

The Jesus Study

Hearing from Those Who
Knew Him Best

**A welcoming and
interactive experience for everyone:**
observers...skeptics...learners...seekers...followers.

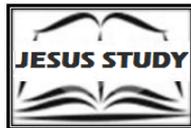


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THE JESUS STUDY SERIES

THE JESUS STUDY

- --Stories from Matthew, Mark, Luke & John: 10 Studies

THE LIFE STUDY

- From the Book of Ecclesiastes: 10 Studies

THE MARRIAGE COURSE

- Keeping Love Alive: 10 Sessions

THE JESUS FOLLOWER STUDY

- The Gospel of Mark
 - Part 1 / 1:1-8:30: 20 Studies
 - Part 2 / 8:31-16:8: 20 Studies

WELCOME TO THE MOST INTRIGUING STORY EVER TOLD

Like the man himself, the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry are unique in the field of literature. Ancient writings include historical accounts, personal memoirs, and mythological stories. But none of these styles describe how Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote. They combine the roles of historian, biographer, theologian, and pastor. These "reporters" are not simply neutral observers but men who had been deeply influenced by the message they desired to communicate. Lacking literary precedent, second-century Christians called them *Evangelists* and their record *The Gospels*.

The English word "gospel" comes from a Greek word which means "good news." The four Evangelists wanted their readers to not only know how remarkable Jesus was, but to know how good his message becomes in the lives of those who would embrace it.

To understand that message better we have chosen thirteen of the most intriguing passages from these four gospel writers. We're glad to have you join in wherever you're at: observer... skeptic...learner...seeker...follower... to more fully appreciate what those who knew Jesus best saw in him.

THE MEN WHO FIRST TOLD JESUS' STORY

A diverse group of men, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, introduced Jesus to the 1st century world and now, in this guide, to us.

MATTHEW: We can only imagine the initial tension between Matthew (also called Levi) and the other disciples of Jesus given his occupation as a tax collector for the Roman government. But reconciliation lay at the heart of Jesus' message (see *The Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew 5-7). Matthew's Gospel emphasizes the interconnectedness between the Old and New Testament and provided young believers a systematic tutorial of Jesus' teaching.

MARK: Recognized as the first-hand recollection of Jesus' lead disciple, Peter, Mark begins his first "sentence" with no verb: "The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." His last sentence ends with women fleeing Jesus' empty tomb "because they were afraid." For Mark, Jesus is a man of action. To help believers facing persecution from the Roman state, Mark focuses on Jesus as the Suffering Servant who "came to serve" (Mk 10:45).

LUKE: An educated Greek physician and traveling companion of Paul, Luke authored the book of Acts and the Gospel that bears his name. Although Luke never met Jesus himself, he had a close relationship with Paul and was acquainted with most of the key eyewitnesses who knew Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). After extensive interviews from these contacts, Luke begins, "Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account" (Luke 1:3).

JOHN: "In the beginning was the Word," John writes, offering a rather obvious parallel to the opening words of Genesis. In the first Genesis God spoke creation into existence and in the "second Genesis" God speaks redemption into existence: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). This "Word made flesh" is the One John wants his readers to encounter.

GROUP OVERVIEW

WHO ARE WE?

We're a dinner group that looks at the life and teaching of Jesus.

FOR 10 WEEKS

2 HOURS each week for a meal, study and discussion together—
in the morning, midday, right after work or in the evening.

MEAL included: Yes, it takes prep but it's worth the effort.



EXAMPLE WEEKLY MEETING schedule:

6:15 Arrival: 15 min. to gather.

6:30 DINNER: 30 min. to relax and eat.

7:00-8:30 DISCOVER WHAT'S THERE & HOW IT RELATES:

Review Last Week's Risk—5 min. | **Video Intro**—10 min. |
Personal Study—15 min. | **Small Group Discussion**—20 min. |
Larger Group Interaction—30 min. | **This Week's Risk**—10 min.



RETREAT (day-away or over a weekend) is planned about two-thirds of the way through the ten weeks. This is a special time to go deeper with three retreat studies (see pages 48-60) and to build closer friendships among group members.

