

KNOWING
JESUS



A JOURNEY EXPLORING
THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

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PREFACE

This devotional journey was written by Common Ground Church in Cape Town, South Africa in 2023.

Feel free to use this liberally as a discipling resource, while giving due credit to the author and the website www.commonresources.co.za where more resources like these can be found.

All Bible references are from the English Standard Version translation, accessed through www.classic.biblegateway.com

This work has been developed for use as devotional material for a local congregation and is not published through traditional editors and publishers.

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Contact details

At various points in this booklet you are invited to contact us so we can serve and support you.

Please reach out on



WhatsApp: 082 760 7514



Email: bosch@commonground.co.za

INTRODUCTION

"If I had stopped asking questions, that's where I would have remained." (Lee Strobel¹)

In a world filled with diverse beliefs and opinions, asking questions is appropriate, wise, even. The questions and beliefs that influence how we act, behave, and make decisions are often not knowledge-based. Rather they are based on what we believe the answers are to questions like: What is truth? Why am I here? Am I loved? Why is there suffering? What happens next? The answers to these questions form our worldview – the way we see the world.

Imagine your personal beliefs as the picture on a puzzle box. This metaphorical box serves as a framework to make sense of the world around you and discern what you consider right or wrong. As you journey through life, you collect various puzzle pieces—some fit perfectly against your existing picture of truth, while others compel you to re-evaluate the picture you've been constructing. Ultimately, this evolving puzzle becomes a comprehensive guide to navigate the complexities of life, allowing you to assemble a coherent worldview.

Our worldview serves as a lens through which we understand reality, answer fundamental questions about life, and form our opinions on various topics.

Over the history of our world, there is one figure who continues to challenge worldviews. One figure who either captivates and challenges hearts and minds, inspiring profound faith and curiosity, or aggravates and infuriates minds and opinions. That is Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Jesus' life has divided history itself. The standard Western dating system uses the terms BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, meaning "In the Year of Our Lord"), marking the dividing line between events that occurred before and after the birth of Jesus. And Jesus continues to divide people to this day – whether in politics, nations, religions, or the human heart.

C.S. Lewis, another profound thinker and once a stout unbeliever, offers guidance on this quest to understand Jesus:

¹ Lee Strobel: *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence that Points towards God.*

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.”

Likewise, Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, philosopher and writer, said:

“In Jesus Christ, there is no half measure: one must either take Him altogether or leave Him altogether.”

If you have picked up this book, it is assumed that you, too, are, at the very least, curious about the claims of Jesus. This book is for you. It aims to lead you on a journey to explore the claims given by Jesus himself in scripture and through encounters people had with him throughout the scriptures.

As you embark on this journey into the pages of the Bible to explore what it reveals about the life and teachings of Jesus, you stand at a crossroads of discovery and contemplation. This journey promises to challenge your beliefs, stir your soul, and, perhaps, transform your life.

Jesus, a figure of unparalleled historical significance, made claims that were nothing short of astonishing. He declared himself to be the Son of God, the bringer of salvation, and the path to eternal life. These claims are not mere words, but the foundational pillars upon which Christianity stands.

As we journey through the pages of this book, we hope that Jesus will answer profound questions: Could his audacious claims be true? Is he the bridge between humanity and God?

The answers to these questions have far-reaching implications that touch the very core of our existence. If what Jesus said is true, then the ramifications are both awe-inspiring and life-altering.

Jesus Is The Gospel: A Love Story of Hope and Redemption

Across scripture, we see God’s beautiful salvation arc unfold as it displays the profound love story of God towards the humanity he dreamed of and created. The gospel, meaning ‘good news,’ tells of God’s inconceivable plan to rescue the creation he loves through his Son, Jesus Christ.

When the angels first heralded the birth of Jesus, they said:

*"¹⁰ Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."
(Matthew 2:10-11)*

The gospel is the good news that Jesus broke into history as God in creation to bring salvation to a broken world. We believe that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone and is a gift of grace from God.

Why do we need salvation?

It starts at the beginning. We read in Genesis 1-3 that we were created and designed for community and union with our Creator. We were designed for love and flourishing, but instead, we turned towards ourselves when tempted and, in doing so, rejected God's rightful place as our Creator Lord, placing ourselves over Him.

Sin swept in and drove a wedge between mankind and God, resulting in the curse of both physical and spiritual death.

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin,
and so death spread to all men because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)*

But does this mean every sin holds equal severity? Isn't living a good life enough?

Imagine a group of people attempting to swim from Africa to America. Some would drown instantly. Some decent swimmers would make it a little farther before succumbing to the waters. Elite, well-trained swimmers could even take days before they succumbed to the water. But, no matter how strong someone's abilities are – the chasm is too far, and all fall short. For someone watching from the other side of this chasm – the difference in goodness is so negligible to be ridiculous. The effort is so futile that the arrogance of the better swimmers is actually more ludicrous.

This symbolizes how futile our efforts are to bridge the gap between us and God. And the more prideful or hesitant we are to grab onto the salvation God offers through his Son, the more difficult we find it to grasp what is on offer to us.

Without rescue, we would be stuck in the figurative deep waters of literal, eternal separation from God. Only when we accept that only a Saviour can mend this broken relationship and reach out for his extended hand can we be reconciled to our Creator and pulled from the waters of death.

But I have been the Lord your God ever since you came out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Saviour except me. (Hosea 13:4)

As we read through the scriptures, we witness humanity's repeated failures to follow God. We also see that God doesn't waver in his steadfast love and intent to fulfil his promise. Instead, he reaches out with love and forgiveness time after time. His promises foretold an ultimate king, one true monarch born of David's lineage, who would finally succeed where others could not.

We see throughout scripture that his promised plan of redemption remained steadfast:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on his shoulders; And his name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of his government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

And so, after centuries of unwavering love, justice, and mercy, God himself came to earth to accomplish what no human could ever do.

He came to seek us out, to save us.

Jesus taught us:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

By willingly shedding his own blood on our behalf, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made it possible for us to stand pure and blameless before our Maker.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

Our response to this unfathomable love begins with repentance and faith.

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30)

Confessing Jesus as Lord, while wholeheartedly believing in his resurrection, paves the way to salvation. Romans 10:9-10 explains:

⁹ “Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Saving us from certain physical and spiritual death was only part of God’s love for us. He then makes us his family, and loves and guides us. We continue receiving blessings through our relationship with God through the saving work of Jesus:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:3-10)

The gospel offers the promise of love, redemption, and a transformative relationship with the Creator of the universe. It extends an invitation to embrace a profound truth – that in Jesus Christ, we find forgiveness, purpose, and eternal life.

Will you accept this invitation and take the first step toward discovering the gospel's profound grace and truth?

This is an invitation from a loving and merciful God who knows you intimately and yearns for a relationship with you. Remember that faith is not about having all the answers; it's about trusting in the One who holds the answers. It begins with a simple act of faith, a surrender of self to God. It starts with a heartfelt prayer, a conversation with God, who promises to hear and respond. Tell him your doubts, your fears, and your hopes. Acknowledge your need for salvation and purpose, and your desire for a relationship with God.

As you respond to God in faith for salvation, know you are not alone. You are joining a community of believers who have embarked on this profound journey. A journey that offers hope, peace, and the assurance of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Consider taking that step of faith today. Respond to God with an open heart. In that response, you may find the salvation and the profound connection you've been searching for all along.

If you are not yet ready to pray this prayer, no problem. This book is for both those who are exploring the claims of who Jesus is for the first time and those who have responded to him already and would like to know more about who this man Jesus is. If you are not ready, keep journeying through this book to find out more.

If you are ready to take this step, consider praying these words:

*Dear God,
I believe you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins.
I believe you rose him from the dead, and he reigns over all.
I am sorry for living my life apart from you in rebellion and pride.
Please forgive me and make me new.
Jesus, would you fill me with your presence by your Spirit?
Guide my thoughts and actions. Help me walk in your ways.
Help me to know you better, God.
Please grow me in my understanding and relationship with you.
Please knit me into community.*

*Thank you for the incredible gift of salvation through Jesus.
I place my trust in you. Amen.*

If you prayed this prayer for the first time, tell someone! What a moment! If you are in a life group, share it with them.

If you would like to connect with a pastor to fully process this amazing moment, please reach out via the contact details provided on page 2.

A large grid of small dots, intended for writing or reflection.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In his book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer writes of how goals and lifestyles must be entwined. He notes that you may desire the physique of professional athletes, but you need to live the type of lifestyle and make the necessary sacrifices that they do in order to realise that goal.

Likewise, if we want to fully explore the life of Jesus and the promises that he makes us, we need to commit to a journey of exploration. Just like getting to know any person we want to know better, we need to spend time with Jesus, get to know him, and consider what he said and did.

So, how do you get to know Jesus? It starts with reading the Bible. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. We can learn about Jesus' life, teachings, and purpose through its pages.

In section 1, each chapter in this book will unpack who Jesus said he is and how he lived his life, and then take us through some considerations and reflections. There is an encouragement to pray at the end of each section.

In section 2, we continue our exploration of who Jesus is by focusing on various encounters with Jesus in scripture.

Each chapter will follow this format:



Being With Jesus / Word – reading the daily scripture and reflecting on who Jesus is.



Consider – what the Scripture teaches us about Jesus and ourselves.



Reflect – how these things about Jesus may challenge or shape us.



Prayer – responding to what we have been reflecting on in prayer.



Going Deeper Resources – where appropriate, we have included QR codes with links to relevant testimonies from trusted voices who have journeyed through some of these steps already, as well as sermon series links or eBooks that could be helpful for those who would like to spend longer on any of the chapters.

We suggest you only read a chapter a day (and some chapters may take you longer). This booklet is designed as a journey of encountering Jesus rather than just a processing of information about him.

This resource is designed to help you on your spiritual journey, whether you engage with it individually, alongside someone you trust, or even within the supportive context of a life group.

