
Encountering Jesus

A Study Through the Gospels



Grace Fellowship Bible Church

————— 2023-2024 —————

Our Mission

Knowing God

Thus says the LORD “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises loving-kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Loving His People

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

Reaching Out to an Unsaved World

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Mark 16:15

A Letter from Our *Pastor*

By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 John 2:5-6

I think most Christians wonder at one time or another what it must have been like to walk with Jesus--to listen to His words, to see the miracles, to watch the blind see and the lame walk, to see how He interacted with those around Him and to watch Him defend the helpless and call out the hypocrites. Unless of course you were the one being called out!

The good news of both the gospels and **the** Gospel is that we can encounter Jesus much like those in His day encountered Him, and that's what this journal is all about. Being a follower of Jesus means becoming more and more like Him, reflecting His character, His temperament, and His values. If we are honest, this is a lifelong process, yet we know that every encounter with Jesus leaves us changed. That is why encountering Him ought to be our passion, as it was for Paul who said in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Him". Now this is not simply head knowledge of facts about Jesus, but real, life-changing encounters with a living Savior that continue to transform us into His image.

Sinclair Ferguson said: "In a word, maturity equals Christ likeness. No other standard may be allowed to substitute. All other standards will be lesser, man-made alternatives that disguise the all-demanding standards God set before us in the Scriptures." Look at the examples in these verses:

- John 13:15--"I have given you an example, that you should do just as I have done."
- Philippians 2:5--"your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."
- 1 Peter 2:21--"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His footsteps."

The Bible's words are also the best way for the followers of Christ to witness. Over the centuries countless books have been written about

how to be an effective witness explaining how we should go and make disciples. Yet for the early Church it was not about a program, a list of steps to follow or some verses they could memorize. As helpful as those things can be, they understood this: the most effective testimony is the transformation of your own life. We see this with Peter and John in Acts 4:13.

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

I wonder if people say that about us. You see, becoming like Jesus is not only our calling but what God promises to those who have put their faith in Him. This is Paul’s point in Romans 8: 29.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

This is our hope with this journal this year: that we all would become more like Jesus. That we would truly encounter Him as we look at how He walked, how He talked, how He showed compassion, and how He was the servant of all. And that by encountering Jesus, we will be forever changed.

In His Service,
Pastor Robbie

How to Use This *Journal*

This year's journal is unique in that we won't be reading verse by verse through a specific book of the Bible as we usually do. Instead, as we endeavor to encounter Jesus, we will follow Him from the first days of His ministry up to the beginning of His final week.

To do this, the weekly readings present a more chronological picture by combining the accounts in the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John. You'll notice that the gospel of Mark isn't listed. That's because we'll be doing an in-depth study of Mark on Sunday mornings!

Combining the gospel accounts can be challenging since we'll be moving back and forth between different books, sometimes reading passages out of order. As you read, remember that the gospel writers wrote for different audiences and sometimes followed a topical rather than a strictly chronological sequence. This means that there may be some variation in the order of events from one gospel to another and there's not always clarity on the precise timeline for each event in Jesus' life. If you'd like to learn more about the harmony of the gospels, gotquestions.org has an excellent article on the subject.

In addition to the list of daily readings, each week of the journal also includes these elements:

- Study questions you can use to guide your time in the Word
- Space for notes
- A place to choose a verse from your week's reading to memorize
- A section for prayer requests & praises
- A brief bio on one of our missionaries

Our hope is that this study will help us to see Jesus and know Him as we never have before and that by encountering Him we will be increasingly transformed into His likeness.

S.O.A.P. *Bible Study*

SOAP is a helpful acronym for deepening your study of Scripture, applying it to your life and enhancing your prayer time based on your study of God's word. Each of the four letters in SOAP stands for one of the four general steps below. The SOAP study questions provided for each week's study are based on these but are more specific to our focus on encountering Jesus.

Study

Read the passage carefully and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate words, phrases or verses. What stands out to you? Write it down. Investigate the context of the book or passage you are studying. How does this contribute to your understanding?

Observation

Take a closer look at the passage. Look up key words in the original Greek or Hebrew. Cross reference scriptures of similar topics to get an overview. What is the meaning of the passage? What is the overall message?

Application

How is the Spirit leading you to apply what you observed in your own life? Romans 12: 2 tells us to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." How does the passage you've studied renew your mind or change your thinking? Are there specific instructions in this passage? Where is it challenging you?

Prayer

Praise God for who He is and what He has shown you in His word today. Follow the Holy Spirit's conviction in a time of confession. Pray for yourself and others based on what you read today. Ask God to give you the wisdom to apply it.

Week 1

Monday

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

Matthew 3: 1-12

Luke 3: 1-20

Tuesday

John Baptizes Jesus

Matthew 3: 13-17

Luke 3: 21-38

Wednesday

Satan Tempts Jesus in the Desert

Matthew 4: 1-11

Luke 4: 1-13

Thursday

The Testimony of John

John 1: 19-51

Friday

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

John 2: 1-12

Study the Scripture

- Do you notice any key/repeated words or ideas in this week's passages?
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Observe the Person of Jesus

- How did Jesus respond to people?
- What attributes of God's character are revealed through Jesus?
- What do Jesus' words & actions in this passage show us about the love of Christ?
- What truths do we see about who Jesus is?

