



WELCOME HOME

« CHILD OF GOD »



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Welcome to God's Family

You are about to start the most joy, love, and hope filled journey of your life!!! Whether you are a brand new believer, a mature follower of Jesus, or simply seeking more truth, this booklet is for you!

This is an introduction to God, His world (called His kingdom) and what is possible in your new life with Jesus. There is even a very special version of the book of Mark from the Bible in the second half of this booklet. This means you can start diving into God's Word right away!

Your new life in Jesus, and this booklet, are designed to **be experienced**. As you read, take time to do each activation to help you fully experience God's truth and all that He has for you. Like being with a dear friend, this booklet isn't about speeding through it or accomplishing something - it's about taking time to be with and enjoy God and the beautiful new life He has for you!

You can do each activity in this book multiple times on your own and with others. If possible, share your responses with a friend or, even better, do the activities in this book together with one or more people. You can go as fast or slow as you'd like and do however many activities seem good to you to do at any one time. As you go through this booklet, you'll want to use a separate notebook, phone, or other device where you can write and draw. Look for special places listed "Challenge" to unlock ways to live out what you are learning.

Just like learning to crawl and then walk and learning to babble and then talk, so learning to walk in and speak the language of God's world will take a little time. So be patient with yourself . . . and have a lot of fun too! Like a proud parent rejoicing when their child takes their first steps and says their first words, **Father God celebrates YOU** with every step you take and every way you start to communicate with Him.



Take a moment, right now, and picture Father God smiling at you and giving you a big hug. Hear Him say to you, "I love you, My child! I Am with you on your journey! Let's walk and talk together."

Just like we brush our teeth and wash our hands everyday, multiple times a day, so applying what we learn in God's kingdom on a regular basis will help us grow. Its not about doing big or complicated things, its about doing small things often. Let's dive into this wonderful journey!



Who God Is

Father God loves you. He has been waiting for you to run into His arms as His dearly loved child. **Jesus**, God's son, offers you forgiveness, healing, hope, and eternal life that starts right now! **Holy Spirit**, God's Spirit, lives in followers of Jesus and will help you get to know God and live in relationship with Him. God is one being who has three parts which are Father, Jesus (the son) and Holy Spirit.

God communicates to us, as His kids, through the Bible, which is His written Word, and through His Holy Spirit.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.- John 3:16 & 17



Draw a picture of yourself (a stick person or simple drawing is great) and draw a heart on your chest. Color in the heart and pray this out loud, "Father God, I give my life to You. Jesus I ask you to forgive me and I receive you into my heart. Holy Spirit, fill me and free me now. Amen"

God is Loving & Good

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. - 1 John 4:16b

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" - Psalm 34:8

Father God

God is love. He's not mad at you. He's not disappointed with you. God is good. God is a good, good Father. He made you and wants to live in relationship with you. God wants to be your father. Usually we are better able to receive God as our good and loving Heavenly Father when we forgive our earthly fathers.



Pray this prayer, out loud, "Father God, thank You that You are love, that You are good, and that You are loving and good to me. I forgive my earthly father and all other father figures for not fully demonstrating You and Your love to me. I release them and ask that You bless them. Please forgive me for any unhealthy ways that I have believed You are like them. I receive You as my good and loving Father. I am so happy that I get to be Your child! Amen."



Draw a picture (a stick person or simple drawing is great) of Father God and you walking side by side and holding hands.



Tell Father God, in your own words, anything that you want to share with Him. You can say this out loud, write it down, or share silently in your heart. God loves when you are fully honest with Him. He wants to hear your questions, your positive and negative emotions, and will love you just as much no matter what you tell Him.

Did you know that PRAYER is simply talking to God and listening for Him to talk back?



When you are done talking to Father God, ask Him if there is anything He wants to tell you. Listen to what He says and write it down if you can.

Jesus

Father God has a Son whose name is Jesus. Jesus walked the earth about 2,000 years ago. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He came to show us what Father God is like. Jesus lived a perfect life. He chose to die a painful death on a cross, taking our place to forgive us for all the wrong things we have done. He rose from the dead after 3 days and is alive waiting to be

in relationship with you! One name for Jesus is Emmanuel which means "God with us." Jesus is with us in the spirit at all times. When we give our lives to Jesus He saves us and becomes our savior, brother and friend. Jesus demonstrated what a normal life for one of God's followers can look like. He told us that, by God's spirit, we could do everything that He did and even more (John 14:12)!

Holy Spirit

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." - Jesus speaking to His disciples in John 14:26

When Jesus rose again He went to be with the Father and gave the Holy Spirit to be with those who know Jesus. Holy Spirit is God's spirit who lives inside followers of Jesus. Holy Spirit helps us walk with God and teaches us God's ways. Holy Spirit is our comforter and teacher. Followers of Jesus can be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive power from God to do the same things that Jesus did and more. Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts that help God's kids live like Jesus (1 Corinthians 12).

3 in 1

God is one and has three parts. People are made in God's image and we have three parts too: body, soul, and spirit. We can talk to God as God, Lord, Father, Jesus, or Holy Spirit. There are even more beautiful and powerful names for God in the Bible, God's Word, that describe what He is like.



Why Are We Disconnected from God?

God loves us and wants to live in relationship with us as His children. However, at some point in our lives we each chose to break our relationship with God and walk away from Him. We chose to go our own way and to live separate from Him. The Bible calls this sin.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- Romans 3:23*



Draw a stick picture of Father God and then draw yourself walking away from Him.



Talk to God or a friend, or write about some of the places in your life where you have sinned and walked away from God.

When we work a job we get paid. When we choose to do the work of sin the payment is death and separation.

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

We can't be good enough to fix ourselves. We can't be good enough on our own to restore ourselves to God. No amount of will power, performance, good deeds, or even being religious will ever fix the disconnection that happened when we chose sin over our relationship with God. While we can't fix ourselves, God gave His own life through Jesus to make a way home for us!

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9



Jesus Is the Only Way

Father God did not want us to live separated from Him so He sent His Son, Jesus, to reconnect us to Him. Jesus lived a perfect life without any sin. He took all the consequences for our sin, brokenness, and bad choices on Himself when He died on the cross in our place. Because He was perfect, death could not hold Him and after 3 days He rose again! Jesus is alive and waiting to live in relationship with YOU! He offers you forgiveness, eternal life, and connection to live in relationships with God.

"That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." - Romans 10:9-10

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:" - John 1:12

Do you want to be fully connected to God, forgiven, and know that you have everlasting life?



If you do, then pray this prayer, out loud:

"Father God, thank You that You love me! I admit that I walked away from You. Jesus, I believe that You died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and that You rose again! I turn away from all the bad things I have done. Jesus, I choose to surrender my life to You today and forever. Save me. Forgive me. Heal me. Holy Spirit, fill me now. As I receive Your forgiveness I also forgive all those who have hurt me. Amen"

When you pray this prayer from your heart you become a Child of God!



Your New Life in Jesus



You have been born again. You get to live your life in relationship with God. You can know that you will go to heaven when you die. You can begin to experience heaven on the inside of you right now. Read the following 3 verses out loud, over yourself.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- John 3:3

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."

- Jesus speaking in John 10:27-30

You Are Adopted

You have been adopted into God's family! You can never be unadopted. You are no longer an orphan. You are now God's beloved son or daughter!



Draw an adoption certificate with your name on it.

And you did not receive the "spirit of religious duty," leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the "Spirit of full acceptance," enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, "Beloved Father!" For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, "You are God's beloved child!" - Romans 8:15-16 TPT

You Are Brand New

Just like a newborn baby born into a healthy, loving family, you are now whole, perfect, loved, and celebrated! Your old nature that wanted to do bad things and live separate from God has died with Jesus on the cross. You are now completely new.

"My old identity has been co-crucified with Messiah and no longer lives; for the nails of his cross crucified me with him. And now the essence of this new life is no longer mine, for the Anointed One lives his life through me—we live in union as one! My new life is empowered by the faith of the Son of God who loves me so much that he gave himself for me, and dispenses his life into mine!" - Galatians 2:20 TPT



Draw a stick figure of Jesus on the cross and draw yourself on the

cross with him. This is your old nature dying with Jesus on the cross.



Draw Jesus laying in a tomb and draw yourself laying next to him. This is your old self who was buried with Jesus.



Draw Jesus walking away from the empty tomb and yourself walking away with him. This is your brand new, born again self who is now resurrected with Jesus.



Say this out loud, over yourself:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| - I am loved | - I am God's child | - I am a new creation |
| - I am forgiven | - I am full of life | - I have a new nature |
| - I am free | - I am healed | - I do what Jesus did |
| - I am whole | - I am victorious | - I have a bright future |
| - I do good things | - I forgive others | - I think healthy thoughts |
| - I read and understand the Bible | - I hear God's voice | |

How did that feel when you said those things about yourself? What if you said this over yourself every day for a week?

Did you know that many things in God's kingdom are voice activated? God spoke creation into being and the world was created. Jesus spoke healing over people and they were healed. When we speak the things of God's kingdom it is powerful. When we speak God's truth out loud it is called "declaring."



Challenge: declare God's truth over yourself and others every day. You can start with what is written above. You can also read an encouraging Bible verse out loud and personalize it to yourself.

Now let's take a few minutes to get to know God and your new self as His child. Keep reading and find out the 4 best and fastest ways to grow in God!



Loved & Loving

God is love. **Everything God does is loving**, because that is who He is. We are His dearly loved children, and are made in His image. We must first know God as a God of love. Then we receive the love that He has for us as a free gift, not because of anything that we do to earn it. Finally, out of this overflow we can give our lives away as lovers of God, ourselves, and others.

Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. Love never fails. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a TPT

Knowing God



- Read 1 Corinthians 13 above out loud saying, "God," "Jesus," "Holy Spirit," or "Father God" in place of "love" and make each phrase specific to you. E.g. "God (Jesus, Holy Spirit, or Father God) is gentle and consistently kind to me." As you say each line, ask Him to show you what it looks like for Him to relate to you in this way. Close your eyes and picture it.



- Say to the Lord out loud, "Lord, please help me receive the love that You have for me."
- Take a deep breath and be still. Close your eyes and rest in His love for you.
- Do the above again and make each line specific by adding in more details about your life. E.g. "Jesus is incredibly patient with me even when I get angry and feel behind at work."

Loving God



Use each line of the Corinthians passage to talk to the Lord, out loud, about how much you love Him. For example, "God (or Holy Spirit, Father, or Jesus), I love that You are so large that nothing scares You. Jesus, I love that You are patient because it is who You are. Father, I love Your gentleness." Go into as much detail as you can about your love for Him.

Your True Identity



You are made in God's image, so read the passage again out loud, and this time say "I am" in each of those places. An example would be, "I am gentle and consistently kind to all."

Loving Others



Ask the Lord to bring to mind specific people that He is calling you to love and how He wants you to practically demonstrate 1 Corinthians 13 to them. Read the passage again out loud and add in the name of the person or people group. An example would be, "I am gentle and consistently kind to homeless people." Share with a partner who God is calling you to love and what it could look like for you to love them well.

When we receive God's love we can love Him back, walk in our true identity, and more easily "love the one" who is in front of us. Love looks like something and should be tangible when we receive and give it away.



Four Ways to Grow

Now that you have surrendered your life to Jesus and been born again, here are 4 ways for you to grow in God.



1. Pray

Prayer is simply talking with God and then also listening for Him to talk with you. Prayer can be any way you communicate with God. You can talk out loud, think silently in your heart/mind, write, dance, sing, draw, pray the Bible, or any number of ways. You can pray anywhere at anytime. You can pray by yourself or with other people.

Write about or share with a friend:

- What are some of the ways you pray now?
- What are some new ways of praying that you would like to try?
- Choose one or more ways listed above and pray to God right now. Make sure you listen to hear what He wants to share back with you. Write down and tell a friend what you feel like He is telling you.



Honest Prayers

When we pray, God loves it when we are fully honest with Him. God already knows everything and it helps us grow in our relationship with Him when we tell Him the full truth of what is going on in our lives. When we choose to be fully honest with God it helps us to let go of the hard, heavy, dark, and untrue things we are carrying. When we give God our hard things and let them go, now our hearts and hand are open to receive His truth, joy, love, and light.

- Practice being as honest as you can with God whenever you talk with Him.
- Take 60 seconds or more right now and tell God honestly anything on your heart to share with Him.



Release & Receive

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
- Jesus speaking in Matthew 11:28-30

A powerful way to connect with God is to both to give Him the hard things you are carrying and also ask for His good things back in return. Use this method with your hands now and several times a week. Help others do this too and it will change both of your lives!