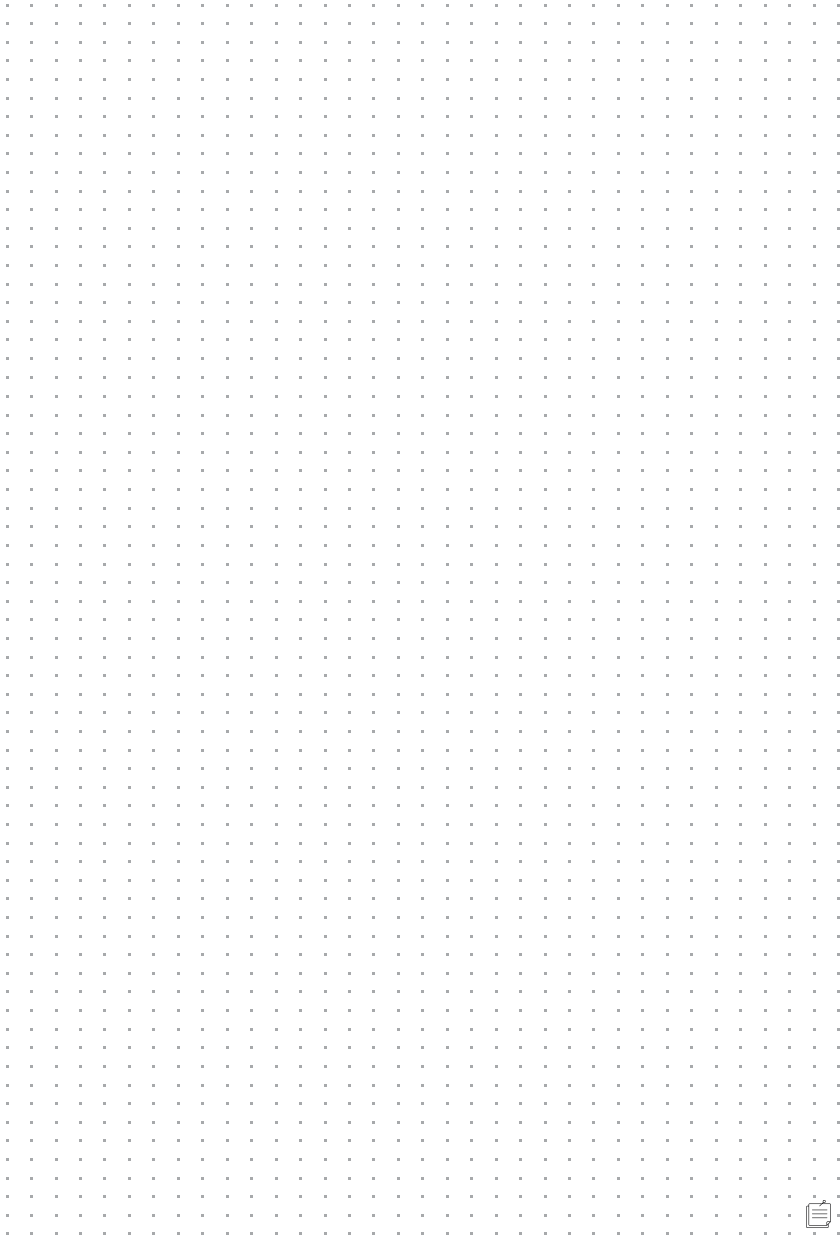
While personal reflection can be deeply enriching, sharing this experience with others can bring added insight, encouragement, and accountability. If you don't have someone readily available in your friendship sphere and would like someone to go on this journey with you, please don't hesitate to reach out. You can contact us via the contact details on page 2. We're here to support you as you explore your faith and deepen your connection with God.

If you are not yet part of a church community that can support and encourage you on your journey, we encourage you to look for a local church to join in your area. We would be happy to help you find one near you.

Remember that getting to know Jesus is a lifelong process. Don't be discouraged if you don't understand everything right away or if you have doubts along the way. Keep seeking and reading, and trust that God will reveal himself to you in his time.

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SECTION ONE:
JESUS IS

JESUS IS GOD



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

22 At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one." (John 10:22-30)



Consider

Earlier in the Book of John, Jesus had said: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)*

"I Am" is the name that God revealed to Moses in the Old Testament. For Jesus to say not only that he existed before Abraham, but also to use the term 'I am,' would have been clear to the listeners that he was equating himself with God. He also taught that he was one with the Father, and one of his names was 'Immanuel', which means 'God with us.' Jesus was fully God.

Jesus was asked plainly by some perplexed Jewish people, who had seen him perform miracles and had heard him proclaim himself as God, to tell them if he was truly the promised Messiah, come to reconcile them to God. Maybe we, too, have come face-to-face with the claims of Jesus and are left asking if they are true.

Jesus' reply in today's passage indicates that there are two ways we can approach him. One is in hopeful faith, genuinely wanting to know Jesus and allowing him to define and reveal who he is and how we are to respond to him. Jesus defines this as being his sheep. These people came to Jesus humbly and in faith. Jesus reminds us, too, that if we call on his name, we are his, and we belong to God. And we have assurance because of this great truth.

Or we can approach him blinded by a hardened heart with our own idea of who he should be, and what he is like.



Reflect

"Jesus Christ is not simply a human being who became God, or a God who became a human being. He is the God-man, fully God and fully man." (R.C. Sproul)

- Reflect on why you picked up this book. Was it because you are curious about the claims of Christ? Or because you have already responded to Jesus and want to know more?
- What does it really mean for you if Jesus is God?
- What does it mean for the world if Jesus is God?
- How would this truth affect the way you live your life if you truly believed it?



Pray

Pray that God would strengthen your faith and understanding of his nature and divinity.

Pray that God would help you if you are having doubts about him and his nature.

Pray that he would continue to reveal himself to you as you journey through the claims of Jesus.

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JESUS IS THE CREATOR



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. But did you know that Jesus, the Son of God, was also involved in creation?

¹⁵ [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:15-16)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)



Consider

Some people think that Jesus only existed after he was born to Mary. That is after all, how we came to be. But we are finite beings, made beings, created beings. Scripture is clear that Jesus is God. He has always existed. He is infinite, eternal, self-existent. These passages emphasise that Jesus is the perfect reflection of God's invisible presence. He embodies God's character and essence on earth.

Jesus took an active role in creating everything in existence – both visible and invisible, material and spiritual. As such, Christ's sovereignty over earthly and heavenly realms is established. The fact that everything was created "through him and for him" highlights his unmatched importance in all dimensions of existence.



Reflect

The maker of the heavens and earth, the sea and everything in them, He remains faithful forever. (Psalm 146:6)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. (Psalm 33:6)

- Think about creation: the vast expanse of space, our beautiful planet, galaxies far and wide, the miracle of a human baby’s birth, the splendour of forests and mountains. What does it reveal about Jesus, the One who crafted it all?
- How does knowing that Jesus created everything you see change the way you appreciate and engage with the world and people around you?

As we reflect on Jesus’ role as Creator and Sustainer of life, we are reminded of our reliance on his grace for everything – from the air we breathe to the spiritual life within us.

- The mind that shaped galaxies also shaped you. How does that impact your feeling of worth and being loved by God?



Pray

Thank God for revealing himself through Jesus Christ and for his sovereignty over all creation.

Ask him to give you a deeper understanding of the power and majesty of Jesus as your Creator and how he loves you as one of his own.

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JESUS IS THE SON OF MAN



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. [Luke 2:7]

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation [atonement] for the sins of the people. [Hebrews 2:17]

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. [1 Corinthians 15:42]



Consider

If Jesus is God, then he has always been God. There was never a time when he became God. But Jesus has not always been man. The miracle of Christmas is that the eternal God became man through the incarnation.

What is also incredible is that Jesus went through this transformation for us – to reveal God to us and to make a way for us to know and be reconciled to God.

Who is God that he would take our frame?

The Artisan inside the paint,

Oh breathe the very air his breath sustains,

The Architect inside the plan.

Oh, come now hail his arrival,

The God of creation,

Royalty robed in the flesh he created,

*Jesus the Maker has made himself known,
All hail the infinite, infant God.*

*The One who had no start and knows no end,
Became confined in time and tense,
The Everlasting God, The Great I Am,
In the mercy of a mother's hands.²*

Jesus' humanity reminds us that the divine can be relatable and approachable. He experienced human emotions, pain, and struggles, showing us that God understands our daily challenges and joys. We can look to his life as an example of how to navigate the complexities of human existence with integrity and grace.




Reflect

The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the incarnation." (J.I. Packer)

- What does it mean for Jesus to be fully man and fully God?
- Consider what Jesus gave up to come to earth to save us. What does this say about him and his character?
- How would this truth affect the way we live our lives, if we truly believed it?

²Arrival song written by: Michael Guy Chislett / Benjamin William Hastings / Matthew Philip Crocker / Dylan George Thomas

 **Pray**

Pray prayers of gratitude to Jesus for his incarnation (God becoming a man), acknowledging that he understands our earthly challenges because he faced them too.

Thank him for being both fully human and fully divine, allowing him to reveal God more completely to us and represent us before God.

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JESUS IS THE WAY



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)



Consider

Jesus makes radical claims about himself in scripture throughout his entire life. In the first verse above, he discloses himself as God to his listeners. He did this many times and in many ways while on earth, teaching that he had come to win mankind back from darkness to God.

Jesus calls himself the Way. He is ultimately telling his listeners that to know God, they need to know him. Jesus is the Way. He doesn't claim to be a way, but *the only* Way. John 3:36 says,

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."



Reflect

- What experiences or events in your life have shaped your view of Jesus? Have your views on Jesus changed over time?
- How can you be more open to allowing Jesus to challenge your perceptions of him and the world?
- What does it mean for you if Jesus really is the only way to God?



Pray

Jesus, you describe yourself in scripture as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Would you help me to grapple with this and understand it better? Would you help me to know you better as I seek you daily?

Please help me to journey in this exploration of faith with you. Guide me and show me who you are. Amen.



Going Deeper Resource:

Is Jesus the only Way to God? (article)



JESUS IS THE TRUTH



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)



Consider

The notion or concept of truth has been under fire in recent times. But this is not a new phenomenon. For centuries, philosophy has been about the debate on what truth is. Even when Jesus is on trial for his life, he is asked by Pilate the judge with the power to send him to death, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38).

Jesus' claim of being the Truth challenges us to seek truth earnestly.