STUDY FORMAT (See study and discussion notes on pages 61-66.)

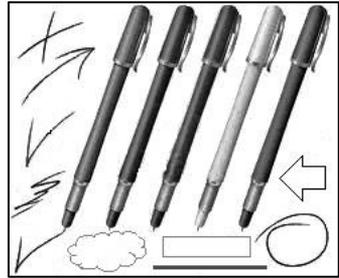
Read, Study, Enjoy—look for the W's:

WHO is involved | WHEN did it happen | WHERE is it happening | WHAT is taking place | HOW is it happening... and then ask the... WHY questions regarding what the author's message is about.

Mark It Up: Use a four-colored Bic pen or a variety of colored pens and pencils. Don't worry about getting it perfect, just mark it up!

Use the pens/pencils to draw:

- Circles around places or people
- Boxes around whatever you'd like
- Underlines of key words/phrases
- Clouds wherever you feel like it
- Identify change of scene, watch for contrast, repetition, key words, etc.
- Put lots of NOTES in the margins and in between lines!



Think About, Pray About, Act On:

How does what you're reading and studying apply to you and where you are with God, others, etc.? There is space to keep a short personal journal. Use it to record your thoughts, prayers and new actions

Discuss:

Come together in a small group to summarize insights, then a larger group interaction. Have a facilitator lead discussion to keep everyone on track but no one is the expert here. The goal is to generate a lot of give and take where everyone's contributions are valued.





STUDY #1: LUKE 19:1-27—Living a Risk-Taking Life

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

19 ¹He entered Jericho and was passing through.

²And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus.

He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³And he

was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account

of the crowd he could not, because he was small in

stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a

sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass

that way. ⁵And 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.”

⁶So he hurried and came down and received him

joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it, they all grumbled,

“He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a

sinner.” ⁸And 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.” ⁹And Jesus said to him, “Today

salvation has come to this house, since he also is a

son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek

and to save the lost.” ¹¹As they heard these things,

he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was

near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that

the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

¹²He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far

country to receive for himself a kingdom and then

return. ¹³Calling ten of his servants, he gave them

ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business

until I come.’¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’¹⁵ When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.¹⁶ The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’¹⁷ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’¹⁸ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’¹⁹ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’²⁰ Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief;²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’

²²He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?' ²³Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' ²⁴And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' ²⁵And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' ²⁶I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See pages 61.)

In study #1 we learn from Zacchaeus and the *Parable of the Minas* that life's opportunities open up to us as we take risks. You took a risk just in coming. **Each week our homework is to TAKE A RISK.**

Your initial risk: *You decided to come and join this group. It's a risk since you didn't know what to expect and would be meeting new people.*

Risk Taking Can Become a Spiritual Experience

Beyond opening ourselves up to new opportunities, taking risks can have spiritual significance. When we seek to go beyond our capabilities we find ourselves in a vulnerable, humbling place, outside of our comfort zone. If we then look to Jesus we will find ourselves crossing the point where ordinary risk taking turns into *exercising faith* and our weakness leads us to dependent trust.

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

THIS WEEK: What specific risk could you take this week?

NEXT WEEK: Evaluate how you did. Were you...able to take that risk...able to push beyond the mindset of personal growth...able to trust God for his perspective and strength to get through it?

➤ **YOUR STUDY #1 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

| Risk Avoidance | Opportunity-Based Risk Taking | Exercising Faith |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Acquiescing to Fear | Pursuing Personal Growth | Trusting in God/Jesus |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|



STUDY #2: JOHN 4:1-26—Having Our Thirst Quenched

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

4 ¹Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. 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.) ⁹The 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.) ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The 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.”

²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 62.)

- What are some of the "big questions" you wonder about life?
- What are some disappointments or hurts you've experienced?
- What is something you are worried or anxious about right now?
- How does Jesus' treatment of the woman offer you hope?
- What does Jesus' offer of "living water" mean to you? How might his offer quench your thirst?
- What would it mean for you to quench your thirst, as the woman did, with Jesus' living water?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #2 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus



STUDY #3: JOHN 4:27-42—Having Our Hunger Satisfied

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

4²⁷Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"²⁸So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,²⁹"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"³⁰They went out of the town and were coming to him.³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" ³⁴Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." ³⁹Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And

many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See pages 62.)