Apply What You Have Learned

- Does Jesus give commands, instructions or an example to follow?
- How does the truth in this passage renew your mind or transform you?
- How does looking closely at Jesus in this passage help keep you from growing weary or losing heart?

Pray

- How might today's reading shape your prayers for yourself & others?
- Follow Jesus' model of prayer in Matthew 6 as you pray today.

Missionary Moments



Jerry & Linda Neuman

Location: Brazil

Contact Info

brazilprof@hotmail.com jlneuman@abwe.cc

Jerry and Lynda Neuman have been missionaries with ABWE International since 1980. They have lived and served in Brazil's Northeast since 1984 and in the metropolis of Fortaleza since 2002. Jerry was part of a team that started a mission board that sends out missionaries from Brazil and teaches classes at the seminary. Lynda is involved in discipleship, counseling, and leading women's Bible studies. They have 4 grown children (Nate, Rachael, Luke and Lydia), who have given them 8 grandchildren. Lydia is pursuing becoming a missionary. She has started a children's Bible club and has taught English classes to gain evangelistic contacts.

Week 2

Monday

Jesus Clears the Temple & Meets with Nicodemus
John 2: 13 - 4: 3

Tuesday

Herod Imprisons John & Jesus Talks with the Samaritan Woman
Matthew 4:12
Luke 3: 19-20
John 4: 4-42

Wednesday

Jesus Begins Teaching in Galilee & Heals the Official's Son
Luke 4: 14-30
John 4: 43-54

Thursday

Jesus Drives out a Demon & Calls Four Fisherman
Luke 4: 31-37; 5:1-11
Matthew 4: 13-22

Friday

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother in Law & Others
Matthew 8: 14-17
Luke 4: 38-47

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Missionary Moments



Melissa Baccarella

Location: Italy

Contact Info

mbaccarella@abwe.cc

Melissa Baccarella is our missionary to Italy. She has served on the field since February 2003. Her current assignment is with a church-planting team in Caselle, near the Northwest city of Turin. This is a city that has not had an evangelical church for over a century. Her strengths lie in teaching and media development. She produces graphic designs for teaching in the church. During COVID, she produced an interactive Christian calendar. Melissa discipled ladies in the church. She hosts coffee events for the local community as an opportunity to share the gospel. She has recently completed her Ph.D. in the area of missions.

Week 3

Monday

Jesus Heals a Man of Leprosy & Heals a Paralytic

Matthew 8:2-4; 9:2-8

Luke 5:12-26

Tuesday

Jesus Calls Matthew & Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

Matthew 9:9-13; 12:1-14

Luke 5:27-39; 6:1-11

Wednesday

People Come to Jesus to be Healed & Jesus Chooses 12 Apostles

Matthew 12:15-21

Luke 6:12-19

Thursday

Jesus Teaches the Beatitudes & Gives Other Instructions

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 6:20-26

Friday

Additional Teachings of Jesus

Matthew 5:13-20

Luke 6:27 - 7:1

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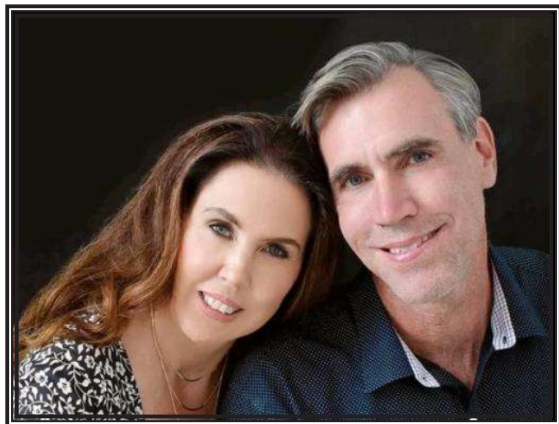
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Missionary Moments



Jim & Kristina Foster

Location: Cape Town , South Africa

Contact Info

jkbefoster@hotmail.com

Jim and Kristina Foster live in Cape Town, South Africa. Jim is the administrator of Good Hope Christian School that meets in Community Baptist Church. The school currently has 710 students. They live and work in a low-income, high crime, and drug impacted area. This school, as well as the church, makes a huge difference in their community. As a professional photographer, Kristina has a special ministry called “Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep” in the local hospitals. She takes photos for families who have had a still born baby to provide them images to remember the little one they have lost. This is also an opportunity to share eternal hope with grieving hearts.

Week 4

Monday

Jesus' Teaching on Murder, Adultery & Promises

Matthew 5: 21-37

Luke 12: 57-59

Tuesday

Jesus' Teaching on Loving Your Enemy, Prayer & Fasting

Matthew 5:38-48; 6:1-18

Luke 6:27-36

Wednesday

Jesus' Teaching on Storing Treasures & Worrying

Matthew 6:19-34

Luke 12:22-34

Thursday

*Jesus' Teaching on Judging Without Hypocrisy, Asking of the Lord &
Judging a Tree by Its Fruit*