The story of the blind men and the elephant is a parable that illustrates how different people can perceive the same thing in vastly different ways. In the tale, several blind men each touch a different part of an elephant to learn what it is like. They then describe the elephant based on their limited experience – and of course the descriptions are very different from each other. This parable is often used to illustrate how different perspectives or limited viewpoints can lead to incomplete or varying understandings of a larger truth. Many people find this a good explanation of religion – all see part of the larger whole, so all are a bit correct. But in his book *"The Reason for God,"* Timothy Keller points out the flaw in this thinking: for the truth to be known, someone must be able to see the elephant.

"How could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you yourself have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality you just claimed that none of the religions have?" (Timothy Keller, The Reason for God).

Statements of fact can be refuted or verified. At a fundamental level, we all believe that certain actions, behaviours, and beliefs are wrong. Statements of truth should be challenged to determine if they are true or false. The statement: "There is no absolute truth" is a statement of absolute truth itself. If the fact were true, then the statement couldn't be true.

It is a self-defeating statement. It disproves itself. Jesus, however, came to Earth and said the opposite. There is truth, and it can be known. Jesus not only claims that he is the only way to God, he also claims that he is the truth. Truth is defined as the state of being reality. Jesus is claiming to be the standard of all reality.

This is another radical claim by Jesus, especially in a culture that regularly tries to dismantle any assertions of fact or truth. In John 1, we see that not only was he at the world's creation, but he, as the second person of the Trinity, God himself, partook in creating it.

Tim Keller continues his argument about absolute truth in *The Reason for God*, saying:

"It is no more narrow to claim that one religion is right than to claim that one way to think about all religions (namely that all are equal) is right. We are all exclusive in our beliefs about religion, but in different ways."

Jesus claimed he was the only way to God and the standard for all truth. Once again, we have to decide what to do with this claim. Either he was incorrect, or he was correct. And if he was correct, then that changes everything! It means that he is the embodiment of all truth. He is the essence of it, the purest form of it. In a world of relativism and subjective truth, Jesus stands as the ultimate benchmark of what is true and what is not.

The single most significant evidence that Jesus was who he said he was is the resurrection.

Lee Strobel, an investigative journalist who set out to disprove Christianity and, in his journey, came to know Jesus, said this about the resurrection:

"I used to think as an atheist that the resurrection was a legend and that took a long time to develop in the ancient world. What I learned is that we have preserved for us a creed of the earliest Christian Church. A creed that is an eyewitness-based report of the resurrection of Jesus. Now this creed has been dated back by scholars to within months

of the death of Jesus — within months. That is historical gold. So, we've got a news flash from ancient history on the resurrection."



Reflect

- If Jesus is who he says he is, how does that change the way I seek truth in life?
- How does this call me to live my life differently, in a world that is constantly clamouring to redefine truth?
- How does this reality anchor my heart and mind in assurance?



Pray

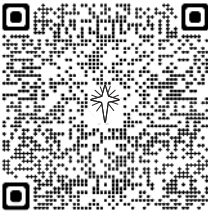
Pray that Jesus would help you to see the truth in who he is. Ask him to embed this truth deeply within your heart.

Pray that he would reveal his presence to you and help you to live according to his ways.



Going Deeper Resources:

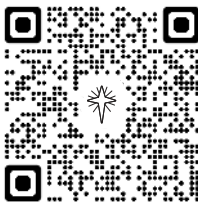
Listen to Iain Kruger sharing on Jesus and worldview: The Way We See the World (podcast)



The Reason for God



[hard copy]



[eBook]

JESUS IS THE LIFE



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by speaking prayers of worship and thankfulness to God.

Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)



Consider

Jesus made many bold declarations about himself. He stated that he is not just a prophet or a great teacher but the essence of life itself.

As "the way," Jesus is our path to a relationship with God. As "the truth," he reveals God's character and plan for our lives. As "the life," Jesus embodies eternal life with God, both now and forever.

Romans 6:23 tells us that *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

This emphasizes how Jesus' sacrificial death gives us an undeserved gift - eternal life in fellowship with our Creator.

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work within us through the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit's presence in our lives that we can experience the fullness of life and victory over sin and death. (Romans 8:11)



Reflect

- In what situations have you leaned on Jesus as your source of guidance, comfort, or hope? How has he proven himself faithful?
- Are there any areas in your life where you are not relying fully on Jesus as your path, truth, or source of life? How can you intentionally refocus on him?
- Are you living in the fullness of the abundant life that Jesus described?
- How can you rely more fully on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you in your walk with God?
- Have you responded to this gift of God, the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord? (If not, consider praying the prayer on page 8 of this booklet).



Pray

Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for his gift of Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Ask for insight into areas where you can rely more fully on him.

Pray for the strength to trust him in all aspects of your life.

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, with a small notepad icon in the bottom right corner.

JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)



Consider

"The light of Christ not only exposes the darkness but also provides the way out of it." (John Piper)

Jesus as the light is the revelation of God to humanity. Just as light dispels darkness, Jesus reveals the truth about God's nature, his plan for salvation, and his love for humanity by coming to us and revealing God to us. This highlights that God is a God of clarity, not confusion. He desires for us to know him and his will.

Light often signifies salvation in the Bible. Through Jesus, we find salvation from sin and eternal darkness. He is the way to eternal life and offers us the opportunity to walk in his light. Jesus shows us the way to live a righteous and fulfilling life. We can trust him to lead us safely.



Reflect

"The light of Christ is a beacon of hope in a world filled with darkness." (Rick Warren)

Reflect on how Jesus not only reveals truth but also leads us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

Just as light reveals imperfections, Jesus' light exposes areas in our lives that need his transformative grace.

- What steps can you take to allow his light to shape you into a more compassionate, forgiving, and loving person?
- Are there areas in your life that you are keeping out of sight of his light? Why?
- Are there areas right now that you feel God may want to shine his light on?



Pray

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

Thank God for being your guiding light in this dark world.

Ask for strength to follow Jesus and walk in his light.

Pray for courage to bring everything in your life into his light.

Pray for those who do not yet know Christ, that they may come to experience his love and guidance.

A large rectangular area filled with a grid of small dots, intended for writing a prayer or reflection. In the bottom right corner of this grid, there is a small icon of a notepad with a pencil.

JESUS IS THE SACRIFICIAL SAVIOUR



Be With Jesus

Before you delve into today's scripture, take a moment to still your heart and mind. Invite God's presence to fill you and speak to you. Prepare yourself to hear his word by letting go of any distractions that might hinder your focus.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)



Consider

"The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man." (John Stott)

It is a humbling experience to consider the depth of God's love for us that he would send his only Son to die for our sins. As we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are acknowledging our need for his forgiveness and submitting to his authority in our lives.

The assurance we gain from these scriptures gives us confidence in our faith. We can trust that our relationship with Jesus brings genuine transformation and grants us access to God's eternal family.

Accepting Jesus' sacrifice is not just a one-time decision, rather it is a daily choice to live for him, to surrender to him, and to allow him to transform our lives.



Reflect

Take some time to reflect on Jesus as the sacrificial Saviour and to consider the impact of his sacrifice on your life.

As you consider accepting Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died for my sins?
- Am I willing to confess my sins and ask for forgiveness?
- Am I ready to surrender control of my life to God?
- Am I willing to follow Jesus and obey his commands?



Pray

If you have never prayed this prayer, and feel like you are ready to accept Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, pray:

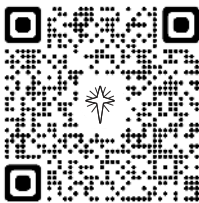
Lord Jesus, I acknowledge my need for your grace and believe in your sacrifice on the cross. Please be my Lord and Saviour, filling me with your Spirit. Forgive my sins, renew me, and guide me to a life honouring you. I trust in your eternal promise and give thanks for your boundless love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you have prayed that prayer before, pray now that you would continually seek to follow him and to live a life that honours him. Pray some prayers of gratitude for the incredible gift of salvation that he has given us.



Going Deeper Resources:

Listen to this testimony of Sai coming to faith:



How do I put my faith in Jesus article:



If you would like to connect with someone to talk about your decision, please contact us via the contact details on page 2.

We're here to support you as you explore your faith and deepen your connection with God.

JESUS IS THE RESURRECTED SAVIOUR



Be With Jesus

Before reading, take a moment to still your heart and mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you meditate on God's Word. Let go of any distractions and open your heart to hear what the Lord has to say to you.

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)



Consider

In this passage, Jesus reveals one of his most powerful declarations about himself: He is the resurrection and the life. This statement holds profound implications for our faith. When we believe in Jesus, we are not merely placing our trust in a wise teacher or a moral leader, but in the One who defeated death itself.

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and an Oxford Professor in languages, commented that there was no antonym for the English word *catastrophe*. A catastrophe is the sudden unexpected that changes everything for the worse. So, he writes:

"I coined the word 'eucatastrophe': the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which I argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce). And I was there led to the view that it produces its peculiar effect because it is a sudden glimpse of Truth, your whole nature chained in material cause and effect, the chain of death, feels a sudden relief as if a major limb out of joint had suddenly snapped back. It perceives – if the story has literary 'truth' on the second plane [...] – that this is indeed how things really do work in the Great World for which our nature is made. And I concluded by saying that the Resurrection was the greatest 'eucatastrophe' possible in the greatest Fairy Story – and produces that essential emotion: Christian joy which produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled, as selfishness and altruism are lost in Love."

By stating that he is the resurrection and the life, Jesus promises eternal life for those who trust him. In a world bound by time and decay, Jesus offers an invitation into eternity.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Through faith in Christ, we don't have to fear death because he has already conquered it on our behalf. We have hope beyond this earthly realm, knowing we will spend eternity with him.

“If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.”
(Timothy Keller)



Reflect

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead also enables us to overcome sin and temptation. Likewise, his death and resurrection have dealt with the reality of sin and death for all time. Therefore, we need not fear anything when we are in Jesus. The resurrection signifies a new beginning and a fresh start filled with hope.

- How does knowing that Jesus is the resurrection and the life impact your faith?
- In what ways can you experience his resurrection power in your daily life?
- Are there areas where you need to let go of fear or anxiety related to death or dying? How might your understanding of these promises from Jesus change those feelings?




Pray

Just as Jesus rose victoriously from the grave, his resurrection power can also bring breakthroughs and victory to our prayer lives.

Is there something for which you are trusting for breakthrough or victory? Bring that before God now.

