answer would be a wrong one. They weren't interested in the answer. They were trying to get Jesus in trouble.

If you were asked this by the people who knew the law better than anyone else, where would you look? Would you look to the ten commandments for some help? Would you go to the Levitical laws and regulations? Jesus had the perfect answer for those who were trying to trap him in his words.

What commandment did Jesus say was the greatest?

- To love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.
- This is from Deuteronomy 6:5

What makes loving God with all of who we are the greatest of the 613 commandments Jesus had to chose from?

- It is God centered
- If we love God this way we won't have any trouble obeying the rest of God's commandments.

Obedience

Commandments require obedience. When God tells what we should do He expects that we will do them. There are two attitudes by which we can obey God's commandments:

1) We can obey God through **fear**. That is, we can do all the things God asks because we fear the consequences of doing something wrong. Jesus could have just as easily gone a few verses further in Deuteronomy 6 and cited 6:13 as the greatest commandment—"Fear the Lord your God." Fear can certainly generate obedience but in the end it is not what God desires.
2) We can obey God through **love**. Jesus said all of the other commandments are summed up in our love for God. If we love God, we will want to follow the rest of His commands. We obey Him because we love Him.

1 John 4:16b-21

John says that love casts out fear. He is probably referring to the fear of final judgment and punishment from God. Many people today live lives of fear toward God, terrified that they will do one wrong thing and be punished. That is not what God asks for. Jesus and John call us to live in love for God and for others. That doesn't mean we disrespect God's other commandments. In fact, we will keep them even better when we are obeying God out of love.

What is it about really loving God that "casts out fear"?

- We realize that He wants the best for us and that He loves us.

- We don't have to live in a constant state of anxiety concerning our salvation.

Does obeying God out of love rather than fear mean we lose respect for his authority and power? Why?

- No.
- It means we appreciate it even more because he has the power and authority to punish us but loves and forgives us instead.

Loving God With Our Whole Life

The love we have for God is not skin deep but is lasting and from the deepest areas of our life.

What three areas of our lives did Jesus say we are to love God from?

- Heart
- Soul
- Mind

How well do these three areas sum up every area of our lives?

- This is all of who we are—spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually.
- Heart, soul, and mind is our identity. It is who we are.

Second Command

In the second command, who did Jesus say we are to love?

- Our neighbor—from Leviticus 19:18

Jesus said this second command is like the first one. *In what way is loving our neighbor like loving God?*

- We are thinking and loving beyond ourselves.
- There is a children's song called J.O.Y.—"Jesus first, Yourself last, and Others in between."
- When we think about the needs of others and how we can help others, we are reflecting Christ to the world.

Defining "Neighbor"

Who is my neighbor? Does this only apply to the few people who live immediately next to me? In Luke 10 Jesus answers the question of "who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:30-37

Who qualifies as our neighbor according to Jesus' parable?

- Just about anyone. Not just those living near us. We are to treat all people as our neighbors.

What about our enemies? Are they are neighbor?

- Even those who have hurt us qualify as neighbors. We are to treat people as God/Jesus would treat people.

Jesus said that loving God and others upholds all the Law and the prophets. In Romans 13:8-10 Paul wrote that loving one's neighbor is the

"fulfillment of the law" and that it summed up all the other laws. *How does loving our neighbor "sum up" the other laws of God?*

- If we love our neighbor we will not steal or lie or murder them.
- If we love our neighbor we will treat them right.

Jesus answers their question perfectly because the two laws he names encompass all of the rest. Jesus is saying they are all important but the most important thing is living out of an attitude of love.

Application

What area do you find hardest to love God with: heart, soul, or mind? Why?

In what ways do the "neighbors" in your life make it challenging to love them?

How can we show God and others just how much we love them?

Putting it Into Practice

This week show God how much you love Him. When you love someone you can't wait to spend time with him. Take a few moments each day this week to just talk with Him. Let Him know how you are feeling and what is going on in your life. Let him know you love him with all of your life—heart, soul, and mind.