Matthew 7:1-23

Luke 6:37-45

Friday

Jesus Describes the Wise & Foolish Builders

Matthew 7:24-29

Luke 6:46-49

Study the Scripture

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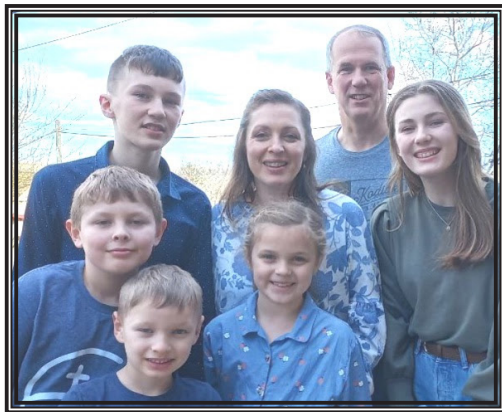
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Missionary Moments



Mike & Rachel Gustafson

Location: Kyiv, Ukraine

Contact Info

mgustafson@abwe.cc

Michael & Rachel Gustafson are our missionaries to Ukraine.

Mike is a key figure in overseeing the Ukraine Relief Fund which helps 3 to 4 million refugees. The Ukrainian Relief Fund

has joined with more than 50 partner churches in Eastern

Europe to distribute more than 60,000 meals and other forms of aid to refugees. More than 25,000 refugees have received some sort of assistance from this fund. Thousands have heard a clear presentation of the gospel, and more than

3,500 Bibles and tracts have been distributed among the sheltering refugees. Rachel home schools their 5 children (Ellie, Daniel, Johnathan, Susanna, and Titus) and works with Ladies Ministries.

Week 5

Monday

Jesus & the Centurion
Matthew 8: 1-13
Luke 7: 1-10

Tuesday

Jesus Heals the Widow's Son & He is Anointed by the Sinful Woman
Luke 7: 11-17, 36-50

Wednesday

Women Who Travel with Jesus & A Visit from Jesus'
Mother & Brothers
Luke 8: 1-3, 19-21
Matthew 12: 46-50

Thursday

Jesus Speaks in Parables
Matthew 13: 1-30, 36-52
Luke 8: 4-18

Friday

Jesus Calms the Storm
Matthew 8: 23-27
Luke 8: 22-25

Study the Scripture

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Missionary Moments



Dennis & Laura Leavell

with Drake & Brady

Location: Brugge, Belgium

Contact Info

brugge4him@gmail.com

Dennis & Laura Leavell are planting churches in Brugge, Belgium. This is a very affluent country with very few Christians or churches. They have planted two churches. Dennis has been establishing a curriculum that can be used to train a handful of men who will become the next generation of pastors and leaders. He also sponsors city-wide events that show how Christ can address the current needs of the community. Laura works with the ladies of the church to make baked items like cookies and brownies that will be hand-delivered to the families in hopes of introducing them to our Savior. She has an ever-expanding quilting ministry.

Week 6

Monday

Jesus Heals Demon-Possessed Men

Matthew 8: 28-34

Luke 8: 26-39

Tuesday

Jesus is Questioned by Others

Matthew 9: 9-17

Wednesday

Jesus Heals a Sick Woman & Brings a Young Girl Back to Life

Matthew 9: 18-26

Luke 8: 40-56

Thursday

Jesus Continues Healing People

Matthew 9: 27-34

Friday

Jesus & John the Baptist

Matthew 11: 2-19

Luke 7: 18-35

Study the Scripture

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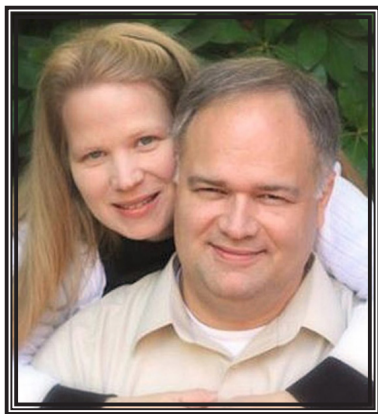
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Missionary Moments



Gary, Sherrie & Liarra Lester

Location: Perth, Australia

Contact Info

lestgary@gmail.com

Gary and Sherrie Lester lead a small church on the coast of Australia. This is a country with very few evangelical churches. The Lord opened doors for Gary to share the Gospel this year with a number of high school students. He has also served at a youth camp. Sherrie is battling her way back from cancer. Her desire to use her talent for the Lord has been limited by severe carpal tunnel. She had three surgeries on her hands (carpal tunnel surgery on both hands and surgery for one finger). They are always looking for more witnessing opportunities like new people moving to the area. Pray for their witnessing opportunities as they share the gospel in a country without many churches.

Week 7

Monday

Jesus Heals a Paralytic and Speaks of His Identity & Authority
John 5: 1-47

Tuesday

Jesus Gives the Apostles Authority & Instructions
Matthew 9: 35 - 10: 15
Luke 9: 1-6

Wednesday

Instructions for the Apostles, continued
Matthew 10: 16-31
Luke 12: 1-12

Thursday

Instructions for the Apostles, continued
Matthew 10: 32 - 11: 1

Friday

The Murder of John the Baptist
Matthew 14: 1-13
Luke 9: 7-9

Study the Scripture

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Observe the Person of Jesus

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Missionary Moments

Pastoral Care in the US

Bruce & Margie McLain

Location: California

Contact Info: carbc.mclain@gmail.com



Bruce is the statewide representative of the CARBC (California Association of Regular Baptist Churches). He helps to set up conferences to give pastors & Christian workers the opportunity to get together for encouragement from the Scriptures and fellowship. Bruce speaks in churches that do not have a pastor or have a need for preaching on a particular Sunday. He helps churches without a pastor in the process of calling a new pastor and advises churches who are in transition.

