

Dear Church Family,

Most of us have had some kind of “brush with fame,” where our lives have crossed paths with celebrities. Whether they are movie stars, professional athletes, famous musicians or even television personalities, it’s kind of exciting to actually meet someone that you’ve only seen from a distance. However, many times it seems those encounters leave us disappointed or disillusioned that a person we admired or even idolized from a distance didn’t turn out to be all we had hoped. In their defense, they live without any privacy and usually have to adjust to the world invading their existence in ridiculous ways. I can only imagine that after a while it would be more than a little annoying to have everything you do become popular news. But I’m not really sure even that excuses how so often they are aloof, arrogant and really not friendly or caring.

In our fall sermon series, we will be studying through a group of encounters that a variety of people had with Jesus, the teacher, healer and prophet from Nazareth. All of these encounters happen during the first two years of Jesus’ ministry, but He is already becoming quite well-known and hard to get to because of the large crowds that seem to follow Him everywhere. However, even amid mounting popularity and obvious invasions of any personal time or space, He seems eager to touch people’s lives in meaningful ways.

No one met Jesus and walked away without having found Him authentic and caring. No one was ever told He didn't have time to see them. No one ever had a conversation with Him without hearing the truth. Not everyone He talked to liked what they heard, but they at least got an audience with Him and were likely never the same afterward.

This series will draw us into close proximity with our Savior, Jesus. We will be walking alongside Him as He literally bumps into people who are broken, needy and desperate, and we will discover in every encounter that Jesus is willing to "get up close and personal" with people from all walks of life. There is much to be learned from spending time on the journey with our Master, and living in "proximity" with Him will only heighten our love and appreciation for His desire to be in a personal relationship with all who are willing.

I invite you to join me on this journey as we walk in "proximity" with Jesus. Honored to make the journey with you!

Pastor Daniel <><

Week One



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK ONE - DAY ONE

Read Matthew 8:1-4.

WHO approaches Jesus?

WHAT disease does he have?

Take a minute and list places where sickness and disease make themselves apparent in your world. (For example: TV ads, wheelchair accessible sidewalks, etc.)

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16. WHAT does Paul say is happening to us outwardly?

HOW do you see signs of this in your own body?

HOW does our culture deal with this reality?

HOW does the slow (or not-so-slow) decay of your body affect your relationship with Jesus?

WEEK ONE - DAY TWO

Read Matthew 8:1-4 again.

To WHOM does the man with leprosy go for help?

Read Matthew 11:1-11.

WHAT has been John's role, according to verse 10?

WHAT doubt begins to rise in John's mind as he sits in prison?

WHAT does Jesus tell the disciples to report back to John?

Read Isaiah 35. (Imagine growing up Jewish and hearing this passage regularly as a hopeful prophecy about the coming Messiah.) Of all the possible ways Jesus could enter the world and reveal himself as the Messiah, WHY do you think healing the sick is one of his foremost demonstrations?

Now think again of the man with leprosy. WHY is Jesus a good person to go to for healing? WHAT simple truth about Jesus does the man with leprosy state in **Matthew 8:2**?

Think of yourself or others close to you whose bodies are sick or broken. Borrow the man's words from **Matthew 8:2** and write a statement about what you know Jesus can do for yourself or for the person you know who is sick:

WEEK ONE - DAY THREE

Read Matthew 8:1-4 again.

The man with leprosy only speaks one recorded sentence to Jesus. Write that sentence below:

Is the man making a request of Jesus or just making a statement? Explain your answer:

Read Psalm 103. WHAT is the theme of this song of David?

WHAT two actions does David command his soul to do, in Psalm 103:2?

According to Psalm 103:3, **WHAT** are two of the benefits of knowing the LORD?

Is this psalm a request for healing? If not, **WHY** is David singing about it?

Compare Psalm 103 to the statement made by the leper in Matthew 8:2. Which do you think is better, to come right out and ask God for healing, or to sing praise of God's ability to heal and simply state what he is able to do? Explain your answer:

HOW does today's study affect your own thoughts about how to approach God for healing?

WEEK ONE – DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 8:1-4 again.

WHAT physical posture does the man with leprosy take? **WHAT** do you think this communicates to Jesus?

WHAT does the man call Jesus? **WHAT** does that name communicate?

Read James 4:6. According to this verse, **WHAT** does humility before God guarantee for the sick person?

Read Psalm 145:8-9. If a sick person humbles himself and kneels before the Lord, write down the response he is sure to get:

Have you witnessed God's rich love, goodness, and grace toward a sick person? Describe **HOW** you saw God at work in that situation:

WEEK ONE – DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 8:1-4 again.

The man with leprosy confesses his belief that Jesus is perfectly capable of healing him, but **WHAT** conditional statement does he add to this?

In Matthew 8:1, **WHAT** do you see happening?

WHAT had Jesus been doing in the presence of these large crowds? (See Matthew 5:1-2 and 7:28-29.)

Read **WHAT** Jesus taught these crowds regarding prayer in **Matthew 6:9-10**. **WHY** is it important to think of God's will in relation to our physical ailments?

WHAT is Jesus' response to the statement of the man with leprosy?

What if Jesus had said he was not willing to cure the man of leprosy? Would that have negated the man's declaration that Jesus was able to make him clean? **WHY** or why not?

