



GOSPEL OF JOHN

A Family Devotional



BRUCE ZACHARY

Gospel of John:
A Family Devotional

By Bruce Zachary

I am the vine, you are the branches.
He who abides in Me,
and I in him, bears much fruit.
John 15:5

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Table of Contents

introduction	6
how to use this book.....	6
1. John 1:1-14 - "Jesus is God"	8
2. John 1:15-51 - "Tell People About Jesus"	10
3. John 2:1-12 - "Jesus Makes Us Better"	12
4. John 2:13-2- "Zeal for God"	14
5. John 3:1-21 - "Spiritual Life"	16
6. John 3:22-36 - "Jesus Must Increase"	18
7. John 4:1-26 - "Satisfying Worship"	20
8. John 4:27-39 - "How to Share Your Faith"	22
9. John 5:1-15 - "Moving Forward"	24
10. John 5:16-47 - "Evidence Beyond a Doubt"	26
11. John 6:1-14 - "Compassion"	28
12. John 6:15-21 - "Don't Be Afraid"	30
13. John 6:22-71 - "The Bread of Life"	32
14. John 7:37-39 - "Living Water"	34
15. John 8:1-11 - "Don't Throw Rocks"	36
16. John 8:12-36 - "The Light of the World"	38
17. John 9:1-41 - "Now I See"	40
18. John 10:1-10 - "The Good Shepherd" part I	42
19. John 10:11-42 - "The Good Shepherd" part II	44
20. John 11:1-57 - "Real Life"	46
21. John 12:1-11 - "True Worship"	48
22. John 12:12-50 - "Why Do You Seek Jesus?"	50
23. John 13:1-22 - "True Love"	52
24. John 13:18-38 - "The Cure for Hypocrisy"	54
25. John 14:1-14 - "The Cure for Heart Trouble"	56
26. John 14:15-31 - "Loving Jesus"	58
27. John 15:1-11 - "Miracle Grow"	60
28. John 15:12-25 - "Love One Another"	62

29. John16:1-15 - “The Work of the Holy Spirit”	64
30. John 16:15-33 - “Fullness of Joy”	66
31. John 17:1-26 - “The Lord’s Prayer”	68
32. John 18:1-27 - “Steps of Denial”	70
33. John 18:28-19:16 - “What Shall You Do With Jesus?”	72
34. John19:17-37 - “It is Finished”	74
35. John 19:38-20:10 - “Seeing is Believing”	76
36. John 20:11-31 - “The Power of His Resurrection”	78
37. John 21:1-25 - “Who Will Feed His Sheep?”	80
38. John 21:24-25 - “Experiencing Jesus”	82
Jesus is the “I am”	84
appendix	85
:: How to memorize Scripture ::	85
.: Teaching younger kids :	85
.: For older kids :	85
topical index	86

introduction

As parents, the greatest challenge we face is to help our children know God and His ways, so that our children and their children can follow after Him. The responsibility to teach our children about God cannot be delegated to the church or Christian schools. This responsibility, privilege, and blessing, rests with parents. The purpose of this book is to assist parents in teaching their children, daily, how to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength [Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 22:37].

Our children face tremendous pressures in our culture that will make it difficult for them to know God and keep the faith. Parents labor to make ends meet, to provide a good education, a nice place to live, and decent clothes for their kids. In our fast-paced world, it is difficult to find time to teach our kids about God. Yet, we know that this is the true priority. The problem is compounded because we feel unable to teach our kids about God, since the challenge seems so complex. But, we really can teach our kids about God on a daily basis.

This book will help your family study together through the **Gospel of John**. Learning through a book of the Bible is a great way to learn about God, because it provides a context for your family devotions. John's gospel, in particular, is a great book to study. John wrote to show us why we should believe in Jesus, and how to experience the Christian life: *"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"* [John 20:31].

how to use this book

Children can learn from the Bible at an early age [2Timothy 3:15]. This book is ideal for families with children from first grade through middle school, but can be used by all. Every day, spend time in one of the lessons with your family. For example, spend 15-20 minutes before school and work at breakfast time, or spend time at the dinner table going through a lesson. It is helpful to review or complete each lesson before moving to the next. You can talk about the lesson in the morning, and then review it at night, or explore the same study two mornings in a row.

When Jesus was in the temple as a boy, He was in the middle of a group of teachers listening to them and asking them questions [Luke 2:46]. Encourage your family to ask questions as well as listening and answering questions. The family devotion time is intended to draw us closer to God, and to help us bond with one another. Questions in the introduction to each topic and the application [bringing it home] sections are frequently oriented toward the kids. For example, the question may ask about school rather than work. Nevertheless, parents should respond to the questions as well. You can either share about your childhood experiences, or adapt a question to your current life situation. As the family shares their experiences they will draw closer to one another, and to God.

Begin the devotion time by asking a family member to **pray**. Then **read the passage** from the Bible. Take turns reading. Perhaps each person reads a verse, or

different family members read the whole section on different days. If a section seems too long, feel free to read only a part. Consider reading the remaining verses when you review or complete the section. The **introduction** questions should be answered by each family member, and draw attention to the topic. The **WDJD** section helps us to consider what did Jesus do. The **“What’s the point?”** section focuses our attention to the subject. The **FYI** provides a bit of related information for your interest. The **“Now what?”** section helps us to consider what to do next.

The **Bible text** suggests a key verse from the passage. Each family member should try to **memorize the verse** [please see the appendix at the back of the book for some suggestions on how to memorize Scripture]. The **bringing it home** section helps us to apply what we have learned. **Write** your family’s answers in a separate journal or in the margins of the book. Writing your answers helps make your thoughts and ideas tangible, and provides a way to review and see how you have grown in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2Peter 3:18]. Finally, have a family member **pray** at the end of the devotion. **Remember** to: read it, learn it, and do it. Let your family see that God is real in your life.

1. John 1:1-14 - "Jesus is God"

Introduction:

A small boy was drawing a picture when an adult asked, "What are you drawing?" The boy replied, "A picture of God." The adult said, "No one knows what God looks like." To which the boy confidently responded, "They will when I get through."

Imagine Jesus' hands. His hands made the universe. They are also a baby's hand wrapped around Mary's thumb, a young boy's hand holding a hammer in Joseph's carpentry shop, hands raised as He calmed the stormy sea, hands that touched the lame, and the blind ... the hands of God washing the disciples' feet. As you think about Jesus' hands, can you imagine Him hugging you? How do you think it would feel?

WDJD?

Jesus left His home in heaven to come to us. He loves you and wants you to understand God's love. He lived a perfect life to be an example to you. Then, He gave His life for you so you that could connect with God.

What's the point? Jesus is God.

FYI: John Howard Griffin wrote "Black Like Me" in 1959. He underwent medical treatment to change the color of his skin to temporarily become a black man. He then went to the South to experience, and to understand, racial prejudice. He wanted to know the suffering others experienced.

Now what? Trust Jesus.

Bible Text: John1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Outline:

1. Jesus is God
2. Jesus reveals God
3. Jesus gives life

1. Jesus is God [1-3, 14]

v.1-3 In the beginning: Jesus lived even before there was time as we know it. Since he is God, He has always existed. John wants us to know Jesus is not only the Son of God, but is God!

v.14 The Word became flesh: Jesus became a man. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He was hungry, thirsty, tired, wept, and bled, just like you and me, but He is also always God. Remember, Judas had to identify Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane; He didn't have a glowing head. He looked just like anybody else.

FYI: Joseph Damien was a missionary who ministered to lepers at Molokai Island in the 1800s. Leprosy is very contagious and a very serious disease. Therefore, people with leprosy lived together on the island away from others. Every day he would start his Bible study, “My fellow *believers* ...” One day he woke up and realized that he had become a leper. That day, he began his Bible study “My fellow *lepers* ...” Joseph dwelt with the lepers, and experienced their life, just like Jesus dwelt with us.

2. Jesus reveals God [4-11]

v.9 Jesus is the True Light: He is the one who reveals God clearly. Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world*” [John 8:12].

Have you ever seen a lighthouse? The light directs the ships in the dark night and warns of dangers. In the same way, Jesus directs us to God, and warns us of the dangers of life apart from God. If we just follow Jesus, we will see God clearly.

FYI: The earliest lighthouses were simply bonfires built on hillsides to guide ships. The first real lighthouse served the old world city of Alexandria, Egypt, in 285 B.C. The first American lighthouse came to life in 1716 at Boston Harbor.

3. Jesus gives life [12-13]

v.12-13 Children of God, to those who believe in Him: Those who recognize Jesus as God and choose to try to follow and obey Him become part of the family of God. They are God’s children and have a special relationship with Him. They relate to God as Papa. They enjoy all the benefits of a relationship with God such as love, joy, peace, hope, and life. You, too, can receive comfort from God, just like a special hug.

Bringing it home:

- 1. If you want to have a special relationship with God, simply trust in Jesus, and decide to learn of Him, follow Him, and obey Him. If you do, the Bible promises special blessings for you.**
- 2. Draw a picture of your family and God together. Date and sign the picture, and find a good place to display the picture.**

2. John 1:15-51 - "Tell People About Jesus"

Introduction:

Henry Ford started the Ford Motor Company and was one of the wealthiest men in the country. One day, he bought a life insurance policy, and the man who sold him the policy made lots of money from the sale. Interestingly, Mr. Ford had a close friend who also sold life insurance. Henry's friend asked why he didn't buy the policy from him. Henry responded, "You never asked."

How many of our friends would say that they did not become a Christian because we never asked?

If I offered \$10,000.00 to the first 10 people who told someone about Jesus, and it made no difference if that person began a relationship with Jesus or not, what do you think would happen?

WDJD?

Jesus asked the disciples [v.38], "What do you seek?" That was the first question Jesus asked during His ministry as recorded in the Bible. The question makes you think about what you are looking for. What need are you trying to fill? Whatever you are looking for from life, Jesus is the answer to what you are seeking.

What's the point? Tell people about Jesus.

FYI: Have you ever looked on a milk carton and seen the word *pasteurized*? Louis Pasteur developed the system that helps protect milk from germs. He was also one of the first people to invent a vaccine, and he invented many. At that time, thousands of people died each year from rabies. Mr. Pasteur invented a vaccine for rabies that he was going to test on himself because he thought it was too dangerous to try on anyone else. That day, nine-year-old Joseph Meister was bitten by a dog with rabies. His mother begged Mr. Pasteur to try the vaccine on her son before he died. Pasteur gave the boy the vaccine, and he lived.

Decades later, of all the things Pasteur could have placed on his gravestone, he asked for three words: "Joseph Meister Lived." One of the most important experiences of life is helping others to live. When we tell people about Jesus, we help them to live.

Now what? Share the Good News.

Bible Text: John 1:29

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Outline:

- 1. Prepare for Jesus**
- 2. Point to Jesus**

1. Prepare for Jesus [15-23]

v.19-22 The Jewish leaders wondered if John the Baptist was the Messiah, the Son of God. They wondered if he was the one who the prophets said would come. When John told them that he wasn't the Messiah, they wondered who he was.

v.22-23 John said: **"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"** In those days, the people would prepare the road for the king's arrival. They would fill the potholes, and remove rocks, and fallen trees. They wanted the path to be smooth for the king. John was letting people know to prepare for Jesus. If there are any obstacles, help people to have a clear path to Jesus.

D.L. Moody once asked a man, "Are you a Christian?" The man responded, "Mind your own business!" Then Moody said, "This is my business." It's your business too. As you talk with people about Jesus, try to answer the questions they have. Help them to see their need for a relationship with Jesus.

2. Point to Jesus [24-34]

v.24-28 The religious leaders wondered why John was baptizing people. He explained that it was to prepare people for the Messiah. Generally, Jews baptized Gentiles [non-Jews] who had converted to Judaism. John was baptizing Jews and Gentiles. John was saying that all people need to be prepared to get right with God.

v.29-31 Behold the Lamb: John points to Jesus, and identifies Him as the real Messiah. Jesus is the only one **who takes away the sin of the world.**

v.32-34 John bore witness and told people about the events at Jesus' baptism. John wanted people to know that Jesus is truly the Messiah. We too, can share our experience with Jesus.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Think about some people that you want to tell about Jesus. Ask God to help you. Consider ways that you can let people know that you love Jesus. Here are some ideas: wear a WWJD bracelet, cross necklace, t-shirt or hat that tells people about your faith; or wear a bracelet or necklace that tells the gospel message with colored beads.**
- 2. Also, invite friends and neighbors to church, Kids' Bible Camp/Vacation Bible School [VBS], or an outreach event.**

3. John 2:1-12 - “Jesus Makes Us Better”

Introduction:

Have you ever seen a baby swan? They are not very pretty to look at. They are clumsy, helpless and ... ugly. As the baby swan grows it is transformed into one of the most beautiful and graceful animals imaginable. God transforms things to make them better. Can you think of an area in your life where you think God wants to change you to make you even better?

WDJD?

Jesus transforms His followers to make them better. He changed Peter from unstable to a rock of a man, John from a man with a bad temper to a loving shepherd, Matthew from a money lover to a lover of God, and Paul from a hater of Christians to a champion of the church.

What’s the point? Jesus transforms us and makes us better.

FYI: Jesus’ very first miracle was the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast. He did not perform miracles as a teenager, but His miracles were on God’s time schedule.

FYI: Jews are often married on the third day of a week [2:1], which would be Tuesday. You probably can’t guess why. During the creation, God pronounced a double blessing on the third day [Genesis 1:9-13]. Jews want a double blessing for their marriage, so some Jews have their wedding on Tuesday.

Now what? Be transformed.

Bible Text: John 2:5

His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

Outline:

- 1. Jesus’ power**
- 2. Jesus’ plan**
- 3. Jesus’ purpose**

1. Jesus’ power [1-5]

v.1-3 There was a wedding ... and they ran out of wine: A Jewish wedding feast would last a week. Jesus was at the wedding with His disciples, and His mother Mary was also there. In that culture, a host would be very embarrassed if he ran out of wine; hospitality was extremely important. Mary knew she didn’t have the power to change things, and neither did anyone else, except for Jesus. Jesus has the power to transform!

Mary instructed the waiters to do whatever Jesus told them to do. If you want to experience transformation, simply do whatever Jesus tells you to do.

2. Jesus' plan [6-10]

v.6-7 Water for purification: There were six big containers of water that each held about 20-30 gallons. The Jews would use the water to wash their hands and feet before they ate as a symbol of being pure. The water was a symbol of ritual and religion. Ritual and religion can't transform us, but Jesus can. He told the waiters to fill the water containers to the top with water, and they obeyed. Jesus' plan for transformation begins with trust and obedience.

v.8-10 Good wine: Jesus' miracle changed the water to wine, and it was the best wine anyone ever tasted! The Lord's best is so much better than the world's best. His plan is to transform you to be even better than you are.