- What gives you a lot of joy and satisfaction in life?
- Have you or could you see yourself going through a similar transformation as did the woman, from meeting Jesus (vs. 7) to telling others about him (vs. 39)? How so?
- How could you make Jesus' "living food" more of a priority in life?
- What priority shifts might there be involved for you in spreading God's love and grace to people around you?
- Who are the key people in your life and what is a way you could communicate this love and grace to them this week?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

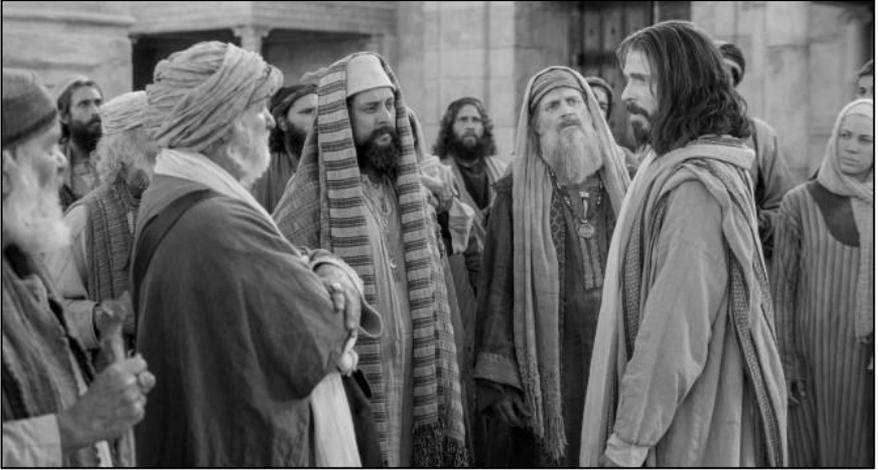
➤ **YOUR STUDY #3 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus



STUDY #4: LUKE 15:11-32—The Lost Son and Searching Father

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

15 ¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. ⁸“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

¹¹And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my

father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.’²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he

heard music and dancing.²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.'²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!"³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See pages 63.)

- In what way do you identify with the younger son?
- What helped you “come to yourself” in your relationship with God?
- What does the Father’s response to his son returning tell you about the Father? How is it a picture of God’s grace in Jesus?
- How did God reach out to you like the Father searched for his son?
- In what ways do you identify with the older son and his attitude?
- How does this story of God’s grace provide you with hope—whether you are more like the younger son or the older son?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #4 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus



STUDY #5: LUKE 7:36-50—A Debt, Forgiveness and Love

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

7³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to him-

self, "If this man was a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is for-

given little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Identify the following themes in the story and parable: (See page 63.)

SIMON

THE WOMAN

DEBT RECOGNIZED

FORGIVENESS OFFERED

RESPONSE MADE

--Have you asked God to cancel your debt through Jesus? Do you have assurance that he has done that? If not, what could you do? How has/might his forgiveness make a difference in your life?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #5 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus

**STUDY #6: JOHN 13:1-17—Letting Jesus Wash Our Feet**

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

13 ¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured

water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.¹⁴ If I then,

your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 64.)

- How would you feel about the idea of Jesus washing your feet?
- How can being a recipient of such a gift make you uncomfortable?
- Does this reveal your struggle with pride and humility? How so?
- In what ways do you sense God serving you through Jesus?
- How does serving others come from embracing being a recipient?
- Who is someone you can offer an act of service? How so?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #6 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Risk Avoidance | Opportunity-Based Risk Taking | Exercising Faith |
| Acquiescing to Fear | Pursuing Personal Growth | Trusting in God/Jesus |



STUDY #7: LUKE 5:1-11—Receiving a Change of Vocation

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

4 ³⁸And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them. ⁴⁰Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.

⁴¹ And demons also came out of many, crying "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and they would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. ⁴²And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, ⁴³but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. **5** ¹On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret ²and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the

people from the boat. ⁴And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹And

when they had brought their boats to land, they
left everything and followed him.