Pray boldly with expectation, knowing he hears your prayers and can change situations in divine ways.

 **Going Deeper Resource:**

Listen to our How The Resurrection Changes Everything preaching series:



JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Be With Jesus

Begin by finding a quiet, comfortable space where you can focus and reflect. Take a few moments to breathe deeply, relax your body, and quiet your mind. As you enter this time of devotion, ask God to guide your thoughts and open your heart to hear what he wants to say.

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:11-18)



Consider

Jesus is teaching his disciples about himself – about what he had come to the world to do for the world. He uses a metaphor that all the listeners in those days would have identified easily with – the shepherd who cares so much for the flock under his watch that he is willing to risk his own life to ensure their safety. He also makes the case that the true Shepherd is not someone hired to care for the sheep, but the owner of the sheep.

Jesus came to restore humanity back to their Creator – God himself. Jesus came to die a death he did not deserve to die, to give us an eternal future we did not deserve.

But Jesus requires a response from each person. In the passage above, the scripture continues:

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" ²¹ Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (John 10:19-21)

Whatever people believe about Jesus, he left no room for fence-sitting.

The great writer and theologian, C.S. Lewis, outlined the trilemma of Jesus in his well-known book, *Mere Christianity*:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. ... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that he was and is God."



Reflect

- How have you historically viewed Jesus? Have you seen him in any of the ways described above?
- Has your view shifted as you reflect on today's scripture?
- What does Jesus being the "the Good Shepherd" mean for you personally if true?
- How does the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf impact your sense of identity and worth?



Pray:

From the first page of scripture we see that God speaks. He spoke the world into being. The scriptures are the accounts of God revealing himself to mankind, who he is, as well as his plans and purposes. And Jesus came to earth to reveal God to us. God speaks and communicates. Prayer is the activity of talking and listening to God.

In each chapter we have provided some guided suggestions on what to speak to God about based on the scripture and considerations, but it doesn't have to stop there. Try talking to God and ask him to speak to you throughout your day. Speak your own words, thoughts, and questions to God.

If you'd like a suggestion on how to start, here's a guided prayer prompt:

God, help me to see you more clearly. In the world around me, in the beauty of nature, the kindness of people, and the love of those closest to me. Help me to understand that there is something greater than myself at work in the world. Speak to me, please. Reveal yourself to me. Amen



Going Deeper Resource:

Watch this testimony by Inge:



JESUS IS THE KING



Be With Jesus

Before we delve into the scripture, take a moment to open your heart and mind to God. Ask that his presence would fill your thoughts as you explore the profound truth about Jesus being King.

*He has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
(Revelation 19:16)*

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)



Consider

The majestic title given to Jesus by God is King of kings and Lord of lords. This title emphasizes the supremacy and authority of Jesus over all creation. It tells us that Jesus reigns as the Sovereign King of the entire universe.

He is a King - but willing to be born into poverty to give up his advantages to meet us where we were and to tell us about God's love for us.

Contrast this with a born heir in our time. In 2013, Prince George was born to Prince William and Princess Kate. By royal decree, the first person to hear about the birth of a royal baby has to be the Queen or King. A royal aide rushes from the hospital to the palace under police escort with a bulletin. The A4-sized note, bearing the Buckingham Palace letterhead and signed by key medical staff, is the nation's first chance to discover that the new baby is a prince. After the note is displayed and the town crier has appeared outside to announce the birth, the announcement is given to the media. And the whole world, who have been waiting to hear the news, get to know. Every newspaper worldwide would have run that story that day and many, close to their top story for the day!

Prince George's birth was celebrated with a 41-gun salute by the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery in a royal park called Green Park. Sixty-two rounds were fired from the

Tower of London. Union jacks were also flown from all Government buildings, Royal Naval ships, and defence establishments. A stamp was released with the new baby in his parents' arms to celebrate the birth of a new heir.

So how did the Creator of galaxies announce the birth of his Son, the King of the Universe, the One with the power to bring salvation to all people for all time? In a small town, in an obscure part of the world, to two young nobodies, in a lowly manger in a stable.

And who did God tell first? A group of shift workers on the nearby fields.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-11)

And some far-off pagans:

¹ "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'" (Matthew 2:1-2).

Jesus, the King, God himself, became man so that he could die on behalf of his people. For the very ones who killed him. Not only so, but he was born in poverty and obscurity – with a message that God loves the lowly, the humble, the oppressed and the downtrodden. All people should see themselves in that light, as no matter what material wealth we have, we are spiritually poor and in need of a Saviour King.

¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

In recognising Jesus as the King of kings, we see a beautiful connection to the gospel. His kingship is not one of tyranny, but of love and redemption. He came to establish a new kingdom, inviting us to be a part of it through faith in him. And this kingdom and King look very different to what we have come to expect from power, wealth and leadership today. Jesus, the King, came to serve. And he called his followers to follow his example.



Reflect

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

Consider what it means to have Jesus as the King of your life.

Ponder the profound truth that the King of kings cares deeply for you.

- How can you actively acknowledge Jesus as your King in your daily life?
- Are there areas of your life where you need to submit to Jesus' lordship?
- How can you honor Jesus the king of your life in your relationships, work, and daily choices?
- How does Jesus' serving actions shape us in how we are called to lead others?



Pray

Thank the King of kings for his loving rule in your life.

Ask him for his guidance in whatever challenges you are facing.

Pray for the strength and wisdom to live in alignment with his kingdom values.

Pray that he would help you to serve others.

JESUS IS THE PRAY-ER



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you.

But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (Luke 5:16)

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)



Consider

Journey through any of the gospels in the bible that account for Jesus' life on earth, and you will read how frequently Jesus prayed. He prayed with people, and for people, and he regularly withdrew from others to pray. At the end of his life, before facing unimaginable trials and suffering, Jesus withdrew with some close friends and encouraged them to pray as he did.

He spent his final evening pouring his heart out to his Father in agony, ultimately submitting in obedience to God.

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (Matthew 26:42).

When he returned to his disciples who were sleeping, he warned them about the need for prayer for what lay ahead:

⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40-41)

We know from the gospel accounts how that night would go. Jesus would stand firm under trial and persecution, fulfilling God's plan and saving the world. But his disciples would bolt in fear and confusion. Peter, who boasted of his loyalty to Jesus, would deny he even knew him three times that night. Perhaps, had they followed Jesus' instructions to pray, they too would have held firm that night, and been less prone to turmoil, and more fully seeing the will of God at work.



Reflect

"True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that - it is spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth." (Charles Spurgeon)

- What has your understanding of prayer been in the past?
- Has that changed at all? How? Why?
- What would you like to speak to God most about if you saw him face-to-face right now?



Pray

Jesus taught us to pray by his example, and when asked, he told us how to pray.

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (Matthew 6:9-14)

Use the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught and try and rephrase in your own words. If that feels difficult, then try this framework:

Our Father in heaven

Pray prayers that remind you that you are privileged as a Christ-follower to be a child of God. You are not approaching a distant, unknowable entity, but hold an intimate relationship with your Father.

Hallowed be your Name

Pray prayers of honour, praise and exaltation towards God.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

Pray for God's reign and the fulfilment of his will on earth. Pray that earth would mirror heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

Acknowledge your daily dependence on God for your physical sustenance. Humbly request for God to provide your basic needs for this day.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive have forgiven our debtors

Confess and ask for God's forgiveness. Commit to forgiving others who have wronged you. Ask God to help you when it's difficult to do so.

And lead us not into temptation

Ask for God's wisdom, guidance and strength to overcome temptations.

But deliver us from evil

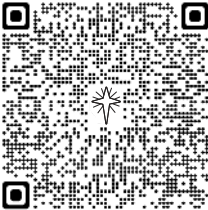
Seek God's protection from the forces of evil, both spiritual and worldly. Pray for God's shielding grace.

 **Going Deeper Resource:**

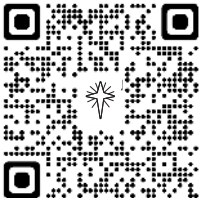
Watch this Testimony:



Fuel for your prayer life eBook:



Use this app to help with your daily prayer habit and to access free video prayer courses:



JESUS IS THE VINE



Be With Jesus:

Before diving into today's scripture, take a moment to open your heart and mind to God. Invite his presence into this time of reflection and consider how your encounter with Jesus can deepen your relationship with him.

⁴ "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)



Consider

Jesus' analogy about vine branches reveals profound truths about our relationship with God. Just as a branch gets its life and nourishment from the vine, we, too, find our true source of life and spiritual sustenance in Jesus.

Jesus calls us to an intimate relationship – one where his life empowers and sustains us. It reminds us that apart from him, we can do nothing of eternal significance.

*God's acquaintance is not made hurriedly. He does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comer and goer. To be little **with** God is to **be** little for God. (E.M. Bounds)*

Jesus wants us to be fruitful. He wants to pour his gifts out onto us – but not for our sakes and not in our power. He promises to flow through us and bring about flourishing in us and in others. But this happens in relationship and out of relationship with him. Our relationship with God is the most important relationship in our lives, and it is a living relationship. The more we get to know Jesus, the more we are changed into his likeness, and the more we want to get to know him more.

- What does it mean to "abide in Jesus"? How can you cultivate a deeper, more intimate relationship with him?



Reflect

²² "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."
(Galatians 5:22-23)

- Consider the fruit of the Spirit. Which aspects of this fruit do you want to see more evident in your life? How can you grow in these areas?



Pray

Thank God for the invitation to abide in him and for the promise of bearing fruit.

Ask for his guidance in deepening your relationship with Jesus.

Pray for the Spirit's help in producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Seek strength and wisdom to face challenges with the knowledge that you are abiding in the true vine, Jesus Christ.



Going Deeper Resource:

Ryan Ter Morshuizen – The Fruit of the Spirit (podcast)



JESUS LOVES HIS CHURCH



Be With Jesus

In this section, we delve into the profound love that Jesus has for his church, seeking to understand the depths of his affection for his people. Ask God to open your heart and mind to him as you read his scripture.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Colossians 1:18)

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:25)



Consider

Paul reminds us that the church is the body of Christ. Just as a person cares for their own body, so should we care for the church, recognising it as an extension of Christ himself. For Jesus, when we neglect the church it is akin to neglecting Christ himself.