3. Jesus' purpose [11]

v.11 Jesus changes good to great. We need to give up the good to get the best. People who have a relationship with Jesus are transformed. The Bible tells us, *"If anyone be in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new."* [2Corinthians 5:17]. When Jesus transforms, it **reveals His glory**.

When people see the changes in us, it reveals God's glory and shows how great God is. It also strengthens our faith, and encourages us that God will transform us.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Consider how God transforms an ugly baby swan into a graceful and beautiful bird or how He changes a caterpillar to a butterfly. Draw a picture to remind you of how God transforms.**
- 2. Did you think of an area in your life where you think God wants to change you to make you even better? Pray and ask Him to transform you. Remember to trust and obey Him. Whatever He says to you, do it!**

4. John 2:13-2- “Zeal for God”

Introduction:

What do you get excited about? Everyone is excited about something ... a master passion (games, work, school, relationships, fitness, recreation, sports, a hobby, cooking, eating, new clothes, cars, pets ...). It's not wrong to be excited; actually, it's good. But, it's important to be excited about God. If you think about some of your friends and people you know, you probably know what they're excited about. They also probably know what you're excited about. If you are excited about Jesus, how do you express that excitement so that others see your zeal for God?

WDJD?

One day, Jesus came to the temple, and he was so upset that He turned the tables over [John 2]. Why was Jesus so upset? The religious leaders were taking advantage of people who had come to worship God. Jesus is passionate about the things of God, and He wants us to be totally committed to doing what is right. Jesus gives us a wake-up call to do the right thing.

What's the point? Have zeal for God.

FYI: *Outside* magazine often features stories about people who risk their lives in their zeal for adventure. Frenchman Jean Luc Antoni, for instance, skis down rocks. In 1987 he set a world record of 61 miles per hour riding a single ski down a rocky slope in France. Since braking is impossible, the resourceful skier built a cardboard wall at the bottom of the run and smashed into it. He amazingly survived. Skiing down rocks certainly isn't for everyone, but zeal and adventure are important elements of life. In fact, people who zealously follow Jesus enjoy the greatest adventure of all.

Now what? Be excited about God.

Bible Text: John 2:17

Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”

Outline: Four steps to have zeal for God

Jesus is passionate about us, and requires us to be passionate about Him. Zeal is intense enthusiasm for a person, cause or object.

How can we have zeal for God? Jesus shows us four steps [John 2:15-25]:

1. Clean house: remove what inhibits worship [15-17]. Jesus removed the things that were obstacles to worship. If there's something in your life that keeps you from being zealous for God, clean house! For example, your music, games, and what you watch on

TV, and the computer. Not only do we need to remove the things that offend, but we need to replace them with things that help us to be excited about God. For example, reading our Bibles, spending time with Christian friends, listening to Christian music, etc.

2. Remember Jesus' death and resurrection [18-21]. Because Jesus gave His life for us, and since the resurrection proves that He is the way to God, we should be zealous for Him. The temple in Jerusalem was the center of spiritual life, but Jesus came to show us that the way to God was through Him, not buildings made by men. You can enter a big beautiful cathedral or church building, and be impressed by the building. It's not bad to be impressed by a beautiful church, but we should be more excited about God than a building.

3. Believe the Word: know it and live it [22]. The disciples were strengthened in their faith as they remembered what Jesus and the prophets predicted about His death and resurrection. When you are studying the Word of God, and you don't understand something, you can still treasure the truth, and later God will make it clear. Learn the word of God; live the Word of God; and you will love the God of the Word.

4. Commit to God: Jesus knows our hearts [23-25]. Jesus wants followers who are truly committed. Jesus is not seeking a big crowd, but He is seeking a real commitment. Since Jesus knows our hearts, isn't it nice when He looks at your heart and sees you're excited about Him?

Bringing it home:

- 1. What do people see you excited about?**
- 2. How do you show people that you are zealous for God?**

5. John 3:1-21 - "Spiritual Life"

Introduction:

How many words do you think you would need to convince someone you really love them? Maybe it would take hundreds or thousands of words. Do you think you could convince someone that you really loved them in 25 words or less? In John 3:16, God shows His love for you, His desire for a relationship with you, and His plan to give you spiritual life. Count how many words there are in John 3:16.

WDJD?

Jesus proves God's love for us by voluntarily leaving heaven and coming to earth to live a perfect life as an example for us. Then He gave His life on the cross for us. It would be like becoming a dog, and leaving earth to go to save a planet of dogs. You would be a nice dog, but other dogs would hurt and kill you. You would rise on the third day, and return to earth, but you would remain a dog ... with scars from where you were bitten to death. Would you be willing to volunteer to do that?

What's the point? Have a relationship with God.

FYI: In Greek and Hebrew the same word is used for spirit and wind. In Hebrew the word is *ruach* and in Greek it is *pneuma*. From the Greek word, we get our English word pneumatic to describe air-powered tools. Jesus compared the work of the Spirit to the wind (see below).

Now what? Experience spiritual life.

Bible Text: John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Outline:

1. God wants a relationship with you
2. Jesus is the bridge to a relationship with God

1. God wants a relationship with you [1-13]

v. 1-4 Unless one is born again, He cannot see the kingdom of God: the only way to enter God's family is by spiritual birth. We can't experience a relationship with God without the Spirit of God. It takes more than your brain or your heart.

v.5-6 Born of water and the Spirit: water speaks of physical birth, and spirit refers to spiritual birth.

v.8-13 The wind: spiritual birth is like the wind. You can't see the wind, or the air you breathe. Even though they are invisible, the effects are visible. When you want to have a relationship with God, He gives you the Holy Spirit, and you have spiritual life. Even

though you can't see electricity, or fully understand how the internet works, you know they change your life. So does the Spirit of God.

2. Jesus is the bridge to a relationship with God [14-21]

v.15 Whoever believes in Him should have eternal life: by trusting in Jesus, God gives you spiritual life. You show that you believe in Jesus by learning about Him, trying to follow Him and obeying His commandments.

v. 16 For God so loved the world: God wants you and everyone else in the world to have a relationship with Him. He loves you! If you ever wonder whether God really loves you, remember He sent Jesus, His only Son, to give His life for you.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Each of us gets to choose to have a relationship with God. God won't force you to have a relationship with Him. He wants to give you a great life, and it's a gift! All you have to do is receive the gift.**
- 2. If you haven't already asked Jesus into your life, pray and receive the gift of spiritual life. If you really want to have a relationship with God, the Bible promises spiritual life. You may not feel any different at first, but you can trust God. And, like the wind, you'll see the effects.**

6. John 3:22-36 - "Jesus Must Increase"

Introduction:

There is a conflict between our pride that seeks attention so that we try to elevate ourselves, and the need to give credit to God so that He will increase.

Hudson Taylor was one of the first to go to China on a mission trip. He was introduced at a missions' dinner with a long introduction praising his accomplishments. When he rose to speak he said, "I am the little servant of an illustrious master." On another occasion, A.W. Tozer, another godly man, was introduced to speak with great praise of his accomplishments. Tozer said, "Father forgive him for that introduction, and forgive me for enjoying it so much."

WDJD?

Jesus never sought glory for Himself. Whenever people sought to praise Him, He gave the glory to God the Father. Jesus taught us to let people see our lives and our good works, and glorify our Father in heaven [Matthew 5:16]. We should follow Jesus' example and seek to glorify God, not seek glory for ourselves.

What's the point? Be humble.

FYI: In all of the many words that Jesus said, as recorded in the Bible, He only made one autobiographical statement. Do you know what He said? Jesus said of Himself, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am **humble** and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" [Matthew 11:29]. He wanted to emphasize that He is humble. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less often, and thinking about others more often.

Now what? I need to give glory to Jesus, and not try to take it for myself.

Bible Text: John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Outline: Three reasons to glorify Jesus

v.26 He is baptizing and all are coming to Him: John's disciples were concerned that people were coming to Jesus to be baptized rather than coming to John. John wasn't upset. He knew that people needed to come to Jesus. John showed three reasons to glorify Jesus:

1. v.27 Jesus is the source of blessing: John wasn't jealous because he realized that all blessings in life came from God. Therefore, only God should receive the glory. Even if you try real hard and practice to get better, remember God blessed you with all of those abilities. So, He deserves the credit.

2. v.29-30 Jesus must increase: We *must* point people to Jesus ... it's not an option. He must increase, or move to the front, and we must decrease, and move to the back. If your best friend got married, you would be happy for him. You would not try to upstage him at the wedding, and draw attention to yourself.

3. v.34-36 Only Jesus gives life: Jesus is the only one who can give life, and He gives life to all who trust Him. Actor Jim Carrey observed, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see it's not the answer." What people really need is a relationship with Jesus. Truly, He is the One that's really special, because only He can give life. We should point people to Jesus rather than seeking praise for ourselves.

Bringing it home:

- 1. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds cried out praises. Wouldn't it be silly if the donkey Jesus rode on thought the praise was for him instead of Jesus? Similarly, when people see anything good in us, the credit should go to God. Will you be content to give God the glory?**
- 2. When people point out that you're a good artist, or student, or musician, or athlete, you can tell them, "It's a gift from God."**

7. John 4:1-26 - “Satisfying Worship”

Introduction:

Have you ever been really, really thirsty? Maybe you were playing extra hard, or out on a long hike. Describe what it was like when you were really thirsty? What did you do to try to quench your thirst? Did you get thirsty again?

We go through life with a spiritual thirst that only God can satisfy. A close relationship with God is the only thing that can truly satisfy that seemingly unquenchable thirst. Worship means you really, really love God. When you love God, you’re satisfied.

WDJD?

Jesus went through the area of Samaria, even though most Jews did not travel through that area. He needed to go through Samaria to help a woman to find a satisfying life with God. It’s great to know God cares enough about us that He will go out of His way to find us.

What’s the point? Worship is more than music at church; it’s your whole life.

FYI: Wells in ancient Israel were dug through solid limestone rock. Sometimes the wells were so deep that steps were carved to allow people to climb down to where they could get the water. Jacob’s well, described in John 4, was probably 150 feet deep. Imagine having to climb down 10 to 15 flights of stairs to get water to drink, to cook with, and to bathe; and then you would have to carry the water back up the stairs.

Now what? Experience satisfying worship.

Bible Text: John 4:24

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Outline:

1. Worship satisfies God
2. Worship satisfies us
3. How to experience satisfying worship

1. Worship satisfies God [1-9]

God is seeking worshipers, because worship satisfies God. It was a hot day in Samaria, and Jesus was thirsty. When He came to the well, **Jesus asked for a drink**. Remember, God has a desire to receive from us, as well as to give to us. God shows His love to us, and wants to receive love from us.

Later in the story, we learn that the **Father is seeking true worshipers [v.23]**. God is in hot pursuit of us, because He is seeking worshipers. Our worship is like a kiss

toward God. When we love God, it's like He gets a big hug from us and that makes Him feel good.

2. Worship satisfies us [v.10-16]

v.10 Living water: Can you imagine a soda that was so good that you'd never thirst again? The bad news is, they'll never invent it. The good news is, God wants to give you something better!

v.13-15 Never thirst again: God created us with "a hole" inside. It's not a physical hole like a donut, but a spiritual need that only God can fill. When we try to fill the hole with things or people, it never really fills up. It's like trying to fill a bathtub when the drain is open. When God comes into our heart, He fills the hole so that we become satisfied.

3. How to experience satisfying worship [16-26]

v.23-24 Spirit and truth: Twice Jesus repeated that we need to worship in spirit and truth. Spirit: satisfying worship is spiritual, as well as emotional, and intellectual. You can be excited at a sporting event, but that's probably just your feelings, or what you're thinking when your team is winning. Satisfying worship involves not only your brain and feelings, but, also, God's Spirit helps you to love God.

Truth: we need to know the truth about God, and approach with a sincere heart. The problem: the Samaritan woman worshiped what she did not know. The Samaritans sought to establish a separate religion from the Jews at Jerusalem. So they changed the Word and made up their own rules for worship. Worship only satisfies when we "play by the rules." We need to know the Word of God to know the God of the Word. To be satisfied, we must worship God on His terms, not ours.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Worship is not limited to a particular place. You worship God at church, at home, at school, at work, at the beach, in the mountains, at a lake, at the park, in Jerusalem, or wherever you live.**
- 2. Worship is more than singing. Worship means you really, really love God. When you love God, you will want to obey Him, and you want to declare His praises. When you love God, you're satisfied.**

8. John 4:27-39 - "How to Share Your Faith"

Introduction:

Have you ever picked berries? Perhaps you've picked strawberries, blackberries or raspberries. When you pick berries, you see that some are ripe and ready to be picked and eaten. Some aren't ready, so you have to be patient. Sometimes you see berries that were neglected, and were never picked. They were just wasted.

When we tell people about Jesus, it can be like picking berries. Some people are ripe and ready, and some are not yet ready. The saddest thought is that people were neglected, and never heard about Jesus because no one shared their faith.

WDJD?

Jesus told all sorts of people about God's love. He told rich people and poor people, religious people and non-religious, Jews and Gentiles [non-Jews], people who lived near Him, and people He met away from home. It's good to share your faith with all sorts of people.

What's the point? Learn how to share your faith.

FYI: Harry Winston was a famous jewel merchant. One day a rich man was shown a very expensive and beautiful diamond by one of Harry's salesmen. The man decided not to buy the diamond and was about to leave. Harry stopped him and showed him the beauty of the gem. The man then decided to buy the diamond, but he wondered why he bought it from Harry, but not the other salesman. Harry explained that the salesman knew all about diamonds, but Harry loved them. When you love someone, or something, it's easy to get others excited about what you love.

Now what? Tell people about Jesus.

Bible Text: John 4:35

Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

Outline:

1. Share your experience
2. Sharing satisfies
3. Share now

1. Share your experience [27-30]

In these verses, the woman at the well told her friends and neighbors about her experience with Jesus, and how Jesus knew all about her even though they had never

met before. She thought that Jesus might be the Messiah. Many people came to meet Jesus, and believed in Him because of what she shared.

All of us can share how we have experienced Jesus. For example, answered prayers, learning the Bible, His love, peace, joy, and hope.

What would you like to tell someone about Jesus?

2. Sharing satisfies [31-34]

The disciples urged Jesus to eat since He had been hungry and tired. Jesus explained that He was satisfied, because He had told the woman at the well about God. When we do God's work, we feel refreshed and renewed. Have you ever told someone about God? How did it feel?

3. Share now [35-39]

The time to share is now. When you plant seeds in the ground you have to wait until they grow. But when the plants are grown and ready, it's time for harvest. Jesus wants us to know that the harvest is ready. There are people who are ready to start a relationship with God ... they just need someone to tell them about Jesus.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Jesus told His disciples to pray for God to send out laborers into His harvest [Matthew 9:35-38]. As the disciples prayed, they realized they were the ones God was sending to tell people about Him.**
- 2. Who would you like to share your faith with? Maybe you want to tell friends, neighbors, or people at school or work. Pray and ask God to help you tell them about Him.**

9. John 5:1-15 - "Moving Forward"

Introduction:

Have you ever ridden a bike, scooter, or skateboard? Have you ever gone real fast, or down a hill, so you can coast and don't have to even try to go forward? Have you ever noticed that if you don't make some effort, pretty soon you'll slow down and stop? The same thing happens in our spiritual life. We can be moving forward, and then start to coast. If we don't put some effort into moving forward, we'll slow down and stop.