- Cup your hands like a bowl in front of you.
- Think of everything in your life that you don't want to carry anymore. Using your imagination, put those things (ideas, struggles, people, etc.) in your hands. You can take as much time as you want. You don't have to tell anyone what those things are or, if you want to, you can say them out loud to God or another person you are doing this with.
- Now picture Jesus standing in front of you. He has a big smile on His face and is telling you how much He loves you!
- Picture Jesus' hands like a bowl underneath your hands. See His scars where He's already borne the weight and pain of everything in your hands.



- When you're ready, open up your hands and picture yourself releasing all of the things in your hands into Jesus' hands. Tell Him, "Jesus, I give You all of these things."



- Now put your hands back together again like a bowl in front of you.
- Ask Jesus out loud, "Jesus, now that I've given You all these things, what do You want to give me in return?"
- Picture or sense what He is giving you or putting in your hands.
- Share with another person or write down what He showed you.

How to Pray

As you make your home in Jesus and let His Words be at home in you, you can ask God for things. Abide means to make your home in.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." - Jesus speaking in John 15:7

Jesus' followers once asked Him how to pray and He told them to pray like this.



Pray this prayer back to God right now:

"Pray like this: 'Our Beloved Father, dwelling in the heavenly realms, may the glory of your name be the center on which our lives turn. Manifest your kingdom realm, and cause your every purpose to be fulfilled on earth, just as it is in heaven. We acknowledge you as our Provider of all we need each day. Forgive us the wrongs we have done as we ourselves release forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Rescue us every time we face tribulation and set us free from evil. For you are the King who rules with power and glory forever. Amen.' - Matthew 6:9-13

*"And when you pray, make sure you forgive the faults of others so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you."
- Matthew 6:14*

As you pray you can also spend time intentionally listening to God. One of the best ways to start learning to hear from God is by reading the Bible and asking Him to speak to you through it. We will share more on that in the next section and more about hearing from God later on too.



Challenge: Do release & receive one or more times each week.



2. Bible

The Bible is God's Word; it is His manual to us for life. It is the most important book ever written. It isn't just a book rather it is actually alive! God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, wrote the Bible through many different people over hundreds of years. When we surrender our lives to Jesus now Holy Spirit lives inside of us. That means that we get to read God's Word with the author inside of us. Holy Spirit will help us understand the Bible and show us how to live out what we are reading in our everyday lives. You do not need any special training to read the Bible.

The Bible has a section called the Old Testament that was written before Jesus was born and a section called the New Testament which was written after Jesus was born. The Bible has many different books and kinds of

writing in it. Each book has chapters and verses. These are written out like this: Book Name Chapter#: Verse# - Ex John 3:16 (the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16). In the Bible we find things by books, chapters and verses. To find where a book is, look it up in the table of contents at the beginning, then turn to that page.

The best place to start reading the Bible is in the first 4 books of the New Testament. These books are called The Gospels. Start with the book of Mark that is included at the end of this manual. Then read John after that. The Bible can also be called the Scriptures or God's Word. Jesus is the "word made flesh" so when we read the Bible we are getting to know Jesus (John 1:14).

The more you eat, the hungrier you get:

In the natural we eat when we are hungry. However, in God's kingdom, the more of His Word we eat, the hungrier we get for God. For this reason we must read the Bible even when we don't "feel" hungry for it. Read it every day, whether you feel like it or not. The more you read, the more you will want to read!

Building with the Bible

As you read, invite the Holy Spirit to lead you and teach you (1 John 2:27). Holy Spirit will teach you and will bring to mind things in the Bible for you to read. When you read the Bible it is like gathering building materials for your life. The more you read and get inside of you, the more materials the Holy Spirit has to work with! He will bring to mind the materials and places in God's word you need to help you build a strong life in every situation.

1. Get a Bible



- Start with the book of Mark at the end of this booklet.
- If you have a smart phone go to the YouVersion Bible app and get a free Bible.
- Get a paper Bible. You can ask other followers of Jesus to help you get one.
- There are different translations of the Bible so pick one that is easier for you to understand. The book of Mark in this booklet is from a translation called, "The Passion Translation."

Read or Listen to the Bible Every Day

2. Read the Bible



- Start reading the Bible in the book of Mark and then John.
- Read some every day. You can also listen to the Bible online.
- Have a plan for going through the Bible. Read a book at a time or find a Bible reading plan on YouVersion online or another place. You can find plans for different topics and different lengths of time.

3. Connect with the Bible

- As you read the Bible, ask God to speak to you and help you apply what you are reading to your life.
- Use the method below to connect with the Bible.



A. Choose a Scripture

Pick a Bible passage anywhere from a few verses all the way up to a whole chapter. Shorter is better to start. If possible, read the passage out loud. It is helpful to write out the verse or verses you are focusing on and even mark different words or phrases that stand out to you.

Pray, “Lord, what are You saying to me today? Please lead and speak to me as I read.” As you read, ask the Lord for **one thing** that He really wants you to focus on.



B. Observation

Write down one or two sentences of what you observe about the passage. Is there a lesson to learn, an example to follow, a promise to embrace, a way to know Jesus more, etc.?



C. Application

Write down one or two sentences: How will I apply what I have read to my life today? What is God saying to me? How will I be different because of reading this? What action will I take? Be as specific as possible.



D. Prayer

Write out a short prayer based on the verse, application, and anything the Lord showed you.

Connect with the Bible in a Group

You can do this same thing with another person or a group of people. When you do this with others:

- Make sure you all pick the same Bible passage.
- Read the passage out loud and then journal the “observe,” “apply,” and “pray” sections on your own.
- Have each person read out loud what they have written without commenting or explaining what they wrote.
- Share a few short stories or testimonies of what God is doing in your lives.
- Have each person share one short personal prayer request and close in prayer.

Connect with the Bible Example



Scripture

*“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”
- John 15:1-2*



Observation

Jesus, is my source. Father takes things away for my good and helps me focus. Even good things He adjusts to make better.



Application

Today I will look to see what Father is removing and adjusting. With joy I will trust that it is for my good, even if it means letting go of things that I am attached to.



Prayer

“Father, You know it’s been hard for me to limit my options and say ‘no,’ but now I’m reminded that You are already at work in this process! Today please help me to see what you are doing so I can fully let go of what you are taking away and joyfully embrace areas in my life You want to change.”



Challenge: Read or connect with the Bible every day.



Bonus Challenge: Connect with the Bible in a group once a week.



3. Connect with Believers

Since you are now part of God's family it is important to spend time with your spiritual family so you can all grow in God together. Followers of Jesus can also be called "believers" or "Christians" and meet together in churches. Churches can meet in any size building or even in homes. Ask God to help you find a church nearby that preaches Jesus where you can put down roots and grow. **Connect once or more** a week with other followers of Jesus in your area. Churches usually have a service once a week with a time of singing worship to God and a message. In addition to going to a church service you can meet with believers to study the Bible, pray together, have fun, and grow in community.

Ask God to help you find other believers who have followed Jesus longer than you who can help you grow. It is okay to visit a couple of different churches or Christian groups before you commit to be a part of that church or group. Ask the Lord to lead you to a place and a people who feel like home. No place or group of believers is perfect and we **MUST** have healthy Christian community to grow in God. Healthy mature followers of Jesus can help you confirm what you are hearing from God or lovingly question and help you hear better. Whatever you feel you hear from God must be in agreement with the Bible and should be confirmed by healthy mature believers who you walk in relationship with.



Challenge: Connect with believers one or more times a week.



4. Share

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. "

- Acts 10:38

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. - Jesus speaking in John 14:12

Share about Jesus, what He has done for you and invite others to know Him. You can also do what Jesus did by loving people, praying for others, healing the sick in Jesus' name, etc.

Connect with other people with a heart to love them, help them encounter (experience) God's love, and invite them to know Jesus. As you talk with each person, stay connected to their heart and help them encounter God's love. You can help people encounter God's love by showing them kindness, encouraging them, offering to pray for them, healing them in Jesus' name, or any number of ways. As you are connected to someone and they are experiencing God's love, invite them to know Jesus or go deeper with Him.



Try each one of the following. It's best to do each one with someone you know and someone you don't know. You can do these one at a time with different people, do them all together, or pick one or two depending on what most helps the person in front of you experience God's love.



- **Connect** with a person by greeting them and start to have a conversation. You can talk about anything whether it is spiritual or not.



- **Pray:** Ask a person, "How can I pray for you?" After they share something, continue talking like you are having a normal conversation and pray for them out loud, with your eyes open.

- It can help to say, "I like to pray for people, how can I pray for you?"
- You can ask to pray for people while waiting in line at a store, getting food, or if someone asks you, "Can I help you with anything else?"
- You can say, "I know this doesn't have anything to do with (whatever you were just talking about) but I like to pray for people. How can I pray for you?"



- **Heal:** Ask a person if they have any pain in their body. If they do ask if you can pray for them to be healed. If they say, "Yes" then pray this with authority:
 - "Holy Spirit come and touch this person."
 - "Pain, get out now in Jesus' name."
 - "(List the specific condition(s)) be healed right now in Jesus name. Amen"
 - Now ask them to test out their condition and see if it is any better. If it is 100% healed praise God! If there is any improvement, thank God for that improvement and pray the prayer above again. If they don't feel any improvement yet encourage them and pray the prayer above again. Encourage them that God does something every time we pray.

"But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed." - Isaiah 53:5 NLT, talking about Jesus

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." - Jesus speaking in Matthew 10:8



- **Encounter:** Do release & receive from earlier in the book



- **Encourage:** Share a short story of something God has done for or healed in you. When you share a God story it gives the other person faith that God can do something good like that for them too! (Revelation 19:10)



• **Testify:** Share how you met Jesus and invite another person to do the same. Pick two words that describe your life before Jesus and two words that describe your life after Jesus and share like this.

- “There was a time in my life when I was _____ & _____ (two words before you met Jesus), then I surrendered my life to Jesus and now I am _____ & _____ (two positive words about your life after you met Jesus). Do you have a story like that?”

• **Share the Gospel:** See the next section



Challenge: Share God's love with one person each day.



Share the Gospel

Invite others to Know Jesus

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . - Romans 1:16a

The gospel means good news. Sharing the gospel means sharing the good news of Jesus with others and inviting them to give their lives to Jesus. Here is a simple way to share Jesus. Use these 4 hand motions and phrases to remember. You can also share John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. - John 3:16

You can ask people,

- “Do you know for sure if you died tonight that you would go to heaven? Do you want to know how you can know for sure?”
- Can I share my favorite Bible verse with you to encourage you? (Then share John 3:16 and explain it using the phrases on the next page.)



LOVE

Say: "God loves us and wants us to be with Him."

Action: Hug yourself.



SIN

Say: "When we do bad things, we walk away from God."

Action: Put your hand out and look away, like you are rejecting someone.



GIFT

Say: "Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross to forgive us, and rose from the dead. He is alive and waiting to be in relationship with you!"

Action: Put your hands out like Jesus dying on the cross.



CHOICE

Say: "This leaves us with a choice. We can reject what Jesus has done and stay separated from God. Or we can accept what Jesus has done, turn away from the bad we have done and receive His forgiveness. Would you like to do that right now?"

Action: Put your hand on your chin and look like you are making a big decision.

Praying to receive Jesus

When people say that, "Yes" they want to receive Jesus. Pray with them a simple prayer something like this: "Thank you God that You love me. I admit that I walked away from You. I believe, Jesus, that You died and rose again to forgive me of my sins. I receive your forgiveness and choose to give You my life. Amen"



Challenge: Invite others to know Jesus one or more times a week.



Do Good & Keep Growing

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ' - Acts 10:38

As you continue to grow as a child of God begin to simply do good. Begin to do good in every way that you know to do and trust that God will use it to bring His kingdom.



Listen & Write



One final way you can keep growing in God is to **ask Him to speak to you everyday** and write down what you feel you are hearing without stopping. Picture Jesus sitting next to you and ask Him what He wants to speak to you. Write down what you feel and sense He says without analyzing anything. When you are done, read it again and see what you truly sense is God speaking to you.

Ask 2 or 3 other healthy mature believers who have walked with Jesus longer than you to read what you write and help you discern what you are hearing from God. Give them permission to question things that they don't feel like are from God and to encourage you when things are from God. At first send them everything you write without censoring anything. After a few weeks or when they agree you are consistently hearing well from the Lord, then just send them when you sense God telling you bigger things for your life.