Jesus declared that he would build his church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He highlights the church's enduring importance in God's plan. If Jesus invests in building and protecting the church, we should do the same.

The church is not just a building; it's a community of believers. It's a place of worship, fellowship, and spiritual growth. Just as Jesus loved and cared for his disciples, he calls us to love and care for our fellow believers within the church.

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

One of the best scenes from the TV series "The West Wing" is where the close confidantes of the president align with his strategy and declare, "I serve at the pleasure of the president". That is what we get to do with our Creator and King. "I serve at the pleasure of the King of kings and Lord of lords". We are about the business of our Creator. And his business is the church! The church is his chosen vessel of hope to take his message of the gospel and salvation to the world as well as to grow his people into maturity. We cannot say, "I love Jesus but not his church" because Jesus loves the church. She is his body and his bride. We are about the "King's business," and the church is God's chosen vessel to advance his message and kingdom on Earth. To love the church is to participate actively in God's mission. When we love the church, we are fulfilling our part in God's plan to redeem the world.



Reflect

"If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all; and the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us." (C.H. Spurgeon)

Consider how Jesus gave himself up for the church. He sacrificed his life for our sake and commissioned the church.

- What does Jesus' commitment and devotion to the church say about his expectation for us and the church?
- In what ways can you reflect Jesus' love for the church in your own relationships, attitudes and actions?
- If you have unforgiveness or cynicism towards the church, perhaps based on past experiences or current frustrations, bring those things before God now and ask him to ignite within you his love and affection for his church.


 **Pray**

Thank God for the incredible love that Jesus has for his church.

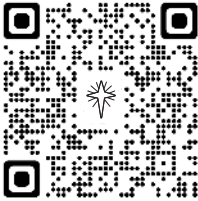
Ask him to help you to understand, experience and express this love in a profound and fresh way.

Pray for any challenges you are facing, or that your church community is facing.

Pray for guidance, wisdom, comfort and strength in the love of Christ.

 **Going Deeper Resources:**

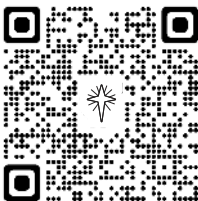
Watch this testimony by Iain Kruger:



The Church Has a Future Sermon Series *(Part 2 of our Ephesians series):*



This Is Us Sermon Series:



JESUS IS STILL AT WORK



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, open your heart and mind to the ever-present work of Jesus in your life. His presence and guidance are constant, even amid life's challenges.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. (John 14:16)

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)



Consider

Jesus assures us of his eternal presence. Before he left his disciples, he promised to give them the Holy Spirit to help them to continue after he returned to the Father. He promised that he would be with us forever and promised to be interceding on our behalf.

Think about how this verse reveals God's unchanging nature. Despite the passing of time and the challenges we face, Jesus remains steadfast in his commitment to be with us.

Consider what it means to have Jesus with you always, regardless of the circumstances.



Reflect

"Jesus is alive, and His Spirit is working in the world today. He is still changing hearts, healing the sick, and transforming lives." (Billy Graham)

- How does the knowledge of Jesus being with you always impact your trust in him?
- Are there specific challenges or uncertainties in your life where you need to lean on Jesus' constant presence?

- Have you asked God's Spirit to empower you and fill you? Why not ask him to do so now?
- Think about the ways God may be working in your life right now, even in situations that seem difficult or confusing.

 **Pray**

Thank God for the assurance of his constant presence in your life.

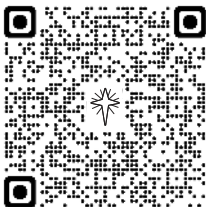
Ask him to help you to trust in his guidance and love and know that he is always with you.

Ask him for strength and faith to walk confidently in the knowledge of his enduring presence.

Pray that God will reveal the ways he is working in your life right now, even in the most challenging moments.

 **Going Deeper Resource:**

Invisible God: The Spirit Jesus Sent



JESUS IS RETURNING



Be With Jesus

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by asking God to reveal himself to you as you open his word. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:27)

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17]



Consider

Jesus speaks of his return with vivid imagery. Consider what this passage reveals regarding the grandeur and suddenness of his second coming.

Reflect on the assurance that Jesus will return just as surely as lightning lights up the sky. It reminds us that his return is not a matter of "if" but "when."

Let us keep to the preaching of a coming Saviour and a coming Judge. May we never mar the doctrine of the second advent, nor tone it down to please the world or the backslider. (Charles Spurgeon)

Jesus' return reminds us of the eternal reality. The promise of Jesus' return is a message of hope for all. This hope should influence a Christ-follower's daily decisions and priorities, focusing on those things that have lasting significance.

Jesus calls us to be faithful in our walk with Christ, knowing that he will return, he calls us to stay watchful and prepared, like servants awaiting their master's arrival.



Reflect

"The second coming of Christ will be so revolutionary that it will change every aspect of life on this planet. Disease will be eliminated. Death will be abolished. War will be eradicated. Nature will be changed. Man will live in peace with man. His coming will be the 'dawning of the day of everlasting righteousness and perfection.'" (Billy Graham)

- What thoughts and feelings arise within you when you think about Jesus returning?
- How does the promise of his second coming shape your understanding of God's plan for the world?
- In what ways can the anticipation of Jesus' return inspire you to live a life that aligns with his teachings and values?



Pray

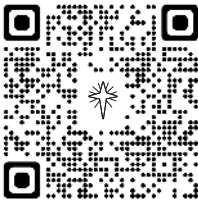
Ask God to help to make you eager for the return of his Son.

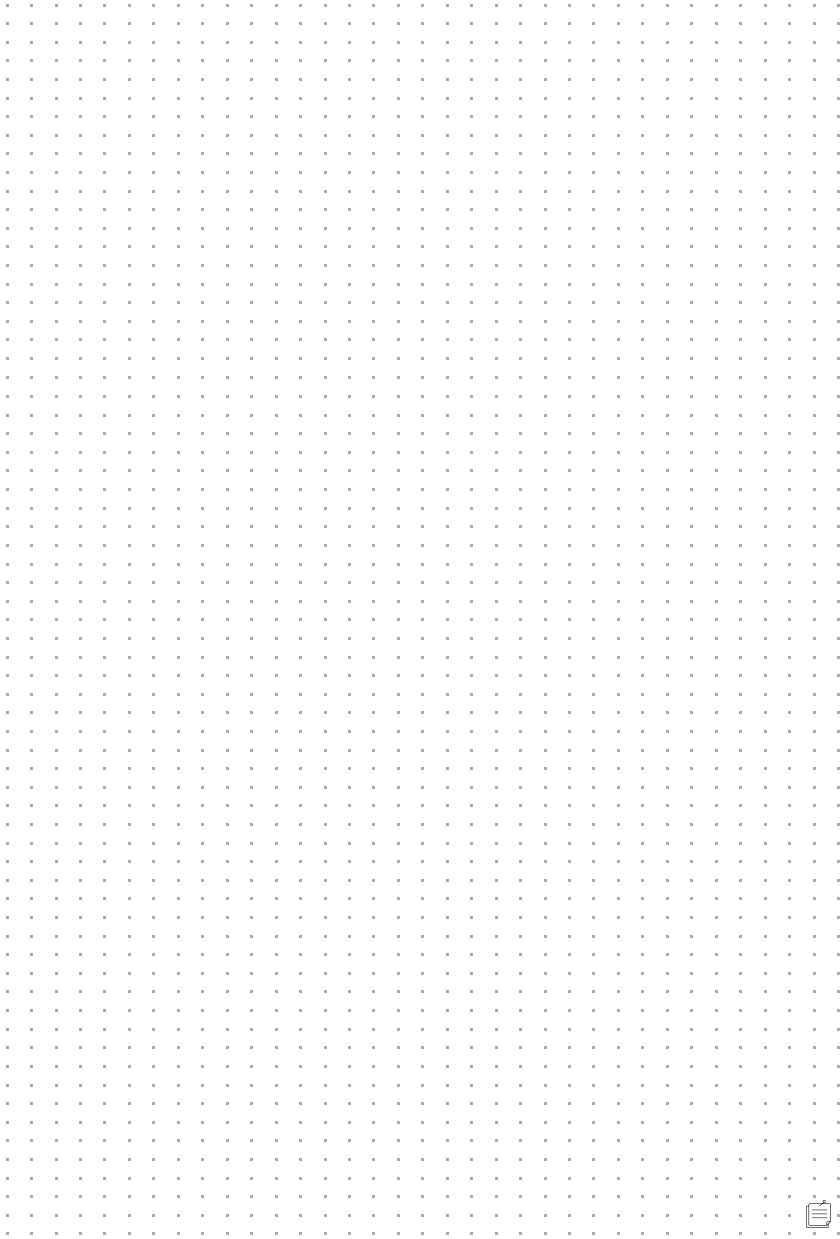
Ask him to help you to live each day with the awareness of his imminent coming and to grant you the wisdom and strength to live as a faithful disciple, sharing his love and truth with others.



Going Deeper Resource:

If you would like to understand more about the return of Jesus, explore the following preaching series *The Return of Jesus*:







SECTION TWO:
ENCOUNTERS
WITH JESUS

We continue our exploration on who Jesus is
by focusing on various encounters
with Jesus in scripture.

JOHN THE BAPTIST



Be With Jesus

To quieten your heart and prepare to hear from God, find a comfortable and quiet space where you can sit and focus on his presence. Take a few deep breaths. Say a brief prayer, asking him to speak as you read his word.

²⁹The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34)



Consider

Here, we read of John the Baptist, a cousin of Jesus, introducing Jesus as the Lamb of God. John had enjoyed a great career as a preacher up to this point. His job was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. As he watches Jesus approaching, it is a sign that his career is ending. Yet, the minute he sees the One he has been waiting for, he points towards Jesus in joy. In the next part of John 1, we see that two of John's disciples leave John to follow Jesus.

Later, John the Baptist would be killed because he was preaching about the Messiah. John lived and died for his belief in Jesus. We see in John's life how he didn't hold his identity, his job, or even his life higher than his call to follow Jesus.

If a cousin of Jesus was willing to give up everything for this belief, surely that made others take notice? Certainly, that was true for his own disciples, who left John to follow Jesus, and ultimately would give up their own lives for the sake of the message of Jesus.