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 64.)

--Have you ever seen "God really show up?" How did you respond?
--Does "catching people" intrigue you as a new vocation? How so?

*Where is Jesus in relation to your "fishing business" (i. e. a central and important area of your life like your job/studies/family/money/finances/relationship with another person, etc.)?

Check one of the following:

- Nowhere in sight
- On the horizon
- Approaching the boat
- One foot in, one out
- Fully in?

--What would it mean to fully invite Jesus into your "fishing business" so that he becomes the expert, directing your best course of action?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #7 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how did you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

| Risk Avoidance | Opportunity-Based Risk Taking | Exercising Faith |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Acquiescing to Fear | Pursuing Personal Growth | Trusting in God/Jesus |



STUDY #8: LUKE 10:25-42—Sitting at Jesus' Feet

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

10 ²⁵And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." ²⁹But

he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay

you when I come back.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." ³⁸Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 65.)

- How do you find yourself caught up in “the Martha syndrome,” serving Jesus (doing things) while neglecting to sit at Jesus’ feet (listening to him)?
- Consider the following quote by Oswald Chambers: *Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor to devotion to Jesus is service for Him.*
- How does the above quote challenge you? Help you prioritize?
- How should “serving” and “sitting” relate to each other in our life?
- How can you develop more of a “sitting lifestyle” with Jesus?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #8 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus

**STUDY #9: MARK 14:1-26—Having Something to Remember**

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

14 ¹It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." ³And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke

the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." ¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an

opportunity to betray him. ¹²And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹They began

to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" ²⁰He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²²And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 65.)

- Do you identify more as a careful giver or cheerful giver? What would it mean for you to become more of a cheerful giver?
- What difference does or could Jesus' sacrificial death make in your life if you more fully embrace it?
- Think of the power of memories. What is one of the important positive memories of your childhood? Why is it so powerful?
- How is/could communion similarly become a powerful memory aid of Jesus' death on your behalf?
- How could you open yourself up more to Jesus serving you, first through his death on the cross and then every moment thereafter?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #9 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus



STUDY #10: LUKE 24:13-35—Walking Into a New Future

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

24 ¹³That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not

know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, now it is now the third day since these things happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And begin-

ning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ²⁸So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

WHAT THEY SAW AND WHAT WE'VE SEEN (Also see p. 65.)

After getting upfront and personal, the two disciples who met Jesus on the Emmaus road had their eyes opened to a new reality about him. Take some time to summarize your own experience, and new discoveries or thoughts you've had from your study these last number of weeks.

What has been something new you've learned from this study?

Gained from your group experience?

Where would you have placed yourself on this continuum (with a smaller x) regarding your relationship with Jesus when you began this study? Where are you now (with a larger X)?

Observer... Skeptic... Learner... Seeker... Follower...

If your perspective has changed, what has made the difference?

What new realities do you see about Jesus? Do you see yourself in relationship to him any differently now? If so, how?

Do you have any new direction for your life from what you've seen?



1st Retreat Study: Matthew 16:24-17:20—The Costs and Benefits

Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

16 ²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each

person according to what he has done.²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." **17** ¹And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well

pleased; listen to him." ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷But have no fear." ⁸And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." ¹⁰And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." ¹³Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. ¹⁴And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and,

kneeling before him, ¹⁵said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." ¹⁷And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 66.)

- How can short-term self-denial lead to long-term self-benefit?
- What is an act of self-denial you felt was worth the cost? Why?
- Do you feel God is more of a “kill joy” (all about self-denial) or a “source of joy” (all about self-benefit as a result of self-denial)?
How do struggle with the “source of joy” view of God?
- What attitudes gets in your way of a deeper dependence on God?
- What have you seen God accomplish through trusting him?
- What would it mean for you to be more dependent on him now?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #1 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Risk Avoidance | Opportunity-Based Risk Taking | Exercising Faith |
| - - - - - | - - - - - | - - - - - |
| Acquiescing to Fear | Pursuing Personal Growth | Trusting in God/Jesus |



2nd Retreat Study: Matthew 19:13-30—The Costs and Benefits, 2
Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

19 ¹³Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went away. ¹⁶And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about

what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich

person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." ²⁷Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 66.)