If Jesus had been unwilling to heal the man, would that have reflected poorly on the man's faith or on his method of approaching Jesus for help? Explain your answer:

Read James 1:2-4. **HOW** does this passage inform our perspective on God's will and his choice to not heal our diseases sometimes?

A visitor to our church went to the wife of one of the pastors and asked, "What does this church believe about healing?" After this week of study, **WHAT** do you think should be the answer to that question?

WEEK ONE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 8:1-4.

How do we see sickness and disease making themselves apparent in our world? (Example: TV ads for medications)

Paul tells believers that outwardly we are “wasting away” (2 Corinthians 4:16). How does our culture deal with this fact? How do you deal with the decay of your own body?

Read Isaiah 35 together. Why do you think Jesus quotes some of this Scripture passage in response to John the Baptist’s doubt that Jesus is the Messiah? Of all the ways the Messiah could enter the world, why do you think coming as a healer is so important?

What one sentence does the man with leprosy say to Jesus? Is this a request or a statement? Think about the song of praise that David wrote in Psalm 103. Do you think it’s better to come right out and ask Jesus for healing or simply praise God’s ability to heal? Explain your answer.

What physical posture does the man with leprosy take before Jesus? What does he call him? How does a posture of humility affect God’s response to the sick person? How have you seen God show compassion toward a sick person?

The man with leprosy makes a conditional statement. What is it? Why is it important to think of God’s will in relation to our physical ailments? If Jesus had not been willing to heal the man, would that have reflected poorly on the man’s faith?

Read James 1:2-4. How does this passage inform our perspective on God’s will and his choice not to heal us sometimes?

How has this week of study changed your thinking about healing? If you or someone you know is sick, what is the best way to approach God about this?

Week Two



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK TWO – DAY ONE

Today's lesson is unusually long. Are you up for it?

Read Matthew 8:5-13.

This story takes place in Capernaum. Visit Capernaum via Google Maps! Back out so that you can see all of Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. Switch to satellite view and then zoom in slowly until you can see a bird's-eye view of the area of Capernaum. Via Google, visit some of the amazing sites you see marked around the area. In excavating, they think they've found Peter's house, and the Catholic Church has built a beautiful suspended chapel over the ruins.

Now that you've had your feet on the ground in this real location, back to the Bible...

WHAT happens when Jesus enters Capernaum?

WHAT is a centurion? Do some research online. (Sorry, it's kind of a school day, but feel free to take a recess whenever you want!)

WHAT does this centurion want?

When Jesus offers to follow the centurion home, **WHY** does the centurion decline the offer? **WHY** do you suppose the centurion feels this way?

Read the passages listed on the next page and take notes on the facts you find in each. As you read, consider whether you are worthy to have Jesus under your own roof.

Psalm 8:3-4

Isaiah 6:1-5

Isaiah 40:15,22

Isaiah 64:6

Romans 3:10

Romans 7:18,24

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Read and respond to this quote by C.S. Lewis from *Mere Christianity*:

“If you really get into any kind of touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble—delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life.”

Some in our day might say to the centurion, “Oh come on, you’re being too hard on yourself. Of course you’re worthy to have Jesus under your roof.” But we don’t see Jesus respond in this way. He makes no effort to build the man’s self-esteem. WHY do you think that is?

Is a sense of unworthiness good or bad for someone who is pursuing Jesus? Explain your answer from a biblical perspective:

Read and respond to this quote by Timothy Keller from *Jesus the King*:

“Everybody has to recognize that we have been resting our hopes on some form of personal merit. And it’s our personal merit, our moral worth, that keeps us from understanding the cross.”

Describe your personal sense of moral worth or lack of moral worth and how you think that affects your relationship with Christ.

WEEK TWO - DAY TWO

Read Matthew 8:8-9.

In verse 8, **WHAT** does the centurion tell Jesus to do?

In verse 9, **HOW** does the centurion describe his military position?

WHAT has been the centurion's experience in this role, according to verse 9?

WHAT does the centurion imply about Jesus?

Read the following verses and write what you learn about Jesus' authority.

Matthew 9:3-8

Matthew 28:16-18

Mark 1:25-28

John 2:13-19

John 10:17-18

Colossians 2:9-10

Jude 25

Revelation 12:10

According to Mark 1:27-28, HOW might the centurion have come to the opinion that Jesus was a man of great authority?

Compare Matthew 8:8 to 8:9. This centurion is a man in a high position of authority. WHERE does his humility toward Jesus come from?

Read and respond to this quote by C.S. Lewis from *Mere Christianity*:

“In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all.”

Think and pray about your life right now. Is there any part of it where you're refusing to acknowledge the authority of Christ? Maybe a prideful feeling of “I deserve better” has crept in? Make notes of confession:

WEEK TWO - DAY THREE

Read Matthew 8:8-10.

WHAT was Jesus' first response when he heard what the centurion had to say?

WHAT does Jesus turn and say to the people following him?

Jesus is pointing to this man and practically shouting, "Yes! Now this is faith!" We should be frantically searching for paper and pen to take notes. **WHAT** is great faith? Think about this by reviewing what you see in the centurion:

What is his reason for coming to Jesus with his problem?

What does he call Jesus?

What is his demeanor toward Jesus?

What is his perspective about himself?

What does he assume Jesus can do?