John & Beabea Rogers

Location: USA

Contact Info: jrtbem@gmail.com



John Rogers is a missionary for Barnabas Enrichment Ministries. John is involved in consulting and evaluating ministries of small churches and church plants under development. He helps churches to facilitate the Biblical relationships God desires by assisting with conflict resolution. He teaches seminars that include witnessing and evangelism, Biblical relationships, and outreach opportunities as well as other areas of ministry and life. John and Beabea meet with pastors and their wives to offer counsel, prayer and on-going encouragement. John and Beabea are involved in pastor/missionary refreshment, giving missionaries time to rest, visit family, or tend to other needs that draw them away from the mission field for a few months.

Week 8

Monday

Jesus Feeds the 5,000

Matthew 14: 13-21

Luke 9: 10-17

John 6: 1-15

Tuesday

Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14: 22-36

John 6: 16-21

Wednesday

Jesus is the Bread of Life

John 6: 22-59

Thursday

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

John 6: 60 - 7:1

Friday

Jesus Teaches About What Makes One Unclean

Matthew 15: 1-20

Study the Scripture

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Missionary Moments



Sharon Rahilly
Location: Togo, West Africa

Contact Info
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Sharon Rahilly directs and teaches in a nursing program at two missionary hospitals in Togo, Africa. The first is in southern Togo, Hospital Baptiste Biblique in Tsiko, where they have been educating Togolese nurses since 1997. The second is the Hospital of Mango (northern Togo). These hospitals are approximately 7 1/2 hours apart. The schools bring in candidates who are mostly Muslim, and they teach them the skills of nursing. The students are required to take a week-long Bible course once every trimester. The instructor consistently takes the students to the Bible, finding there the answers to so many questions and sharing with them who Jesus is, according to God's Word.

Week 9

Monday

*Jesus Heals the Gentile Woman's Daughter & Many Others;
Jesus Feeds the 4,000
Matthew 15: 21-38*

Tuesday

*Jesus Warns About the Teaching of the Pharisees & Saducees;
Jesus Goes to the Feast of Tabernacles
Matthew 15: 39 - 16:12
John 7: 2-13*

Wednesday

*Jesus Establishes His Authority &
Tensions Rise with the Religious Leaders
John 7: 14 - 8: 1*

Thursday

*Jesus Continues to Speak Boldly About Himself
John 8: 2-59*

Friday

*Jesus Heals the Blind Man & Calls Himself "The Good Shepherd"
John 9: 1 - 10: 21*

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Missionary Moments



Bob & Lynn Trout

Location: USA

Contact Info

bt Trout@abwe.com

Bob and Lynne are in their 57th year as missionaries, 45 of those years in Colombia. Their primary ministry is with the ABWE Ambassadors, a ministry which hosts fellowships for retired missionaries who have been on the field for 20, 30, or 40 years. On average, they share about 400 emails/month,

30 phone calls along with visits, and the 8 Ambassador Gatherings. Their heart is missions and missionaries. Bob has been able to teach classes at Bogota Seminary via zoom. Lynne teaches an evening Bible study with 70+ ladies in Bogota via zoom in addition to teaching at ladies' retreats. Bob and Lynne have been married for 61 years and have 3 children and 11 grandchildren.

Week 10

Monday

Opposition to Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

John 10: 22-42

Tuesday

Jesus Reveals the Fulness of His Identity to the Apostles

Matthew 16: 13-28

Luke 9: 18-27

Wednesday

The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-13

Luke 9: 28-36

Thursday

A Lesson on Faith & Jesus Predicts Betrayal

Matthew 17: 14-27

Luke 9: 37-45

Friday

Instructions on Humility & Stumbling Blocks

Matthew 18: 1-9

Luke 9: 46-50

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Missionary Moments



Caleb & Christina Suko

Location: Odessa, Ukraine

Contact Info
sukofamily.org

Caleb and Christina Suko are meeting the needs of war-torn Ukraine. The family hands out humanitarian aids like food and blankets while Caleb preaches the gospel. He speaks at conferences and meets for discipleship with young men, many who are worried about getting drafted into the military. They hand out Bible literature around holidays and special times of the year. They have started the “Bible Today” journal and they produce a correspondence Bible course that offers people the chance to study God’s Word in greater depth. They continue in the work of planting an international church in Odessa.

Christina serves at Choose Life, a pro-life women’s center where she counsels women and shares the gospel to give hope to a hopeless situation.