- How is Jesus' spirituality portrayed in his view of children? How is this attitude a challenge to you and where you are with God?
- What possession(s) is it hard for you to imagine living without?
- How would you describe your "relationship with" or struggle with money? How important is it to you?
- How much do you trust money/a bank account/investments to take care of you versus God taking care of you?
- Are you considering whether/convinced that Jesus will provide for your future and your welfare better than money or possessions?
- How could trusting him end up being a gain rather than a sacrifice?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

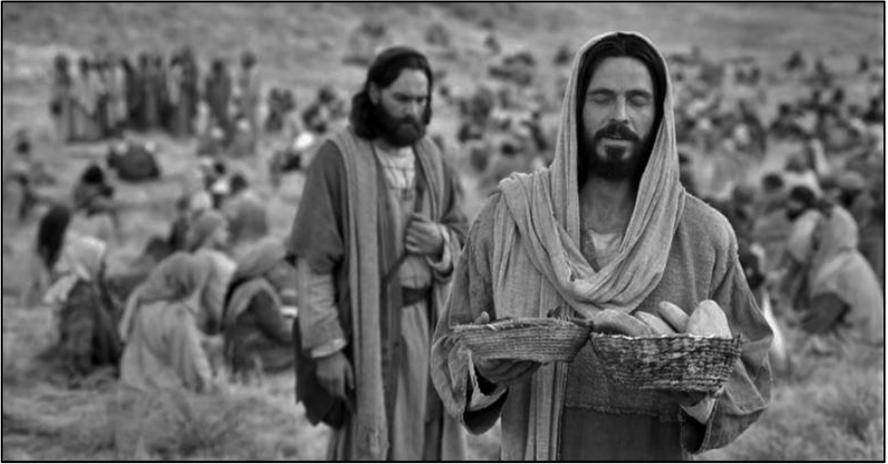
➤ **YOUR STUDY #2 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

Risk Avoidance Opportunity-Based Risk Taking Exercising Faith

Acquiescing to Fear Pursuing Personal Growth Trusting in God/Jesus



3rd Retreat Study: Mark 6:6b-13, 30-44—Living a Multiplication Life
Mark It Up: Who | What | Where | When | How | Why

6 ^{6b}And he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— ⁹but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. ¹⁰And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. ¹¹And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when

you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. ¹³And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. [Vs: 14-29: Interlude of King Herod's party with the resulting death of John the Baptist from his vow to Solame after she dances for Herod and his guests.] ³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on

them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the

disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Things to: Think & Talk About | Pray & Act On >> (See page 66.)

- How do you deal with feeling overwhelmed with life's busyness?
- What is an area(s) of your life you have felt "called" to go beyond your normal limits or what you thought you could handle?
- At those difficult times do you tend to fold, dug deep or looked to God for help?
- What ways of serving has challenged you to trust God the most?
- What would it mean to stretch yourself and take a risk—a step of faith—in an area of serving someone else?

HOMEWORK: TAKE A RISK between now and next week

➤ **YOUR STUDY #3 risk** (examples, p. 62):

➤ **EVALUATE afterwards** how you did in this endeavor:

➤ **MARK an X** regarding your mindset in taking this risk:

| Risk Avoidance | Opportunity-Based Risk Taking | Exercising Faith |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| - - - - - | - - - - - | - - - - - |
| Acquiescing to Fear | Pursuing Personal Growth | Trusting in God/Jesus |

• STUDY AND DISCUSSION NOTES

FIRST MEETING:

Plan for an extra 30 minute for this session. This will allow time for introductions of group members as well as to go through pages 2-7.

STUDY #1:

The Parable of the Minas explains Zacchaeus' radical choice, providing us with an example of using our life to the absolute fullest.