WDJD?

Jesus wants to help people move forward. When the friends of a paralyzed man brought him to Jesus, He healed their friend so that he could move forward [Mark 2:1-12]. When Peter denied Jesus, he was ready to give up and stop serving God. Jesus came to Peter. He encouraged and strengthened Him. Then, Peter moved forward and once again served God [John 21:15-19].

What's the point? Make spiritual progress [move forward].

FYI: In Arizona there is a shallow river that has quicksand on the bottom. You can walk right over the quicksand as long as you keep moving, but the moment you stop, the quicksand pulls you down. Our spiritual life can be like that river bottom. If we keep moving forward, we won't get stuck and pulled down.

Now what? Take the next step and come to Jesus.

Bible Text: John 5:8

Jesus said to Him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

Outline:

1. Jesus cares
2. Jesus cures

1. Jesus cares [1-6]

Jesus came to the **pool of Bethesda**, a Hebrew name meaning "house of mercy." There was a **great multitude of sick and needy people**. It would be like being at a school nurse's office full of really sick kids. Why were these people there? They came seeking mercy and healing from God.

Jesus saw a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. He was unable to walk, and was basically stuck in his bed. Jesus came to the pool because He cares. Jesus wants to restore people. Some people are paralyzed physically so they are unable to walk. Some are paralyzed emotionally or spiritually so they don't ever seem to move forward. Jesus cares about you, and wants to help you move forward in your relationship with God.

2. Jesus cures [6-13]

v.6 “Do you want to be made well?” Jesus asks, because He wants to help us. Why doesn't the man just respond, “Yes”? Surely, he wanted to be made well, but probably thought it was impossible, or didn't know how he could move forward.

v.8-9 Immediately the man was made well. Jesus not only cares, but He is able to cure us. The man was now able to walk. Walking is a picture of moving forward and making progress.

Bringing it home:

- 1. After Jesus healed the man, the man went to the temple to worship, praise, and say thanks to God. God's work of physical healing was a beginning, not an end. God not only wanted to heal the man's legs, but Jesus wanted to help the man so that he could make spiritual progress.**
- 2. Jesus cares for you, and wants to help you move forward to bring you closer to God. Consider some areas of your spiritual life: reading the Bible, prayer, worship, caring for others, sharing, and the fruit of the Spirit [love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control]. In what area of your spiritual life do you think God wants to help you move forward? Pray and ask God to help.**

10. John 5:16-47 - "Evidence Beyond a Doubt"

Introduction:

If someone asked you to prove that you were part of your family, how would you show that you were? Maybe you would show your birth certificate, family pictures, or cards and notes from family members. That would be evidence that would prove beyond a reasonable doubt that you were part of your family.

How do we know that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He's really God? Well, there's evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that shows us. Here, we'll consider some of the proof.

WDJD?

Jesus claimed to be equal with God. The religious leaders were upset that someone, who looked just like any other man, would claim to be God. So Jesus showed them the evidence that proves He is God.

What's the point? Examine evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus is God.

FYI: What is evidence? Evidence refers to anything that is used to prove the truth of a claim. For example, you might claim that you cleaned your room. The fact that you made your bed is evidence of the truth of your claim. If you stuck things under your bed without putting them away, it would be evidence that you didn't really clean your room.

Evidence is used in science, in courts, and other areas of life.

Now What? Consider the evidence and decide to follow Jesus.

Bible Text: John 5:37

And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.

Outline:

1. Works
2. Witness
3. Word

1. Works [17-30, 36]

The religious leaders were upset that Jesus healed the paralyzed man on the Sabbath. They thought it was wrong to do any type of work on the Sabbath. Jesus explained that God, His Father, works on the Sabbath and so does He. They do the same works, because they are both God.

Jesus performed miracles: He changed the water to wine; healed dying, paralyzed, blind, and deaf people; and was even able to restore life to people who were dead. The works of Jesus prove He is God. Since Jesus has all authority over life, we should choose to follow Him and live.

2. Witness [31-38]

Reliable witnesses also show that Jesus is the Christ. John the Baptist identified Jesus as Messiah. John pointed to Jesus as the One who takes away the sin of the world [John 1:29]. And, at Jesus' baptism, John confirmed that Jesus was the Christ.

Jesus had an even better witness, God the Father. At Jesus' baptism [Matthew 3], and at the Mount of Transfiguration [Matthew 17], God the Father spoke out loud and declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We can trust God and other trustworthy witnesses when they tell us about Jesus.

3. Word [39-47]

v.39 The Scriptures ... testify of Me: The Bible shows Jesus as Messiah, and as God.

v.46 Moses wrote about Me: The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses, and they contain predictions [prophecies] to help us identify Messiah. The Old Testament has over 300 prophecies concerning Messiah. The New Testament, especially in the gospels, shows how Jesus fulfilled the predictions. God's Word proves that Jesus is Messiah.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Consider the evidence of Jesus' works, the witnesses, and the Word, and decide to follow Him.**
- 2. Pretend you are a lawyer and your family is the judge. Try to present evidence that shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.**

11. John 6:1-14 - "Compassion"

Introduction:

Sometimes in church we lose sight of what's really important. We make sure the carpets are all clean, and the chairs are tidy, and everything "looks just right." These things are probably less important to Jesus. What Jesus cares most about is people. He has compassion for people's needs. People have hurts and needs, and Jesus cares; and He wants us to care, too!

WDJD?

Imagine spring at the Sea of Galilee: the rolling green grassy hills, full of wildflowers in vibrant red, orange and yellow. Thousands of people have gathered to meet Jesus. The disciples had been working hard and were tired. Jesus told the disciples they needed to rest for awhile. Jesus was tired too. Would he also rest, or would He care for the people? Jesus was moved with compassion, so He began to teach the people about God and care for their needs.

What's the point? Have a passion for compassion.

FYI: There are only two miracles of Jesus that are recorded in all four of the gospels. One is the Resurrection of Jesus, and the other is the feeding of the 5,000. We understand why the Resurrection is so important, but why is the feeding of the 5,000 so important? What's the lesson?

Now What? Receive compassion and show compassion.

Bible Text: Mark 6:34

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them ...

Outline:

1. Jesus is compassionate
2. We must be compassionate

1. Jesus is compassionate [1-6]

Jesus began by teaching the people many things about God [Mark 6:34], but, as time passed, the people became hungry. Jesus is concerned about our spiritual needs and our physical needs. The disciples thought it was time to send the people away so that the people could go and get some food to eat. The disciples realized they did not have enough food, and had no idea how they would feed so many people.

Sometimes people have needs that seem too big for us to help: we don't know how to meet the need, or we don't personally want to deal with it. Remember, the

answer is not simply sending people away. If God puts a need on your heart, Jesus will enable you to take action to help.

II. We must be compassionate [7-14]

The disciples discovered that they had only five loaves of bread and two fish ... it would take a miracle to feed more than 5,000 people with such a small amount of food. Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit in groups of fifties and hundreds [Mark 6:34]. Then Jesus miraculously multiplied the bread and fish, and gave it to the disciples to feed the people.

Why did Jesus have the disciples serve the people in smaller groups? I believe the Lord wanted the disciples to have compassion for those that they served. By gathering the people into smaller groups, the disciples saw the people as individuals rather than as a crowd. They could see how each person was doing, see their joy, or their pain, and show compassion. When we see people as individuals, rather than as a label, such as “homeless” or “poor,” we can begin to have compassion for them.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Compassion is hard to give away: the more you give away, the more you get. The disciples didn't have to make the bread and fish, they merely gave away what Jesus provided. Jesus will always give us enough compassion if we want to give it away.**
- 2. Think of a need that you would like to help. Maybe: poor children who need school supplies, toys, or medicine. Now think of a way to show compassion. For example, you could wash cars, sell lemonade, or gather recyclables to raise money to help the need. Compassion is more than just feeling bad ... it moves us to action. Have a passion for compassion!**

12. John 6:15-21 - “Don’t Be Afraid”

Introduction:

A little boy once found a butterfly’s cocoon and brought it home. One day, the butterfly was ready to break free from the cocoon. As it struggled to get free, the little boy felt sorry for the seemingly helpless butterfly. So, he tried to help the butterfly by opening the cocoon. What the little boy didn’t know was that the butterfly actually needed to struggle to break free from the cocoon. Unless the butterfly struggles through the difficult process, it doesn’t fully strengthen its wings and mature. In the same way, God has us go through difficult times to help us grow, but we need not be afraid when times are tough.

WDJD?

When Jesus sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee, He wasn’t with them. Jesus knew they would row right into a storm. Jesus hadn’t forgotten about them, but was on the mountain praying for them, and watching them [Mark 6:47-48]. Jesus knows the struggles you are going through. He cares, and He is praying for you ... so don’t be afraid.

What’s the point? Trust God during scary times.

FYI: A young boy was in the market with his dad. The boy was carrying a basket, and the dad kept putting groceries in the basket. As the basket was filling up, a concerned woman said, “That’s a heavy load for a young fellow like you.” The boy responded, “Don’t worry, my dad knows how much I can carry.”

In the same way, our heavenly Father won’t give us more than we can handle.

Now what? Don’t be afraid even when life is difficult.

Bible Text: John 6:20

But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”

Outline:

- 1. Jesus will come to us**
- 2. We must come to Jesus**

1. Jesus will come to us [15-21]

Jesus wants us to know that we can trust Him when life is difficult. As the disciples rowed across the sea, an intense storm suddenly came against them. The disciples had been rowing for hours, but couldn’t move forward. They were tired, scared, and probably ready to give up and go back. Sometimes, we go through difficult times where we struggle, we’re afraid, and we want to give up.

Just at the right moment, Jesus came walking on the water to meet them. As they saw someone walking on the water, they were scared [wouldn’t you be too?], but

Jesus said, "It is I; do not be afraid." More than 40 times in the Bible, God tells us not to be afraid. Really; He tells us to stop being afraid. When Jesus comes to you, He will get you to the other side, so don't be afraid.

2. We must come to Jesus [Matthew 14:25-33]

As Jesus approached the disciples, Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So Jesus said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat, and began to walk on the water to Jesus. How do you think Peter felt when he started to walk on the water?

How do you think the other disciples felt when they saw Peter walking on the water? Do you think they wanted to walk on the water, too?

As long as Peter stayed focused on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water, but when he looked at the waves, he began to sink. Jesus rescued him and said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When Jesus calls us to do something, it might seem scary, but we shouldn't doubt Jesus. We need to keep focused on Jesus, rather than the circumstances, and then come to Him.

Bringing it home:

- 1. One day an ant was dragging a piece of straw across a sidewalk. The ant was complaining about having to carry the straw. Then the ant came to a crack in the sidewalk that he couldn't cross. The clever ant placed the straw across the crack, and walked over it like a bridge. The moral of the story is: don't be afraid of your struggles, God will use them to get you to the other side.**
- 2. Think of something in your life that you think God is calling you to, but seems frightening. What is it? Pray and ask God to help you do it even if it's scary. As you come to Jesus, keep focused on Him and not the circumstances.**

13. John 6:22-71 - "The Bread of Life"

Introduction

When I was a young boy, my family lived near a bread factory. My dad and I would walk our dog at night, and three nights a week we would smell fresh bread baking. You could smell the aroma for miles. There's something wonderful about eating hot bread from the oven with melting butter ... yum! Unfortunately, you still get hungry later.

WDJD?

Jesus repeatedly taught us that physical food won't satisfy our spiritual hunger. Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," and "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled" [Matthew 4:4, 5:6]. Jesus wants us to know that if we are seeking to please God, we will be satisfied.

What's the point? Jesus is the bread of life.

FYI:

During the time of Jesus, the Romans set aside 93 days per year for public games at the government's expense. Rome found that it was less expensive to give the people bread and gladiator contests, to feed and entertain them, than to try to keep them from rebelling against the government. Nevertheless, the people still rebelled. Bread and entertainment never satisfy.

Now what? Let Jesus satisfy your hunger.

Bible Text: John 6:35

Then Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger ..."

FYI:

Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life." Seven times in John's gospel Jesus makes a statement about Himself that begins, "I am." This is the first one. We will discover six more as we study together. Write them down in the back of the book, and see if you can list [and then remember] the seven "I am" statements.

Outline:

1. Satisfaction
2. Security

1. Satisfaction [22-29]

Jesus had just miraculously fed bread and fish to more than 5,000 people. Now, the people were following Jesus because they wanted to be fed by Him without having to

work for their food. Jesus taught the people that loaves of bread can never truly satisfy hunger, but He can satisfy their spiritual hunger.

The story is told of a woman who borrowed a beautiful pearl necklace to attend a dance with her husband. Unfortunately, she lost the necklace. She found a replacement, and worked for years to pay it off. Finally, once she had paid for the necklace, she told her friend what happened. Her friend told her that the first necklace was a fake, it only looked valuable. Sometimes in our lives we look to material things to satisfy, and discover, once we've paid the price, that they were just fakes, and didn't satisfy.

2. Security [30-51]

Jesus offers true spiritual security. God provided manna from heaven to feed the Hebrews when they were in the desert. Manna was like wafers of bread that fell from the sky and the people gathered every morning. What if you went outside and there was bread on the sidewalk that came from heaven? Manna sustained life [just like the bread that you eat]; but Jesus gives life, and only has to be received once. Jesus is the true bread from God. Jesus makes clear that once you are His, He will never lose you [v.37-39]. You are secure in His hands.

When my kids were small, and we crossed a busy street, I would tell them, "Hold Dad's hand tight, we're crossing a busy street." It wasn't how tight they could hold my hand, but how tight I was holding their hand. I was going to make sure my kids made it safely to the other side of the street. It's the same way with God. It's not about how tight I can hold onto His hand, but how tight He can hold onto me. He is my Dad. He'll take care of me, and get me to the other side.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Here's a family project: bake some bread, rolls, pie, a cake or anything your family likes to eat. While it's baking, walk out of the house for a bit and come back in and smell how good the aroma is. Eat the baked goods while they're still warm and enjoy how yummy they are.**
- 2. Make a list of ways that God makes you feel good. How many items can you think of? As you review your list, learn that Jesus can satisfy your hunger.**

14. John 7:37-39 - "Living Water"

Introduction:

Do you remember learning how to swim? What was it like? It's interesting to go to a swimming pool, lake or river and watch the different ways that people get into the water. Some people dive or jump right into the water. Others walk around the pool a few times before they get in. Some go to the first step, and let the water go up to their ankles, and then they take the next step and let the water go up to their knees. Then, they go in up to their waist, and then their neck, and finally, they get completely underwater. How do you like to get in?