What in his life experience allows him to hit the nail on the head regarding Jesus' authority?

What bold statement does he make in the second half of verse 9?

Let's fully digest the centurion's statement to Jesus: "Just say the word" (Matthew 8:8). Read the following verses and take notes about what happens when Jesus "says the word":

Mark 4:35-41

Mark 7:31-35

Mark 9:14-27

WHY do you think this simple statement, "Just say the word," was music to Jesus' ears?

WHEN does Jesus declare the man's faith great—before or after he heals the servant?

Is the greatness of the centurion's faith, then, connected to the outcome of the encounter with Jesus? Explain your answer.

Now bring all of today's study into your own life. List several of your greatest concerns right now:

Is your faith regarding each of the above concerns amazing to Jesus? Would he point to you and say to the crowd, "Now this person has great faith"? WHY or why not? If your faith is little, what are you missing that the centurion had?

WEEK TWO - DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 8:8-11.

WHAT kingdom does Jesus describe in verse 11?

WHAT event will take place in the kingdom of heaven?

Read Revelation 19:1-10.

WHAT does John hear in verse 6?

WHAT is this roaring, thunderous multitude celebrating?

WHAT does the angel tell John to write down?

Read John 1:36. WHO is the Lamb?

Read Matthew 8:11 again. WHO are three of the prominent guests at the wedding feast of the Lamb?

Read Genesis 50:24 and Deuteronomy 7:9. How does God's covenant connect to the great feast and the roaring multitudes and the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the table?

Add your own voice to that of the multitude. How has God been faithful to keep his covenant of love to you?

WEEK TWO - DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 8:5-13.

WHAT hasn't Jesus found in Israel?

WHO will come to the feast, according to verse 11?

WHERE will these people sit?

WHO will *not* be at the feast?

WHO are "the sons of the kingdom"? (Consider verse 10 as you answer this.)

WHERE will the sons of the kingdom be when the feast is going on?

WHAT will the sons of the kingdom experience in the darkness?

WHY will many of the sons of the kingdom be in the dark instead of feasting? (See verse 10.)

Is the centurion "from the east and the west," or is he a son of the kingdom?

Read Romans 11:11. Given this verse, **WHY** do you think Jesus holds the centurion in front of the crowds as an object lesson in faith?

Read John 1:10-12, which talks about Jesus.

WHO are "his own"?

WHAT did his own people refuse to do, according to verse 11?

Are you “from the east and the west,” or are you a son of the kingdom?

Have you received Jesus? Do you have great faith in him that will provide you an invitation to the great feast?

If you are a saved Gentile, HOW does it make you feel to think of sitting at the wedding feast with the Lamb, while so many of his own chosen people, Israel, are weeping in the darkness?

Do you have great faith in the authority of Jesus, like the centurion—enough that Jesus could use you to make his own people jealous and hungry for such a faith?

Will you pray and ask God to show you how to invest in helping Jewish people come to a place of great faith in Yeshua (Jesus), their Messiah? WHAT could you do now for the sons of the kingdom?

WEEK TWO – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 8:5-13.

Describe your Google tour of Capernaum.

What is a centurion, and what does this one want of Jesus? Why does he say he's unworthy to have Jesus under his roof? Is the centurion being too hard on himself? Go back to Day One of this week's study and read the quote by C.S. Lewis together. What do you think of this? Is a sense of unworthiness good or bad for someone who is pursuing Jesus? Explain your answer from a biblical perspective.

What does the centurion tell Jesus to do? In verse 9, how does the centurion describe his military position? What has been his experience in this role? What does he imply about Jesus?

Summarize what you read about Jesus' authority. How might the centurion have come to the opinion that Jesus was a man of authority? (See Mark 1:27-28.) Talk about your own life. Do you feel like there are parts of your life where you aren't acknowledging the authority of Christ?

What astonishes Jesus? Describe in detail what great faith looks like, based on the story of the centurion. How does your faith compare to that of the centurion? Be specific. Describe anything he had that you lack. Talk about the value of praying, "Just say the word," when you go to Jesus with a need.

Jesus uses the interaction with the centurion to teach about the kingdom of heaven. **Read Revelation 19:1-10.** What is the roaring, thunderous multitude celebrating? What does the angel tell John to write down? Who is the Lamb? What is the significance of the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at this feast? **Read Deuteronomy 7:9.** How does this verse connect to the great feast and the prominence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the table? How have you seen God keep his covenant of love to you?

What is the feast to which Jesus refers? Who will be at the feast and why? Who will not be at the feast and why? Where will many of the subjects of the kingdom be? **Read Romans 11:11.** Why do you think Jesus holds up the centurion as an example to the crowd? How does it make you feel to think of yourself sitting at the wedding feast of the Lamb, while many of the subjects of the kingdom have been thrown into darkness? Do you have the kind of faith that could make a Jew jealous for what you have? What could you do now for the subjects of the kingdom, so that more of the Jewish people will be pulling up a chair next to you at the feast?

Week Three



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK THREE – DAY ONE

Read Matthew 8:14-15.

WHAT is wrong with Peter's mother-in-law?

WHERE is she when Jesus enters the house?

WHAT does Jesus do?

After she gets up, WHAT does she do?

WHY do you think she does this?