But what was John proclaiming about Jesus?

He called Jesus the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sins of the world. He emphasizes the sacrificial role of Jesus.

Throughout the Old Testament, lambs were used as a sacrificial offering to God for the forgiveness of sins (Leviticus 4:32-35). John was declaring Jesus' mission: he had come to die as the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross fulfilled this requirement once and for all. He would become the ultimate sacrifice so that no more sacrifices would be necessary.



Reflect

- How can we follow John's example of humility in recognizing our own limitations and Jesus' lordship in all aspects of our lives?
- Are there areas of our lives that we hold as more important than Jesus? Maybe ask God to reveal some of these to you.
- How would this truth, that Jesus is the Lamb of God, affect the way you live your life if you truly believed it?



Pray

Begin by thanking God for sending his Son, Jesus, as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Ask God to deepen your understanding and appreciation of the gospel message.

Pray for opportunities and courage to share your faith with others.

A large area of dotted lines for writing, with a small notepad icon in the bottom right corner.

THE FATHER OF LIES



Be With Jesus

Before diving into today's passage, take a moment to quiet your heart and mind. Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Ask God to speak to you and to calm your mind so you can hear him.

¹ "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' ⁴ But he answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."' ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, 'All these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.' ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him."
(Matthew 4:1-11)



Consider

This encounter contrasts with scripture's first encounter with Satan. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were in a place of paradise, of utter contentment (Genesis 1-2). Every need was met - from food to the closest relationship with God. Yet Adam and Eve still chose not to trust the One who gave them all they needed (Genesis 3). They chose themselves as

their lord and master. Satan caused them to doubt the character of God and tempted them with knowledge. And they failed to remember *who* they were and *whose* they were.

Contrast this with Jesus when Satan comes to tempt him. Jesus was in the opposite place that Adam had been. He had been in a desert for forty days without food or water, away from community and family. He couldn't have been further from the environment of perfection in that hot, desolate, dry place.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

Hungry beyond reason, parched, and weary – it was then that Satan came and tempted Jesus with material goods (food), power, and identity. Even in his hunger and need, Jesus stood firm on the Word of God. When Satan then tempted him with power, still, Jesus stood firm on the Word of God. He knew his identity and trusted in God and his word above all. Jesus succeeded where Adam had failed to be able to save the world.

¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)



Reflect

Jesus' obedience throughout this passage underscores his absolute commitment to his Father, setting an example we can strive to follow as we face our own trials and temptations. Jesus is a great source of encouragement, wisdom and compassion to us when we go through times of trials and temptations.

"Visit many good books, but live in the Bible." (Charles Spurgeon)

- Where do you find yourself facing temptations in life? Are there places or people where it seems you feel more tempted than others?
- How does Jesus' example in this passage demonstrate how to face temptations?

- What are some scriptures that have personally resonated with you during difficult times?
- What changes or improvements could you make to deepen your engagement with scripture? How will this help you to be more prepared for times of weakness or vulnerability?



Pray

Begin by thanking Jesus for facing the same trials and difficulties that we do, yet standing firm in order to represent us fully before God.

Ask God for guidance and strength to resist temptations in your life.

Pray for a deeper knowledge of God's Word so that you may be better equipped to follow Jesus' example in wielding scripture in the face of difficulties that tempt you to stray.



Going Deeper Resources:

Bible reading holds immense importance in spiritual growth, allowing us to explore, contemplate, and grow in our relationship with God.

A 2011 research project of over 1000 US churches found that nothing causes a person to move forward spiritually more than reading and reflecting on God's Word every day on their own, as a personal habit that they have embraced³.

Once this devotional journey is complete, consider the following resources to continue your journey of bible discovery:

³ <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol60/iss1/62/>

Common Ground devotionals:



The Lectio 365 App – a brilliant digital tool with audio and text based daily devotionals to kickstart a great devotional habit.



THE WOMAN AT THE WELL



Be With Jesus:

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by speaking prayers of worship and thankfulness to God. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.¹⁵ The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." (John 4:7-26)



Consider

In this passage, Jesus demonstrates his authority as Messiah and challenges religious and cultural boundaries through his encounter with the Samaritan woman. For her, there was a barrier because he was Jewish and a man, so much so that she was shocked Jesus even spoke to her, let alone wanted to share a drinking vessel with her.

The Israelites and the Samaritans all believed in the same God but differed in their beliefs on how one could approach him, what sacrifices were required, and where they could meet with God.

This woman, recognizing that he was a teacher, asked Jesus who was correct. He answered that the type of worship she would be able to experience because he had come to the world would be so different in place, form, and sacrifice that none of these factors would be considerations anymore. It was a radical teaching.

Author, John Piper, in his teaching on worship, explains that in the Old Testament, the word for worship, mentioned 171 times, mainly meant to bow down in respect and reverence (*"hishtahavah"* in Hebrew). In the New Testament, it's less common, with Paul using it just once in his letters to the early churches. Piper suggests that the reason for Paul having to use a completely different word in the New Testament to teach about worship was because of Jesus' revolutionary approach to worship, such as he described to this Samaritan woman. Jesus completely shifted the focus from sacrifices and formalities to an emphasis on personal communion with God.



Reflect

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Because of Jesus (his life, death, and resurrection), we can worship God with unprecedented intimacy, and we can worship anywhere and at anytime. We don't wait to be in the right place. No longer do we need to wait for conditions to be right.

Boldly, we can approach God because Christ paved the way for us to come into his presence. He has made a way that we can be with him all the time. There is no further sacrifice needed, no need for works or achievement, no need to go to a specific place (physically, emotionally or spiritually). Christ died and tore down all the obstacles and steps needed for us to be with God.

- What do you think of when you hear the word "worship"? What image or thoughts come up for you? Where do you think that has come from?
- What restrictions do you place on yourself or others about what worship really is? Where do these restrictions come from?
- What worship does Jesus call for us?

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. (Matthew 27:51)

When Jesus died, the veil that separated God from his people in the temple was torn – representing how Jesus tore the barrier that separated us from God.

As Jesus' body was broken on the cross, so too was the veil torn that stood between us and eternal life in God's presence. (N.T. Wright)

- What does Jesus breaking all restrictions mean for your daily worship practices?
- What does Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman tell us about how Jesus views social and religious barriers?



Pray

The only person who dares wake up a king at 3 am for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access. (Timothy Keller)

Thank God that he has made a way that we can approach him just like a child of a king can approach their father – with immediate and unhindered access and acceptance.

Ask God to make this reality, of how accessible he is to you, more real as you reach out to him and speak to him.

A large grid of small dots for writing notes.



ZACCHAEUS



Be With Jesus:

Before you read today's verses, still your heart and mind by speaking prayers of worship and thankfulness to God. Ask him to quieten your mind from distraction so you can hear what he would say to you today.

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.

⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1-10)



Consider

To be a tax collector was a great offense to the Jewish people. It meant that a Jewish person was working for the occupying power, Rome, making them traitors in the eyes of their Jewish brethren. Not only so, but often, tax collectors were corrupt and cheated their people out of money to enrich and empower themselves. We see this in Zacchaeus when he confesses to Jesus by promising to repay fraud.

Nevertheless, this proud, wealthy Jewish man – disregarded his pride when he climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus passing through. Any inkling of faith delights God. Faith that seeks to see Jesus, despite how foolish it may make one look.

And Jesus singles out this despised and reviled man from the crowd. He approaches Zacchaeus with unmerited favour when he calls to him by name and invites himself to Zacchaeus' house (which no doubt is partly paid for by shady means). And the rest of the crowd is scandalized by Jesus associating with a tax collector.

In this encounter, we see that the person most open to Jesus and his saving grace was the most scandalous man, whom everyone thought was beyond or beneath salvation. Yet, an hour with Jesus and Zacchaeus is completely changed. That's what Jesus does.



Reflect

"To stay away from Christianity because part of the Bible's teaching is offensive to you assumes that if there is a God he wouldn't have any views that upset you. Does that belief make sense?" (Timothy Keller)

- Are there any things that scripture says that you find offensive?
- What does Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus tell us about how Jesus views social and religious barriers? How would he call us to be like him?
- How would the truth that Jesus came to seek and save the lost affect the way we live our lives if we truly believed it?



Pray

Ask God to show you who the "Zacchaeus's" are in your life and ask him to give you the grace to share his love with them.

Pray for a heart of humility and generosity like that of transformed Zacchaeus.

Thank God for his mission to seek and save the underserving lost, including you.

A large grid of small dots for writing notes, with a small icon of a notepad in the bottom right corner.

JUDAS ISCARIOT



Be With Jesus

Before you begin reading today's scripture, take a moment to quiet your heart and mind. Ask God to open your heart to receive his Word and help you understand its meaning and purpose in your life.

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. (Matthew 26:14-16)



Consider

In this passage, we see Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, making a deal with the chief priests to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. This act has profound implications for understanding human nature, our capacity for sin, and our need for redemption.

Judas' betrayal reminds us that even those who are in close proximity to Jesus can fall into temptation and sin. Judas never caught the heart of who Jesus really was. Theologians suggest a variety of motivations for why Judas betrayed Jesus. Some think it was greed; others suggest that disappointment led to his actions. When Jesus didn't meet his expectations of overthrowing Rome and bringing Israel back into national prominence, Judas turned against him.

Whatever his underlying motivations, Judas serves as a warning for us to guard our hearts against greed, selfish ambition, and turning away from God because we are disappointed with his path for our lives.

This passage also highlights the depths of God's love and mercy. Despite knowing that Judas would betray him, Jesus still chose him as a disciple and allowed him to partake in his ministry. Just before this Jesus even washed Judas' feet, despite knowing that Judas was just about to betray him. This demonstration of grace shows who Jesus is and will never change because of who we are. There is nothing we can do that will change God.

In contrast to Judas' actions, we see Jesus willingly going along with his betrayal, which would ultimately lead to his crucifixion and resurrection.



Reflect

In our lives, we will likely experience moments of hardship and betrayal from those we trust. It is during these times that we may turn to Jesus, who understands the feeling of being betrayed and attacked. He was betrayed by those closest to him, as well as by and systems that should have been just and fair. Having experienced betrayal, Jesus sympathizes with our pain and offers guidance through our struggles.