Most believers experience the Christian life like a person walking in a river with water up to their ankles, many up to their knees, and some past their waist. A few go to their shoulders, but only a very few get in over their head where their feet don't reach the bottom.

WDJD?

At the feast of Tabernacles, Jews would come from all over Israel to celebrate God's provision of food and water to the Israelites when they were in the wilderness for 40 years. On the last day of the feast, they would take water from a nearby stream and place it in special golden containers, then climb the steps near the temple and pour the water out. The ceremony reminded people of how God provided water, and also reminded them that only God can satisfy our spiritual thirst.

At the moment the water was poured out during the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus cried out so that all could hear, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" [v.37]. He wants everyone to hear His invitation to come to him and experience the Spirit-filled life ... and be satisfied.

What's the point? Experience the Spirit-filled life.

FYI:

A power station at the base of Niagara Falls harnesses only a small bit of the falls' power, but it provides enough power to send electricity to a whole area of upstate New York.

Now what? Go deeper into the living water of spiritual life.

Bible Text: John 7:38

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Outline: Four steps to experience spiritual life

God wants your spiritual life to overflow so that it blesses you and others. Here are four steps to help:

1. Come to Jesus [v.37]. Jesus invites you to begin a relationship by asking Him into your life [see also, Matthew 11:28-29]. The first step is to realize that He is the source of spiritual life and come to Jesus.

2. Keep drinking living water [v.37-38]. We are to continually take in spiritual nourishment. Think about how much time you spend refreshing your spirit. For example: reading the Bible, praying, praising, going to church, talking about God, or serving others. Now think about how much time you put stuff in your head that's not refreshing your spirit. You probably need to cut back on the stuff that's not refreshing the spirit. If you want to experience a spiritual life, take in more spiritual refreshment. The more you take in the stronger you will be.

3. Spend time with Jesus [v.37-38]. We are to *come* to Jesus, and *believe* in Him. These verbs could be translated to "keep coming and keep believing." The idea is to stay close to Jesus. You want to spend time with Jesus like any other good friend. Don't just visit Him on Easter and Christmas.

4. Go in deeper [Ezekiel 47:1-5]. The prophet Ezekiel receives a vision of a pure river flowing from God's Temple. At first, he steps into the water up to his ankles, and then he is told to walk further and is in up to his knees. As he goes further, he is in up to his waist, and soon the water is over his head and he can't touch the bottom. This is a picture of drawing close to God, and a truly spiritual life. To experience a full spiritual life, we need to keep going deeper.

Bringing it home:

- 1. What's your next step to go deeper into the living water [spiritual life]?
Maybe it's reading your Bible more, prayer, praise, going to church more, serving others, or something else. Pray and ask God to show you your next step.**
- 2. Draw a picture of you going deeper into the living water.**

15. John 8:1-11 - "Don't Throw Rocks"

Introduction:

When our kids were younger, I would get upset when they would forget a jacket, a hat, or something else at school. Has that ever happened to you? Then, one year, my older brother bought me a baseball glove for my birthday. I took my family to the park and played catch with my son with the new glove. After playing catch we started to play basketball. After a while, we got tired and we all got in the car to go. As we drove away, I said to my son, "Where's my glove?" And he said, "I don't know I thought you had it." Then I realized that I had lost the glove.

The next time one of my sons forgot something at school, before I got upset, I remembered the time that I lost the baseball glove. Suddenly, I had a new compassion for his situation. I still reminded him to be responsible about his things, but I wasn't upset. There was compassion without compromise.

WDJD?

v.1-5 Jesus was teaching many people at the temple very early in the morning. The religious leaders interrupted Jesus and brought a woman who was guilty of a crime punishable by death. Her accusers were trying to trap Jesus. If Jesus said, "Stone her," He would alienate the people who would think, "He's too harsh." If Jesus said, "Don't stone her" he would alienate people who would think that He failed to follow the Law of Moses. What did Jesus do?

What's the point? Think before you judge others.

FYI:

In ancient Israel, certain serious crimes were punished by stoning. The guilty criminal would be put to death as the men of the community would throw rocks at the offender. The witnesses who testified at trial would cast the first stones.

Now what: Show compassion without compromise.

Bible Text: John 8:11

Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Outline:

1. The problems with judging others
2. The cure for judging others

1. The problems with judging others: three problems

Judging creates tension and pain: Judging is like throwing stones. People with stones in their hands make us uncomfortable. We've heard people say, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But, truly, words can hurt.

We often do the same things: Sometimes we are upset at others for being angry, selfish, or not sharing. We may do the same things that we accuse others of doing [Romans 2:1]. For example, you may accuse someone of being selfish when they don't give you the attention that you selfishly want.

We judge others for their actions: we often judge others for their actions, but we want to be judged for our motives [the reasons why we did something]. It is best to try to understand why people do what they do before rushing to judgment.

2. The cure for judging others: compassion without compromise

v.6-11 What was Jesus writing in the dirt? This is the only time we read in the Bible that Jesus wrote. Perhaps He was writing the Ten Commandments. More likely, he wrote the sins of the accusers. Then, Jesus said, "Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Jesus did not compromise the Law, but He shows compassion. In effect, not one of the accusers could continue to judge the woman, because none of them was perfect.

None of them was able to throw a stone, except Jesus, because He had no sin. Yet, Jesus chose not to judge her, and threw no stone. Then, Jesus instructed the woman, "Go and sin no more." Jesus doesn't say "Sin less," or "Try to sin only a little." God never compromises with sin, but he shows us compassion, and is slow to judge.

Bringing it home:

- 1. D. L. Moody, a famous American evangelist, said, "If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself." In other words, if you do the right things, people will ultimately think well of you. So, even if someone wrongly judges you, keep doing the right things, and pretty soon they'll see who you really are.**
- 2. Before you judge someone else, remember none of us is perfect. Try to have compassion for their situation. Don't approve something that's wrong, but be gentle. Don't throw rocks!**

16. John 8:12-36 - "The Light of the World"

Introduction:

When I was a teenager, I was preparing to go on a camping trip. I wanted to try my brand-new big flashlight. There was an empty field next to our apartment building, so I flashed the light up into the sky to see how high it would go. On and off, and on again went the flashlight. Soon, a crowd of people showed up to see what was going on. I learned some valuable lessons about light that night: it attracts, it illuminates, and it exposes.

WDJD?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." This is the second "I am" statement of seven that we will discover in John's gospel. Add "I am the light of the world" to your list of "I am" statements in the back of the book.

What's the point? Jesus is the light of the world.

FYI:

In the book of Genesis, God describes the creation of the world. On the first day, God said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light, and it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness" [Genesis 1:3-4]. On the third day there were plants and trees. It wasn't until day four that God created the sun. So, where did the light come from to give life to the plants and trees? God is the source of light and life.

Now What? Reflect the light of Jesus.

Bible Text: John 8:12

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Outline:

1. Jesus gives life
2. Jesus gives freedom

1. Jesus gives life [12]

v.12 Jesus promised that, if we **follow** Him, we will have the **light of life**. To follow Jesus means to obey like a good soldier, or a good worker. Follow also means to accept a wise counselor's advice, and agree with right teaching. The life that Jesus gives us flows from being close to Him.

When my boys were small, we would hike along a creek. When I stepped in wet sand or mud, it left footprints. As I looked back, I saw my boys were putting their feet in

my footprints. They were following me by walking where I walked. When I follow Jesus, I follow His footprints. The Bible shows us Jesus' "footprints" so we can follow Him.

2. Jesus gives freedom [31-36]

The truth of the light gives freedom. As we learn the Word of God, we learn about the God of the Word. God's Word will help guide us in the right direction in any situation. The truth of God makes us really free. Free to live a life that is pleasing to God, freedom not to sin, and freedom from the cares of the world. On the other hand, some people say, "I can do what I want, it's my life!" The problem is they can't do what they want. Bad choices become bad habits. Bad habits become a lifestyle. That lifestyle becomes a destiny. They end up destroying their lives. That's not freedom Jesus gives real freedom.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Jesus declared, "You are the light of the world" [Matthew 5:14-16]. We want to reflect His light, like the moon reflects the light of the sun. How should your light shine like Jesus? First, it *illuminates* or shows the way to God. Second, it *exposes*. When others try to get you to join in something that is wrong and you don't do it, you help expose the difference between right and wrong. Third, it *attracts*. When people see you shining for Jesus, they want to find out more.**
- 2. Search the house for some flashlights. Go out tonight and test the flashlights. Which one shines the brightest, and which is the dimmest? Which light do you want to shine like?**

17. John 9:1-41 - "Now I See"

Introduction:

Imagine what life would be like if you couldn't see. You wouldn't be able to experience some of the beauty that God desires you to see. You wouldn't behold the beauty of a sunrise as the light begins to change the sky from steel blue to gold. You wouldn't know the majesty of an eagle or hawk soaring in the sky, or the glory of a rainbow. You could not experience a sunset where the clouds look like blue and pink cotton candy melting into the sky.

What if there were special "spiritual glasses," like 3-D glasses, that would allow you to see spiritual things? Would you want to wear them? What do you think you'd see?

WDJD?

Jesus and His disciples came to a man who was blind from birth. The disciples wondered why the man was born blind. Jesus explained that the man's condition gave an opportunity to show the power and grace of God. Your difficult situation may be God's opportunity to shine. Jesus wants to open our eyes so that we know God's love. The Gospels show Jesus healing at least three blind men. It shows His compassion, shows our spiritual condition, and reveals who Jesus is.

What's the point? Have eyes that are open to see spiritual truth.

FYI:

The **braille** system, devised in 1821 by Louis Braille, is a method that is widely used by blind people to read and write. Each braille character or "cell" is made up of six dot positions, arranged in a rectangle containing two columns of three dots each. A dot may be raised at any of the six positions to form 64 combinations, counting the space in which no dots are raised.

The braille system was based on a method of communication originally developed in response to Napoleon's demand for a code that soldiers could use to communicate silently and without light at night.

Now what? Understand God.

Bible Text: John 9:25

One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.

Outline:

1. Who opens our eyes?
2. What do we see?

1. Who opens our eyes? [1-12]

Jesus placed clay on the man's eyes. The clay reminds us of our humanity, because God created man from the ground. The clay wasn't the cure; it was the touch of Jesus. Each time Jesus healed a blind man, the method was different [Mark 8:22-26; Matthew 9:27-31]. Even though the religious leaders kept asking "How" the man's eyes were opened, the real question wasn't how but, "Who opened his eyes?" We see spiritual truth because Jesus opens our eyes, not because of special glasses or some method.

2. What do we see? [13-41]

First, we see more of who and what Jesus is. The blind man called Jesus a man [v.11], a prophet [v.17], a man of God [v.33], and finally, Son of God and His Lord [v.35-38]. Each time, he showed a better understanding about Jesus.

Second, we see God's protection. When the man declared that it was Jesus who opened his eyes, the religious leaders kicked him out of the synagogue ["church"]. He was removed from friends, family, and fellowship. It was at this man's greatest moment of need that Jesus found him, and protected him. In our moments of greatest need, Jesus' protection is revealed.

When the Syrian army surrounded Elisha, the man of God was able to see God's chariots of fire protecting him. So Elisha prayed for the Lord to open his servant's eyes, and he too saw God's protection [2Kings 6:8-17].

Bringing it home:

- 1. Pretend that you can't see. Close your eyes, and carefully walk through the house [no peeking]. It's much more difficult than when your eyes are open. It works best when you can see where you are and where you are going. In the same way, our life is better when we see or understand God.**
- 2. Ask someone who wears glasses or contact lenses what their vision is like without their corrective lenses. Glasses help people to see clearly. As Jesus opens our eyes, we see [understand] God more clearly, just like a pair of glasses.**

18. John 10:1-10 - “The Good Shepherd” part I

Introduction:

Imagine a shepherd in Jesus’ day. They would wear a long poncho with a wide leather belt. Attached to the belt would be one or two leather pouches. The shepherd would use the pouches to store dried fruit to eat, and stones for his sling. He would use his sling to throw stones at predators like wolves, or lions, to protect the sheep. The shepherd also had a horn filled with oil attached to his belt, he would apply oil to cuts, and put the oil on the sheep to repel insects. A shepherd would have a long walking stick, called a staff, to guide the sheep, and a small club called the rod. The rod was like a small souvenir baseball bat, and the shepherd could use it against a predator in close combat. Sheep need care, and a real shepherd truly cares for his sheep.

WDJD?

Many of God’s greatest leaders have been shepherds. Moses and David, the great leaders of the Old Testament, were shepherds; and the greatest leader of God’s people, Jesus, is a shepherd.

What’s the point? Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

FYI:

Sheep are prone to wander from the flock. Shepherds will search for the sheep and return them to the flock [Luke 15:3-7]. If the sheep continues to wander, the shepherd will break one of its legs, and carry that sheep until the leg heals. When the leg is healed, and the shepherd no longer needs to carry the sheep, it remains close to the shepherd and no longer wanders. The sheep learn that it is best to stay close to the shepherd, and not to wander away.

Now what? Follow Jesus.

Bible Text: John 10:11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Outline:

- 1. Jesus leads us**
- 2. Jesus saves us**
- 3. Jesus cares for us**

1. Jesus leads us [1-6]

Jesus calls His sheep to follow Him. The sheep recognize the shepherd’s voice, just like your pet dog comes to you when you call it, because it recognizes your voice. Shepherds take the sheep to green pasture and still waters to eat, drink, and to be satisfied. Jesus leads us to a satisfying life; He leads us to God: the path of righteousness [Psalm 23:4].

Sheep won't follow another shepherd because they can recognize the true shepherd's voice. God still speaks to us today. As you learn the Bible, you start to recognize the things that God is saying to you.

2. Jesus saves us [7-9]

The good shepherd saves the sheep. Jesus is the door. He is the way the sheep enter the sheep enclosure. He is the one who guards and protects the sheep. Notice that He is *the* door. There aren't many doors; He is the only one who can save us. He delivers us safe and sound to God, if we follow Him.

3. Jesus cares for us [9-10]

The good shepherd loves and feeds the sheep. His sheep are free to enjoy pastures of green grass, and be protected. The good shepherd warns the sheep of dangers, and cares for them when they are hurt. He loves you so much that He promises you an abundant life, a life full of blessings, if you follow Him. Finally, David said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" [Psalm 23:1]. If you follow Jesus, you'll be satisfied, because He will care for you.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Create an obstacle course. Then place a blindfold on. Walk the obstacle course (carefully) with the blindfold on. Now, with blindfold still on, let someone lead you through the obstacle course. Jesus leads us like a good shepherd through the obstacle course of life.**
- 2. Draw a picture of a shepherd. Here's a hint: review the introduction to this lesson for some ideas about what a shepherd might look like.**

19. John 10:11-42 - “The Good Shepherd” part II

Introduction:

Have you ever played, “Follow the Leader”? Do you like playing, and why? Do you think you are a good follower, and why? Jesus wants us to follow Him, and assures us that if we do, He will care for us.