PAGE: 8 | Living a Risk-Taking Life, Luke 19:1-27

- As a tax collector for the Romans, Zacchaeus made his living by the overage he could charge for taxes to his fellow Jews. This made him rich and likely corrupt. After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus makes a radical choice: He removes himself from roles of the rich.
- No one in the crowd that day expected such a response from Zacchaeus. People could understand the rich ruler's departure from Jesus which Luke records just prior to the Zacchaeus story (see Luke 18:18-30). But Zacchaeus' response seems so extreme that the people who heard his declaration were likely shocked by it.
- To help the crowd understand why deciding to follow Jesus results in such change, Jesus tells *The Parable of the Minas*.
- A mina amounted to three months' wages. Whereas the servants in *The Parable of the Talents* are given different amounts based on abilities (5, 2 and 1) in this parable they are given the same (1). The one thing we have all been given to spend/invest is OUR LIFE.
- The parable presents two options of what people do with their mina—THEIR LIFE. One option is the third servant's conservative, low-risk attitude of not trusting the king (God's) directive to invest.
- The other option (Zacchaeus) is to take what we have been given by God (our life) and risk it doing what Jesus would have us do and depend on him to make up the difference by providing for our welfare. It's the motto: "Spend like there's no tomorrow!" Those servant's returns end up being 500-1000% on the king's money. The risk: trust the King's directives. The reward: fantastic returns!

A FEW EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUALLY-ORIENTED RISKS:

- Make a decision to keep coming/invite a friend to the Jesus study.
- Forgive someone who has wronged you but won't acknowledge it.
- Confront someone you would otherwise have resentment if you didn't.
- Exercise integrity by being truthful and honest in a specific situation.
- Reach out to help or serve someone who you know has a need.
- Contact someone you have talked to in a while to "clear the air."
- Make a decision to start a discipline you've been putting off.
- Start a prayer partnership with another person or group for growth.
- Challenge yourself to learn or experience something new.
- Follow through on a commitment you have made and put off.
- Verbally look to communicate Jesus' love and forgiveness to a friend.

STUDY #2:

PAGE: 13 | **Having Our Thirst Quenched**, John 4:1-26

- Jesus is the master conversationalist. He breaks down conventions (male/female, Jew/Samaritan, Rabbi/sinner), builds on commonality, avoids diversion and gets to the woman's real need. This conversation is a great example of building rapport, identifying a person's need and seeking to meet it in a meaningful way.
- The woman is an outcast in society (comes to well alone at noon, has had "five husbands," an adulterer). Jesus offers her "living water" to meet her deepest need—a relationship with himself.
- Jesus' offer is as radical as "living water" is to water (see 7:37-39).

STUDY #3

PAGE: 17 | **Having Our Hunger Satisfied**, John 4:27-42

- Like living water that replenishes the spirit, there is "living food" that sustains the soul. The disciples completely miss the point in their focus on ordinary food and wondering if Jesus already ate.
- Many pursuits can energize us, but for Jesus it is the work of God in the lives of people that provides real satisfaction—forsaking small ambitions for the large ambition of the Great Commission.
- Jesus becomes the local town's living water through the woman's testimony as many seek him out. (This event likely laid the groundwork for the Samaritans' openness to the gospel in Acts 8:4-25.)

STUDY #4

PAGE: 20 | **The Lost Son and the Searching Father**, Luke 15:1-32

- The parable of the sheep and coin set the motif of lost and found.
- The younger son makes a scandalous request. In affect he proclaims his Father dead to him by asking for his inheritance.
- The Son doesn't repent but he "came to himself (vs. 17)." He doesn't humbly return, he "arises and goes (vs. 18)" to his Father.
- The Father must have been searching for his son because he sees him coming from "a long way off (vs. 20b)."
- The issue for the Father is restoring the relationship with his son.
- The Father takes the initiative: he runs, embraces, calls for the best robe, the signet ring, shoes and a party with the fatted calf.
- After his Father's actions, the son accepts being found (vs. 21).
- The older son responds in anger when he found out that his Father had restored his rebellious brother in an extravagant way.
- This son response reflects the religious leaders' attitude (vs. 2).
- The older son insults his Father by not coming to the party and saying he has not provided him a goat to celebrate with friends.
- The Father invites all (younger son, villagers, oldest son) to the party to honor the Father and his efforts to restore relationships.
- The Father represents Jesus who offers grace to both those who violate the law (rebellious) and those who keep the law (prideful).