Everything God tells us will be in agreement with the Bible and should also be confirmed by other healthy mature followers of Jesus with whom we walk in relationship. Learning to hear from God for ourselves is a journey just like children learn to hear from and follow their parents.

Keep growing! You will keep growing in God for the rest of your life! Connect with God through his Word and His Spirit everyday. Connect and fellowship with other believers several times a week. Share God's love and invite people to know Jesus. Do what Jesus did. Receive God's

love, healing, and wholeness for your life every day and then give it away to those around you!

Grow in Kingdom Culture

This booklet was written using portions of the Kingdom Culture Curriculum by Kristen D'Arpa Cushing. Once you've completed this booklet, if you'd like to keep growing with other material like it please contact us at www.KingdomCulture.Global/Espanol or scan this QR code. We have kingdom equipping material for children, youth, young adults and adults and can help YOU facilitate a Kingdom Culture club, small group, outreach, or training in your area.

Scan Here to connect and get more info:



A word from the author:

Thank you for taking the time to go through this booklet. I gave my life to Jesus as a teenager and have been writing training material ever since. I believe that God has a powerful identity for you to embrace and a great purpose for your life! Let Him work in you to receive heaven (His kingdom) into your earth (i.e. your life) and then work through you to release heaven to those around you. My team and I would be honored to continue to journey with you and have many more resources for you to grow in and share with those you love. With much Joy in Jesus!

- Kristen D'Arpa Cushing

The next section of this booklet is the Gospel of Mark from the Passion Translation. You can find more online versions of the Bible by going to www.YouVersion.com or www.bible.com.



The Book of Mark

CHAPTER 1

The Wonderful News

1This is the beginning of the wonderful news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

2It starts with Isaiah the prophet, who wrote:

Listen! I am sending my messenger ahead of you
and he will prepare your way!

3He is a thunderous voice of one
who shouts in the wilderness:

"Prepare your hearts
for the coming of the Lord Yahweh,
and clear a straight path
inside your hearts for him!"

4John the Baptizer was the messenger who appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the complete cancellation of sins. 5A steady stream of people came to be dipped in the Jordan River as they publicly confessed their sins. They came from all over southern Israel, including nearly all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 6John wore a rough garment made from camel hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and honey. 7And this is the message he kept preaching: "There is a man coming after me who is greater and a lot more powerful than I am. I'm not even worthy to bend down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8I've baptized you into water, but he will baptize you into the Spirit of Holiness!"

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9One day, Jesus came from the Galilean village of Nazareth and had John immerse him in the Jordan River. 10The moment Jesus rose up out of the water, John saw the heavenly realm split open, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. 11At the same time, a voice spoke from heaven, saying:

"You are my Son, my cherished one,
and my greatest delight is in you!"

12Immediately after this he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go into an uninhabited desert region. 13He remained there in the wilderness for forty days, enduring the ordeals of Satan's tests. He encountered wild animals, but also angels who appeared and ministered to his needs.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen to Follow Him

14Later on, after John the Baptizer was arrested, Jesus went back into the region of Galilee and preached the wonderful gospel of God's kingdom. 15His message was this: "At last the fulfillment of the age has come! It is time for God's kingdom to be experienced in its fullness! Turn your lives back to God and put your trust in the hope-filled gospel!"

16As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he noticed two brothers fishing: Simon and Andrew. He watched them as they were casting their nets into the sea 17and said to them, "Come follow me and I will transform you into fishers of men instead of fish!" 18Immediately they dropped their nets and left everything behind to follow Jesus. 19Walking a little farther, Jesus found two other brothers sitting in a boat, along with their father, mending their nets. Their names were Jacob and John, and their father Zebedee. 20Jesus immediately walked up to them and invited the two brothers to become his followers. Jacob and John dropped their nets, stood up, left their father in the boat with the hired men, and followed Jesus.

People Stunned by Jesus' Teachings

21Then Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum, and he immediately started teaching on the Sabbath day in the synagogue. 22The people were awestruck by his teaching, because he taught in a way that demonstrated God's authority, which was quite unlike the religious scholars.

23Suddenly, during the meeting, a demon-possessed man screamed out, 24"Hey! Leave us alone! Jesus the victorious, I know who you are. You're God's Holy One and you have come to destroy us!"

25Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Silence! You are bound! Come out of him!"

26The man's body shook violently in spasms, and the demon hurled him to the floor until it finally came out of him with a deafening shriek! 27The crowd was awestruck and kept saying among themselves, "What is this new teaching that comes with such authority? With merely a word he commands demons to come out and they obey him!"

28So the reports about Jesus spread like wildfire throughout every community in Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many

29Now, as soon as they left the meeting, they went straight to Simon and Andrew's house, along with Jacob and John. 30Simon's mother-in-law was bedridden, sick with a high fever, so the first thing they did was to tell Jesus about her. 31He walked up to her bedside, gently took her hand, and raised her up! Her fever disappeared and she began to serve them.

32Later in the day, just after the Sabbath ended at sunset, the people kept bringing to Jesus all who were sick and tormented by demons, 33until the whole village was crowded around the house. 34Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. But he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who he really was.

Jesus Prays, Preaches, Heals, and Casts Out Demons

35The next morning, Jesus got up long before daylight, left the house while it was dark, and made his way to a secluded place to give himself to prayer. 36Later, Simon and his friends searched for him, 37and when they finally tracked him down, they told him, "Everyone is looking for you—they want you!"

38Jesus replied, "We have to go on to the surrounding villages so that I can share my message with the people there, for that is my mission." 39So he went throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the Jewish synagogues and casting out demons.

40On one occasion, a leper came and threw himself down in front of Jesus, pleading for his healing, saying, "You have the power to heal me right now if only you really want to!" 41Being deeply moved with tender compassion, Jesus reached out and touched the skin of the leper and told him, "Of course I want you to be healed—so now, be cleansed!" 42Instantly his leprous sores completely disappeared and his skin became smooth! 43Jesus sent him away with a very stern warning, 44saying,

"Don't say anything to anyone about what just happened, but go find a priest and show him that you've been healed. Then bring the offering that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a living testimony to everyone."
45But no sooner did the man leave than he began to proclaim his healing publicly and tell the story everywhere.

Jesus' growing fame prevented him from entering the villages openly, which forced him to remain in isolated places. Even so, a steady stream of people flocked to him from everywhere.

Chapter 2

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

1Several days later, Jesus returned to Capernaum, and the news quickly spread that he was back in town. 2Soon there were so many people crowded inside the house to hear him that there was no more room, even outside the door.

While Jesus was preaching the word of God, 3four men arrived, carrying a paralyzed man. 4But when they realized that they couldn't even get near him because of the crowd, they went up on top of the house and tore away the roof above Jesus' head. And when they had broken through, they lowered the paralyzed man on a stretcher right down in front of him! 5When Jesus saw the extent of their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are now forgiven."

6This offended some of the religious scholars who were present, and they reasoned among themselves, 7"Who does he think he is to speak this way? This is blasphemy for sure! Only God himself can forgive sins!"

8Jesus supernaturally perceived their thoughts and said to them, "Why are you being so skeptical? 9Which is easier, to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are now forgiven,' or, 'Stand up and walk!'" 10But to convince you that the Son of Man has been given authority to forgive sins, 11I say to this man, 'Stand up, pick up your stretcher, and walk home.' " 12Immediately the man was healed and sprang to his feet in front of everyone and left for home.

When the crowd witnessed this miracle, they were awestruck. They shouted praises to God and said, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew) to Follow Him

13Jesus went out to walk near Lake Galilee, and a massive crowd gathered, so he taught them. 14As he walked along, he found Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at a tax booth, collecting taxes. He approached him and said, “Come follow me.” Immediately he got up from his booth and began to follow Jesus.

15Later, Jesus and his disciples went to have a meal with Levi. Among the guests in Levi’s home were many tax collectors and notable sinners sharing a meal with Jesus, for there were many kinds of people who followed him. 16But when the religious scholars and the Pharisees found out that Jesus was keeping company and dining with sinners and tax collectors, they were indignant. So they approached Jesus’ disciples and said to them, “Why is it that someone like Jesus defiles himself by eating with sinners and tax collectors?”

17But when Jesus overheard their complaint, he said to them, “Who goes to the doctor for a cure? Those who are well or those who are sick? I have not come to call the ‘righteous,’ but those who are sinners and bring them to repentance.”

Jesus Questioned about Fasting

18One time, the disciples of John the Baptizer and the Pharisees were fasting. So they came to Jesus and asked, “Why is it that John’s disciples and disciples of the Pharisees are fasting but your disciples are not?”

19Jesus answered, “How can the sons of the bridal chamber fast when the bridegroom is next to them? As long as the bridegroom is with them they won’t, 20but the days of fasting will come when the Bridegroom is taken from them.

21“And who would mend worn-out clothing with new fabric? When the new cloth shrinks, it will rip, making the tear worse than before. 22And who would pour new wine into an old wineskin? Eventually the wine will ferment and make the wineskin burst, losing everything—the wine will be spilled and the wineskin ruined. Instead, new wine is always poured into new wineskins.”

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath

23One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of wheat. The disciples were hungry, so they plucked off some heads of

grain to eat. 24But when some of the Pharisees saw what was happening, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples shouldn't be harvesting grain on the Sabbath!"

25Jesus responded, "Haven't you ever read what King David and his men did when they were hungry? 26They entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the sacred bread of God's presence. They violated the law by eating bread that only the priests were allowed to eat. But there is one here who is even greater than the temple."

27Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for the sake of people, and not people for the Sabbath. 28For this reason the Son of Man exercises his lordship over the Sabbath."

Chapter 3

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

1Then Jesus left them and went again into the synagogue, where he encountered a man who had an atrophied, paralyzed hand. 2Everyone was watching Jesus closely to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath, giving them a reason to accuse him of breaking Sabbath rules. 3Jesus said to the man with the paralyzed hand, "Stand here in the middle of the room."

4Then he turned to all those gathered there and said, "Is it against the law to do evil on the Sabbath or to do good? To destroy a life or to save one?" But no one answered him a word.

5Then looking around at everyone, Jesus was moved with indignation and grieved by the hardness of their hearts and said to the man, "Now stretch out your hand!" As he stretched out his hand, it was instantly healed!

6After this happened, the Pharisees left abruptly and began to plot together with the friends and supporters of Herod Antipas on how they would kill Jesus.

Massive Crowds Follow Jesus

7Once again Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, but a massive crowd of people followed him from all around the provinces of Galilee and southern Israel. 8Vast crowds came from Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and from Lebanon. Large numbers of people

swarmed in from everywhere when they heard of him and his wonderful works.

9The crowd pressed so closely to Jesus that he instructed his disciples to bring him a small boat to get into and keep from being crushed by the crowd. 10For he had healed so many that the sick kept pushing forward just so they could touch Jesus. 11And whenever a demon saw him, it would throw the person down at Jesus' feet, screaming out, "You are the Son of God!" 12But Jesus would silence the demons and sternly order them not to reveal who he was.

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles

13Afterward, Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to himself the men he wanted to be his close companions, so they went up with him. 14He appointed the Twelve, whom he named apostles. He wanted them to be continually at his side as his friends, and so that he could send them out to preach 15and have authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons.

16He appointed his Twelve and gave Simon the nickname Peter the Rock. 17And he gave the brothers, Jacob and John, the sons of Zebedee, the nickname Benay-Regah, which means "passionate sons." 18The others were Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Jacob the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Nationalist, 19and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus and the Ruler of Demons

20Then Jesus went home, but once again a large crowd gathered around him, which prevented him from even eating a meal. 21When his own family heard that he was there, they went out to seize him, for they said, "He's insane!"

22The religious scholars who arrived from Jerusalem were saying, "Satan has possessed him! He casts out demons by the authority of the prince of demons!" 23Jesus called them to himself and spoke to them using parables. "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24No kingdom can endure if it is divided against itself, 25and a fragmented household will not be able to stand, for it is divided. 26And if Satan fights against himself he will not endure, and his end has come."

27Jesus said to them, "Listen. No one is able to break into a mighty

man's house and steal his property unless he first overpowers the mighty man and ties him up. Then his entire house can be plundered and his possessions taken. 28I tell you this timeless truth: All sin will be forgiven, even all the blasphemies that are spoken. 29But there can never be forgiveness for the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, for he is guilty of an eternal sin!" 30(This is because they said he was empowered by a demon spirit.)

Members of Jesus' True Family

31Then Jesus' mother and his brothers came and stood outside and sent a message to him, asking that he come out and speak with them. 32When the crowd sitting around Jesus heard this, they spoke up, and said to him, "Jesus, your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

33He answered them, "Who is my true mother and my true brothers?" 34Then looking in the eyes of those who were sitting in a circle around him, he said, "Here are my true family members. 35For whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, and my mother!"