WDJD?

Jesus knows those who belong to Him, like a good shepherd knows his sheep. A good shepherd knows their names, and what each sheep is like. He knows the one that wanders, and He goes out and finds it [Luke 15]. He knows the ones that get in trouble, and still loves them. When a sheep is tired, or sick, the shepherd notices and carries the sheep on his shoulders. Jesus is the good shepherd who knows our weaknesses and still loves us.

What’s the point? Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

FYI:

In the 23rd Psalm, David wrote, “He restores my soul.” The 23rd psalm is written from a sheep’s perspective. When a sheep gets on its back, it may not be able to get up. It needs a shepherd to help it up or it may die. When the shepherd finds the sheep, he helps it up, and supports the sheep until it is able to walk. He restores the sheep.

Now what? Follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Bible Text: John 10:14

I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own.

Outline:

1. Jesus gave His life for us

2. Jesus knows us

3. Jesus keeps us

1. Jesus gave His life for us [11-18]

Jesus gives His life for us, so that we can live. David was a shepherd who was so brave that he rescued his sheep from lions and bears, but he expected to live. Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends” [John 15:13]. Jesus proves His great love for us by giving His life for us.

2. Jesus knows us [14-15, 27]

Jesus knows us and cares for us. He knows your needs and He cares. As sheep enter the sheepfold [where they are kept] each night, the shepherd inspects the sheep one by one. A good shepherd cares for wounds, keeps the sheep from fighting, and uses oil on

the sheep to keep insects away. Little bugs can really “bug” the sheep, just like little things can really “bug” us. The shepherd makes sure that each of us is cared for.

3. Jesus keeps us [22-29]

If you let Jesus be your shepherd, you will always be His. A good shepherd wants a loving, living, and lasting relationship with his sheep. No one can snatch Jesus’ sheep from Him. Jesus has strong carpenter’s hands to hold you, and keep you safe. Nothing can separate you from His love. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He wants you to follow Him.

Bringing it home:

- 1. This chapter has the next two of the seven “I am” statements made by Jesus in the gospel of John: “I am the door” [John 10:7], and “I am the good shepherd” [John 10:11]. Add these “I am” statements to your list in the back of the book.**
- 2. Play “Follow the Leader” with your family. Take turns leading. Who is the best leader and follower in your family? Remember, Jesus is the best leader and we need to follow Him.**

20. John 11:1-57 - "Real Life"

Introduction:

Have you ever wondered, what's the meaning of life? God wants us to know that there's more to life than just the physical world around us. Real life starts when we begin to know God.

WDJD?

Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha. His love for them is the main reason why He came to help them. Even more important than our love for Him, is His love for us.

What's the point? Jesus gives real life.

FYI:

John records seven miracles of Jesus. How many do you think you can name? Here's a list, and the chapter where you can find them: water to wine [2], healing the nobleman's son [4], healing the paralyzed man [5], feeding the 5,000 [6], walking on water [6], healing the blind man [9], and raising Lazarus from the dead [11]. In this chapter, we see the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

Now what? Experience real life, and have hope.

Bible Text: John 11:25

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

Outline:

1. Life brings crisis
2. Jesus brings comfort
3. Jesus brings life

1. Life brings crisis [1-16]

Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, and he was very, very sick. He was so sick that they sent for Jesus to come and help him. Jesus was only about 20 miles away, but, in those days, it would take a day to travel that far. Rather than go immediately, Jesus waited two days. Meanwhile, Lazarus became so sick that he died.

Why did Jesus delay? Mary, Martha, and Lazarus had known Jesus as a rabbi, friend, prophet, and Messiah, but they did not realize that Jesus had power over even life and death. Jesus waited so that they could grow in their faith and trust in Him. Remember, Jesus is never late, but He is rarely early. Life brings difficulties, and Jesus won't always take away or keep us from difficulty; but we can always trust Him no matter how difficult the situation looks.

2. Jesus brings comfort [17-27]

When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. He was surely dead, and the situation looked hopeless. Martha and Mary thought that if Jesus had been there earlier, He could have helped, but now it was too late. Jesus sought to comfort Martha by assuring her that He has authority over life. Jesus wants us to know He has everything under His control. We can be comforted in a seemingly hopeless situation, if we trust Him.

When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus [v.35], it probably wasn't because Lazarus was dead. Jesus knew He would soon raise Him from the dead. He is probably sad because Mary and Martha are sad, and because the sisters did not fully trust Him when He tried to comfort them. When we simply trust Jesus, it brings comfort to us, and to Him.

3. Jesus brings life [28-44] four steps to real life

Jesus restored Lazarus' life, and shows us how to experience real life and hope:

Take away the stone [v.39]: Remove any obstacles in your relationship with God. If there is any hardness in your heart toward God, it must be taken away.

Believe [v.40]: Five times we are reminded to believe [v.15,25, 26,40,42]. Real life begins and grows as we trust God.

Respond to His call [v.43]: Jesus called Lazarus by name, and he responded and received life. When God gives you a desire to move forward, respond and receive the life that He is giving.

Help others [v.44]: First, people helped by removing the stone. Then they helped by removing the grave clothes that were wrapped around Lazarus. When we help others to come to Jesus, not only do they experience real life, but we experience real life.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Act out the scene of Lazarus coming forth from the tomb. Wrap one of your family members with toilet paper while they stand near a closet. Everybody in the family should help. Have "Lazarus" get in the closet. Then act out the scene.**
- 2. This chapter has the fifth "I am" statement, "I am the resurrection and the life." See how many of the first five "I am" statements you can remember. Try to memorize them all. Don't forget to write a list of all seven of Jesus' "I am" statements in the back of the book.**

21. John 12:1-11 - "True Worship"

Introduction:

Worship means giving something to God. We should worship God, because He is worthy, because of who He is, and what He does. There are two great desires in the world: God's desire to be glorified and our passionate desire to be satisfied. True worship fulfills both because God is most glorified, and I am most satisfied, when I truly worship Him.

WDJD?

Jesus said that Mary's act of worship would be remembered wherever the Gospel was preached. It is interesting that He never said anything similar in regard to Abraham, Moses, David, or Paul. Yet, Mary's passionate worship is remembered to this day [Matthew 26:13].

What's the point? Learn what it means to worship God.

FYI: The sculptor Walden created a sculpture of Jesus such that the observer could only see the face of Jesus if he was seated at the feet of Jesus. You cannot see the face of Jesus if you're standing up. You need to humble yourself, at His feet, and look up.

Now what? Be a true worshiper of God.

Bible Text: Matthew 26:10

Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.

Outline:

1. True worship requires sacrifice
2. True worship requires spending time with Jesus
3. True worship blesses Jesus and others

1. True worship requires sacrifice:

Jesus was at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom Jesus had recently raised from the dead. It was now only days before Jesus would be crucified. Mary took a container of very expensive, perfumed oil and poured it out upon Jesus. The perfume was so expensive that a person might have to work almost a year to earn enough money to buy it. Mary was probably saving it for her wedding day, but she gave it to Jesus because of her love for God.

True worship gives God our best. The Wise Men gave gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They traveled a great distance, endured great hardship, and gave costly gifts. Their worship was true. What can you give as a sacrifice to God? You can give God your time, talents, and treasure.

2. True worship requires spending time with Jesus

Mary's love for Jesus is seen by the simple desire to spend time with Him. When Jesus was at their home for a meal, Martha was busy cleaning and preparing, but Mary sat at Jesus' feet. She wanted to spend time with Jesus. She had discovered that even more important than doing for Jesus, is the importance of being with Him [Luke 10:38-42].

Mary was at Jesus' feet when her brother Lazarus died; and, just days before the cross, she is at his feet again. Mary is at His feet, because she wants to be close to Jesus. True worship flows from spending time with Jesus. You can spend time with Jesus, too. By reading your Bible, praying, going to church, being in a group Bible study, and thinking about the things of God, you spend time with Jesus.

3. True worship blesses Jesus and others

When Mary poured out the perfumed oil, the whole house was filled with fragrance. Not only did the perfumed oil provide a pleasant aroma, but it also removed unpleasant odors. When I clean my car and throw away any trash, there may still be an odor from fast food. It is not enough to remove the offending stuff, but I also need to add a pleasing aroma, like air freshener. True worship blesses Jesus and others by filling our environment with a pleasing aroma.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Are we seeking to minister to Jesus? Do we come to church primarily to *give* to Jesus, or do we come seeking to *get* from Jesus? True worship seeks to give to God, and doesn't expect anything in return. You'll discover that when you come to give, you'll be blessed, too!**
- 2. What would you like to give to God this week?**

22. John 12:12-50 - "Why Do You Seek Jesus?"

Introduction:

People will come to Jesus for a variety of reasons: crisis, desire to belong to a group, spiritual seekers, a desire for love and peace, and even fear. What do you think is a good reason to come to Jesus?

WDJD?

The first question that Jesus asked the disciples was, "What do you seek?" [John 1:38] He challenged them to consider what they wanted, why were they seeking Him?

What's the point? Why do you seek Jesus?

FYI: Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez sailed with 600 soldiers to the east coast of Mexico to conquer the New World for Spain. After his soldiers got off of the ships, Cortez sank the ships. His men realized that they were committed to their mission; there was no going back.

Now what? Come to Jesus for the right reasons.

Bible Text: John 12:21

Some Greeks paid a visit to Phillip ... They said, "Sir we want to meet Jesus."

Outline:

1. Why come to Jesus?
2. How to come to Jesus
3. The rewards of coming to Jesus

1. Why come to Jesus? [12-23]

Three groups of people came to Jesus for different reasons. The first were the crowds who came to Jesus to improve their physical/material condition. They wanted Jesus to set-up an earthly kingdom, and free them from the Romans. It would be like you coming to God only if you wanted good grades, or a new job. If you got what you wanted, you'd soon forget God; and if you didn't, you'd probably be angry, and not come again. Improving your physical/material condition is not the best reason to come to Jesus.

A second was made up of those who wanted to be entertained or see miracles. They had heard about Jesus' miracles, like raising Lazarus from the dead, and wanted to be part of the experience. Some people come to church to be entertained, or to be part of an experience, but they never grow in their relationship with God. It would be like going to Disneyland every day with your parents, but they never talk with you about life ... it would seem fun at first, but it would get old quick. Coming for entertainment, or an experience is not the best reason to come to Jesus.

A third group was made up of true spiritual seekers. They came to find spiritual truth, and to worship God. They wanted to meet Jesus, talk to Him, and learn from Him. This is probably the best reason to come to Jesus.

2. How to come to Jesus [23-26]

The best way to come to Jesus is to decide to live to please Him, rather than seeking to please yourself. Love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. When you choose to follow Him, He will guide you by His Word [the Bible], and by His Spirit. Remember, when your “conscience” tells you something, don’t talk back! It’s likely God directing you on which way to go.

3. The rewards of coming to Jesus

Jesus mentions three of the many rewards that we receive when we come to Him [v.25-26]. First, we receive eternal life ... one day, we’re going to go to heaven to be with Jesus forever. Second, God will honor us. Any king would want to reward subjects who are loyal to the prince. God will surely honor us more as we are loyal to His Son Jesus, who is not only a Prince, but the King of kings. Third, where He is, we will be. Being with Jesus is the greatest reward of all!

Bringing it home:

- 1. Make a list of reasons why people come to Jesus. How many do you think you can list? What are some of the best and worst reasons you can think of?**
- 2. Why do *you* seek Jesus?**

23. John 13:1-22 - "True Love"

Introduction:

Have you ever heard someone say, "I love you"? Have you ever told someone that you loved them? How do you know it's really love? How can you show true love?

WDJD?

In the Bible, there is only one time that Jesus says, "I have given you an example to follow." Think of all the words that Jesus spoke, as recorded in the Bible [the red letters]. Isn't it amazing that only once did he say it was an example to follow? The disciples had been arguing with each other about who was the best [Luke 22:24-27]. Jesus taught them (and teaches us) that the test of greatness is true love.

What's the point? Jesus' example of love.

FYI: In Jesus' day, it was common courtesy to wash the feet of your guests. In our culture, if a guest visits, we offer something to drink or eat out of common courtesy; but, in Jesus' culture, you would also wash their feet. People walked on dirt roads, in open sandals, so their feet became dirty. Many people in that culture had servants to care for their home. It was the job of the lowest ranking servant to wash the feet of the guests.

Now what? Learn to love.

Bible Text: John 13:15

For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Outline:

1. Be committed
2. Be a servant
3. Be humble

1. Be committed [1-2]

Jesus loved the disciples to the end. He loved them to the fullest, without any limit. Even though Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, He placed Judas in the seat of honor for the Passover feast. Jesus keeps loving people even when they hurt Him. His love is committed so it doesn't stop every time someone does something hurtful.

When our boys were small, they had a book about a momma rabbit and her baby. The baby rabbit wanted to run away, but the momma told him she would go and find him and bring him back. So, the baby said, "I'll turn into a fish, and swim away into the pond." The momma replied, "I'll become a fisherman, and catch you and bring you home." The book continues like this from one scene to another. Finally, the baby says,

“If you’re going to do that, I might as well stay here.” That’s what committed love does in relationships ... it keeps people together.

2. Be a servant [3-16]

None of the disciples volunteered to wash feet, but Jesus did. Jesus shows true love by serving the disciples, rather than expecting them to serve Him [Mark 10:44-45]. There is a difference between serving and manipulating. Manipulating is when we help others, and expect to get something from them, but serving seeks to simply give. The more you want to serve others, rather than receiving from them, the more love you have [and the happier you’ll be]. Remember, it’s not how many servants we have, but how many others we serve.

3. Be humble [17-22]

Jesus told the disciples that one of them would betray Him. They looked at each other, wondering which one of them He was talking about. It’s interesting that they didn’t all point to Judas. They began to talk among themselves and asked, “Is it I?” [Mark 14:18-19, Luke 22:21-23].

It’s a good question, because it helps us to see where we may be wrong. True love doesn’t simply blame others for problems, but seeks to learn where we are wrong, and make it right.

Bringing it home:

- 1. When we show true love, people will know that we are Christians [v.34-35]. Jesus promised when we do these things, we’ll be blessed (happy) [v.17]. It’s not enough to know what true love is, but we need to do it.**
- 2. Take a basin of water and a towel, and wash one another’s feet. Imagine Jesus with the disciples. He probably did not scrub too hard, and the water temperature was likely just right. Next time you feel like throwing in the towel, instead grab a towel and serve others. You’ll be glad, because you know that’s true love.**

24. John 13:18-38 - "The Cure for Hypocrisy"

Introduction:

Our English word *hypocrite* comes from a Greek word used to describe actors. The actors would wear masks to show various emotions such as joy, sadness, or anger. The mask did not really reveal the actor's true feelings. When people pretend, or act a certain way, but really are another way, they are being hypocrites. For example, if someone acts like your friend, but says mean things behind your back, they are a hypocrite.