STUDY #5

PAGE: 25 | **A Debt, Forgiveness and Love**, Luke 7:36-50

- The issue of being religious but unloving (Simon) versus being non-religious—"a sinner"—but loving (the woman) provides us the challenge of who we are like more. Do we come to God on our own terms in self-righteous pride, or on his terms, in humility?
- The gospel message is vividly portrayed in the story and parable: 1) We all have an *unpayable debt* (are sinners), 2) *debt is cancelled* (through forgiveness), resulting in 3) a *renewed response* (love).
- The issue that love is a result of experiencing forgiveness, not the other way around, is seen in the woman's motivation. We don't start with loving, when it comes to God, we start with being loved.

STUDY #6

PAGE: 28 | **Letting Jesus Wash Our Feet**, John 13:1-17

- How do you serve someone who has no needs? Unlike religions whose devotees serve their god as employees, Jesus will have none of it: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45). Even Judas would get in on the experience of having Jesus washing his feet.
- When Jesus got to Peter, Peter exclaimed “Lord you shall never wash my feet (vs. 8).” He just could not comprehend how radically different a relationship with Jesus is. Not only is Jesus the “only way,” there is “only one direction:” We have the needs, Jesus has the means. He is the servant; we are the ones being served.
- Jesus was so insistent because if Peter could not humble himself to accept Jesus’ beautiful act of washing his feet how could he be spiritually prepared to accept Jesus’ greater act of dying for Peter’s sins the very next day, not to mention strengthen and sustain him every day of his life thereafter?
- The foot washing foreshadows Jesus’ service to his followers on the cross and for every subsequent moment in our lives as we look to him for grace, perspective, joy, perseverance, hope. The only thing we have to offer him is our openness to be served by him.

STUDY #7

PAGE: 31 | **Receiving a Change of Vocation**, Luke 5:1-11

- Peter sees his mother-in-law healed by Jesus (4:38-44) so he knows Jesus and has seen his power at work, though unconvinced.
- It isn’t until Jesus touches an area of his life that he considered himself an expert (fishing) that Jesus really gets Peter’s attention.
- What does sin have to do with fish? Now Peter understands who he is dealing with and who he is in comparison. Peter speaks as one who has had an encounter with God himself (see Isaiah 6:5).
 - Jesus gives Peter a new, grand vocation: to be “fishers of men.” Fear is inappropriate given that he will be with Jesus from now on.

STUDY #8

PAGE: 35 | **Sitting at Jesus' Feet**, Luke 10:25-42

- A lawyer asks a critical question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” and answers his own question by saying to love God and love your neighbor. Jesus makes the latter real by telling a story about a Samaritan (who was despised by the Jews) to illustrate what love for a neighbor looks like.
- Then immediately afterward someone acts as the Good Samaritan (Martha) and yet Jesus says her priorities are in the wrong place by highlighting that her sister (Mary) has chosen something even better to do, loving God, through her attentive listening to Jesus.
- These two sections show how the 2nd commandment (loving our neighbor) is to be the natural result of keeping the 1st commandment (loving God), not the other way around.

STUDY #9

PAGE: 39 | **Having Something to Remember**, Mark 14:1-26

- The One who promises “living water” and “living food” (studies 3 & 4) is also the One who provides it through his death on the cross and the new adoptive relationship it brings. Ultimately a relationship with God—becoming his son or daughter—becomes a reality when we embrace Jesus’ act of sacrifice on our behalf.
- A woman’s beautiful act of anointing Jesus’ head with a jar of very expensive perfume (likely her only valuable possession) brings up the issue of priorities and helps prepare Jesus’ body for death.
- At the Last Supper Jesus changes the meaning of the Passover meal to become an act we do to remember him and his death.