Chapter 4

Parable of the Sower

1Once again Jesus went to teach the people at the shore of Lake Galilee and a massive crowd surrounded him. The crowd was so huge that he had to get into a boat and teach the people from there. 2He taught them many things by using parables to illustrate spiritual truths, saying:

3"Consider this: A sower went out to sow. 4As he sowed some fell along the beaten path and soon the birds came and ate it. 5Some fell onto gravel with no topsoil and quickly sprouted since the soil had no depth. 6But when the days grew hot, the sprouts were scorched and withered because they had insufficient roots. 7Some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8But some fell onto good, rich soil that kept producing a good harvest. Some yielded thirty, some sixty—and some a hundredfold! 9If you understand this, then you need to respond."

The Purpose of Parables

10Afterward, Jesus' disciples and those close to him remained behind to ask Jesus about his parables. 11He said to them, "The privilege of intimately knowing the mystery of God's kingdom realm has been granted

to you, but not to the others, where everything is revealed in parables. 12“For even when they see what I do, they will not understand, and when they hear what I say, they will learn nothing, otherwise they would repent and be forgiven.”

13Then he said to them, “If you don’t understand this parable, how will you understand any parable? 14Let me explain: The farmer sows the message of the kingdom. 15What falls on the beaten path represents those who hear the message, but immediately Satan appears and snatches it from their hearts. 16And what is sown on gravel represents those who hear the message and receive it joyfully, 17but because their hearts fail to sink a deep root, they don’t endure for long. For when trouble or persecution comes on account of the message, they immediately wilt and fall away. 18And what is sown among thorns represents those who hear the message, 19but they allow the cares of this life and the seduction of wealth and the desires for other things to crowd out and choke the message so that it produces nothing.

20“But what is sown on good soil represents those who open their hearts to receive the message and their lives bear good fruit—some yield a harvest of thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold!”

Parable of the Lamp

21He also gave them this parable: “No one lights a lamp only to place it under a basket or under the bed. It is meant to be placed on a lampstand. 22For there is nothing that is hidden that won’t be disclosed, and there is no secret that won’t be brought out into the light! 23If you understand what I’m saying, you need to respond!”

24Then he said to them, “Be diligent to understand the meaning behind everything you hear, for as you do, more understanding will be given to you. And according to your longing to understand, much more will be added to you. 25For those who listen with open hearts will receive more revelation. But those who don’t listen with open hearts will lose what little they think they have!”

Parable of the Growing Seed

26Jesus also told them this parable: “God’s kingdom realm is like someone spreading seed on the ground. 27He goes to bed and gets up, day after day, and the seed sprouts and grows tall, though he knows not how. 28All by itself it sprouts, and the soil produces a crop; first the green

stem, then the head on the stalk, and then the fully developed grain in the head. 29Then, when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts the sickle to the grain, because harvest time has come."

Parable of the Tiny Mustard Seed

30And he told them this parable: "How can I describe God's kingdom realm? Let me illustrate it with this parable. 31It is like the mustard seed, the tiniest of all the seeds, 32yet when it springs up and grows, it becomes the largest plant in the garden, with so many large spreading branches, even birds can nest in its shade."

Jesus Always Taught Using Parables

33Jesus used many parables such as these as he taught the people, and they learned according to their ability to understand. 34He never spoke to them without using parables, but would wait until he was alone with his disciples to explain to them their meanings.

Jesus Stills a Storm

35That same day, after it grew dark, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." 36Leaving the crowd behind, the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting, and they took him with them. Other boats sailed with them. 37Suddenly, as they were crossing the lake, a ferocious storm arose, with violent winds and waves that were crashing into the boat until it was nearly swamped. 38But Jesus was calmly sleeping in the stern, resting on a cushion. 39So they shook him awake, saying, "Teacher, don't you even care that we are all about to die!" Fully awake, he rebuked the storm and shouted to the sea, "Hush! Be still!" All at once the wind stopped howling and the water became perfectly calm.

40Then he turned to his disciples and said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Haven't you learned to trust yet?" 41But they were overwhelmed with fear and awe and said to one another, "Who is this man who has such authority that even the wind and waves obey him?"

Chapter 5

A Demonized Man Set Free

1They arrived at the other side of the lake, at the region of the Gerasenes. 2As Jesus stepped ashore, a demon-possessed madman came out of the

graveyard and confronted him. 3The man had been living there among the tombs, and no one was able to restrain him, not even with chains. 4For every time they attempted to chain his hands and feet with shackles, he would snap the chains and break the shackles in pieces. He was so strong that no one had the power to subdue him. 5Day and night he could be found lurking in the cemetery or in the vicinity, shrieking and cutting himself with stones!

6When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran to him and threw himself down before him, 7shouting at the top of his lungs, "Leave me alone, Jesus, Son of the Most High God! Swear in God's name that you won't torture me!" 8(For Jesus had already said to him, "Come out of that man, you demon spirit!")

9Jesus said to him, "What is your name?"

"Mob," he answered. "They call me Mob because there are thousands of us in his body!" 10He begged Jesus repeatedly not to expel them out of the region.

11Nearby there was a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside. 12The demons begged him, "Send us into the pigs. Let us enter them!"

13So Jesus gave them permission, and the demon horde immediately came out of the man and went into the pigs! This caused the herd to rush madly down the steep slope and fall into the lake, drowning about two thousand pigs!

14At this, the herdsmen ran to the nearby villages, telling everyone along the way what had happened, and the people came out to see for themselves. 15When they found Jesus, they saw the demonized man sitting there, properly clothed and in his right mind. Seeing what had happened to the man possessed by many demons, the people became afraid. 16Those who had witnessed this miracle reported the news to the people and included what had happened to the pigs. 17Then they asked Jesus to leave their region.

18And as Jesus began to get into the boat to depart, the man who had been set free from demons asked him, "Could I go with you?" 19Jesus answered, "No," but said to him, "Go back to your home and to your family and tell them what the Lord has done for you. Tell them how he had mercy on you."

20 So the man left and went into the region of Jordan and parts of Syria to tell everyone he met about what Jesus had done for him, and all the people marveled!

Two Miracles—Healing and Resurrection

21 After Jesus returned from across the lake, a huge crowd of people quickly gathered around him on the shoreline. 22 Just then, a man saw that it was Jesus, so he pushed through the crowd and threw himself down at his feet. His name was Jairus, a Jewish official who was in charge of the synagogue. 23 He pleaded with Jesus, saying over and over, "Please come with me! My little daughter is at the point of death, and she's only twelve years old! Come and lay your hands on her and heal her and she will live!"

24 Immediately Jesus went with him, and the huge crowd followed, pressing in on him from all sides.

25 Now, in the crowd that day was a woman who had suffered horribly from continual bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had endured a great deal under the care of various doctors, yet in spite of spending all she had on their treatments, she was getting worse instead of better. 27 When she heard about Jesus' healing power, she pushed through the crowd and came up from behind him and touched his prayer shawl. 28 For she kept saying to herself, "If I could touch even his clothes, I know I will be healed." 29 As soon as her hand touched him, her bleeding immediately stopped! She knew it, for she could feel her body instantly being healed of her disease!

30 Jesus knew at once that someone had touched him, for he felt the power that always surged around him had passed through him for someone to be healed. He turned and spoke to the crowd, saying, "Who touched my clothes?"

31 His disciples answered, "What do you mean, who touched you? Look at this huge crowd—they're all pressing up against you." 32 But Jesus' eyes swept across the crowd, looking for the one who had touched him for healing.

33 When the woman who experienced this miracle realized what had happened to her, she came before him, trembling with fear, and threw herself down at his feet, saying, "I was the one who touched you." And she told him her story of what had just happened.

34Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, because you dared to believe, your faith has healed you. Go with peace in your heart, and be free from your suffering!"

35And before he had finished speaking, people arrived from Jairus' house and pushed through the crowd to give Jairus the news: "There's no need to trouble the master any longer—your daughter has died." 36But Jesus refused to listen to what they were told and said to the Jewish official, "Don't yield to fear. All you need to do is to keep on believing." 37So they left for his home, but Jesus didn't allow anyone to go with them except Peter and the two brothers, Jacob and John.

38When they arrived at the home of the synagogue ruler, they encountered a noisy uproar among the people, for they were all weeping and wailing. 39Upon entering the home, Jesus said to them, "Why all this grief and weeping? Don't you know the girl is not dead but merely asleep?" 40Then everyone began to ridicule and make fun of him. But he threw them all outside.

Then he took the child's father and mother and his three disciples and went into the room where the girl was lying. 41He tenderly clasped the child's hand in his and said to her in Aramaic, "Talitha kum," which means, "Little girl, wake up from the sleep of death." 42Instantly the twelve-year-old girl sat up, stood to her feet, and started walking around the room! Everyone was overcome with astonishment in seeing this miracle! 43Jesus had them bring her something to eat. And he cautioned them repeatedly that they were to tell no one about what had happened.

Chapter 6

Jesus Rejected in Nazareth

1Afterward, Jesus left Capernaum and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. 2On the Sabbath, he went to teach in the synagogue. Everyone who heard his teaching was overwhelmed with astonishment. They said among themselves, "What incredible wisdom has been given to him! Where did he receive such profound insights? And what mighty miracles flow through his hands! Isn't this Mary's son, the carpenter, the brother of Jacob, Joseph, Judah, and Simon? And don't his sisters all live here in Nazareth?" And they took offense at him. 4Jesus said to them, "A prophet is treated with honor everywhere except in his own hometown, among his relatives, and in his own house." 5He

was unable to do any great miracle in Nazareth, except to heal a few sick people by laying his hands upon them. 6He was amazed at the depth of their unbelief!

Then Jesus went out into the different villages and taught the people.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

7Jesus gathered his twelve disciples and imparted to them his authority to cast out demons. Then he sent them out in pairs with these instructions: 8-9"Take only your staff and the sandals on your feet—no bread, no knapsack, no extra garment, and no money. 10And whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave the area. 11Whatever community does not welcome you or receive your message, leave it behind. And as you go, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

12So they went out and preached publicly that everyone should repent. 13They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Death of John the Baptizer

14King Herod soon heard about Jesus, for the name of Jesus was on everyone's lips. Some were even saying about him, "John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead, and that's why miraculous powers flow from him!" 15Others said, "No, he's Elijah!" While others said, "He's a prophet, like one of the prophets of old!"

16When Herod heard what the people were saying, he concluded, "I beheaded John, and now he's raised from the dead!" 17-18For Herod had John arrested and thrown into prison for repeatedly rebuking him in public, saying, "You have no right to marry Herodias, the wife of your brother Philip! You are violating the law of God!"

19This infuriated Herodias, and she held a bitter grudge against him and wanted John executed. 20But Herod both feared and stood in awe of John and kept him safely in custody, because he was convinced that he was a righteous and holy man. Every time Herod heard John speak, it disturbed his soul, but he was drawn to him and was intrigued by his words.

21But Herodias found her opportunity to have John killed—it was on the king's birthday! Herod prepared a great banquet and invited all his

officials, military commanders, and the leaders of the province of Galilee to celebrate with him on his birthday. 22On the day of the feast, his stepdaughter, the daughter of Herodias, came to honor the king with a beautiful dance, and she flattered him. Her dancing greatly pleased the king and his guests, so he said to the girl, "You can ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you!" 23And he repeated it in front of everyone, with a vow to complete his promise to her: "Anything you desire and it will be yours! I'll even share my kingdom with you!"

24She immediately left the room and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" Her mother answered, "The head of John the Baptizer on a platter!" 25So she hurried back to the king and made her request: "I want you to bring me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter—and I want it right now!"

26Deeply grieved, the king regretted his promise to her, but since he had made his vow in front of all his honored guests, he couldn't deny her request. 27So without delay the king ordered an executioner to bring John's head, and he went and beheaded John in prison. 28He brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl brought it to her mother. 29When John's followers heard what had happened, they came and removed his body and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus Multiplies Food to Feed Five Thousand

30The apostles returned from their mission and gathered around Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught.

31There was such a swirl of activity around Jesus, with so many people coming and going, that they were unable to even eat a meal. So Jesus said to his disciples, "Come, let's take a break and find a secluded place where you can rest a while." 32They slipped away and left by sailboat for a deserted spot. 33But many of the people saw them leaving and realized where they were headed, so they took off running along the shore. Then people from the surrounding towns joined them in the chase, and a large crowd got there ahead of them.