Week 11

Monday

Jesus Teaches About Relationships & Forgiveness
Matthew 18: 15-35

Tuesday

The Cost of Following Jesus
Matthew 8: 18-22
Luke 9: 51-62

Wednesday

Jesus Condemns Unrepentant Cities & Sends Out More Witnesses
Matthew 11: 20-30
Luke 10: 1-24

Thursday

The Parable of the Good Samaritan; Jesus Visits Mary & Martha
Luke 10: 25 - 42

Friday

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer
Luke 11: 1-13

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Missionary Moments



Kevin & Tanya Van Horne

Location: USA

Contact Info

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Kevin is the Executive Director of IFES/USA: International Fellowship of Evangelical Students which disciples college-age students so they will be transformed by the gospel and impact their universities and churches. Kevin oversees a staff that connects with students for worship, prayer, Bible study, and ministry training. Tanya has recently joined The Lausanne Movement as Director of Collaboration – an organization that seeks to unite all evangelicals in the common task of the total evangelization of the world. She is currently spending the bulk of her time meeting 1:1 with each of the 64 network leaders who are under her care.

Week 12

Monday

Jesus Continues to Challenge the Pharisees

Matthew 12: 22-37

Luke 11: 14-28

Tuesday

The Pharisees Demand a Sign & The Lamp of the Body

Matthew 12: 38-45

Luke 11: 29-54

Wednesday

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Luke 12: 13-21

Thursday

Jesus Tells His Followers to Be Watchful & Ready

Matthew 24: 43-51

Luke 12: 35-53

Friday

Additional Teachings & Parables

Matthew 13: 31-35

Luke 12: 54 - 13: 21

Study the Scripture

- Do you notice any key/repeated words or ideas in this week's passages?
- When you read different accounts of the same events, did you see similarities or differences?
- What is the teaching behind the events or miracles you read about?

Observe the Person of Jesus

- How did Jesus respond to people?
- What attributes of God's character are revealed through Jesus?
- What do Jesus' words & actions in this passage show us about the love of Christ?
- What truths do we see about who Jesus is?

Apply What You Have Learned

- Does Jesus give commands, instructions or an example to follow?
- How does the truth in this passage renew your mind or transform you?
- How does looking closely at Jesus in this passage help keep you from growing weary or losing heart?

Pray

- How might today's reading shape your prayers for yourself & others?
- Follow Jesus' model of prayer in Matthew 6 as you pray today.

Missionary Moments



Nate & Rachel Waldock

Location: Cambodia

Contact Info

nathan@waldockfamily.com

Nathan and Rachel are missionaries to Cambodia. Cambodia has had such a long history of Buddhism that it has become tied to Cambodia's national identity. Since parenting skills are needed, Nathan recently started a parenting class which involves teaching Biblical principles, and then showing practical application the next week. For the past several months, they have been having a group of young ladies (around ages 9-14) come to their home for a Bible study. Recently, the Lord has provided a wooden house owned by a family in the church, the church can use for services. Pray for them as they disciple believers and develop in them a heart for evangelism.

Week 13

Monday

Jesus Makes His Way Toward Jerusalem
Luke 13: 22-33

Tuesday

Instruction on Sabbath & The Parable of the Great Banquet
Luke 14: 1-24

Wednesday

The Cost of Being a Disciple
Luke 14: 25-35

Thursday

The Parables of the Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin & The Lost Son
Luke 15: 1-32
Matthew 18: 11-14

Friday

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager
Luke 16: 1-13

Study the Scripture

- Do you notice any key/repeated words or ideas in this week's passages?
- When you read different accounts of the same events, did you see similarities or differences?
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Observe the Person of Jesus

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Pray

- How might today's reading shape your prayers for yourself & others?
- Follow Jesus' model of prayer in Matthew 6 as you pray today.

Missionary Moments



Kevin & Darleen Weston

Location: USA

Contact Info

westonmissions@gmail.com

Kevin is a pastor with Village Missions. He and his wife Darleen serve in very remote parts of the United States. Village Missions sends pastors to support churches that are in danger of closing. If that happens, the community would be left with no gospel witness. They sponsor a Kid's club where the children study and memorize the Scripture. In addition, Care Home Ministry goes into three local nursing homes with a gospel message and singing. The church hosts local community events like banquets as a chance to share about Christ. Darlene homeschools her six children and leads a women's Bible Study.

Today, Kevin is a missionary pastor in the beautiful rural community of Bethany, Kansas.

Week 14

Monday

The Rich Man & Lazarus
Luke 16: 14-31

Tuesday

Jesus Teaches About Sin, Faith & Duty;
Jesus Heals 10 Lepers
Luke 17: 1-19

Wednesday

Jesus Teaches on the Second Coming
Luke 17: 20-37

Thursday

The Parable of the Persistent Widow &
The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
Luke 18: 1-14

Friday

Jesus Teaches About Divorce & Blesses the Children
Matthew 19: 1-15
Luke 18: 15-18

Study the Scripture

- Do you notice any key/repeated words or ideas in this week's passages?
- When you read different accounts of the same events, did you see similarities or differences?
- What is the teaching behind the events or miracles you read about?

Observe the Person of Jesus

- How did Jesus respond to people?
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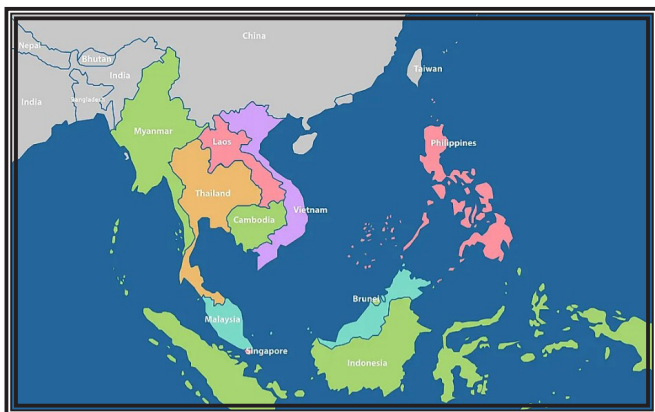
Apply What You Have Learned

- Does Jesus give commands, instructions or an example to follow?
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- How does looking closely at Jesus in this passage help keep you from growing weary or losing heart?