WDJD?

Jesus corrected the religious leaders for being hypocrites. They were trying to impress people, rather than God, by their prayers, fasting and charity [Matthew 6]. They were trying to appear more spiritual than they really were. Jesus doesn't want us to be hypocrites.

What's the point? The cure for hypocrisy.

FYI: At the French Riviera, it is a status symbol to have a balcony. Some people will paint a balcony on their apartment wall, just to make it look like they have one. They'll even paint a laundry line, and paint laundry to try to make it look like a real balcony. Really, it's just a wall with a painting; it's not a balcony.

Now what? Don't be a hypocrite.

Bible Text: John 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Outline:

1. The problems of hypocrisy
2. The cure for hypocrisy

1. The problems of hypocrisy

First, hypocrites act spiritual. Judas gathered with all the other disciples for the Passover meal, and acted just like the others. He shared food with them, which was a symbol of being a close friend. Second, they sound spiritual. Judas complained that they should care for the poor [John 12:5-6]; and when Jesus predicted one of the disciples would betray Him, Judas asked along with them, "Rabbi, is it I?" [Matthew 26:25]. Third, hypocrites can even fool other believers. When Jesus predicted that one of them would betray Him, the disciples didn't all look at Judas. He had fooled them all to think that he really loved Jesus.

2. The cure for hypocrisy

Realize you can't fool Jesus: Jesus knew who would betray Him and was not fooled [v.21-27]. President Lincoln said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." Remember, you can't fool Jesus at any time!

Realize Jesus loves you: Jesus put Judas in the seat of honor at the Passover meal. Even though He knew Judas would betray Him, He continued to love Him. Jesus loves you no matter what, so you don't need to pretend to be something you're not.

Realize the need to love one another as Jesus loves: Jesus commands us to love each other as He loves us [v.34-35]. The real test of whether we are His disciples is our love for one another. Jesus loves the disciples despite their shortcomings. He knows what we are, and our potential. He knows what we can and will become. If we love as Jesus loves, there will be no need for hypocrisy. When there is real acceptance of people, we won't need to try to appear to be something that we are not.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Failure is not necessarily hypocrisy. Peter truly loved Jesus, and truly meant it when he declared he was ready to die for Jesus. Nevertheless, Peter did deny Jesus, just as Jesus predicted. Just because we fail, and we're not perfect, doesn't mean we're hypocrites.**
- 2. Kids and parents should not expect each other to be perfect, but it is reasonable for them to expect us to be real [genuine].**

25. John14:1-14 - “The Cure for Heart Trouble”

Introduction:

Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but won't get you anywhere. Jesus' disciples were worried that He was going to leave them. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled” [v.1, 27]. The heart is described as the center of our feelings and emotions. Jesus doesn't want us to worry about anything, but sometimes He needs to remind us not to worry. What are some things that people worry about?

WDJD?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us that we don't need to worry [Matthew 6:25-34]. He assured us that God loves and cares about us. Because He loves you, you don't need to worry.

What's the point? The cure for heart trouble [worry].

FYI: Mickey Rivers, at the time, an outfielder for the Texas Rangers professional baseball team, stated his philosophy of life: “Ain't no sense worrying about things you got control over, because if you got control over them, ain't no sense worrying. And there ain't no sense worrying about things you got no control over either, because if you got no control over them, ain't no sense worrying.”

Now what? Trust Jesus, and don't worry.

Bible Text: John14:1

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

Outline: Four reasons not to worry

1. Believe in Jesus [v.1]. You can stop worrying. You can trust Jesus, just like you trust God the Father. When I think about how great God is, I realize that my problem is no problem for Him.

2. Jesus goes to prepare a place for us [v.2-3]. Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven. In heaven, there will be no more pain, or suffering; everything will be perfect, and there's nothing to worry about. I don't have to worry, because one day I will be with Jesus, forever in a perfect place.

3. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life [v.4-6]. Thomas, the other disciples, and the rest of us, want to know how to get to heaven. Jesus told Thomas that He was the Way. We get to heaven because of our relationship with Jesus, not because of good things that we have done, or because of religion. Jesus doesn't only say He that knows the

way, but He *is* the Way. If you know Jesus, and follow Him, you will get to live forever with God in heaven.

4. Jesus shows us God [v.7-11]. Jesus explained to Phillip, the other disciples, and to us, that if we know Him, we know the Father. God knows that we want to know, and understand Him. Jesus reveals the Father to us so that we can know God. Jesus is God, the Son, and He is the perfect image of God, the Father. What Jesus does, and what He says, reveals God to us. When you know that God loves you and cares about you, you don't have anything to worry about.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Make a list of three things that you're worried about. Write next to each item what you think is the worst thing that could happen. Ask yourself whether God loves you enough to care for you even if the worst things happen? When you know that God loves you and cares about you, you don't have anything to worry about.**
- 2. Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life ..." This is the sixth "I am" statement. Add this to your list in the back of this book. There will be one more to add [a total of seven].**

26. John 14:15-31 - "Loving Jesus"

Introduction:

Have you ever really liked someone, and wondered if it was true love?

In every serious relationship, we wonder, "Do you love me?" Often we wonder, "Do I love you?" or "How can I love you better?"

WDJD?

In our relationship with Jesus, we don't have to wonder if He loves us, because He proved His love at the cross. Sometimes, we wonder about our love for Him, how we can love Him better, and what's in it for us. Jesus teaches us, and shows us, the truth about "true love".

What's the point? Loving Jesus.

FYI: Do you think it would be easier to love God and obey Him if Jesus were right there with you? Probably so! Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with us just like Jesus was with the disciples. The Holy Spirit helps us to love and obey God, just as if it is Jesus helping us.

Now What? Experience true love.

Bible Text: John 14:15

If you love Me, keep My commandments

Outline:

1. How to love Jesus
2. Benefits of loving Jesus

1. How to love Jesus

Three times, Jesus says that if we love Him we will obey Him [15,21,23]. Obedience is the greatest evidence of our love for God. The problem is: how can we keep His commandments? The Holy Spirit helps us to love and obey God, just like Jesus. Here are three ways the Spirit helps us love Jesus:

Strengthens us [16-20]: The Spirit is a constant source of power to help you live a life that pleases God. Sometimes, it seems hard to obey God, and do the right thing. So, God gives you the strength through His Spirit.

Teaches us [17-26]: The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth [v.17], because He teaches us spiritual truth about God so that we can love God.

Reminds us [v.26]: The Spirit will not only teach you God's commands, but will remind you so that you can keep them. Your job is to read the Bible, and then the Spirit can remind you of what you have learned. It's like taking a test at school. You can't remember something if you have never studied it. Simply owning a Bible won't help you learn about God; you have to study. Then, the Spirit will remind you.

2. Benefits of loving Jesus

Here are three [of many] benefits of loving Jesus:

Jesus will be revealed [v.21]: Jesus will keep revealing more of Himself to those who love Him. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to see and hear Jesus? Through the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and love of God, Jesus is revealed. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" [Matthew 5:8].

Relationship with God [v.20, 23]: If you love God, the Father and Son want to spend time with you. In the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God. Jesus came to restore the relationship that was lost because of sin. God loves the whole world, but has a special relationship with those who love Him.

His peace [v.27]: When you love Jesus, you know that He will take good care of you, so you don't need to worry. God's peace is more than an absence of fear; it is a sense of security and completeness. The world's peace is based upon resources, but God's peace is based upon a relationship with Him. The world's peace is based upon an absence of trouble, but God's peace is available even when there is trouble.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Make a list of the Ten Commandments on a card [Exodus 20]. Put the card where you will see it often, such as: the refrigerator door, your bathroom mirror, or near your bed. Read the commandments often, and seek to obey God.**
- 2. Parents, agree on a list of weekly chores for the kids to perform in exchange for a set allowance. Kids remember that doing your chores is like obeying the commandments, and receiving your allowance is like receiving the benefits of loving Jesus.**

27. John 15:1-11 - "Miracle Grow"

Introduction:

What's your favorite fruit? Every year there are hundreds of ads for products that can make your plants, flowers, and fruit trees grow bigger than you can imagine. There's usually a farmer with a giant tomato, melon or pear telling you about the product. In your spiritual life, God wants you to grow and bear fruit, too. Fruit is important to God. In this story, we will learn about spiritual fruit.

WDJD?

When Jesus cursed a fig tree, it was the only time in His ministry that He cursed something [Matthew 21:19]. Why did He curse the fig tree? Some say it's because of Adam and Eve's efforts to cover their sin with fig leaves. I believe the better explanation relates to the fig tree as a symbol of the nation of Israel. The fig tree had leaves which gave the appearance that there was fruit, but, in fact, there was no fruit. God's people are to bear fruit, and without Jesus in your life, you can't bear fruit.

What's the point? Bearing fruit.

FYI: Orchids grow in all types of climates, but especially tropical climates, like Hawaii. Some can grow without their roots being in the ground, and they can obtain nutrients without soil. On the other hand, grapes need to be connected to the vine to grow. Once you remove grapes from the vine, they begin to shrivel and become raisins.

Now what? Bear much fruit.

Bible Text: John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in Him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Outline:

1. Conditions for growth
2. Characteristics of growth

1. Conditions for growth

Here, we see what God is doing and what we need to do to bear fruit. There are three things that God does so we can bear fruit:

He Lifts us up: In California, we have hundreds of grape growers, and you can see the big clusters of grapes that are lifted up and attached to sticks. Lifting the grapes above the ground helps them to grow. When we declare our need for God, He promises to lift us up [James 4:10].

He Prunes us: The grower needs to remove dead and unhealthy branches that don't produce fruit, and drain life from the vine. Twice a year, the vines are cut back so that they can produce more fruit in the next season. Sometimes, God takes things away in our lives so that we can bear much fruit.

He Cleans us: Grapes are washed to remove mud and insects. God also washes us with the Word to remove the mud of the world and to help us deal with things that "bug." God receives you just as you are, and then cleans you up with His Word [Psalm 119:9].

There is only one thing that we need to do, and that's "abide." To abide means to dwell, or remain, or to hang out with. To abide focuses on relationship, or being close, not doing. For example, I picture Jesus high up in an apple tree and dropping fruit, to people with baskets below. The people who are closest to Jesus have full baskets that overflow, but the people who are farther away don't have as much fruit. Those farthest away hardly have any fruit.

When we hang out with Jesus, we bear fruit; it just comes naturally. Imagine watching an orange tree. It doesn't strain to produce oranges; it just happens naturally ... It is the same with Christians: we bear fruit naturally.

2. Characteristics of growth

Here's a quick checklist to see if you're bearing fruit:

Christ-like character [Galatians 5:22-23]. If you're growing in the Christ-like character described in this passage, you are bearing fruit.

Worship [Hebrews 13:15]. If you like to sing praises to God, you are bearing fruit, because praise is the fruit of our lips.

Spirit-prompted giving [Philippians 4:17]. If you like to share what God has given to you with others, you are bearing fruit.

Souls won for Jesus [John 4:36]. If you like to tell people about Jesus, and see them saved, you are bearing fruit.

Good works [Colossians 1:10]. If you do good works to please God, you're bearing fruit.

Bringing it home:

1. **Open your Bible to Galatians 5:22-23, and read the description of the fruit of the Spirit. Write a list of the nine characteristics. Then draw a picture of the "fruit" of the Spirit.**
2. **Jesus declared, "I am the true vine." This is the seventh "I am" statement. Add this to your list. There should be a total of seven.**

28. John15:12-25 - “Love One Another”

Introduction:

When Jesus talked about loving one another as He loved, He had given an example of the essence of God’s love and true relationship. The closer we are to God, the better we can love one another. Failure to love biblically is the cause of problems in marriages, relationships, and causes problems between parents and children. We are created for relationships, but we don’t know how to begin, develop, or fully enjoy them. We need to learn to love one another as Jesus loves.

WDJD?

Jesus told the disciples that they were His friends. They were as close as brothers could be. Jesus knew that His disciples would face a variety of challenges and conflicts. Every generation of Christians face struggles, and needs the support of others. We can’t do it alone. That’s why Jesus tells us to love one another.

What’s the point? Real relationships.

FYI: Over 25 times we are told to, “ ____ one another.” For example, love, forgive, honor, bear with, greet, serve, share with, encourage, comfort, motivate, pray for, and instruct one another. The church is a community, and a family. When we fail to “one another,” we rarely grow as fast as we should, and we are often selfish and lonely.

Now what? Love one another.

Bible Text: John15:12

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Outline:

- 1. Community**
- 2. Characteristics**

1. Community

Jesus commands us to love one another as He loves, because the Christian life requires real relationships. Love is not only an emotion, but it flows from a decision ... we choose to love. Once we choose to love, the right attitude and behavior will follow. The Law of Moses also tells us to love one another [Leviticus 19:18], but to love as Jesus loves is new, because it is a higher standard ... it is the love of God.

The key to community is to love one another. Jesus sets the example by caring about others more than focusing on self. Remember, love is the hardest thing to give away, because you keep getting it back.

2. Characteristics

What do real relationships look like? Jesus shows us that relationships work best as friendships. Three times in this passage Jesus spoke of the disciples as His friends. Abraham was called the friend of God [James 2:23]. Here are three characteristics of real friendships:

v.13 Live to give, not to get: The greatest evidence of love is to sacrifice for your friends. Laying down your life means to put their needs before your own.

v.14 Respect: Real relationships require respect for others. We are Jesus' friends if we obey/respect His commands. Real relationships are strengthened and established when we respect the feelings and wishes of others.

v.15 Communicate: Jesus told His disciples important information about His life, about God, and about His plans. Good friends share their feelings, fears, hopes, disappointments, and excitement. Real relationships require us to be the kind of friends who encourage, counsel to do the right thing, speak the truth in love, listen, admit when we're wrong, and bring comfort.

Bringing it home:

1. **Why do you like your friends?**
2. **What makes you a good friend?**

29. John16:1-15 - "The Work of the Holy Spirit"

Introduction:

If we want to experience spiritual growth, we need the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. If we just have the Spirit, we will "blow up." If we just have the Word, we will "dry up." If we have the Spirit and the Word, we will grow up.

WDJD?

After the Resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to wait until they had received the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants us to know that we need the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. Jesus explained to the disciples, and to us, what the Spirit does. Jesus teaches us that the Holy Spirit will be to all disciples what Jesus was to the first disciples.

What's the point? The work of the Holy Spirit.

FYI: Have you ever walked through a metal detector, perhaps at an airport? The electronic device detects concealed weapons. Interestingly enough, centuries ago, one of the palaces of the capital of what is now known as Thailand had a similar device. The gates were made of lodestone, a natural magnet. If someone entered through the gate with a concealed dagger, the lodestone would pull at the weapon like an invisible hand. Startled, the person would reach for the weapon. Trained guards, watching every moment, would then grab him.