34By the time Jesus came ashore, a massive crowd was waiting. At the sight of them, his heart was filled with compassion, because they seemed like wandering sheep who had no shepherd. So he taught them many wonderful things.

35Late that afternoon, his disciples said, "It's getting really late and we're

here in this remote place with nothing to eat. 36You should send the crowds away so they can go into the surrounding villages and buy food.” 37But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.”

“Are you sure?” they replied. “You really want us to go buy them supper? It would cost a small fortune to feed all these thousands of hungry people.”

38“How many loaves of bread do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” After they had looked around, they came back and said, “Five—plus a couple of fish.”

39Then he instructed them to organize the crowd and have them sit down in groups on the grass. 40So they had them sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, gazed into heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread and the two fish and distributed them to his disciples to serve the people—and the food was multiplied in front of their eyes! 42Everyone had plenty to eat and was fully satisfied. 43Then the twelve disciples picked up what remained, and each of them ended up with a basket full of leftovers! 44Altogether, five thousand families were fed that day!

Jesus Walks on Water

45After everyone had their meal, Jesus instructed his disciples to get back into the boat and go on ahead of him and sail to the other side to Bethsaida. 46So he dispersed the crowd, said good-bye to his disciples, then slipped away to pray on the mountain.

47As night fell, the boat was in the middle of the lake and Jesus was alone on land. 48The wind was against the disciples and he could see that they were straining at the oars, trying to make headway.

When it was almost morning, Jesus came to them, walking on the surface of the water, and he started to pass by them. 49-50When they all saw him walking on the waves, they thought he was a ghost and screamed out in terror. But he said to them at once, “Don’t yield to fear. Have courage. It’s really me—I Am!”

51Then he came closer and climbed into the boat with them, and immediately the stormy wind became still. They were completely and utterly overwhelmed with astonishment. 52Their doubting hearts had not grasped his authority and power over all things in spite of just having

witnessed the miraculous feeding.

Jesus the Healer

53They made landfall at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54The moment they got out of the boat, everyone recognized that it was Jesus, the healer! 55So they ran throughout the region, telling the people, “Bring all the sick—even those too sick to walk and bring them on mats!” 56Wherever he went, in the countryside, villages, or towns, they placed the sick on mats in the streets or in public places and begged him, saying, “Just let us touch the tassel of your prayer shawl!” And all who touched him were instantly healed!

Chapter 7

Jesus Breaks Religious Traditions

1One day, the Pharisees and certain religious scholars came from Jerusalem and gathered around Jesus. 2They were shocked to find that some of Jesus’ disciples ate bread without first observing the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating their meal. 3(For the Pharisees, like all other Jews, will not eat without first performing a ritual of pouring water over their cupped hands to keep the tradition of the elders. 4Similarly, when returning from the marketplace, they ceremonially wash themselves before eating. They also observed many other traditions, such as ceremonially washing cups, pitchers, and kettles.)

5So the Pharisees and religious scholars asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the age-old traditions passed down by our elders? They should first ceremonially wash their hands before eating.” 6Jesus replied, “You are hypocrites! How accurately did Isaiah prophesy about you phonies when he said:

‘These people honor me with their words
while their hearts run far away from me!
7Their worship is nothing more than a charade!
For they continue to insist
that their man-made traditions
are equal to the instructions of God.’

8“You abandon God’s commandments just to keep men’s rituals, such as ceremonially washing utensils, cups, and other things.”

9Then he added, “How skillful you’ve become in rejecting God’s law in

order to maintain your man-made set of rules. 10For example, Moses taught us:

‘Honor your father and mother,’ and,

‘Whoever insults or mistreats his father or mother must be put to death.’ 11“But your made-up rules allow a person to say to his parents, ‘I’ve decided to take the support you were counting on from me and make it my holy offering to God, and that will be your blessing instead.’ 12How convenient! The rules you teach exempt him from providing for his aged parents. 13Do you really think God will honor your traditions passed down to others, making up rules that nullify God’s Word? And you’re doing many other similar things.”

Jesus Explains What Truly Defiles

14Then Jesus called the crowd together again, saying, “Hear my words, all of you, and take them to heart. 15What truly contaminates a person is not what he puts into his body, but what comes out. That’s what makes a person defiled.”

17When Jesus went back home and away from the crowd, his disciples acknowledged that they didn’t understand the meaning of the parable and asked him to explain it. 18He answered them, “Are you as dull as the rest? Don’t you understand that you are not defiled by what you eat? 19For the food you swallow doesn’t enter your heart, but goes into your stomach, only to pass out into the sewer.” (This means all foods are clean.) 20He added, “Words and deeds pollute a person, not food. 21Evil originates from inside a person. Coming out of a human heart are evil schemes, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22adultery, greed, wickedness, treachery, debauchery, jealousy, slander, arrogance, and recklessness. 23All these corrupt things emerge from within and constantly defile a person.”

Jesus and a Foreign Woman

24Jesus set out from there to go into the non-Jewish region of Tyre. He intended to slip into a house unnoticed, but people found out that he was there. 25But when a woman whose daughter had a demon spirit heard he was there, she came and threw herself down at his feet. 26She was not Jewish, but a foreigner, born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia. She begged him repeatedly to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27Finally he said to her, “First let my children be fed and satisfied, for it isn’t fair to

take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

28She answered, "How true that is, Lord. But even puppies under the family table are allowed to eat the little children's crumbs."

29Then Jesus said to her, "That's a good reply! Now, because you said this, you may go. The demon has permanently left your daughter." 30And when she returned home, she found her daughter resting quietly on the couch, completely set free from the demon!

Jesus Heals a Deaf Man

31After this, Jesus left the coastland of Tyre and came through Sidon on his way to Lake Galilee and over into regions of Syria. 32Some people brought to him a deaf man with a severe speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hands on him and heal him.

33So Jesus led him away from the crowd to a private spot. Then he stuck his fingers into the man's ears and placed some of his saliva on the man's tongue. 34Then he gazed into heaven, sighed deeply, and spoke to the man's ears and tongue, "Ethpathakh," which is Aramaic for "Open up, now!"

35At once the man's ears opened and he could hear perfectly, and his tongue was untied and he began to speak normally. 36Jesus ordered everyone to keep this miracle a secret, but the more he told them not to, the more the news spread! 37The people were absolutely beside themselves and astonished beyond measure. And they began to declare, "Everything he does is wonderful! He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

Chapter 8

Jesus Multiplies Food Again

1During those days, another massive crowd gathered to hear Jesus, and again, there was no food and the people were hungry. So Jesus called his disciples to come near him and said to them, 2"My heart goes out to this crowd, for they've already been here with me for three days with nothing to eat. 3I'm concerned that if I send them home hungry, some may faint along the way, for many have come a long, long way just to be with me." 4His disciples replied, "But could anyone possibly get enough food to satisfy a crowd this size out here in this isolated place?"

5He asked them, "How many loaves of flatbread do you have?"

"Seven," they replied.

6Jesus instructed the crowd to sit down on the grass. After he took the seven loaves, he gave thanks to God, broke them, and started handing them to his disciples. They kept distributing the bread until they had served the entire crowd.

7They also had a few small fish, and after giving thanks for these, Jesus had his disciples serve them to the crowd. 8Everyone ate until they were satisfied. Then the disciples gathered up the broken pieces and filled seven large baskets with the leftovers. 9About four thousand people ate what had been multiplied! Then he dismissed the crowd.

10Afterward, Jesus got into a boat and sailed to the vicinity of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees Demand a Sign

11As soon as Jesus landed, he was confronted by the Pharisees, who argued with Jesus and tested him. They demanded that he give them a miraculous sign from heaven.

12With a deep sigh from his spirit, he said, "What drives this generation to clamor for a sign? Listen to the truth: there will absolutely be no sign given to this generation!" 13Then he turned and left them, got back into the boat, and crossed over to the opposite shore.

Jesus Warns of the Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod

14Now, the disciples had forgotten to take bread with them, except for one loaf of flatbread. 15And as they were sailing across the lake, Jesus repeatedly warned them, "Be on your guard against the yeast inside of the Pharisees and the yeast inside of Herod!" 16But the disciples had no clue what Jesus was talking about, so they began to discuss it among themselves, saying, "Is he saying this because we forgot to bring bread?" 17Knowing what they were thinking, Jesus said to them, "Why all this fussing over forgetting to bring bread? Do you still not see or understand what I say to you? Are your hearts still hard? 18You have good eyes, yet you still don't see, and you have good ears, yet you still don't hear, neither do you remember. 19When I multiplied the bread to feed more than five thousand people, how many baskets full of leftovers did you

gather afterward?"

"Twelve," they replied.

20 "And when I multiplied food to feed over four thousand, how many large baskets full of leftovers did you gather afterwards?"

"Seven," they replied.

21 "Then how is it that you still don't get it?"

Jesus Heals Blind Eyes

22 When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, begging him to touch him and heal him. 23 So Jesus led him, as his sighted guide, outside the village. He placed his saliva on the man's eyes and covered them with his hands. Then he asked him, "Now do you see anything?"

24 "Yes," he said. "My sight is coming back! I'm beginning to see people, but they look like trees—walking trees."

25 Jesus put his hands over the man's eyes a second time and made him look up. The man opened his eyes wide and he could see everything perfectly. His eyesight was completely restored! 26 Then Jesus sent him home with these instructions: "Go home, but don't tell anyone what happened, not even the people of your own village."

Peter Receives Revelation from God

27 Then Jesus and his disciples walked to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he posed this question to his disciples: "Who do the people say that I am?"

28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer, others say Elijah the prophet, and still others say you must be one of the prophets."

29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter spoke up, saying, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!"

30 Then he warned them not to breathe a word of this to anyone.

Jesus Prophesies His Death and Resurrection

31From then on, Jesus began to tell his disciples that he, the Son of Man, was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer great injustice from the elders, leading priests, and religious scholars. He also explained that he would be killed and three days later be raised to life again. 32Jesus opened his heart and spoke freely with his disciples, explaining all these things to them.

Then Peter took him aside and rebuked him. 33But Jesus turned around, and glancing at all of the other disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, “Get out of my sight, Satan! For your heart is not set on God’s plan but man’s!”

What It Means to Be a Follower of Jesus

34Jesus had his disciples and the crowd gather around him. And he said to them: “If you truly want to follow me, you should at once completely disown your own life. And you must be willing to share my cross and experience it as your own, as you continually surrender to my ways. 35For if you let your life go for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, you will continually experience true life. But if you choose to keep your life for yourself, you will forfeit what you try to keep. 36For what use is it to gain all the wealth and power of this world, with everything it could offer you, at the cost of your own life? 37And what could be more valuable to you than your own soul? 38If you are ashamed of me and my words while living among sinful and faithless people, then I, the Son of Man, will also be ashamed of you when I make my appearance with my holy messengers in the glorious splendor of my Father!”

Chapter 9

The Transfiguration of Jesus

1Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, there are some standing here now who won’t experience death until they see God’s kingdom realm manifest with power!”

2After six days, Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, Jacob and John, and hiked up a high mountain to be alone. And Jesus’ appearance was dramatically altered, for he was transfigured before their very eyes! 3His clothing sparkled and became glistening white—whiter than any bleach in the world could make them. 4Then suddenly, right in front of them, Moses and Elijah appeared, and they spoke with Jesus.

5Peter blurted out, "Good Teacher, this is so amazing to see the three of you together! Why don't we stay here and set up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?" 6(For all of the disciples were in total fear, and Peter didn't have a clue what to say.) 7Just then, a radiant cloud began to spread over them, enveloping them all. And God's voice suddenly spoke from the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son and you need to always listen to him!"

8Then suddenly, as they looked around, they saw only Jesus with them, for Moses and Elijah had faded away.

9As they all hiked down the mountain together, Jesus ordered them, "Don't tell anyone of what you just witnessed. Wait until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." 10So they kept it to themselves, puzzled over what Jesus meant about rising from the dead.

11Then they asked him, "Why do the religious scholars insist that Elijah must come before the Messiah?"

12He answered them, "They're right. Elijah must come first to put everything in order. And what about all that is written about the Son of Man? It is true that he must endure many sufferings and be rejected. 13So Elijah has already appeared, just as it was prophesied, and they did to him whatever they pleased."

The Disciples Unable to Cast Out a Demon

14Now when they came down the mountain to the other nine disciples, they noticed a large crowd of people gathered around them, with the religious scholars arguing with them. 15The crowd was astonished to see Jesus himself walking toward them, so they immediately ran to welcome him.