Think of the last time you were flat in bed for days with an illness. When you were finally well, WHAT did you do on that first day out of bed?

HOW did it feel to be up and about again?

WEEK THREE - DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 9:6-7. This passage is a known prophecy about the coming Jewish Messiah. List the qualities he will have:

Read Matthew 8:14-17. Here we have the great Messiah coming to fulfill the long-foretold prophecies about him. What we see is a woman who goes from lying in bed sick to saying, "Can I fix you something to eat?" **HOW** does this story at Peter's house fit in with the attributes you listed above?

HOW does Jesus heal Peter's mother-in-law?

Which is easier for you to believe and accept: the personal touch of Jesus' hand or the magnificent description of Jesus' coming government? Explain your answer.

WEEK THREE - DAY THREE

Read Proverbs 31:10-31. List the qualities of the wife of noble character:

Go back and put a check mark by all of the above qualities that require physical energy and health for the wife to carry out.

Read Matthew 8:14-15. In light of the list you made about the wife of noble character, **WHY** is it significant for this mother-in-law to go from lying in bed to waiting on Jesus?

Jesus made it possible for this sick woman once again to shine in doing the tasks flowering out of her noble character. If you're a woman, take a minute to thank Jesus for the physical strength he gives you to care for your home and family. If you're a man, thank God for the physical strength Jesus gives to the women in your life, to be homemakers and servants in the community.

WEEK THREE - DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:8-11.

WHAT are people meant to do for six days of the week?

When we live in a broken world, full of sickness and disease, **WHAT** sometimes happens to those six days of work?

Because of physical problems, **HOW** do you think the inability of people to work hard for six days affects our communities?

Read Matthew 8:14-15. **HOW** does this simple story connect Jesus to God's great commandment that people are to work for six days?

Compare Isaiah 9:7 to Matthew 8:15. As we see Peter's mother-in-law get up and return to her normal tasks, how does this give us a taste of the future prosperity of Jesus' coming kingdom? (Think about work and its connection to prosperity.)

If you are physically able to do your normal daily work, **HOW** do you see this contributing to your family and your greater community?

WEEK THREE – DAY FIVE

Read 1 Kings 3:1-15. According to verse 12, **WHAT** does God give to Solomon?

Read Solomon's words in Proverbs 6:6-11.

WHOM is the writer addressing?

WHAT does he want him to observe?

WHAT is special about the ant that will help the slacker become wise?

WHAT questions does the writer ask?

WHAT will happen to the slacker, if he stops to snooze?

Review Proverbs 31:10-31. **HOW** does this passage compare to the passage about the slacker and the ant?

Now look at Matthew 8:14-15. Certainly this woman is in bed because of illness and not because she's a slacker. But take some time to think about God's great wisdom regarding work, as it came through Solomon's words. **HOW** do you see the beauty of God's wisdom regarding work come through in the story about Peter's mother-in-law?

WHAT has God been saying to your heart this week regarding the value of work?

WEEK THREE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 8:14-15. What does Jesus do? What happens when the fever leaves Peter's mother-in-law? Why do you think she gets up and waits on Jesus? Describe the last time you were flat in bed for days with an illness. What did you do on your first day of feeling better?

Discuss the list of attributes of the coming Messiah that you read about in Isaiah 9:6-7. How does the story of a mother-in-law going from feverish to waiting on Jesus fit with this list? Which is easier for you to believe and accept—the personal touch of Jesus' hand or his incredible coming government? Explain your answer.

Describe the wife of noble character, as noted in Proverbs 31:10-31. Which of the qualities of this wife require physical strength and wellness? When Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, why is it significant that she gets up and begins to wait on him? Take a minute to express gratitude for the physical strength Jesus gives to women every day, to be homemakers and servants in the community.

Talk about God's intention for people to work six days of the week. In our broken world, how do you see sickness, disease, and injury affecting people's ability to work? How do you think this affects our communities? As we see Peter's mother-in-law healed and able to get back to her normal activities, how does this give us a taste of the prosperity of Jesus' coming kingdom, as we read about in Isaiah 9:7?

What is Solomon's word of wisdom to the slacker regarding work? How do we see God's great wisdom about the value of work in the story of Peter's mother-in-law? What has God been saying to your heart this week about the value of work?

Week Four



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK FOUR – DAY ONE

Read Matthew 8:18-22.

WHERE does Jesus give the order to go?

To **WHOM** does Jesus give this order? (See verse 21 for a clue.)

WHY does he give this order?

WHO approaches Jesus?

WHAT is a scribe? (Check out the brief, interesting article at this link:

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/scribes/>)

WHAT does the scribe declare to Jesus?

WHAT is Jesus' answer?

WHO else addresses Jesus?

This second person is described as “another of the disciples.” **WHAT** does this description imply about the scribe?

WHAT does this second disciple declare?

WHAT is Jesus' answer?

(BIBLE STUDY TIP: It might seem like all of these simple questions are insulting your intelligence, but this question-asking is an excellent method of studying the Bible that forces you to slow down and gather solid, detailed facts from a Bible passage, before you race off making possibly erroneous assumptions about meaning. Anytime you open the Bible, it's a good, scholarly habit to read a passage of Scripture and then ask, "Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?" These are the "5 W's and an H" questions that every good Bible student carries in his pocket at all times. Think of Bible fact gathering as a game of *Jeopardy*, where the facts are in front of you, and you have to come up with the questions.)