Pray

- How might today's reading shape your prayers for yourself & others?
- Follow Jesus' model of prayer in Matthew 6 as you pray today.

Missionary Moments



Sam & Megan *Location: South East Asia*

Sam and Megan are missionaries in a closed country full of unreached, unengaged people groups. In these countries, professing Christians face fines, imprisonment, beatings, or death. The religion in their area is primarily Islam and animism. Sam is a gifted graphic designer and was hired by a local man to co-own a coffee business in town which has connected Sam with employees with whom he would like to share the gospel. Megan home schools the kids and has great relationships with her neighbors. She tries to connect with them on a regular basis to have opportunities to present the gospel. Pray the gospel breaks through in this very dark place.

Week 15

Monday

Jesus Raises Lazarus & The Plot to Kill Jesus Intensifies
John 11: 1-54

Tuesday

The Rich Young Ruler
Matthew 19: 16-30
Luke 18: 18-30

Wednesday

*Jesus Again Predicts His Death & The Disciples
Argue About Who's the Greatest*
Matthew 20: 17-28
Luke 18: 31-34

Thursday

Jesus Restores a Blind Man's Sight
Matthew 20: 29-34
Luke 18: 35-43

Friday

*Zacchaeus the Tax Collector &
The Parable of the Ten Minas*
Luke 19: 1-27

Study the Scripture

- Do you notice any key/repeated words or ideas in this week's passages?
- When you read different accounts of the same events, did you see similarities or differences?
- What is the teaching behind the events or miracles you read about?

Observe the Person of Jesus

- How did Jesus respond to people?
- What attributes of God's character are revealed through Jesus?
- What do Jesus' words & actions in this passage show us about the love of Christ?
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Apply What You Have Learned

- Does Jesus give commands, instructions or an example to follow?
- How does the truth in this passage renew your mind or transform you?
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Pray

- How might today's reading shape your prayers for yourself & others?
- Follow Jesus' model of prayer in Matthew 6 as you pray today.

Missionary Moments



You!

Location: Everywhere You Go

Read Matthew 4:19 & Matthew 28: 18-20. This is our mission. Like the people you have been praying over for weeks now, YOU too are called to follow Jesus, invite others who don't know Him to be a part of His plan, speak His Word to them, share His love & grace with them, and disciple them. We have a responsibility to call those who are dead in their sin to repent and come to Christ. At times this might be scary, but God never calls us to something He does not empower us to do. This is why we need God's Spirit and prayer to ask God to do what only He can do.

We all have people in our lives who don't know Jesus or who have never confessed Jesus as Lord. If they died today they would go to hell. Pray for them. Ask God for an open door to share the Gospel, telling them about what Jesus has done for them. With the holidays coming, this might be a great time for you to share the true reason for the season.

Pastor Kevin used to say, "the cradle without the cross is just another miracle." The cross reminds us how much God loves us and was willing to send His Son for us. (Rom.5:8)

Who do you need to be praying for? On the next page, you will have the opportunity to name 8-15 people and ask yourself how God is prompting you to share the Gospel with them.

8 to 15

“...He said to him, ‘Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.’”

Mark 5:19

Who comes to mind when you think about “your people”? Among these names, who isn’t a believer? Who has drifted from the faith? Who has God been putting in your path more often than in the past?

According to multiple research studies, the vast majority of people who come to Christ report that it was mainly because of a friend or family member. Don’t underestimate your influence in the lives of people around you as you testify what the Lord has done for you and how He has shown you mercy!

In the space below, list 8 to 15 people you with whom you can share your faith. Make it a priority to pray for and invest in them, and look for opportunities to share your testimony!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Advent

Why Did Jesus Appear?



Advent

We've spent the last 15 weeks studying the accounts of Jesus' ministry. We've followed along as He walked the roads of first century Palestine bringing hope & healing to the people and testifying to the truth of God's plan & purposes. We've traced His journey of faithful obedience on His unwavering mission toward the cross, our ultimate hope and healing.

Now we'll pause and look back on Jesus's birth so we can fully appreciate why He came. Philippians 2: 6 tells us that Jesus "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant." Why did He do this? We'll spend the next four weeks answering this question!

This year, the season of Advent is from Sunday, December 3rd through Sunday, December 30th. We have the opportunity during this season to intentionally pause and focus our minds and hearts on waiting for Christ's arrival. We wait *reflectively*, considering the significance of Christ's arrival two thousand years ago. And we wait *expectantly*, setting our hearts on His coming arrival, when He returns to reunite us with Him forever!

As part of this special season of the year, we'd like to include some additional elements to enhance your time spent in prayer, study and reflection. You'll notice each week contains a section called "Meat for the Week". This brief devotional will accompany your daily reading and is meant to deepen your study and application of the week's content.