16"What are you arguing about with the religious scholars?" he asked them.

17A man spoke up out of the crowd. "Teacher," he said, "I have a son possessed by a demon that makes him mute. I brought him here to you, Jesus. 18Whenever the demon takes control of him, it knocks him down, and he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and his body becomes stiff as a board. I brought him to your disciples, hoping they could deliver him, but they were not able to do it."

19Jesus said to the crowd, "Why are you such a faithless people? How much longer must I remain with you and put up with your unbelief? Now, bring the boy to me."

20So they brought him to Jesus. As soon as the demon saw him, it threw the boy into convulsions. He fell to the ground, rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21Jesus turned to the father and asked, "How long has your son been tormented like this?"

"Since childhood," he replied. 22"It tries over and over to kill him by throwing him into fire or into the water. But please, if you're able to do something, anything—have compassion on us and help us!"

23Jesus said to him, "What do you mean 'if'? If you are able to believe, all things are possible to the believer."

24When he heard this, the boy's father cried out with tears, saying, "I do believe, Lord; help my little faith!"

25Now when Jesus saw that the crowd was quickly growing larger, he commanded the demon, saying, "Deaf and mute spirit, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!"

26The demon shrieked and threw the boy into terrible seizures and finally came out of him! As the boy lay there, looking like a corpse, everyone thought he was dead. 27But Jesus stooped down, gently took his hand, and raised him up to his feet, and he stood there completely set free!

28Afterwards, when Jesus arrived at the house, his disciples asked him in private, "Why couldn't we cast out the demon?"

29He answered them, "This type of powerful spirit can only be cast out by fasting and prayer."

Jesus Again Prophesies His Death and Resurrection

30They went on from there and walked through the region of Galilee. Jesus didn't want the people to know he was there, because he wanted to teach his disciples in private. 31He said to them, "The Son of Man is destined to be betrayed and turned over to those who will execute him. But after three days he will rise again." 32But the disciples didn't have a clue what he meant and were too embarrassed to ask him to explain it.

The Disciples Argue over Who Will Be the Greatest

33Then they came to Capernaum. And as soon as Jesus was inside the house, he asked his disciples, "What were you arguing about on the way here?"

34No one said a word, because they had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest. 35Jesus sat down, called the twelve disciples to come around him, and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be content to be last and become a servant to all." 36Then he had a child come and stand among them. He wrapped the child in his arms and said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes not only me, but the one who sent me."

The Name of Christ

38John spoke up and said, "Teacher, we noticed someone was using your name to cast out demons, so we tried to stop him because he wasn't one of our group."

39"Don't stop him!" Jesus replied. "For the one who does miracles in the power of my name proves he is not my enemy. 40And whoever is not against us is for us. 41Listen to the truth that I speak: Whoever gives you a cup of water because you carry the name of Christ will never lose his reward. 42But if anyone abuses one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to have a heavy boulder tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea than to face the punishment he deserves! 43"If your hand entices you to sin, let it go limp and useless! For it is better for you to enter into life maimed than to have your entire body thrown into hell, the place of unquenchable fire. 44This is where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out. 45And if your foot leads you into sin, cut it off! For it is better to enter life crawling than to have both feet and be flung into hell. 46This is where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out. 47And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out! For it is better to enter into life with one eye than to be thrown into hell with two. 48This is where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out!

49"Everyone will pass through the fire and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 50Salt is excellent for seasoning. But if salt becomes tasteless, how can its flavor ever be restored? Your lives, like salt, are to season and preserve. So don't lose your flavor, and preserve the peace in your union

with one another.”

Chapter 10

The Revolutionary Values of the Kingdom

1Then Jesus left the region and went into the district of Judea, across from the Jordan River, and again, massive crowds flocked to him, and Jesus, as was his custom, began to teach the people. 2At one point, some of the Pharisees came, seeking to entrap him with a question. “Tell us,” they asked, “is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

3He answered them, “What did Moses command you?”

4They replied, “Moses permitted us to write a certificate of separation that would be valid to complete a divorce.”

5Jesus said, “Yes, Moses wrote this exception for you because you are hardhearted. 6But from the beginning God created male and female. 7For this reason a man will leave his parents and be wedded to his wife. 8And the husband and wife will be joined as one flesh, and after that they no longer exist as two, but one flesh. 9So there you have it. What God has joined together, no one has the right to split apart.”

10Once indoors, his disciples asked him to explain it to them again. 11So he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12And if the wife divorces her husband and marries another, she also commits adultery.”

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13The parents kept bringing their little children to Jesus so that he would lay his hands on them and bless them. But the disciples kept rebuking and scolding the people for doing it. 14When Jesus saw what was happening, he became indignant with his disciples and said to them, “Let all the little children come to me and never hinder them! Don’t you know that God’s kingdom exists for such as these? 15Listen to the truth I speak: Whoever does not open their arms to receive God’s kingdom like a teachable child will never enter it.” 16Then he embraced each child, and laying his hands on them, he lovingly blessed each one.

A Rich Man Meets Jesus

17As Jesus started on his way, a man came running up to him. Kneeling

down in front of him, he cried out, "Good Teacher, what one thing am I required to do to gain eternal life?"

18 Jesus responded, "Why do you call me good? Only God is truly good. 19 You already know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give a false testimony, do not cheat, and honor your father and mother.' "

20 The man said to Jesus, "Teacher, I have carefully obeyed these laws since my youth."

21 Jesus fixed his gaze upon the man, with tender love, and said to him, "Yet there is still one thing in you lacking. Go, sell all that you have and give the money to the poor. Then all of your treasure will be in heaven. After you've done this, come back and walk with me."

22 Completely shocked by Jesus' answer, he turned and walked away very sad, for he was extremely rich.

23 Jesus looked at the faces of his disciples and said, "How hard it is for the wealthy to enter into God's kingdom realm."

24 The disciples were startled when they heard this. But Jesus again said to them, "Children, it is next to impossible for those who trust in their riches to find their way into God's kingdom. 25 It is easier to stuff a rope through the eye of a needle than for a wealthy person to enter into God's kingdom."

26 But this left them all the more astonished, and they whispered to one another, "Then who could ever be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and replied, "With people it is impossible, but not with God—God makes all things possible!"

28 Then Peter spoke up and said, "Can't you see that we've left everything we had to cling to you?"

29 "Listen to my words," Jesus said. "Anyone who leaves his home behind and chooses me over children, parents, family, and possessions, all for the sake of the gospel, 30 it will come back to him a hundred times as much in this lifetime—homes, family, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, possessions—along with persecutions. And in the age to come, he will inherit eternal life. 31 But many who are considered to be the most

important now will be the least important then. And many who are viewed as the least important now will be considered the most important then."

Jesus Again Prophesies His Death and Resurrection

32 Jesus and his disciples were on the road that went up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was leading them forward. The disciples were filled with wonder and amazement at his bravery, but those following along with them were very afraid. As they approached the city, he took the Twelve aside privately and told them what was going to happen. 33 "I want you to know that we are going to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be handed over to the ruling priests and religious scholars and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Romans. 34 And they will mock him, spit in his face, torture him, and kill him, but three days later he will rise again."

Jacob (James) and John Ask a Favor of Jesus

35 Jacob and John, sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said, "Teacher, will you do us a favor?"

36 "What is it?" he asked.

37 "We want to sit next to you when you come into your glory," they said, "one at your right hand and the other at your left."

38 Jesus replied, "You don't have a clue what you're asking for! Are you prepared to drink from the cup of suffering that I am about to drink? And are you able to endure the baptism into death that I am about to experience?"

39 They replied, "Yes, we are able."

Jesus said to them, "You will certainly drink from the cup of my sufferings and be immersed into my death, 40 but to have you sit in the position of highest honor is not mine to decide. It is reserved for those especially prepared to have it."

41 Now the other ten disciples overheard this, and they became angry and began to criticize Jacob and John. 42 Jesus gathered them all together and said to them, "Those recognized as rulers of the people and those who are in top leadership positions rule oppressively over their subjects, but this is not the example you are to follow. 43 You are to lead by a different model. If you want to be the greatest, then live as one called

to serve others. 44The path to promotion comes by having the heart of a bond-slave who serves everyone. 45For even the Son of Man did not come expecting to be served by everyone, but to serve everyone, and to give his life as the ransom price for the salvation of many."

Jesus Heals Blind Bar-Timai

46When Jesus and his disciples had passed through Jericho, a large crowd joined them. Upon leaving the village, they met a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road named Timai, the son of Timai. 47When he heard that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by, he began to shout "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me now in my affliction. Heal me!" 48Those in the crowd were indignant and scolded him for making so much of a disturbance, but he kept shouting with all his might, "Son of David, have mercy on me now and heal me!"

49Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they went to the blind man and said, "Have courage! Get up! Jesus is calling for you!" 50So he threw off his beggars' cloak, jumped up, and made his way to Jesus.

51Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The man replied, "My Master, please, let me see again!"

52Jesus responded, "Your faith heals you. Go in peace, with your sight restored." All at once, the man's eyes opened and he could see again, and he began at once to follow Jesus, walking down the road with him.

Chapter 11

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

1Now, as they were approaching Jerusalem, they arrived at the place of the stables near Bethany on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead 2and said to them, "As soon as you enter the village ahead, you will find a donkey's colt tied there that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. 3And if anyone asks, 'Why are you taking it?' tell them, 'The master needs it and will send it back to you soon.' "

4So they went and found the colt outside in the street, tied to a gate. When they started to untie it, 5some people standing there said to them, "Why are you untying that colt?"

6They answered just as Jesus had told them: "The master needs it, and

he will send it back to you soon.” So the bystanders let them go.

7The disciples brought the colt to Jesus and piled their cloaks and prayer shawls on the young donkey, and Jesus rode upon it. 8Many people carpeted the road in front of him with their cloaks and prayer shawls, while others gathered palm branches and spread them before him. 9Jesus rode in the center of the procession, with crowds going before him and behind him. They all shouted in celebration, “Bring the victory! We welcome the one coming with blessings sent from the Lord Yahweh! 10Blessings rest on this kingdom he ushers in—the kingdom of our father David! Bring us the victory in the highest realms of heaven!”

11Jesus rode through the gates of Jerusalem and up to the temple. After looking around at everything, he left for Bethany with the Twelve to spend the night, for it was already late in the day.

Jesus and a Fruitless Fig Tree

12The next day, as he left Bethany, Jesus was feeling hungry. 13He noticed a leafy fig tree in the distance, so he walked over to see if there was any fruit on it, but there was none—only leaves (for it wasn’t yet the season for bearing figs). 14Jesus spoke to the fig tree, saying, “No one will ever eat fruit from you again!” And the disciples overheard him.

Jesus Drives Merchants Out of the Temple Courts

15When they came into Jerusalem, Jesus went directly into the temple area and overturned all the tables and benches of the merchants who were doing business there. One by one he drove them all out of the temple courts, and they scattered away, including the money changers and those selling doves. 16And he would not allow them to use the temple courts as a thoroughfare for carrying their merchandise and their furniture.

17Then he began to teach the people, saying, “Does not the Scripture say, ‘My house will be a house of prayer for all the world to share’? But you have made it a hangout of thieves!”

18When the chief priests and religious scholars heard this, they began to hatch a plot as to how they could eliminate Jesus. But they feared him and his influence, because the entire crowd was totally captivated by his teaching. 19So he and his disciples spent the nights outside the city.

Lessons of Faith

20In the morning, they passed by the fig tree that Jesus spoke to and it was completely withered from the roots up. 21Peter remembered and said to him, "Teacher, look! That's the fig tree you cursed. It's now all shriveled up and dead."

22Jesus replied, "Let the faith of God be in you! 23Listen to the truth I speak to you: Whoever says to this mountain with great faith and does not doubt, 'Mountain, be lifted up and thrown into the midst of the sea,' and believes that what he says will happen, it will be done. 24This is the reason I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer—be convinced that you have received it and it will be yours. 25And whenever you stand praying, if you find that you carry something in your heart against another person, release him and forgive him so that your Father in heaven will also release you and forgive you of your faults. 26But if you will not release forgiveness, don't expect your Father in heaven to release you from your misdeeds."

The Religious Leaders Question Jesus' Authority

27They came again into Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the Jewish rulers—the chief priest, certain religious scholars, and the elders—approached him. They came up to him 28and asked, "What right do you have to say and do these things? Who gave you the authority to do all this?"

29Jesus replied, "I too have a question to ask you. If you can answer this question, then I will tell you by what power I do all these things. 30Where did John's authority to immerse come from? Was it from heaven or from people? Answer me now."