Two disciples want to follow Jesus, which seems awesome, but Jesus answers with negative, rather harsh statements. WHY do you think he paints a hard picture instead of showing his best "Be all you can be!" recruiting video?

If you're talking to someone who is interested in following Christ, do you think you also should make full disclosure about the difficult side of this discipleship? WHY or why not?

WEEK FOUR – DAY TWO

Read Matthew 8:19-20.

WHAT is true for Jesus (the “Son of Man”)?

Read Hebrews 11:1-16. According to verse 13, **WHAT** did these people of faith confess?

According to verse 14, **WHAT** is made clear when people say things like, “I’m a foreigner on earth,” and “I’m only a temporary resident on earth”?

To **WHAT** do people of faith aspire? **WHAT** has God prepared for people who have faith in him?

Compare Hebrews 11:13-16 to the statement Jesus makes to the scribe about foxes and birds. **WHAT** is similar in the mind-set?

One basic human need is to have shelter. Is Jesus saying his followers should not seek shelter or will not have shelter? (Brrrr.) **WHAT** is he communicating to the scribe about what it means to follow him?

Now that you’ve listened in on Jesus’ conversation with the scribe, **WHAT** do you think Jesus is communicating to you about following him?

WEEK FOUR - DAY THREE

Read Matthew 8:19-22.

WHAT does this other disciple want to do?

WHAT is Jesus' response?

Read Luke 14:25-30. List what Jesus requires of his disciples:

According to verses 28-29, WHAT is the wise thing to do before building a tower?

WHY does Jesus use this imagery of building? WHAT point is he trying to convey?

Read Exodus 20:12. WHAT is one of the ten great commandments God gives to his people?

Compare Matthew 8:22 and Luke 14:26 to Exodus 20:12. Is Jesus contradicting the very command of God? Is he being literal when he asks his disciples to "hate" their father and mother? Explain your answer.

Think about your love and devotion to your parents, spouse, children, and siblings. HOW does your love, devotion, and obedience to Jesus compare?

WEEK FOUR – DAY FOUR

Read Luke 9:57-62. WHAT repeated words do you see in verses 59 and 61?

In verse 61, WHAT does the disciple want to do before following Jesus?

WHAT imagery does Jesus use for the disciples who want to follow him “but first” want to go do something else?

WHAT does this imagery communicate about the danger of saying, “But first”?

Conversely, then, WHAT *does* make a person fit for the kingdom of God?

Read Jesus’ words in John 14:21. WHAT do we communicate to Jesus when we obey his commands?

Compare John 14:21 to Luke 9:59-62. Are these disciples Luke describes showing they love Jesus? Explain your answer.

Look at Luke 9:59-62 again. Wouldn't you say these disciples are being reasonable? Isn't it reasonable to want to care for your father? Isn't it reasonable to say goodbye to your family before committing to follow some new rabbi? HOW does being reasonable fit with following Jesus?

Now consider your own obedience to Jesus. Have you ever reasoned your way out of following him and obeying him? Or have you ever thrown reason to the wind and done what Jesus asked you to do? Describe a few of your own experiences with reason versus immediate obedience to Jesus:

WEEK FOUR – DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 13:44-46. WHAT is the kingdom of heaven like?

WHAT words are repeated in this passage?

WHY do these two men sell everything?

HOW does the man feel who finds the treasure in a field?

WHAT lesson is Jesus teaching with these two parables?

In yesterday's study, we thought about doing what is reasonable when it comes to following Jesus. In light of Jesus' two parables in today's passage, WHAT would you say about doing what is reasonable when a person discovers the kingdom of heaven?

Read Matthew 8:19-22 and compare it to these two parables.

Have you found Jesus to be a treasure? If yes, HOW have you "sold everything" in order to follow him and be obedient to him? Give some examples of things you've joyfully left behind in order to pursue the kingdom of heaven with your whole heart:

WEEK FOUR – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 8:18-22 and discuss the importance of asking the “5 W’s and an H” questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?). Walk through these questions in this passage. Two disciples want to follow Jesus, which seems awesome, but Jesus answers with negative, rather harsh statements. Why do you think he paints a hard picture instead of showing his best “Be all you can be!” recruiting video? If you’re talking to someone who is interested in following Christ, do you think you also should make full disclosure about the difficult side of this discipleship? Why or why not?

Read Hebrews 11:13-16. According to verse 14, what is made clear when people say things like, “I’m a foreigner on earth,” and “I’m only a temporary resident on earth”? To what do people of faith aspire? What has God prepared for people who have faith in him? Compare Hebrews 11:13-16 to the statement Jesus makes to the scribe about foxes and birds. What is similar in the mind-set? One basic human need is to have shelter. Is Jesus saying his followers should not seek shelter or will not have shelter? What is he communicating to the scribe about what it means to follow him?

Read Luke 14:25-30. What does Jesus require of his disciples? What is the wise thing to do before building a tower? Why does Jesus use this building imagery? What point is he trying to convey?

Read Exodus 20:12. What is one of the ten great commandments God gives to his people? Compare Matthew 8:22 and Luke 14:26 to Exodus 20:12. Is Jesus contradicting the very command of God? Is he being literal when he asks his disciples to “hate” their father and mother? Explain your answer.