The Holy Spirit acts in much the same way; it tugs at the concealed sins in our lives as though it were God's hidden hand.

Now what? Understand and experience the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Text: John 16:13

When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.

Outline: Four spiritual truths the Spirit shows us

1. We need a savior: [v.8-9] The Holy Spirit shows us that we don't measure up to God's standard of holiness. The Spirit shows us that we have broken God's commandments, and have sinned against God.

2. Jesus is our Savior: [8-10] The Spirit reveals that only Jesus can save us. The only sin that God won't forgive is the sin of rejecting Jesus as Savior. That's the only "unpardonable sin." Only Jesus died, and rose again, to prove that he was the bridge between God and man.

3. Jesus brings victory: [v.11] The Spirit shows us that our enemy is defeated. When Jesus died on the cross, the devil was defeated, and he no longer has power over Christians. God's Spirit gives us power so that we don't have to sin.

4. Spirit reveals truth: [v.12-14] The Spirit guides us in all spiritual truth. There were many things that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples, but they were not ready to receive them. The Spirit would continue to teach, just like Jesus. The Spirit teaches us about God, and helps make God real to us.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Greek soldiers went into battle in pairs. When the enemy attacked, they could draw together back-to-back, covering each other's weak side. God has sent the Holy Spirit to go into your battles with you.**
- 2. Find a magnet and a metal paper clip in your house. Hold the magnet just far enough way to begin moving or "tugging" at the paper clip. That is how the Holy Spirit moves you and tugs at your heart!**

30. John 16:15-33 - "Fullness of Joy"

Introduction:

What is your favorite place to go for family vacation? Have you ever gone on vacation, been full of joy, and then returned to the "real world"? Was the feeling of joy gone within hours or days? How can we find true lasting joy?

WDJD?

Jesus gathered the disciples in the Upper Room, hours before the cross. He knew that they would be sad, but He wanted to assure them that soon they would have lasting joy. Three days later, when Jesus rose from the dead, they could see that He had overcome death, and that they could always have a relationship with God. We can have fullness of joy, because God loves us, He is good, and we will be with Him forever.

What's the point? Have fullness of joy.

FYI: About 300 years before Jesus was born, a group of Greek philosophers were known as the Epicureans. They believed that the chief aim of life was the pursuit of pleasure. They believed that happiness could be obtained by seeking physical pleasure. Today, we call the philosophy *hedonism* from the Greek word for pleasure. Unfortunately, people learn that true joy can't be found in seeking personal pleasure.

Now what? Experience the joy of the Lord.

Bible Text: John 15:11

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Outline:

1. Our sorrow is temporary
2. Jesus gives lasting joy

1. Our sorrow is temporary [v.15-21]

As we look back at the events of the cross, we know that everything worked out fine because Jesus was resurrected three days later. For the disciples, as they thought about their circumstances on the night before the cross, they were afraid, and very sad. Jesus wanted them to know that He would transform the very event that made them sad, His death, to something that would bring them joy, His resurrection. When a woman gives birth to a child, she is in much pain, but when the child is born there is much joy. The same thing is seen differently depending on when it is experienced.

Jesus does not have to take away the sad things, but we have to see them from His perspective. He has everything under control, and knows the beginning from the

end. We need to realize that our problems are temporary (they won't last long), and that He will transform them in His perfect time.

2. Jesus gives lasting joy [v.22]

Jesus wants us to experience fullness of joy, even when life is hard. Jesus assured the disciples that He would return to them, and, because He is with them no one can take their joy. There are things in life that should make us sad, but the sadness should be temporary. Psalm 30:5 says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The reason we have enduring joy is because Jesus is with us, and He has promised to be with us always [Matthew 28:20].

The apostle Paul was in a Roman jail when he wrote to his friends and said, "Rejoice in the Lord always" [Philippians 4:4]. He understood that despite his circumstances, he could still have joy, because Jesus was with him.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Ask a mom to describe her feelings about childbirth.**
- 2. What is something that you've been sad about recently? Try to imagine how God can change that to joy?**

31. John 17:1-26 - "The Lord's Prayer"

Introduction:

Imagine Jesus gathered with the disciples in the Upper Room. It is hours before the cross. As He closes His eyes and begins to pray, you listen, trying to focus on every word that He is saying. Jesus could have prayed silently, and the Father would have heard, but He wants the disciples to hear, so that they will be comforted, and encouraged. What would you want Jesus to pray? What do you think would be important to Jesus in His final hours?

WDJD?

Jesus revealed God to the disciples through His life, teaching, miracles, and by His death and resurrection. Soon, within hours, the disciples will be in a major crisis and confrontation with the religious leaders and those opposed to Jesus. Jesus did the most important thing He could ... He prayed for them.

What's the point? The Lord's prayer.

FYI:

We often think of the Lord's Prayer as the "Our Father" [Matthew 6:9-13]; but John 17 is the longest and the last recorded prayer of Jesus.

Now What? Be set apart to Him, and united with one another.

Bible Text: John 17:17

Set them apart by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Outline:

- 1. Jesus protects us**
- 2. Jesus sets us apart**
- 3. Jesus unites us**

1. Jesus protects us [11-16]

Jesus prayed for the Father to protect them. Jesus had protected them, and the Father would continue to protect them even after Jesus went to the cross. Jesus prays for us to be protected during conflict, not removed from it. When you take a stand for what is right, it is not always easy, but God will protect you. Jesus knows that when you feel protected and secure, you will go out into the world and be the influence that He wants you to be.

2. Jesus sets us apart [17-19]

Jesus sets us apart to serve God, and we are sent into the world to represent Him. As soon as you ask Jesus into your heart you are sanctified, or set apart to Him. Then, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit help us live a life that is pleasing to God. Maybe you know people who listen to music, or watch movies and videos that you know are not pleasing to God; or maybe they use bad language. Perhaps they lie or cheat, and seem to get away with it. Maybe you're tempted to do those things. Remember, you've been set apart to God so that you try not to do those things that aren't good for you and make God sad.

3. Jesus unites us [20-26]

Four times Jesus calls all Christians to be united in Him. Jesus wants all believers to be united, like the Father and Son are united. Our unity flows from love for God and love for one another. When Christians are truly united, it attracts those who don't know Jesus to Him. We need to support each other, not fight with one another. Here are some of the obstacles to unity: competition, jealousy, indifference, gossip, and playing favorites. In Christ, we have no reason to think that we are better than others ... we are all the same at the foot of the cross.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Remember, Jesus is praying for you, and He will protect you. So, when you go out of the house, and even in the house, remember that you are His messenger.**
- 2. We need to support one another, not fight with one another. Is there someone in your life that you're struggling with? Pray, and ask God to help you be united.**

32. John 18:1-27 - "Steps of Denial"

Introduction:

In the Christian life, there are definite steps that precede spiritual growth, and, unfortunately, there are steps that lead to a spiritual slide. In this chapter, we will learn lessons from Peter's life.

WDJD?

Jesus warned the disciples about pride. When Jesus predicted that all of the disciples would betray Him, Peter insisted that he would never betray Jesus, even if all the other disciples did. Jesus told Peter, "This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" [Matthew 26:30-35]. Peter refused to believe that he would deny the Lord, but we will see that Peter did in fact deny Jesus. Remember, we need to live with a humble attitude of dependence upon God. Also, remember that anytime you argue with Jesus, you're wrong.

What's the point? The steps of denial.

FYI:

About 7 out of 10 people (70%) fail to take the full prescribed dose of antibiotics, because they start to feel better and think they're fine. Unfortunately, they're still sick, and the infection often comes back even stronger. What's really amazing is the fact that doctors, people who should know better, often do the same thing.

Now what? Stand firm in Christ.

Bible Text: John 18:27

Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

Outline:

1. Fight in the flesh
2. Follow at a distance
3. Seek comfort at the enemy's fire

1. Fight in the flesh [2-10]

We can't fight spiritual battles with weapons of the flesh. When the religious leaders came to arrest Jesus, Peter bravely used a sword to try to defend Jesus. He cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, Malchus. Jesus told Peter to put his sword away, for those who use the sword will die by the sword [Matthew 26:52]. Fighting in the flesh generally causes unnecessary injury, so Jesus promptly healed the servant's ear [Luke 22:51].

Spiritual battles must be fought with spiritual weapons, like prayer and the Word of God [Ephesians 6:12-18]. Peter fought using the wrong sword. Our sword is the Bible.

We win the battle, and stay close to Jesus when we rely on His strength, not our own strength.

2. Follow at a distance [12-17]

We need to stay close to Jesus. When Jesus was arrested, Peter followed at a distance [Mark 14:54]. Soon, Peter would deny his relationship with Jesus. If we are distant from the Lord, we will deny Him when we are squeezed.

3. Seek comfort at the enemy's fire [18, 25]

Jerusalem is about 2,600 feet above sea level, and it gets cold in the spring. Peter warmed himself at the enemy's fire. We must be careful to seek our comfort in Jesus rather than in areas that God has said are off limits. Soon, Peter would deny Jesus a second, and a third time ... and then the rooster crowed, just like Jesus had predicted.

Bringing it home:

- 1. After Peter denied Him, Jesus looked at Peter. As Peter remembered what Jesus had predicted, Peter cried very heavily [Luke 22:61-62]. He felt bad for what he did, and for hurting Jesus. To avoid hurting Jesus, and being hurt yourself, avoid the steps leading to denial.**
- 2. To stand firm in Christ, remember to use your spiritual weapons by reading your Bible and praying; stay close to Jesus, and seek comfort in Him.**

33. John 18:28-19:16 - "What Shall You Do With Jesus?"

Introduction:

What do you think are some important questions in life? The Gospels record several questions to make us think and reflect. During the trial of Jesus, the Roman leader Pilate asked several questions, including, "What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" This same question is probably the most important question of your life.

WDJD?

Jesus used questions to make us think. His first recorded question, to His new followers, was, "What do you seek?" [John 1:38]. To the religious leaders, He asked, "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" [John 8:46]. To the blind man that He healed, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" [John 9:35]. Jesus wants us to think about our relationship with Him?

What's the point? What will you do with Jesus?

FYI: The people were offered a choice between Barrabas or Jesus. Barrabas means, "a son of a father," but Jesus is *the* Son of *the* Father. Barrabas can't save, can't transform, and is a poor substitute. Who would you choose?

Now what? Make Jesus your Lord and Savior.

Bible Text: Matthew 27:22

Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

Outline:

- 1. What charge do you bring against this man?**
- 2. What is truth?**
- 3. Who do you want?**

1. What charge do you bring against this man? [28-36]

The religious leaders accused Jesus of leading a rebellion against Rome, but the charges were false, and there was no evidence against Jesus. Three times at the trial, Pilate declared, "I find no fault in Him." Truly, Jesus was the sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world [John 1:29]. Think about it ... is there anything bad that Jesus ever did? It's easy to follow Jesus, because He never does anything wrong.

2. What is truth? [37-38]

The purpose of Jesus' life is to show us the truth about God. Jesus reveals the truth about God's love, grace, and holiness. Jesus makes it clear that God exists, He cares, and that we can go to heaven. When it comes to the things of God, there is real truth ... it's not simply how we feel. It's easy to follow Jesus, because He always reveals truth.

3. Who do you want? [39-40]

Pilate wanted to release Jesus, because he knew Jesus was not guilty.

So he offered the people a choice between Barrabas, a robber and murderer, or Jesus.

Pilate thought the crowd would surely choose Jesus, but the religious leaders pressured the people to choose Barrabas. Unfortunately, we can let peer pressure influence us to make bad choices about Jesus. Be careful and make wise choices!

Bringing it home:

- 1. What will you do with Jesus? Will you make Him your Lord and Savior?**
- 2. Here's an interesting thought to consider. Remember, Jesus is with us always [Matthew 28:20]. So, when you go to a movie, watch T.V. or the internet, go to school or work, you take Jesus with you. What will you do with Jesus today?**

34. John19:17-37 - "It is Finished"

Introduction:

If you could choose your last words, before your death, what would you want to say to people? What do you think Jesus chose to say?

WDJD?

The gospels record 7 statements that Jesus made from the cross. John records the last word from the cross: *tetelestai*. This Greek word means "it is finished." What was finished? Was Jesus referring to his life, or to something more? Is Jesus' death merely the death of a good man, or is it the completion of God's plan to save man?

What's the point? Jesus' crucifixion.

FYI: The Greek word *tetelestai* was used to describe a debt paid in full, a worker who had finished his job, and a lamb that had passed inspection at the temple. All of these meanings apply to Jesus' work on the cross. The other Gospels tell us Jesus cried out with a loud voice. He wanted all to hear! Every other religion focuses on what men must do, but Christianity focuses on what God has done.

Now what? Believe and receive.

Bible Text: John19:30

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His Spirit.

Outline:

1. God's plan to save man
2. Jesus finished the job

1. God's plan to save man

Why did Jesus have to die? In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, and they were separated from God. Each of us sins, just like Adam and Eve. All of us have fallen short of God's standard [Romans 3:23]. God promised Adam and Eve that the Messiah would come and restore people to God. Jesus gave His life so that we could live.

A teacher told her young students a story about an ant and a grasshopper. During the summer and fall, the ant worked hard to gather food, but the grasshopper just played. When winter came, the grasshopper didn't have enough food. So the grasshopper came to the ant and asked for food. The teacher asked the students to finish the story and draw a picture. What would you write?

Some students finished the story by having the ant share some food with the grasshopper; and some finished the story by having the ant not share so that the grasshopper would learn a lesson. One little boy did something the teacher had never

seen before. His story ended by the ant giving all of his food to the grasshopper, and then the ant died. On his picture, the boy showed the grasshopper with a pile of food, the ant was on his back with x's for eyes, and in the background was the cross. That's what Jesus has done for us.

2. Jesus finished the job

Jesus' mission is to take away the sin of the world. If you were God, how would you let all future generations know that this was truly your plan? By giving prophecy [telling the future] in the Old Testament, which was fulfilled by the life and death of Jesus, we see that Jesus finished the job. John's account of Jesus' death on the cross shows more than 10 Old Testament predictions being fulfilled [e.g. John 19:24, and Psalm 22:18].

Jesus' death was not just the death of a good man, but He finished the job. Because of what Jesus has done, you can have a relationship with God by simply believing in Him and receiving God's gift.

Bringing it home:

- 1. A teenager wanted a car for her birthday, but instead she received a Bible. She was so disappointed that she never opened the gift. Years later, as she prepared to go to her father's funeral, she opened the Bible, and discovered the key to the car inside. Her father always wanted to bless her, but she had refused to receive the gift. For all those years, she missed out.**
- 2. There is nothing you have to do to make God love you; or to earn His approval. Jesus has already done the work; it is finished. All you have to do is believe and receive.**

35. John 19:38-20:10 - "Seeing is Believing"

Introduction:

Christianity is different from all other religions. All other religions are based on man's efforts to please God. Christianity is based on God reaching down to us because of His love. Christianity is based on Jesus giving His life for us by dying on the cross. Unlike other religious leaders, Jesus rose from the dead [the resurrection] to prove that He was the Messiah. How can we know that this is true?