31They stepped away and debated among themselves, saying, "How should we answer this? If we say, 'from heaven,' he will say to us, 'Then why didn't you respond to John and believe what he said?' 32But if we say, 'from the people,' we fear the crowds, for they're convinced that John was God's prophet."

33So they finally answered, "We don't know."

"Then neither will I tell you where my power comes from to do these things," Jesus replied.

Chapter 12

The Parable of the Tenants

1Then Jesus began to speak to them in parables: "There once was a man who planted a vineyard and put a secure fence around it. He dug a pit for its winepress and erected a watch tower. Then he leased it to tenant-farmers and traveled abroad. 2When the time of harvest came, he sent one of his servants to the tenants to collect the landowners' share of the harvest. 3But the tenants seized him and beat him and sent him back empty-handed. 4So the owner sent another servant to them. And that one they shamefully humiliated and beat over the head. 5So he sent another servant, and they brutally killed him. Many more servants were sent, and they were all severely beaten or killed. 6The owner had only one person left to send—his only son, whom he dearly loved. So he sent him to them, saying, 'Surely they will restrain themselves and respect my son.' 7But the tenants saw their chance and said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come! Let's kill him, and then we'll inherit it all!' 8So they violently seized him, killed him, and threw his body over the fence! 9So what do you think the owner of the vineyard will do? He will come and put to death those tenants and give his vineyard to others. 10Haven't you read what the psalmist said?

The stone the builders examined and rejected
has become the cornerstone,
the most important stone of all?

11This was the Lord's plan—
and he is wonderful for our eyes to behold!"

12Now, the chief priests, religious scholars, and leaders realized that Jesus' parable was aimed at them. They had hoped to arrest him then and there, but they feared the reaction of the crowd, so they left him alone and went away.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

13Then they sent a delegation of Pharisees, together with some staunch supporters of Herod, to entrap Jesus with his own words. 14So they approached him and said, "Teacher, we know that you're an honest man of integrity and you teach us the truth of God's ways. We can clearly see that you're not one who speaks only to win the people's favor, because you speak the truth without regard to the consequences. So tell us, then, what you think. Is it proper for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

15Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said to them, "Why are you

testing me? Show me one of the Roman coins.” 16They brought him a silver coin used to pay the tax.

“Now, tell me,” Jesus said, “whose head is on this coin and whose inscription is stamped on it?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

17Jesus said, “Precisely. The coin bears the image of the emperor Caesar, so you should pay the emperor his portion. But because you bear the image of God, you must give to God all that belongs to him.” And they were utterly stunned by Jesus’ words.

A Question about Marriage

18Some of the Sadducees, a religious group that denied there was a resurrection of the dead, came to ask Jesus this question: 19“Teacher, the law of Moses teaches that if a man dies before he has children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up children for his brother’s family line. 20Now, there was a family with seven brothers. The oldest got married but soon died, and he had no children. 21The second brother married his oldest brother’s widow, and he also died without any children, and the third also. 22This repeated down to the seventh brother, none of whom had children. Finally, the woman died. 23So here’s our dilemma: Which of the seven brothers will be the woman’s husband when she’s resurrected from the dead, since they all were once married to her?”

24Jesus answered them, “You are mistaken because your hearts are not filled with the revelation of the Scriptures or the power of God. 25For when they rise from the dead, men and women will not marry, just like the angels of heaven don’t marry. 26Now, concerning the resurrection, haven’t you read in the Torah what God said to Moses at the burning bush? ‘I AM the living God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? 27God is not God of the dead, but of the living, and you are all badly mistaken!”

The Greatest Commandment

28Now a certain religious scholar overheard them debating. When he saw how beautifully Jesus answered all their questions, he posed one of his own, and asked him, “Teacher, which commandment is the greatest of all?”

29Jesus answered him, “The most important of all the commandments

is this: 'The Lord Yahweh, our God, is one!' 30You are to love the Lord Yahweh, your God, with a passionate heart, from the depths of your soul, with your every thought, and with all your strength. This is the great and supreme commandment. 31And the second is this: 'You must love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself.' You will never find a greater commandment than these."

32The religious scholar replied, "Yes, that's true, Teacher. You spoke beautifully when you said that God is one, and there is no one else besides him. 33And there is something more important to God than all the sacrifices and burnt offerings: it's the commandment to constantly love God with every passion of your heart, with your every thought, and with all your strength—and to love your neighbor in the same way as you love yourself."

34When Jesus noticed how thoughtfully and sincerely the man answered, he said to him, "You're not far from the reality of God's kingdom." After that, no one dared to question him again.

Jesus, Son of David—Lord of David

35While Jesus was teaching in the courts of the temple, he posed a question to those listening: "Why do the religious scholars say that the Messiah is David's son? 36Yet it was David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who sang:

Yahweh said to my Lord,
'Sit near me in the place of authority
until I subdue all your enemies under Your feet.'

37Since David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?"
The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Jesus Warns Against the Religious Scholars

38Jesus also taught the people, "Beware of the religious scholars. They love to parade around in their clergy robes and be greeted with respect on the street. 39They crave to be made the leaders of synagogue councils, and they push their way to the head table at banquets. 40For appearance's sake, they will pray long religious prayers at the homes of widows for an offering, cheating them out of their very livelihood. Beware of them all, for they will one day be stripped of honor, and the judgment they receive will be severe."

The Widow's Offering

41Then he sat down near the offering box, watching all the people dropping in their coins. Many of the rich would put in very large sums, 42but a destitute widow walked up and dropped in two small copper coins, worth less than a penny. 43Jesus called his disciples to gather around and then said to them, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given a larger offering than any of the wealthy. 44For the rich only gave out of their surplus, but she sacrificed out of her poverty and gave to God all that she had to live on, which was everything she had."

Chapter 13

Jesus Prophecies the Destruction of the Temple

1As Jesus was leaving the temple courts, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Teacher, look at these magnificent buildings! And what tremendous stones were used to build all this!"

2Jesus turned to them and said, "Take a good look at all these enormous buildings, for I'm telling you, there will not be one stone left upon another. It will all be leveled!"

Signs of the End of the Age

3Later, while Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple, his disciples, Peter, Jacob, John, and Andrew, came to him privately where he was sitting and said, 4"Tell us, when will these things happen? And what supernatural sign should we expect to signal your coming and the completion of this age?"

5Jesus answered, "At that time deception will run rampant. So beware that you're not fooled! 6For many will appear on the scene claiming my authority or saying about themselves, 'I am God's Anointed,' and they will lead many astray. 7You will hear rumors of wars nearby, with more rumors of wars to come. Make sure that you are not thrown into a panic or give in to your fears, for these things are destined to happen. Prepare for it, but still the end is not yet. 8For nations will go to war against each other and kingdoms will clash with kingdoms. And there will be terrible earthquakes in place after place—seismic events of epic proportion. And there will be famines and riots. This is how the first contractions and birth pains of the new age will begin."

Jesus Warns of Persecution

9“Be on your guard! For they will hand you over to the ruling councils, and you will be beaten in public gatherings. And you will stand trial before kings and high-ranking governmental leaders as an opportunity to testify to them on my behalf. 10But prior to the end of the age, the hope of the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

11“So when they put you under arrest and hand you over for trial, don’t even give one thought about what you will say. Simply speak what the Holy Spirit gives you at that very moment. And realize that it won’t be you speaking but the Holy Spirit speaking through you. 12Brothers will betray each other unto death—even a father his child. Children will rise up to take a stand against their parents and have them put to death. 13Expect to be hated by all because of your allegiance to my name. But determine to be faithful to the end and you will be saved.”

The Detestable Idol That Brings Misery

14“When you witness what Daniel prophesied, ‘the disgusting destroyer,’ standing where it must not be [Let the reader learn what it means], then those in the land of Judah must escape to higher ground. 15On that day, if you happen to be outside, don’t go back inside to gather your belongings. 16And if you’re working out in the field, don’t run back home to get a coat. 17It will be especially hard for pregnant women and for those nursing their babies when those days come. 18So pray that your escape will not be during the winter months. 19For this will be a time of great misery beyond the magnitude of anything the world has ever seen from the beginning of time or ever will see. 20Unless God limits those days, no one would escape. But because of his love for his chosen ones, he will shorten that time of trouble.

21“And if you hear reports from people, saying, ‘Look, the Messiah is over here,’ or, ‘The Messiah is over there!’ don’t believe it. 22For there will be imposters falsely claiming to be God’s ‘Anointed One.’ And false prophets will arise to perform miracle signs, and if it were possible, they would cause God’s chosen ones to wander off the right track. 23Be alert, for I prophesy all this will happen!”

The Appearing of the Son of Man

24“**This is what will take place after that suffering:**
The sun will be darkened and the moon will reflect no light.
25The stars will be falling from the sky

and all the cosmic powers will be shaken.

26“Then they will see the Son of Man appearing in the midst of clouds and revealed with mighty power and great glory. 27At that time he will send his messengers to gather together his beloved chosen ones from every direction—from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven!”

The Parable of the Fig Tree

28“Now, learn the lesson from the parable of the fig tree. When spring arrives, and it sends out its tender branches and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you observe all these things progressively taking place, you will know that he is near, even at the door! 30I assure you, this family will not pass away until all I have spoken comes to pass. 31The earth and sky will wear out and fade away before one word I speak loses its power or fails to accomplish its purpose.”

Live Always Ready for His Appearing

32“Concerning that day and exact hour, no one knows when it will arrive, not the angels of heaven, not even the Son—only the Father knows. 33This is why you must be waiting, watching and praying, because no one knows when that season of time will come.”

A Parable of a Man Who Left on a Journey

34“For those days can be compared to a man who was about to leave on a journey, but before leaving he placed his servants in charge and gave each one work to do while he was away. Then he commanded the watchman to be on guard at all times. 35So I say to you, keep awake and alert—for you have no idea when the master of the house will return; in the evening, at midnight, at four o’clock in the morning, or at dawn. 36Be alert, for he’s coming suddenly and may find you sleeping! 37And what I say to the four of you, I say to everyone—be awake at all times!”

Chapter 14

The Plot to Kill Jesus

1Two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the leading priests and religious scholars were committed to finding a way to secretly arrest Jesus and have him executed. 2They agreed that their plot could not succeed if they carried it out during the days of the feast, for they said, “There could be a riot among the people.”

Jesus Is Anointed for His Death and Burial

3Now Jesus was in Bethany, in the home of Simon, a man Jesus had healed of leprosy. And as he was reclining at the table, a woman came into the house, with an alabaster flask filled with the highest quality of fragrant and expensive oil. She came to Jesus, and with a gesture of extreme devotion, she broke the flask and poured out the precious oil over his head. 4But some were highly indignant when they saw this, and they complained to one another, saying, "What a total waste! 5It could have been sold for a great sum, and the money could have benefited the poor." So they scolded her harshly.

6Jesus said to them, "Leave her alone! Why are you so critical of this woman? She has honored me with this beautiful act of kindness. 7You will always have the poor, whom you can help whenever you want, but you will not always have me. 8When she poured the fragrant oil over me, she was preparing my body in advance of my burial. She has done all that she could to honor me. 9I promise you that as this wonderful gospel spreads all over the world, the story of her lavish devotion to me will be mentioned in memory of her."

Judas Schemes to Betray Jesus

10One of the twelve apostles, Judas Iscariot, went to the leading priests to inform them of his willingness to betray Jesus into their hands. 11They were delighted to hear this and agreed to pay him for it. So immediately Judas began to look for the right opportunity to betray him.

The Passover

12On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover Lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where would you like us to prepare the Passover meal for you?"

13So he sent two of his disciples ahead into Jerusalem with these instructions: "Make your way into the city and watch for a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, 14and say to the owner of whatever house he enters, 'The Teacher wants to ask you: "Do you have my room ready where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?" ' 15And he will show you a large upstairs room ready and with a table set. Make preparations for us there."

16So they went into the city and found everything to be exactly like Jesus had prophesied, and they prepared for him the Passover meal. 17And

when evening came, he entered the house and went upstairs with his twelve disciples. 18Over dinner, while they were reclining around the table, Jesus said, "Listen to the truth: One of you eating here with me is about to betray me."

19Feeling deeply troubled by these words, one after another asked him, "Is it I?"

20He answered, "It is one of you twelve who has shared meals with me as an intimate friend. 21All that was prophesied of me, the Son of Man, is destined to soon take place, but it will be disastrous for the one who betrays the Son of Man. It would be far better for him if he had never been born!"