Each week will also include a reflection on a Christmas carol, written by our dear Pastor Kevin Robinson as part of his 2021 Christmas Eve sermon. In his sermon notes, Pastor Kevin wrote, "We call them 'Christmas carols,' but they are actually Christian hymns celebrating the incarnation of our Lord and Savior." Later in the message, he went on to say, "The carols that we sing each year do such a magnificent job of underscoring who Jesus is and why He came." The truths he highlighted in each week's hymn will help us better understand the gospel and share it with others. We continue to be blessed by Pastor Kevin's faithful study of God's word!

Week 16

Monday

1 John 3: 1-10
1 Timothy 1: 15
Mark 1: 38

Tuesday

Matthew 1: 1-17

Wednesday

John 1: 1-18

Thursday

Luke 1: 1-4

Friday

Review & Reflect on this Week's Reading

1st Sunday of Advent

Hope

"O Holy Night"

In O Holy Night, we are reminded that the world was "in sin and error pining," wasting away until our dear Savior "appeared and the soul felt [the] worth" of His salvation. The word pining speaks of a deep yearning for deliverance. Like Simeon who was looking for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25) and Anna who was looking for the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:38), we must look beyond the Babe in the manger and see the One who pleased the Father and satisfied the Righteous Judge's wrath.

*from Pastor Kevin Robinson's Christmas Eve Sermon
December 24th, 2021*

Meat for the Week

Jesus knew he had come not just to preach the gospel of sacrifice, but also to be that sacrifice. For years Pastor Kevin would say, “You can’t have the cradle without the cross,” for the cross is the very reason Jesus came.

As we prepare to focus this week on hope, we must first recognize our own hopeless condition. Paul David Tripp speaks brilliantly on this in his advent devotional *Come Let Us Adore Him*:

One of the dark character qualities of sin that we don’t recognize as much as we should is unwillingness. We’re often unwilling to do what God says if it doesn’t make sense to us. We’re often unwilling to inconvenience ourselves for the needs of someone else. We’re regularly unwilling to wait. We’re often unwilling to be open and honest. We’re too often unwilling to consider the loving rebuke of another. We struggle to be willing to say no to our own wrong thoughts and desires. We often struggle to be willing to answer God’s ministry call. Often we are unwilling to admit that we are wrong. Too often we struggle to serve willingly and to give generously. Unwillingness is one of sin’s powerful damaging results.

It’s impossible to read these words without feeling the sting of conviction. We are indeed a hopeless people! Yet the hope of the Christmas story is that Jesus WAS willing. He was willing to do what Philippians 2:6 describes, emptying Himself and becoming a servant—a willing servant to an unwilling people, hopeless in our sins. Jesus came to give hope to the hopeless!

In 1 John 3:8 we are reminded, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” We also read in 1 Timothy 1:15, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost.”

As Tripp says, “...the Advent story reminds us that our past, present, and future hope rest not on our willingness, but on the willingness of the One for whom the angels sang, the shepherds worshipped, and the magi searched. Willing Jesus is the only hope for unwilling sinners!”

Week 17

Monday

Isaiah 9: 6-7, Mark 2: 17 & Titus 2: 13-14

Tuesday

Luke 1: 5-25

Wednesday

Luke 1: 26-38

Thursday

Luke 1: 39-56

Friday

Review & Reflect on this Week's Reading

2nd Sunday of Advent

Peace

“Silent Night”

The fact that sinful men and women can experience PEACE with God (and subsequently peace on earth) when they really deserve death is the essence of grace. That is why the author of Silent Night could pen these words, “Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace.” Redeeming grace is why Jesus came. It is why He died; so that through Him, sinful men and women might be reconciled and restored to God. The message of Christmas brings sinners to a crossroads, where they must deal with the Person of Jesus Christ. Will you embrace Him as Lord and Savior? Or will you dismiss His claim on your life and reject the salvation He offers? He is the only way of salvation. As the apostle Peter proclaimed about Jesus: “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

*from Pastor Kevin Robinson's Christmas Eve Sermon
December 24th, 2021*

Meat for the Week

Why did Jesus come?

The baby in the manger came as the conquering King to dethrone us and to enthrone himself in our hearts. He came to be king, to rule in all power and authority and to establish a kingdom with no end. Mary, I think, understood this well.

Luke 1:46-55 is known as “The Magnificat”. These 10 verses are a song or poem of praise that show us that Mary understood the significance of being chosen by God to give birth to the Son of the Most High. *Magnificat* is a Latin word meaning “magnify”, based on Mary’s declaration in verse 46: “My soul EXALTS the Lord.”

In the verses that follow, she recognizes God as Lord and King; she calls Him Savior, Mighty One and Holy, and she declares him to be both merciful and sovereign over all things. She understood that the birth of Jesus was God’s plan to rescue His people from bondage, scattering the proud and destroying our little kingdoms.

Like children we all want what we want. We all have a tendency to make ourselves the center of our own world and put our wants, needs, thoughts, preferences and feelings first. We want to be sovereign over our lives and write our own rules. We often demand to be served, accepted and respected. And when we don’t get what we want, we easily get angry, not because people have broken God’s law, but because they have broken our law of “happiness”.