Read Luke 9:57-62. What repeated words do you see in verses 59 and 61? In verse 61. What imagery does Jesus use for the disciples who want to follow him “but first” want to go do something else? What does this imagery communicate about the danger of saying, “But first”? Conversely, then, what does make a person fit for the kingdom of God?

Read Jesus’ words in John 14:21. What do we communicate to Jesus when we obey his commands? Compare John 14:21 to Luke 9:59-62. Are these disciples showing they love Jesus? Explain your answer.

Look at Luke 9:59-62 again. Wouldn’t you say these disciples are being reasonable? Isn’t it reasonable to want to care for your father? Isn’t it reasonable to say goodbye to your family before committing to follow some new rabbi? How does being reasonable fit with following Jesus? Now consider your own obedience to Jesus. Have you ever reasoned your way out of following him and obeying him? Or have you ever thrown reason to the wind and done what Jesus asked you to do? Share a few of your own experiences with reason versus immediate obedience to Jesus.

Read Matthew 13:44-46. What is the point of these two parables? In light of these parables, what would you say about doing what is reasonable when a person discovers the kingdom of heaven? Have you found Jesus to be a treasure? If yes, how have you “sold everything” in order to follow him and be obedient to him? Share some examples of things you’ve joyfully left behind in order to pursue the kingdom of heaven with your whole heart.

Week Five



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK FIVE – DAY ONE

Read Matthew 8:16-17.

When evening came, WHO is brought to Jesus?

HOW MANY are demon-possessed?

WHAT does Jesus do to the spirits?

HOW does he drive them out?

WHAT else does Jesus do besides drive out demons?

WHAT prophecy does this fulfill?

Read Isaiah 53:4. WHY do you think this Old Testament passage is referenced in the context of driving out demons as well as healing the sick?

Okay, demon possession isn't exactly a sweet devotional topic for the week, but take some time to pray right now and ask Jesus to show you amazing truth and goodness about him as you study. Plan to be pleasantly surprised.

WEEK FIVE – DAY TWO

Read Matthew 8:28-34 with the goal of defining what demon possession is.

WHO meets Jesus?

WHY don't people pass by the tombs?

WHO shouts at Jesus? (Answer carefully.)

WHAT do the demons expect Jesus to do?

WHAT do they beg Jesus to do?

WHAT does Jesus say to the demons?

WHAT comes out of the men?

WHERE do the demons go?

WHAT does the herd of pigs do?

Based on this passage, would you say demon possession is simply an illness, for which the people in Jesus' day had no name? Explain your answer.

Read Matthew 8:16.

WHAT two things does Jesus do?

WHY do you think these are listed as two separate actions?

HOW do you think people in the community knew demon-possessed people and recognized this as something to bring to Jesus?

Is it possible there is just as much demon possession now as in Jesus' day, but maybe we define it differently in our culture? Explain your answer.

How would you define demon possession?

Have you had any personal experience with demon-possessed people?

WEEK FIVE – DAY THREE

Read Matthew 8:16,31-32. HOW does Jesus deal with demons?

Read John 2:13-16.

WHAT does Jesus find in the temple complex?

WHY is he upset about this?

WHAT does he do with these people?

Note: The same word “to drive out” is used to describe what Jesus does in the temple and what he does with the demons.

WHAT tool does Jesus use to drive out the money-changers?

WHAT tool does Jesus use to drive out demons?
(See Matthew 8:16.)

Read Matthew 8:5-9.

HOW do the centurion’s observations shed light on Jesus’ ability to drive out demons?

HOW does the centurion’s expression “just say the word” come into play in regard to Jesus’ encounters with demons?

Read Matthew 8:17. HOW is the fulfillment of this prophecy connected to the authority the centurion sees in Jesus?

As you see Jesus with a whip, driving out money-changers in the temple, and with words, saying, "Go," and the demons go, are you acknowledging this kind of driving authority in your own life? Is Jesus trying to crack the whip and drive out anything from your life?

WEEK FIVE – DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 8:16. What is your gut response when you come across the phrase “demon-possessed”?

Read Ephesians 1:1 and 6:10-12.

TO WHOM is Paul writing?

WHAT imagery does Paul use?

WHO is the enemy?

In WHAT action are believers engaged?

WHOM is the battle *not* against?

WHOM is the battle against? (Write this in list form.)

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul talks about “the powers of this dark world.” How does this idea compare with Matthew 8:16?

Read Matthew 8:8-9. WHERE do the authorities of darkness stand in comparison to the authority of Jesus?

In our modern culture, what would you say is the perspective on demon possession? What do you think Paul would say to us now regarding this topic?

Demon possession is the stuff horror movies are made of. But how do you think we should approach this issue in real life?

WEEK FIVE – DAY FIVE

Read John 2:13-25.

According to verse 24, **WHY** wouldn't Jesus entrust himself to those who were believing in him? **WHAT** does Jesus know?

Compare Matthew 8:16 to John 2:25.

Read Matthew 8:16-17 and consider modern-day diagnostics, both medical and psychological. Think about the DSM-5, which psychiatrists use to diagnose mental illness. Think about blood work, MRI machines, and ultrasound technology. **WHAT** method of diagnosis did Jesus use before treating the demon-possessed and the diseased people? **WHAT** does John 2:25 tell you about Jesus' diagnostic methods?