Victory in Jesus

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

If we are given a choice between victory or defeat, I think we would all chose victory. At the end of Jesus' life there is a large celebration held for him as he enters Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:7-11

Their actions and words point to his identity as the Messiah and coming victory:

- **Donkey** was one of Zechariah's signs of the messiah (Zech 9:9).
- **Placing cloaks on the donkey**—great sign of respect.
- **Words**—honor Jesus as a deliverer— "Hosanna" or "Save now!"

But just a few chapters later we find Jesus facing another crowd. Matthew 27 records Jesus' trial before Pilate.

Jesus' Trial

Matthew 27:15-26

How could people change from shouting "Hosanna" to shouting "Crucify Him" so quickly?

- Misunderstanding of what type of Messiah he was supposed to be.
- They thought the Messiah would not allow himself to be arrested and tried by the Romans. He would say something. He would defeat them and this guy stands there and doesn't say a word. How could he be the Messiah?

How did Jesus' death on the cross appear to be a defeat?

- It is not easy to look at a crucified man on a cross and believe he is the Messiah and savior of the world.
- The Messiah is supposed to look victorious and Jesus looks defeated!
- No one to date had found victory on a cross.
- There was only one outcome for those who were put on a cross—death.

But how was Jesus' death on the cross a victory?

- He conquered death
- He paid the price for our sins
- He showed us how much he loves us

Jesus' Love Through Suffering

How does Jesus' willingness to endure such suffering show us how much he really loves us?

- If he didn't go through it, we would have to go through even worse.
- His death paid the ultimate price for our sins.
- Being on a cross is shameful and embarrassing. He took it all for us when he didn't have to.
- He knew how painful it would be and how humiliating it would be on the cross but he did it anyway.

Victory Through Resurrection

Have you ever had a time in your life when defeat turned into victory?

What two promises did Jesus make to his disciples would happen to him after he died?

- Mark 8:31—three days after his death he would rise again!
- John 14:1-4 He would come again and bring us to heaven.

Often when we talk about "Victory in Jesus" we think about two things:

1) His death
2) The second coming.

The song Victory in Jesus leaves out the resurrection. It goes from talking about his suffering to our being with him in heaven. There is something extremely important in between those two things that bridges them and makes heaven possible—resurrection!

Matthew 27:62-28:10

They remembered Jesus' words — "After three days I will rise again." *Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose again early on Sunday, how is that three days?*

- Friday = 1, Saturday = 2, Sunday = 3

Matthew 28:1-10

How is Jesus' resurrection different than the resurrection of people like Lazarus?

- Jesus had power over death. Lazarus was risen by Jesus' power.
- Lazarus died again. Jesus will never die again.
- This miracle was different than all the rest. All the other people Jesus healed would get sick again one day and die. Jesus would never get sick and he would never die again—**Romans 6:10**— "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."

Hope Through the Resurrection

How does Jesus' victory over death give us hope?

- We now have hope that through him, death will have no hold on us.
- We know he will come again
- **1 John 3:1-3**

How does John say we are to react to the hope we have in Jesus' resurrection?

- By purifying our lives.

Why would purifying our lives be an important part of our hope in the resurrection?

- The resurrection changes our lives. It changes our future. It changes our hope and our direction.
- Purity is important in keeping our relationship with him right.
- We know he is coming back for us and he wants us to live for him.

Victory Through the 2nd Coming

Revelation 22:20 & John 14:1-4

How is Jesus' second coming a victory?

- There will be no more sadness or death
- We will be with God forever!
- The purpose of all of creation will be fulfilled and all things will be made right.

How does Jesus' resurrection give us hope that he will also make good on his promise of his return?

- If he is able to conquer death then he is able to come back for us.

Application

What excites you the most about Jesus' return?

What are you looking forward to the most about heaven?

How does this hope encourage you to live a more holy life today?

How does the news of Jesus' victory over death and his promise of return help spur us on to tell more people about Jesus?

- Jesus is the only source of life and the only hope of life after death. If people don't have Jesus they are without hope and need to be reached.

Let our faith in Christ and his return spur us on to be more about his business and less about our own. Let it be an encouragement to us on a daily basis that we can live cheerful lives because no matter what this world throws at us we have a better life ahead with God.

Put it Into Practice

Make a list of some big victories that have happened in your life because of God answering your prayers. Take a few moments to thank him for the victories he has provided in the past, present, and even in the future when he comes again.

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

Take the Prepwork Here