WDJD?

After Jesus rose from the dead, He visited the disciples so that they would know that He was truly alive. All the other disciples saw Jesus before Thomas did. Thomas didn't believe them, that's why he is sometimes called "Doubting Thomas." So Jesus came to Thomas and showed him that, in fact, He was alive. Jesus said, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

What's the point? Jesus' burial and resurrection.

FYI: Jews generally go to temple on Friday and Saturday, because the Sabbath begins Friday night at sundown. Have you ever wondered why Christians generally meet on Sunday? Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week [20:1], which is Sunday. That's why the church has generally gathered to worship on that day.

Now What? See and believe.

Bible Text: John 20:8

Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.

Outline:

- 1. Scripture**
- 2. Experience**
- 3. Evidence**

1. Scripture [19:38-42]

The Bible proves that Jesus is the Messiah. John tells us that two men, Joseph of Aramathea and Nicodemus, came to bury Jesus. These men were wealthy, they were Jewish religious leaders, and they were important leaders in the community. Why would they seek to honor Jesus at a time when He appeared to be a failure, before the resurrection? They could lose everything by coming to Jesus.

Both of these men were religious leaders who knew the Scriptures. They knew the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled to prove He was the Messiah. There

are more than 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament, and Jesus fulfilled these prophecies to show He is the Messiah.

2. Experience

Both Nicodemus and Joseph had experiences with Jesus which showed them that he was Messiah. Jesus taught Nicodemus about the need to be born-again [John 3]. Joseph watched Jesus during his trial before the religious leaders; and realized that Jesus was not merely a man, or a wise teacher.

In the same way, the woman at the well [John 4], the thief on the cross [Luke 23], and the disciples all discovered from their experiences with Jesus that He was the Messiah. Each of us can have experiences that reveal Jesus to us, so that we can see and believe.

3. Evidence [20:1-10]

God has given us evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, so that we can know that Jesus was truly resurrected. John and Peter went into the tomb (like a small cave) and saw something that convinced them. What was it? They saw the grave clothes and the linen head cover folded neatly. John told us that they buried Jesus with myrrh and aloes. They would act like glue so that the linen would stick together like a cocoon. The position of the grave clothes was evidence that Jesus had passed right through. In other words, if enemies stole the body, they would not take time to remove the grave clothes and fold them neatly. If friends moved Jesus, they wouldn't take His body and dishonor the grave clothes.

Bringing it home:

- 1. Have you ever had an experience in your life when you saw God move in such a way that you were led closer to God? Share the experience.**
- 2. Write in the back of the book, like a journal, a brief description of the experience, and when it happened.**

36. John 20:11-31 - “The Power of His Resurrection”

Introduction:

Whenever someone encounters Jesus their life is changed. Sometimes, we fail to remember that the power of God is available to change us. How would you like to change?

WDJD?

Jesus had the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it up again [John 10:18]. Jesus wants His followers to know that His power is available to transform them. That's why the apostle Paul prayed that he would know Jesus and the power of His resurrection [Philippians 3:10]. Paul wanted to keep experiencing the life-transforming power of the resurrection.

What's the point? God's power is available for change.

FYI: Have you ever wondered when the disciples became born again? Here, in John 20, we have the answer. When Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” they were born-again. When God breathes life, lives are changed. Just like when God formed Adam from the dust and breathed life into Him [Genesis 2:7]. Remember, a spiritual birth is required for a truly changed life.

Now what? Be transformed.

Bible Text: John 20:22

And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Outline:

- 1. Sorrow to joy**
- 2. Fear to peace**
- 3. Wanderers to worshipers**

1. Sorrow to joy [11-21]

As Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, she was sad because Jesus' body wasn't there, and she was worried that someone may have stolen the body. Also, the disciples were sad because they did not yet know that Jesus was resurrected. When they learned that Jesus truly was alive, and with them, their sorrow was transformed to joy.

2. Fear to peace [19-26]

Three times Jesus told the disciples, “Peace to you” [19,21,26]. They were worried about what was going to happen to them in the future. Jesus assured them that they had nothing to fear because He would be there with them and care for them. Whatever

you're afraid of right now, just remember that Jesus is alive, He loves you, and He's there with you.

3. Wanderers to worshipers [24-31]

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples, Thomas wasn't with them. Thomas wanted to see the proof that Jesus really was alive before he would believe. The other disciples had already come to realize that Jesus was alive. They were transformed from wanderers to worshipers. As they were convinced of the fact that Jesus is alive, they worshiped God.

Jesus met Thomas exactly where he was, so that he could believe; and he, too, could worship God. God's desire is to transform us from wanderers to worshipers. Jesus assured us that we will be blessed [happy] when we discover that Jesus is truly alive. That's why John wrote this Gospel, so that we can believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His name [v.31]. The life that God wants us to experience is a transforming life.

Bringing it home:

- 1. How has God changed your life during the last year?**
- 2. How do you think God wants to change you in the coming year?**

37. John 21:1-25 - "Who Will Feed His Sheep?"

Introduction:

Have you ever been to a petting zoo where you got to feed the animals? What was it like? Was it fun? Would you do it again, and why? Have you ever thought that the zoo doesn't really need you to feed the animals? They let us feed the animals because it's a blessing for us.

WDJD?

Jesus is the Great Shepherd [Hebrews 13], the Good Shepherd [John 10], and the Chief Shepherd [1Peter 5]. Jesus can care for His people without us, but He allows us the blessing of helping to care for His people.

What's the point? Care for God's people.

FYI: In Jesus' culture, when you ate a meal, it was a symbol of closeness and unity like being one with those you ate with. When Jesus came to Peter at the Sea of Galilee, and invited Peter to eat with Him, he was inviting Peter to have fellowship with Him. Jesus was telling him that He wanted to be close to Peter again.

Now what? Serve God by serving His people.

Bible Text: John 21:15

After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" "Yes Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

Outline: 3 characteristics of those who care for God's people

- 1. Fulfilled**
- 2. First love**
- 3. Follow Jesus**

1. Fulfilled [1-7]: Those filled by the Lord, care for others. Peter had denied Jesus and wanted to go back to being a fisherman. Peter was a leader and other disciples followed him. He had been called from fishing to be a fisher of men, but now he wanted to return to the sea. Peter learned that you can never be satisfied apart from the Lord. He fished all night but caught nothing ... no satisfaction or fulfillment.

Then, Jesus came and told them where to lower their net and they did. They caught so many fish they had enough to feed themselves and others, too. As we find fulfillment in the Lord, we will care for others. It wasn't the fish that satisfied, but being with Jesus. Only Jesus fulfills! Obey Him and you will be fulfilled too.

2. First love [v.15-17]: Those who love Jesus care for others. The key issue is our love for the Lord, not our ability to lead, teach, or preach. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me

more than these?” What was Jesus referring to? The boats represented Peter’s business or position. The disciples represented Peter’s friends and relationships. Finally, the fish were a picture of his money and possessions. When we love Jesus more than these other things, He is our first love. Those who love Jesus care about others, because Jesus does.

3. Follow [18-24]: Those who follow Jesus care for others. Jesus encouraged Peter to keep following Him rather than focusing on what other people were doing, or not doing. We need to keep looking at Jesus, and follow Him, instead of focusing on others. It’s like riding your bike, or driving a car; you have to look where you’re supposed to go, to keep from crashing. Remember, don’t be distracted by people, circumstances, or self.

Bringing it home:

- 1. We serve God by serving His people. Think of ways to serve your family. Everyone come up with two ideas, and then do them.**
- 2. As a family, think of a way you can all help someone else this week.**

38. John 21:24-25 - "Experiencing Jesus"

A Review of the Gospel of John

Introduction:

John ends his Gospel by reminding us that he saw, and heard, the things he has described, and that we can trust what he says. He tells us that Jesus did, and said, so many wonderful things that even all the libraries of the world could not hold all the books that could be written. So, why did John choose the events that he recorded? He wants to give us a picture of Jesus, so that we can experience Him, and trust Him.

WDJD?

Jesus performed miracles to fulfill prophecy, and to show that He was the Messiah. Jesus performed miracles to benefit others not Himself, and to give us a better understanding of God.

What's the point? seven miracles of Jesus.

FYI: Do you know what a miracle is? A miracle is a temporary stopping of natural laws that reveal God. There were miracles in the Old Testament, such as the miracles performed by Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha. Miracles in the New Testament are performed by Jesus, the Apostles, and the two witnesses [Revelation 11].

Now what? Experience Jesus.

Bible Text: John 21:25

And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Outline: Seven miracles of Jesus as recorded by John

1. Water to wine [John 2]: theme - transformation. Jesus' first miracle was changing the water to wine. Jesus changed something good to something great. Everyone who has a relationship with Jesus is transformed. How would you like God to transform you?

2. Healing the nobleman's son [John 4]: theme - healing power. Jesus has the power to heal our spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Although He may choose not to heal some needs, He always has the power, and He knows what is best. A government official came to Jesus, because his son was dying. The first miracle was a celebration performed at a wedding; and the next miracle was a devastating crisis. Whether joy or sorrow, Jesus is the answer to life. When Jesus healed the boy, the father and the boy were both strengthened. The father now fully trusted Jesus, so he was healed spiritually,

and the son was healed physically. You need to live with people to know their problems, and live with God in order to solve them.

3. Strength and mercy [John 5]: theme - Jesus gives mercy and strength to those who need help. Jesus cares and Jesus cures. Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda [House of Mercy] and healed a paralyzed man. Religion and ritual couldn't heal the man, but Jesus did. Jesus gives strength and mercy to move from paralysis to progress. How would you like to make progress in the coming year?

4. Provision and satisfaction [John 6]: theme-feeding of the 5,000, and compassion. Jesus started with a few loaves of bread and a few fish. He miraculously multiplied them, and fed more than 5,000 people. The people ate as much as they wanted, and there were leftovers! Jesus has compassion for His people, and will provide so that they are satisfied. Jesus will give you all the compassion that you need, if you want to give it away.

5. Deliverance from danger [John 6]: theme - Jesus calms the storms and delivers us from danger. God allows storms, or difficult times, in our lives to cause us to depend more on Him. Jesus walked on the water to them, and then He calmed the storm. More than 40 times in the Bible, God says, "Don't be afraid." We can trust God in difficult times. He will deliver us from danger. Remember that without a test, you would have no testimony.

6. Spiritual insight [John 9]: theme - healing the blind so that they can see. Jesus opens the eyes of the blind so that He can reveal the truth about God. As Jesus heals him, the blind man sees more and more of who Jesus is: a man, a prophet, a rabbi, a man of God, the Son of God, and Lord. As he comes to appreciate who Jesus really is, he responds by worshiping God. God desires to open our eyes so that we can worship Him.

7. Spiritual life [John 11]: theme - Lazarus raised from the dead and the resurrection. By the time Jesus came to him, Lazarus, had already been dead four days. The situation seemed hopeless. But Jesus gave life to Lazarus.

When Jesus Himself rose from the dead, He proved that He gives life, and He gives hope. Whatever difficulty you are experiencing, Jesus is the answer. Life with Jesus is real life!

Bringing it home:

- 1. Which of the miracles of Jesus is your favorite and why?**

Jesus is the “I am”

Seven times in John’s Gospel, Jesus makes a statement about Himself that begins, “I am.” He is letting us know that whatever our need is, He is the answer. For example, if you hunger for spiritual satisfaction, Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger ...”

Write down the “I am” statement, and the verse reference [e.g., John 6:35] on this page. See if you can list [and then remember] the seven “I am” statements. Also, write what you think the “I am” statement means, and how you can apply it to your life.

1. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

2. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

3. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

4. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

5. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

6. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

7. John___ I am the
What do you think it means?
How can you apply it to your life?

appendix

:: How to memorize Scripture ::

..: Teaching younger kids :.

Start by choosing short verses to learn. This will build your child's confidence. Remember to have fun while learning the verse. Keep the time brief to hold your child's attention. This should be enjoyable. If your child gets frustrated, try again later.

Show your child where the verse is found in the Bible. Mark their Bible with a special color to identify verses that they have memorized. Say the book, chapter, and verse before and after the Scripture. Recite the verse several times a day in your child's presence so that it becomes familiar to them. Clarify any words that they don't understand.

Make flash cards with Scripture words on one side, and the book, chapter, and verse on the other. Take the cards with you when you go out so that you can review the verse at different times of the day (for example, in the car while you are at a light, etc.). You can put a sticker on the card when the child has successfully memorized the verse. They will be encouraged by the accumulated cards. Put your flash cards in a special envelope or container and review the verses that they have learned so that they do not forget them.

Four fun ways to help them memorize:

1. Teach them one phrase or word from the verse at a time. Say a word (or phrase), then point to your child to supply the next word (or hand them an item when it is their turn to speak).
2. Bounce or roll a ball back and forth as each word of the verse is said. Start by saying the verse with your child as you pass the ball. As they learn the verse, each of you says a word of the verse as you pass the ball.
3. Put the verse to music or rhythm. Your child will enjoy singing and clapping hands.
4. Use flash cards. Put each word on an index card, and then scramble the words. Have your child put them in the right order.

..: For older kids :.

Encourage older family members to read the verse several times. Then try writing the verse from memory. Check your answer and see how you did. If you missed some words, write in the corrections. Keep writing the verse until you can write it correctly from memory. Remember to write the book, chapter, and verse before the Scripture [e.g. John 1:1].

topical index

compassion.....	chapter 11
evangelism/how to share your faith.....	chapter 8
evidence that Jesus is God.....	chapter 10
experiencing Jesus.....	chapter 38
fear.....	chapter 12
fruit.....	chapter 27
God's plan to save us.....	chapter 34
good shepherd.....	chapter 18
Holy Spirit.....	chapter 29
humility	chapter 6
hypocrisy	chapter 24
Jesus is God.....	chapter 1
joy.....	chapter 30
judging others	chapter 15
let your light shine	chapter 16
living water.....	chapter 14
loving Jesus.....	chapter 26
power for change.....	chapter 36
proof of the resurrection	chapter 35
real life	chapter 20
real relationships.....	chapter 28
satisfaction.....	chapter 13
spiritual growth.....	chapter 9
spiritual life	chapter 5
tell people about Jesus	chapter 2
transformation	chapter 3
true love	chapter 23
understand God.....	chapter 17
unity.....	chapter 31
what shall you do with Jesus?	chapter 33
why do you seek Jesus?.....	chapter 22
worry.....	chapter 25
worship.....	chapter 7
worship.....	Chapter 21
zeal	chapter 4
gospel of John review/seven miracles of Jesus.....	chapter 38