Read John 1:1-5, which is referring to Jesus. List facts about "the Word":

HOW does this passage shine light on Jesus' ability to know "what was in man" and his ability to cast out demons and heal diseases?

Often we talk about our own "demons." We don't mean that we're possessed, but it's fair to say we have our own internal battles against the authorities of darkness. **HOW** do you find John 2:25 and Matthew 8:17 encouraging to you today?

WEEK FIVE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 8:14-17. What are the facts in this story? What prophecy is fulfilled? Read Isaiah 53:4. Why do you think demon possession is included in this prophecy?

Read Matthew 8:28-34. What are the facts of this story? Would you say demon possession is simply an illness?

Reread Matthew 8:16. What two things does Jesus do? Why are these two acts listed separately? How do you think those in the community knew demon-possessed people and recognized this as something to bring to Jesus? Do we have demon-possessed people in *our* community? What is your experience with this?

How did Jesus deal with demons? How does this compare to what he did in the temple complex (John 2:14-16)? What tools did he use in each case? Compare the centurion's observations about Jesus in Matthew 8:8-9 to the stories about Jesus' encounters with demon-possessed people. How does the centurion's expression "just say the word" seem fitting in regard to demons? **Reread Matthew 8:17.** How is the fulfillment of this prophecy connected to Jesus' authority? How do you see Jesus' driving authority in your own life?

What is your gut response when you hear the phrase "demon possession"? **Read Ephesians 6:10-12.** What are the facts in this passage? How do the authorities of darkness stand in rank to the authority of Jesus? What is the perspective in our culture toward demon possession? What do you think Paul would say to us now about this topic? How do you think we should approach this?

How do the descriptions of "the Word" in John 1:1-5 shine light on Jesus' abilities to drive out demons and heal people?

Week Six



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK SIX - DAY ONE

Read Matthew 9:1-8. List WHO is involved in this story:

This week, let's look at each person or group of people in this story and see what insights we can gain. First we see "some men."

WHAT do these men do?

WHY do you think they carry this man to Jesus?

WHAT does Jesus see in these men?

HOW does he know they have faith?

WHAT is the result of their action?

Review Matthew 8:1-3,5-10. Compare the faith of the leper and the centurion to that of these men who bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

Read Hebrews 11:6. If someone draws near to God, **WHAT** two things does that person have to believe?

If a person comes to God believing these two things, **WHAT** does the writer of Hebrews imply will be God's response?

WEEK SIX - DAY TWO

Read Matthew 9:1-8 again. Today we'll focus on the man on the stretcher.

WHAT is wrong with the man on the stretcher?

WHO is carrying him?

WHAT does Jesus call the man?

In verse 2, **WHAT** command does Jesus give to the paralyzed man?

WHY do you think he tells this man to have courage?

WHAT does Jesus do for the man?

In verse 6, **WHAT** three things does Jesus tell the paralyzed man to do?

In verse 7, **WHAT** does the paralyzed man do?

According to verse 2, **WHY** does Jesus help the paralyzed man?

Read Matthew 8:5-13 and compare the servant to the paralyzed man. Why is each one healed?

What do you think of this idea that the faith of one person can result in Jesus healing another person?

Read Matthew 9:1-2 again and think about courage. **HOW** was the paralyzed man affected by the courage and faith of people he knew?

Imagine yourself as the paralyzed man and think about your own life. **WHOSE** faith and courage helped bring you to Jesus?

Imagine the man listening to Jesus, then getting up and walking home. Describe a day when you decided to have your own faith and courage to do what Jesus was asking you to do:

Now imagine yourself as one of the men who carried the stretcher. Is there anyone who is completely weak and helpless in your life? Maybe not physically, but spiritually. **HOW** might your own courage and faith be useful to that person?

WEEK SIX – DAY THREE

Read Matthew 9:1-8 again. Today we'll focus on the scribes. **WHAT** do the scribes do when Jesus forgives the sins of the paralyzed man?

WHAT do they say among themselves?

“To blaspheme” means to speak evil, especially to speak impiously. **WHY** do you think the scribes accuse Jesus of doing this?

HOW does Jesus describe what the scribes are thinking in their hearts?

The scribes are accusing Jesus of being evil and impious. Jesus is accusing them of thinking evil in their hearts. **WHO** is correct and **WHY**? (Try to find other Scripture passages to support your answer.)

According to verse 6, **WHAT** is it the scribes really need to know?

There is evil running through the hearts of the scribes. Is there any vein of that same evil running through your own thoughts? Are you balking at Jesus' authority in any way?

WEEK SIX – DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 9:1-8 again. Today we'll focus on Jesus. **WHAT** does Jesus see in the men who bring the paralyzed man to him on the stretcher?

WHAT does Jesus see in the scribes?

In verse 4, **WHAT** incredible ability does Jesus demonstrate?

Read Psalm 139:1-2. List what David says about the **LORD**:

Compare Psalm 139:2 to Matthew 9:4. **WHAT** does this teach you about Jesus?

Read Matthew 9:5. **WHAT** hard question does Jesus put in front of the scribes?

How about an expansion of that question? **WHICH** is easier: to forgive sins, to heal a man, or to perceive the inner thoughts of a man's heart?