Jesus Shares Communion with His Twelve

22As they were dining, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples. He said to them, "Receive this; it is my body." 23Then taking the cup of wine and giving thanks to the Father, he declared the new covenant with them. And as each one drank from the cup, 24he said to them, "This is my blood, which seals the new covenant poured out for many. 25I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day comes when we drink it together in the kingdom feast of my Father." 26Then they sang a psalm and afterwards left for the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Prophesies Peter's Denial

27Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away and desert me. This will fulfill the prophecy of the Scripture that says:

I will strike down the shepherd
and all the sheep will scatter.

28"But after I am risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

29Then Peter spoke up and said, "Even if all the rest lose their faith and fall away, I will still be beside you!"

30Jesus said, "Mark my words, Peter. This very night, before the rooster crows twice a few hours from now, you will deny that you know me three times."

31But Peter was insistent and replied emphatically, "I will absolutely not! Under no circumstances will I ever deny you—even if I have to die with you!" And all the others repeated the same thing.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

32Then Jesus led his disciples to an orchard called "The Oil Press." He told them, "Sit here while I pray awhile." 33He took Peter, Jacob, and John with him. An intense feeling of great horror plunged his soul into deep sorrow. 34And he said to them, "My heart is overwhelmed with anguish and crushed with grief. It feels as though I'm dying. Stay here and keep watch with me."

35He walked a short distance away, and being overcome with grief, he threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to experience this hour of suffering. 36He prayed, "Abba, my Father, all things are possible for you. Please—remove this cup of suffering! Yet what I want is not important, for I only desire to fulfill your plan for me."

37Then he came back to his three disciples and found them all sound asleep. He awakened Peter and said to him, "Simon, are you asleep? Do you lack the strength to stay awake with me for even just an hour? 38Keep alert and pray that you'll be spared from this time of testing. For your spirit is eager enough, but your humanity is feeble."

39Then he left them a second time and went to pray the same thing. 40Afterward, he came back to the disciples and found them sound asleep, for they couldn't keep their eyes open and they didn't know what to say to him.

41After praying for the third time, he returned to his disciples and awoke them again, saying, "Do you plan on sleeping and resting indefinitely? That's enough sleep! The end has come and the hour has arrived for the Son of Man to be handed over to the authority of sinful men. 42Get up and let's go. Don't you see? My betrayer draws near."

Jesus' Betrayal and Arrest

43At that moment Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, along with a large crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent to arrest Jesus by order of the ruling priests, the religious scholars, and the Jewish leaders. 44Now, Judas, the traitor, had arranged to give them a signal

that would identify Jesus, for he had told them, "Jesus is the man I will kiss. So arrest him and take him away." 45Judas quickly stepped up to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, my teacher!" and he kissed him on both cheeks. 46Then the armed men seized Jesus to arrest him. 47One of the disciples pulled out a sword and swung it at the servant of Caiaphas, the high priest, slashing off his ear.

48Jesus said to the mob, "Why would you arrest me with swords and clubs as though I were an outlaw? 49Day after day I sat with you in the temple courts, teaching the people, yet you didn't arrest me then. But all of this fulfills the prophecies of the Scriptures." 50At that point all of his disciples ran away and abandoned him.

51There was a young man there following Jesus, wearing only a linen sheet wrapped around him. 52They tried to arrest him also, but he slipped from their grasp and ran off naked, leaving his linen cloth in their hands.

Jesus Condemned by the Religious Leaders

53Those who arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, to a meeting where the religious scholars and Jewish leaders were assembled. 54Now, Peter had followed him from a distance all the way to the chief priest's courtyard. He sat with the guards and was warming himself by the fire.

55The chief priests and the Jewish council of leaders were doing their best to find false charges that they could bring against Jesus and condemn him to death, but they could not find any. 56Many false witnesses came forward, but the evidence could not be corroborated. 57Some came forward and testified against him, saying, 58"We heard him say, 'I can destroy this temple made with hands and then build another one again in three days not made with hands!' " 59Yet even on this point the witnesses did not agree.

60Finally, the chief priest stood up in the middle of them and said to Jesus, "Have you nothing to say about these allegations? Is what they're saying about you true?"

61But Jesus remained silent before them and did not answer. So the chief priest said to him, "Are you the anointed Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?"

62Jesus answered him, "I am. And more than that, you are about to see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty and coming in

the heavenly clouds!"

63Then, as an act of outrage, the high priest tore his robe and shouted, "No more witnesses are needed, 64for you've heard this grievous blasphemy." Turning to the council he said, "Now, what is your verdict?" "He's guilty and deserves the death penalty!" they all answered.

65Then they spat on his face and blindfolded him. Others struck him over and over with their fists and taunted him by saying, "Prophecy to us! Tell us which one of us is about to hit you next?" And the guards took him and beat him.

Peter's Denials

66Meanwhile, Peter was sitting below in the courtyard when a girl, a servant of the high priest, came near the fire. 67When she saw Peter there warming himself, she said to him, "I recognize you. You were with that Nazarene, Jesus."

68But Peter denied it, saying, "I don't have a clue what you're talking about." Then he went out to the gateway of the courtyard and the rooster crowed.

69When the servant girl noticed him, she said to all the bystanders, "I know this man is one of his followers!"

70Once again, Peter denied it. A short time later, the bystanders said to him, "You must be one of them. You're a Galilean, like he is, for your accent proves it!"

71Peter cursed and said, "I tell you, I don't know this man you're talking about!"

72At the same moment Peter spoke those words, the sound of a rooster crowing pierced the night for the second time. And Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken to him earlier: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." With his heart shattered, Peter broke down and sobbed with bitter tears.

Chapter 15

Jesus Handed Over to Pilate

1Before dawn that morning, the ruling priests, elders, religious scholars,

and the entire Jewish council set in motion their plan against Jesus. They bound him in chains, took him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

2As Jesus stood in front of the Roman governor, Pilate asked him, "So, are you really the king of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "You have just spoken it."

3Then the ruling priests, over and over, made bitter accusations against him, but he remained silent.

4So Pilate questioned him again. "Have you nothing to say? Don't you hear these many allegations they're making against you?" 5But Jesus offered no defense to any of the charges, much to the astonishment of Pilate.

Jesus and Barabbas

6Every year at Passover, it was the custom of the governor to pardon a prisoner and release him to the people—anyone they wanted. 7Now, Pilate was holding in custody a notorious criminal named Barabbas, one of the assassins who had committed murder in an uprising. 8The crowds gathered in front of Pilate's judgment bench and asked him to release a prisoner to them, as was his custom.

9So he asked them, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" 10(Pilate was fully aware that the religious leaders had handed Jesus over to him because of spite and envy.)

11But the ruling priests stirred up the crowd to incite them to ask for Barabbas instead.

12So Pilate asked them, "What do you want me to do with this one you call the king of the Jews?"

13They all shouted back, "Crucify him!"

14"Why?" Pilate asked. "What evil thing has he done wrong to deserve that?" But they kept shouting out with a deafening roar, "Crucify him at once!"

15Because he wanted to please the people, Pilate released Barabbas to them. After he had Jesus severely beaten with a whip made of leather

straps and embedded with metal, he sentenced him to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

16The soldiers took Jesus into the headquarters of the governor's compound and summoned a military unit of nearly six hundred men. 17They placed a purple robe on him to make fun of him. Then they braided a victor's crown, a wreath made of thorns, and set it on his head. 18And with a mock salute they repeatedly cried out, "Hail, your majesty, king of the Jews!" 19They spit in his face and hit him repeatedly on his head with a reed staff, driving the crown of thorns deep into his brow. They knelt down before him in mockery, pretending to pay him homage. 20When they finished ridiculing him, they took off the purple robe, put his own clothes back on him, and led him away to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

21As they came out of the city, they stopped an African man named Simon, a native of Libya. He was passing by, just coming in from the countryside with his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, and the soldiers forced him to carry the heavy crossbeam for Jesus. 22They brought Jesus to the execution site called Golgotha, which means "Skull Hill." 23There they offered him a mild painkiller, a drink of wine mixed with gall, but he refused to drink it.

24They nailed his hands and feet to the cross. The soldiers divided his clothing among themselves by rolling dice to see who would win them. 25It was nine o'clock in the morning when they finally crucified him. 26Above his head they placed a sign with the inscription of the charge against him, which read, "This is the King of the Jews."

27Two criminals were also crucified with Jesus, one on each side of him. 28This fulfilled the Scripture that says:

He was considered to be a criminal.

29Those who passed by shook their heads and spitefully ridiculed him, saying, "Aha! You boasted that you could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. 30Why don't you save yourself now? Just come down from the cross!"

31Even the ruling priests and the religious scholars joined in the mockery and kept laughing among themselves, saying, "He saved others, but he

can't even save himself! Israel's king, is he? 32Let the 'Messiah,' the 'king of Israel,' pull out the nails and come down from the cross right now. We'll believe it when we see it!" Even the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus began to taunt him, hurling insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

33For three hours, beginning at noon, darkness came over the earth. 34About three o'clock, Jesus shouted with a mighty voice in Aramaic, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"—that is, "My God, My God, why have you turned your back on me?"

35Some who were standing near the cross misunderstood and said, "Listen! He's calling for Elijah." 36One bystander ran and got a sponge, soaked it with sour wine, then put it on a stick and held it up for Jesus to drink. But the rest said, "Leave him alone! Let's see if Elijah comes to rescue him." 37Just then Jesus passionately cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last. 38At that moment the veil in the Holy of Holies was torn in two from the top to the bottom.

39When the Roman military officer who was standing right in front of Jesus saw how he died, he said, "There is no doubt this man was the Son of God!"

40-41Watching from a distance, away from the crowds, were many of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and had cared for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob the younger and Joseph, and Salome. Many other women who had followed him to Jerusalem were there too.

Jesus' Burial

42Evening was fast approaching, and it was a preparation day before a Sabbath. 43So a prominent Jewish leader named Joseph, from the village of Ramah, courageously went to see Pilate and begged to have custody of the body of Jesus. Joseph was a highly regarded member of the Jewish council and a follower of Jesus who was eagerly awaiting the kingdom of God. 44Pilate was amazed to hear that Jesus was already dead, so he summoned the Roman officer, who confirmed it. 45After it was confirmed, Pilate consented to give the corpse to Joseph.

46Joseph purchased a shroud of fine linen and took the body down from the cross. Then he wrapped it in the linen shroud and placed it in a tomb

quarried from out of the rock. Then they rolled a large stone over the entrance to seal the tomb. 47Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were there and saw exactly where they laid the body of Jesus.

Chapter 16

The Resurrection of Jesus

1-2On the first day of the week, as the Sabbath was ending, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob, and Salome made their way to the tomb. It was very early in the morning as the first streaks of light were beginning to be seen in the sky. They had purchased aromatic embalming spices so that they might anoint his body. 3And they had been asking one another, "Who can roll away the heavy stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4But when they arrived, they discovered that the very large stone was already rolled away! 5And as they stepped into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right, dressed in a long white robe. The women were startled and amazed. 6But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid. I know that you're here looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here—he has risen victoriously! Look! See the place where they laid him. 7Run and tell his disciples, even Peter, that he is risen. He has gone ahead of you into Galilee and you will see him there, just like he told you."

8They staggered out of the tomb, awestruck, with their minds swirling. They ran to tell the disciples, but they were so afraid and amazed, they said nothing to anyone.

Jesus Appears to Some of His Followers

9Early on the first day of the week, after rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10After she had seen Jesus, she ran to tell his disciples, who were all emotionally devastated and weeping. 11Excitedly, Mary told them, "He's alive and I've seen him!" But even after hearing this, they didn't believe her.

12After this, Jesus appeared to two of the disciples, who were on their way to another village, appearing in a form they did not recognize. 13They went back to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples, but they didn't believe it was true.

14Then Jesus appeared before the eleven apostles as they were eating a meal. He corrected them for having such hard, unbelieving hearts

because they did not believe those who saw him after his resurrection.

15And he said to them, "As you go into all the world, preach openly the wonderful news of the gospel to the entire human race! 16Whoever believes the good news and is baptized will be saved, and whoever does not believe the good news will be condemned. 17And these miracle signs will accompany those who believe: They will drive out demons in the power of my name. They will speak in tongues. 18They will be supernaturally protected from snakes and from drinking anything poisonous. And they will lay hands on the sick and heal them."

19After saying these things, Jesus was lifted up into heaven and sat down at the place of honor at the right hand of God! 20And the apostles went out announcing the good news everywhere, as the Lord himself consistently worked with them, validating the message they preached with miracle-signs that accompanied them!

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