- What does Jesus teach us about how we can face those who betray us?

You may not know exactly how betrayal has manifested in your life or who those betrayers are, but Jesus knows your heart and circumstances. As a compassionate Shepherd, he seeks to lead and support you through these challenges. Remember that his love transcends any act of betrayal, allowing you to find solace through His guidance, wisdom, and understanding.

"Forgiveness is not an emotion. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." (Corrie ten Boom)

During World War 2, Corrie ten Boom had been a prisoner in a concentration camp in World War 2 where her sister and many others had died. After her time there, she preached about Jesus and forgiveness. One day, she came face-to-face with a guard who had been with them in the camps. He didn't recognise her and had since become a Christ-follower since their time there. He asked her for forgiveness.

In her account, Corrie ten Boom states how difficult it was to extend forgiveness and yet because of the grace shown her, she knew it wasn't an option not to. So she prayed silently, "Jesus, help me! I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling."

She describes God's miraculous healing and forgiveness rushing through her, and she embraced the guard and told him she forgave him. Obedience is doing what God tells us to, trusting that he will empower us to be changed into his likeness as we trust him.



Pray

"Betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, abandoned by the eleven, forsaken by God. Darkness, you get one hour. Then you die." (John Piper)

Ask God to search your heart and make you aware of areas where you may be vulnerable to temptation or unforgiveness.

Ask God for strength and wisdom to resist these temptations and for the grace to return to him when you falter.

Thank him for his unending love and mercy, even when we fall short.

Pray for the strength to forgive those you need to forgive.

A large grid of small dots for writing notes.



THE FAITHFUL FRIENDS



Be With Jesus

Before we explore today's scripture, take a moment to open your heart and mind to God. Invite his presence into this time of reflection.

¹ "And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" (Mark 2:1-5)



Consider

In this account, we witness the determination and faith of the four men who lowered their paralysed friend through the roof to meet with Jesus. This story highlights several profound aspects of our relationship with Christ.

It demonstrates the power of faith to overcome obstacles. Despite the crowded room, these friends were unwavering in their determination to bring their paralysed companion to Jesus. They believed in Jesus' ability to save and to heal – and nothing would stop them from getting their friend to the Saviour.

Notice how Jesus saw their faith. It wasn't just the paralytic's faith, but the collective faith of those who brought him. Faith delights Jesus! In this account, Jesus healed the paralysed man.

Not all our prayers in faith are answered like this – but scripture is clear – our faith-filled prayers are worship to God. He delights in his children when they ask him, knowing he can act. Just like a parent won't always say yes to their children's requests, they are still delighted when their children feel the safety and assurance to ask.

More importantly, Jesus not only healed the man physically, but also forgave his sins. While physical healing may not be guaranteed on this side of heaven, spiritual healing and restoration are. And, as Jesus says a few verses later:

“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’” (Mark 2:9)

Jesus says this because the cost to forgive our sins would be a great one for him while free for us. Jesus was going to pay the ultimate price to be able to forgive our sins eternally. This emphasizes the spiritual healing and transformation when we draw near to Jesus.



Reflect

⁹Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Think about the determination of the four friends to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus. Consider the depth of your friendships and what obstacles stand between them and Jesus.

- Where could you be a friend like this for others?
- Consider the power of collective faith and intercession. Where do these get practiced in your community? How can you be more engaged in participating in these ways?
- Reflect on the healing and forgiveness that come through individual’s encounters with Jesus.
- Are there areas in your life where you need the healing touch and forgiveness of Jesus?



Pray

Thank God for the gift of faith that allows us to overcome obstacles and draw near to him. Ask him to deepen your faith.

Pray for healing and forgiveness in areas where you need the touch of Jesus.

Seek his presence and guidance in your life, inviting him to draw near to you as you draw near to him.

Ask for a deeper sense of community and intercession in your faith journey.



Going Deeper Resources:

Seugnet's story of faith and hope:



CONCLUSION

As you conclude this Knowing Jesus journey, we hope that you have not only gained knowledge about Jesus but have also experienced a profound encounter with him. We hope that you both know about and know the person of Jesus better.

From understanding him as the Good Shepherd to the Resurrected Saviour: from the creator of the universe to the King who will return, you've journeyed through a rich landscape of truths about the person of Jesus Christ.

But above all, we hope that you have heard his invitation to you:

"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Getting to know Jesus is a lifelong pursuit, one that continually unfolds with new revelations and experiences that deepen your relationship with Him. As C.S. Lewis put it,

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

NEXT STEPS

For any of these following next steps, we encourage you to move towards your local church if you belong to one already. If you do not belong to one and would like us to help you find one, or if you are at Common Ground Bosch and would like to find out more about next steps, please contact us via the contact details provided on page 2.

Continue in Prayer

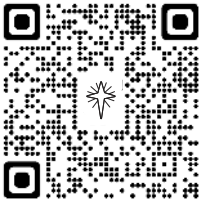
As we learned through this journey, Jesus often withdrew to pray (Luke 5:16). Make it a daily habit to talk with him, to give thanks, to ask for guidance, and to pray for others.

Dive Deeper into the Bible

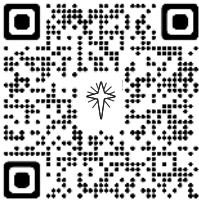
"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Invest in a good Bible and follow a reading plan. Here are some resources that we recommend:

Common Ground devotionals:



The Lectio 365 App – a brilliant digital tool with audio and text based daily devotionals to kickstart a great devotional habit.



Be an active part of a community

²⁴ "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

When we respond to Jesus, we join his body – we are one of many parts, a member of his family. As followers of Jesus, we are called to join a local church where we can grow, serve, and fellowship with other believers.

Seek Spiritual Discipleship

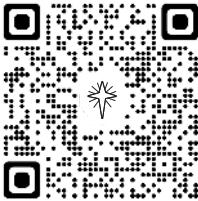
Consider finding someone mature in their faith who can help guide you in your spiritual journey.

If you are not part of a life group (a smaller group that gathers outside of a Sunday meeting), reach out to sign up for one using the contact details on page 2.

Be Baptised

If you have committed your life to Christ but have not yet been baptised, this is likely your next step. Baptism is an external symbol of an internal change, identifying you with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:4).

Visit our website via the QR code, if you would like to read more about baptism.



If you would like to sign up to be baptised, contact us using the contact details above.

Share the Gospel

Encounters with Jesus are transformative. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (Matthew 28:19).

Share your experience and what you’ve learned with others around you – your friends, colleagues, family members and neighbours. Be open to how God might want to use you to reach others

Live Expectantly

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Let this hope not only comfort you, but also motivate you to live a life worthy of His calling.

Love as Jesus Loved

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

Love as Jesus did—unconditionally, sacrificially, and without prejudice. Find ways to serve the community that God has called you to join. Seek ways to love people in your spheres and show Christ-like servanthood towards them. Ask God to empower you to show love like he does.

Never Stop Learning

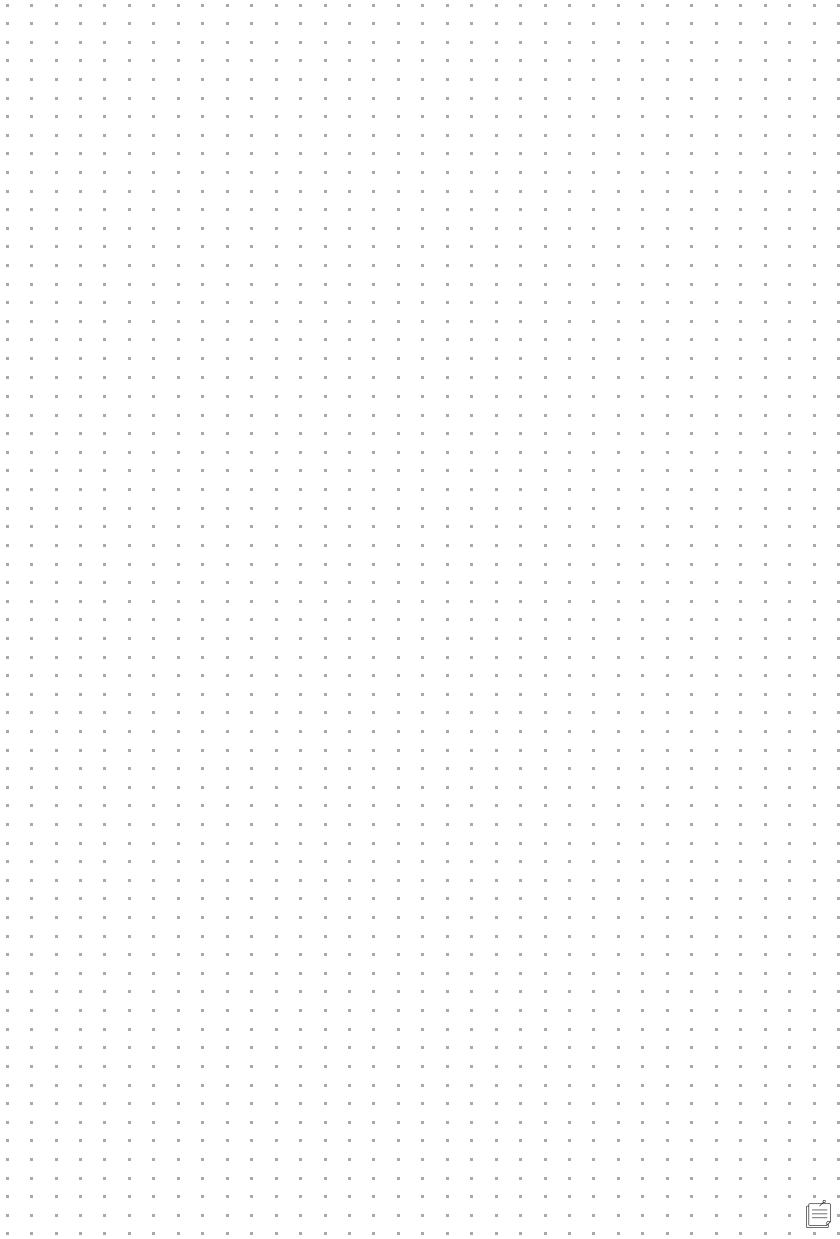
Keep reading, keep asking questions, keep seeking. As A.W. Tozer said, *“The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One.”*