STUDY #10:

PAGE: 44 | **Walking Into a New Future**, Luke 24:13-35

- Luke 24 is a fitting end. Allow for an extra 30 minutes. The two disciples’ changed perception of Jesus illustrates the change that can happen in our awareness of him. Consider the dramatic discovery of those who knew Jesus best—taking them (and us) from **observers... and skeptics... to learners...and seekers... to followers.**

RETREAT STUDY NOTES 1st RETREAT STUDY: See page 48

The Costs and the Benefits, Matthew 16:24-17:20

- Jesus' hard call to follow him includes the benefits (finding life) as well as the costs (losing life). The way Jesus motivates people is to appeal to their best self-interest: "Save their life." Self-denial is not an end in itself, but the means to "God-receiving!"
- The Father validates Jesus' message via *The Transfiguration* with the Old Testament characters of Moses and Elijah giving witness along with Peter, James and John and the Father (vs. 5).
- The other nine disciples left cannot exercise a demon out of a boy because of the issue of their faith. They appear to have presumptuous faith which has grown less dependent on God and more on themselves. Jesus calls for genuine, dependent faith in God.

2nd RETREAT STUDY: Page 53

The Costs and the Benefits, Part 2, Matthew 19:13-30

- The disciples' values are called into question in this passage beginning with their rebuke of those who bring little children as not being worthy of Jesus' time. But Jesus loves "the least" in society.
- Jesus answers the rich young man's question, saying spirituality is a heart condition that is far beyond "do-good-ism" and he takes on the disciples' understanding of wealth.
- Jesus answers the issue of sacrifice when Peter says the disciples have left everything to follow him. He says that the idea of sacrifice doesn't apply because the benefits far outweigh the costs.

3rd RETREAT STUDY: Page 57

Living a Multiplication Life, Mark 6:6b-13, 30-44

- Jesus puts the Twelve into "survival mode" so they will depend on God and the people to whom they are sent to minister.
- After an exhausting period of ministry (during the John the Baptist interlude, 6:14-28), the disciples want to get away to debrief with Jesus but they cannot because of the crowds.
- Jesus challenges his disciples to go further. They want to send the crowds away while Jesus says, "you give them something to eat." Jesus fulfills the shepherd imagery (Psalm 23) by feeding his flock.

FAITH-BASED RISK TAKING LEADS US TO PRAYER

Being “out of control,” can lead us to look to the One who is there for us. If you’re looking for a more systematic prayer life, try ACTS:

ACTS PRAYER: Adoration • Confession • Thanksgiving • Supplication

Adoration for God’s praiseworthiness and his awesome nature.

Confession for lack of trust, then experiencing forgiveness in Jesus.

Thanksgiving for what he has given us and is taking us through.

Supplication for our needs, for others and for his kingdom’s work.

THINGS TO TALK WITH GOD/JESUS ABOUT

CONTINUING ON IN JESUS' STORY

One definition of being a Jesus-follower is “giving all you know about yourself to all you know about God.” This is sadly the opposite of what so many of Jesus’ contemporaries did, especially the religious leaders of his day. Instead of approaching God with humility they looked to impress him with their religious performance.

The more you hang around Jesus, the more you realize that he isn’t impressed with appearances. Maybe that’s why he—the God/man himself—made no grand entry. Instead Jesus shows up as a baby, born in the plainest of circumstances to a peasant girl in a non-descript town. Then he takes on a three-year ministry offering forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God the Father, finally culminating in his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

Something is going on here. You just can’t make this kind of stuff up. It’s all so strange and compelling. If nothing more, the story of Jesus is the very best story that humanity has to offer. The Gospel writers felt that same way and their eagerness to retell Jesus’ remarkable story to any who’d listen pours through their accounts.

Are you increasingly finding yourself caught up in Jesus’ story as well? Do you want it to more deeply influence your life? Then, take on what you learn. If Jesus says to love your enemies, try it out. Or, if he says to show hospitality like the Good Samaritan, then do it.

As you “try on Jesus’ teaching,” you will find it not only making sense, but will also need to look to him for the wisdom, strength and courage to take the risk of making some hard choices. Thankfully his forgiveness is always close at hand in this journey.

WHAT TO STUDY NEXT . JesusStudy.org

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