Jesus came to free us from this bondage of self, because when we make Him Lord, He calls us to follow Him and changes us from the inside out, making us more like him. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul reminds us of this:

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

The question is, who are you living for today? Have you made Jesus Lord of your life? Are you serving in His eternal kingdom or are you still trying to sit on the throne of your own kingdom?

Week 18

Monday

Philippians 2: 5-8 & John 10: 10

Tuesday

Luke 1: 57-80

Wednesday

Matthew 1: 18-25

Thursday

Luke 2: 1-20

Friday

Review & Reflect on this Week's Reading

3rd Sunday of Advent

Joy

“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”

In God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, tidings of comfort and JOY come from knowing that “Jesus Christ our Savior” was born “to save us all from Satan’s power, when we were gone astray.” Isaiah 53:6 informs us that “all we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Human beings, guilty of disobedience and rebellion against God, are enslaved to sin. They face God’s wrath against them. The Bible says that “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23) and that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) including eternal separation from God. But “God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

*from Pastor Kevin Robinson's Christmas Eve Sermon
December 24th, 2021*

Meat for the Week

After the Fall of Man in the Garden, God promised that someday a Savior would be born into the world; and that Savior would put an end to the suffering and pain that has plagued mankind ever since. From eternity past, God had calculated the right moment in history for this Savior's entrance onto the world stage. It had to be the right time, the right place, and the right people for the Savior to begin the redirection of the course of man's final chapter of history. The foretelling of this Savior's birth and His mission was mentioned time and again throughout history by many of God's spokesmen. These are just a few examples:

- Moses recorded God's Word in Genesis, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."
- Job said, " And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth..."
- King David wrote in the second Psalm, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."
- King Solomon included Agur's words in the Proverbs and wrote, "Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, If you know?"
- Isaiah described the Savior with these words, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."
- Daniel while in Babylonian captivity predicted the Savior's coming, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself..."
- Micah, the prophet, declared, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth unto Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

And so, we see that God's plan of redemption unfolded throughout the Old Testament and culminated in the fulfillment of the prophecies in Jesus the Messiah. Emmanuel, God with us...the incarnate Word! Read Matthew 1:23 and John 1:1 & 14. The prophecies from centuries before had come to pass!

Week 19

Monday

John 3: 16-17 & Mark 10: 45

Tuesday

Luke 2: 21-38

Wednesday

Matthew 2: 1-12

Thursday

Matthew 2: 13-23 & Luke 2: 39-40

Friday

Review & Reflect on this Week's Reading

3rd Sunday of Advent

Love

“O Come Let Us Adore Him” and “Angels We Have Heard on High”

The very title of O Come Let Us Adore Him underscores the worshipful attitude that characterizes all those who truly trust in Him. And Angels We Have Heard on

High exhorts one and all to “come, adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the new-born King.” The Word of God calls every person to embrace the Lord Jesus

Christ – believing in Him, trusting in His sacrifice, and submitting to His authority in life. Read Ephesians 1:3-8a: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we

would be holy and blameless before Him. In LOVE He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His

will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the

Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.”

*from Pastor Kevin Robinson's Christmas Eve Sermon
December 24th, 2021*

Meat for the Week

Read Matthew 2: 1-23.

Throughout history, men have tried to thwart the Plan of God for the salvation of mankind. From the murder of Abel, to the great tumult before the Global Flood, to the dispersion at the Tower of Babel, to the enslavement of the Jewish people by Pharaoh, to the many battles faced by David, to many prophets who came to warn the nation of Israel of the coming judgement of God, and to the final act of evil by Satan at the cross of Calvary: the Plan of God has used all of these events in history to the glory of God. They demonstrate to the world His love for His creation and in particular His love for His image-bearers, all human beings.

Many men would be God, but only one God would become a man, and by so becoming a man He could pay the price of the sins committed throughout history and satisfy God's justice! Forever solving the problems associated with sin and death was God's intention from the very beginning.

Jesus' life began with many difficulties. There was suspicion regarding the manner of his birth. His family had to flee the evil edicts of Herod by moving from Bethlehem to Egypt and back to Nazareth. He was considered uneducated and poor. He was just a lowly carpenter's son. We esteemed him not.

But when Jesus began His final mission, the difficulties became more and more intense. His words were divisive and yet to many His words brought comfort, peace and healing. Everywhere He went there was opposition to His message. All the while, the Lord was watching over His life so that the final conclusion was the right time, the right place and the right blessing for all of His people throughout the world. Finally, He went to the Cross and sacrificed Himself to satisfy the wrath of God. God judged Jesus for our sakes. Trust the Lord for salvation, for He is the only Way!

Acknowledgements

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Pastor Robbie Edwards
Kristy Bateman
Rick Blair
Dave Hackley

Editing, Design & Production

Pastor Robbie Edwards
Kaylee Bateman
Kristy Bateman
Brock Blair
Abby Gilliland
Josh Monzon
Linda Morris
Kelly Robinson
Aimee Taylor
Arrow Printing Inc.

*Special thanks to Kelly Robinson for providing notes from Pastor Kevin's
2021 Christmas Eve sermon to include in our advent readings.*

Cover Image

The Mount of Beatitudes in Israel
Photo by Robert Bye on Unsplash

Advent Title Page Image

Advent Candles
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