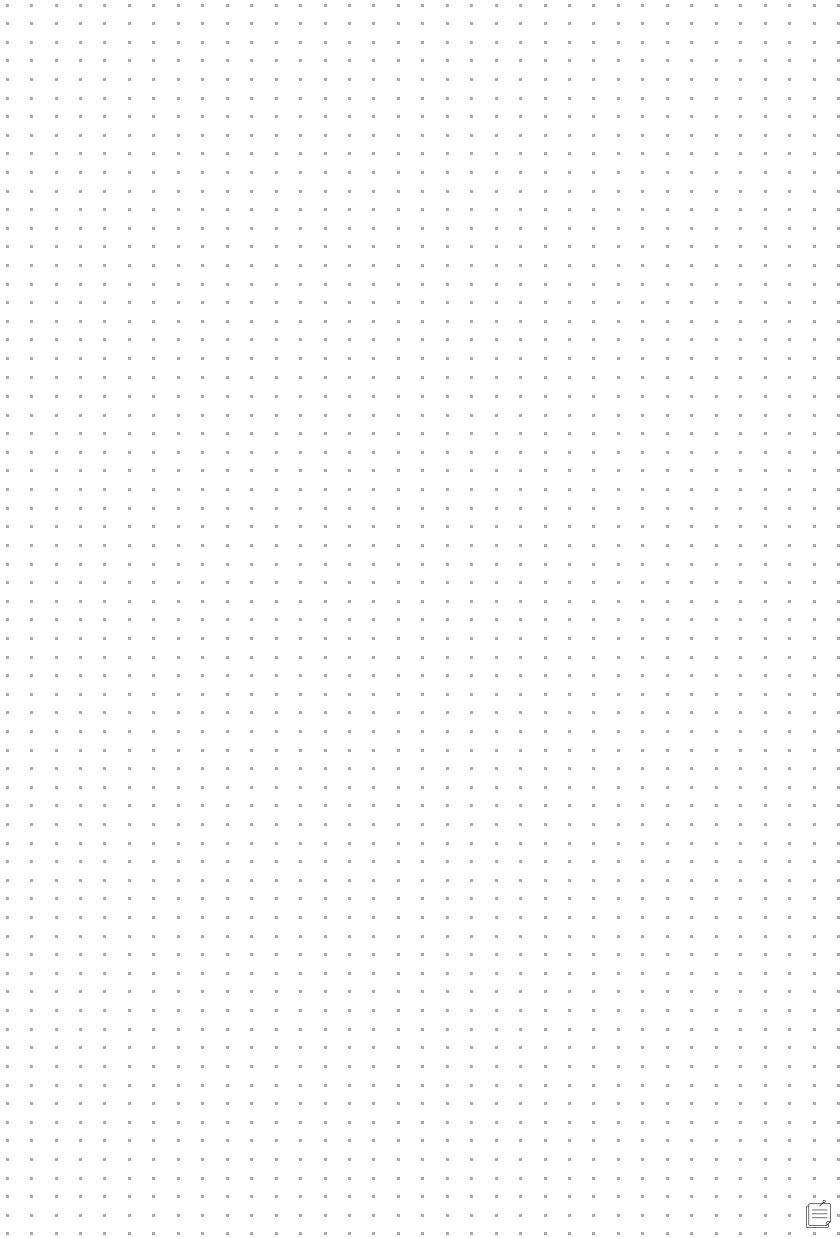
Our prayer for you

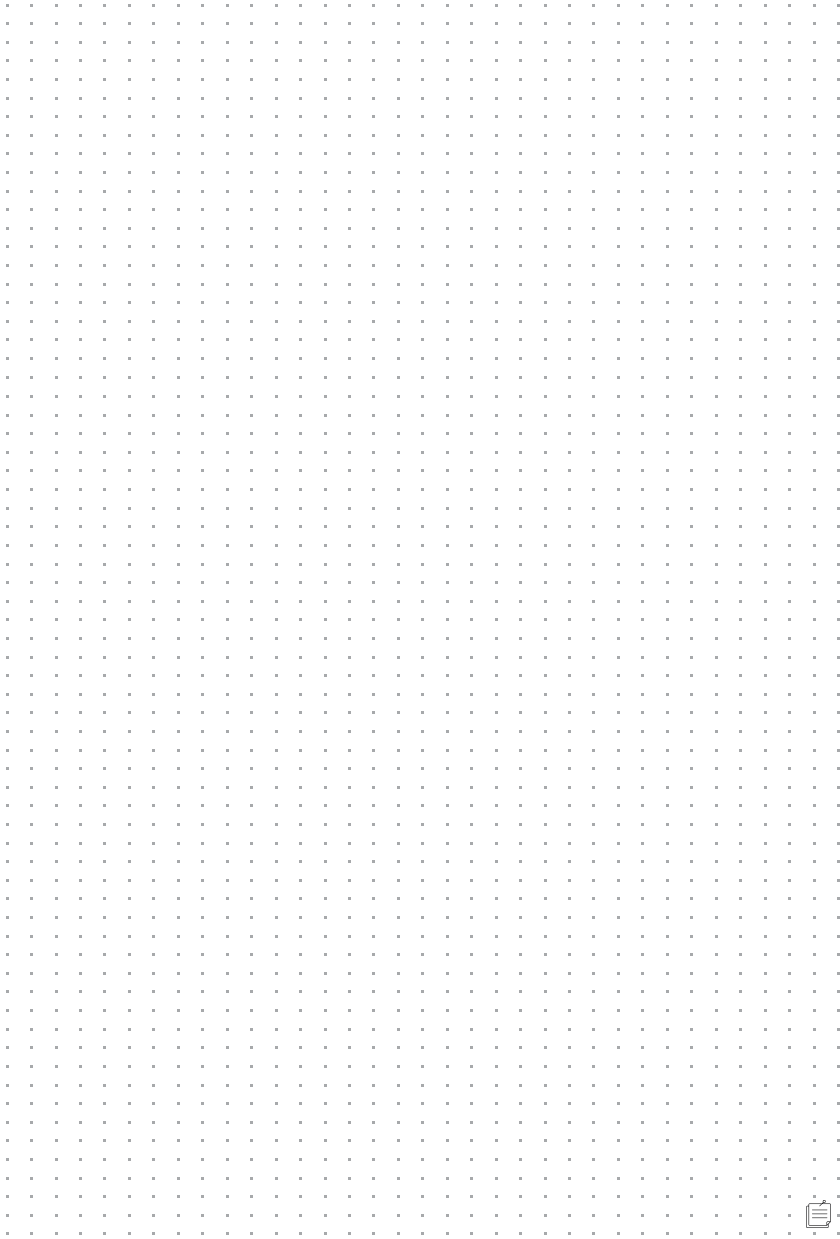
May your relationship with Jesus continue to grow richer,
your faith deeper, and your life more fruitful as you
continue on this wonderful journey.

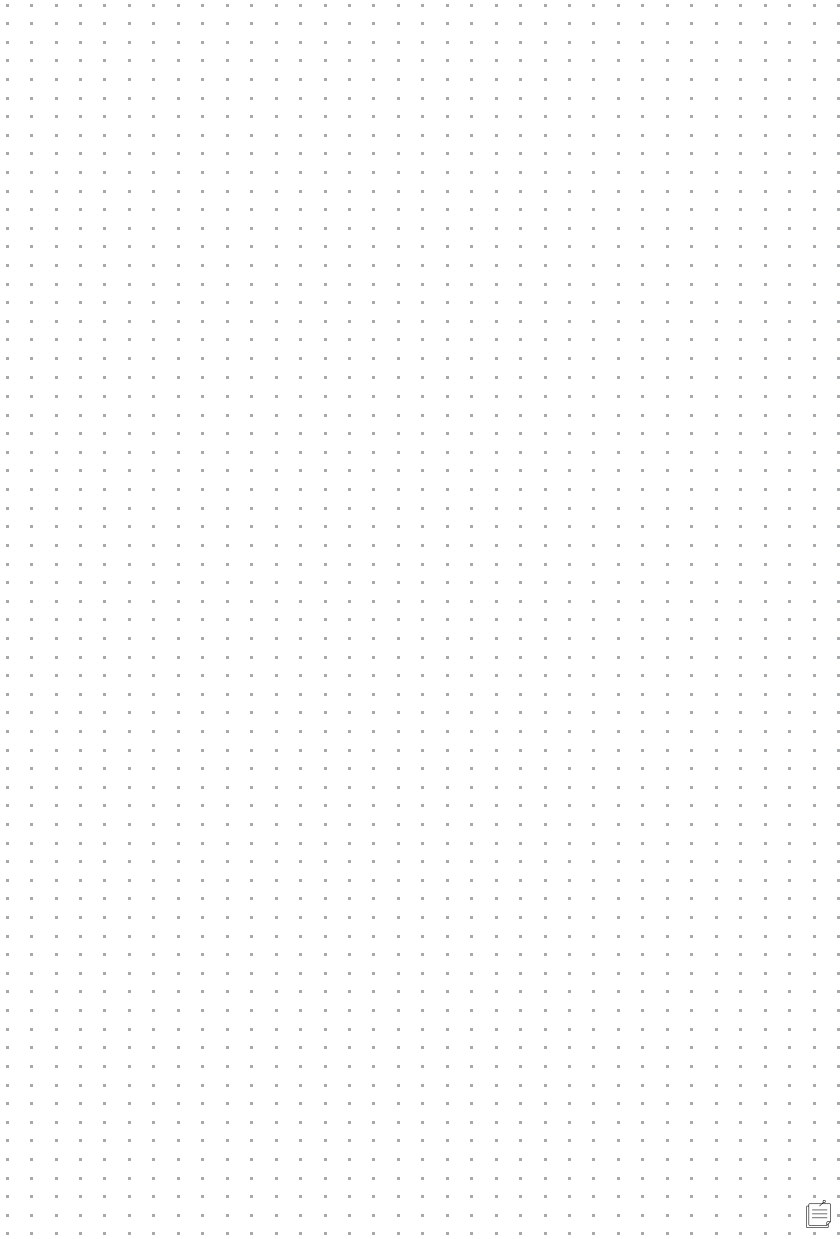
God bless you.
Amen.











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