Read all of Psalm 139 and join the psalmist in the prayer at the end, in verses 23-24. **Make notes** here about what God reveals to you in your own heart:

WEEK SIX – DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 9:1-8 again. Today we'll focus on the crowds.

WHAT do the crowds witness?

HOW do they feel when they see the paralyzed man get up and head for home?

WHY do they give glory to God?

Read Mark 4:35-41. **HOW** does Jesus show his authority in this account?

HOW do the disciples feel when Jesus calms the storm?

WHAT question do they ask one another?

Compare Jesus' demonstration of authority in this story to the authority he demonstrates by healing the paralyzed man:

HOW do you see Jesus demonstrate his authority in your own life? Try to give several examples:

WEEK SIX – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 9:1-8. Who is involved in this story? What facts do you see about the men who carry the paralyzed man to Jesus? How does the faith of these men compare to the faith of the leper and the centurion that we studied earlier? **Read Hebrews 11:6.** If someone draws near to God, what two things does he have to believe? If a person comes to God believing these two things, what does the writer of Hebrews imply will be God's response? In light of this verse and the faith of the men who carry the stretcher, how would you describe your own faith?

Now talk about the man on the stretcher. What does Jesus call the man? What command does Jesus give to the paralyzed man? Why do you think he tells this man to have courage? In verse 2, what does Jesus do for the man? Why does Jesus help the paralyzed man? Think back to the centurion and his servant, and compare the servant to the paralyzed man. Why is each one healed? What do you think of this idea that the faith of one person can result in Jesus healing another person? Think about courage. How was the paralyzed man affected by the courage and faith of people he knew? Imagine yourself as the paralyzed man and think about your own life. Whose faith and courage brought you to Jesus? Now imagine yourself as one of the men who carried the stretcher. Is there anyone who is completely weak and helpless in your life? Maybe not physically, but spiritually. How might your own courage and faith be useful to that person?

Now talk about the scribes. What do they do when Jesus forgives the sins of the paralyzed man? What does it mean “to blaspheme”? How does Jesus describe what the scribes are thinking in their hearts? The scribes are accusing Jesus of being evil and impious. Jesus is accusing them of thinking evil. Who is correct and why? Support your answer with Scripture. According to verse 6, what is it the scribes really need to know? There is evil running through the hearts of the scribes. Can you identify any vein of that same evil running through your own thoughts? Are you balking at Jesus’ authority in any way?

Now talk about Jesus. What does Jesus see in the men who bring the paralyzed man to him on the stretcher? What does Jesus see in the scribes? In verse 4, what incredible ability does Jesus demonstrate? **Read Psalm 139:1-2** and describe what is true about the LORD. Compare Psalm 139:2 to Matthew 9:4. What does this teach you about Jesus? In Matthew 9:5, what hard question does Jesus put in front of the scribes? How about an expansion of that question? Which is easier: to forgive sins, to heal a man, or to perceive the inner thoughts of a man’s heart? As you prayed this week, what did God reveal to you about your own heart?

Now talk about the crowds. What do they witness? How do they feel when they see the paralyzed man get up and head for home? Why do they give glory to God? Compare this story to when Jesus calms the storm in Mark 4:35-41. How do we see his authority demonstrated in different ways? How do you see Jesus demonstrate his authority in your own life?

Week Seven



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK SEVEN - DAY ONE

Read Matthew 9:9-13.

WHO does Jesus see sitting in the tax office?

WHAT does Jesus command Matthew to do?

WHAT does Matthew do?

WHO comes to be guests at dinner with Jesus and his disciples?

WHAT do you think is meant by “sinners”?

WHY do you think this crowd has come to dinner?

WHO witnesses this crowd having dinner with Jesus?

WHO are the Pharisees? (Do some research.)

WHAT do the Pharisees ask the disciples of Jesus?

WHO overhears this question?

WHAT statement does Jesus say in reply to the Pharisees?

WHAT command does Jesus give to the Pharisees?

Jesus tells the Pharisees he did not come to do **WHAT**?

WHAT is Jesus' purpose on earth?

Read Hosea 6:4-6 (keeping in mind the Pharisees would have been very familiar with this passage). **WHAT** is the tone of voice in God's message? **WHAT** facts do you learn about the LORD in verse 6?

We can see that Jesus quotes from this passage. **WHAT** tone of voice do you think he's using with the Pharisees, in comparison to the tone in Hosea?

Jesus tells the Pharisees to "go and learn" this, but these are the most learned men in society. There's a high likelihood they would have been able to quote Hosea from memory. (Sounds like the old saying, "Buy them books and buy them books, and all they do is chew on the covers.") What is it the Pharisees haven't learned yet, despite all their schooling?

Do you see any tendency in yourself to go through religious motions versus truly getting to know God and exercising loyalty to him in every area of your life? Give an honest self-assessment:

WEEK SEVEN – DAY TWO

Write Jesus' statement in Matthew 9:12 and try to memorize it today:

Now read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. WHAT does Paul want the believers to remember about the condition they were in when they were called to follow Christ?

According to verse 27, WHAT has God chosen?

WHY has God chosen the foolish things?

WHY has God chosen the weak things?

According to verse 28, WHAT has God chosen?

WHY has God chosen the insignificant and despised things—the things viewed as nothing?

According to verse 29, WHY has God chosen the foolish, weak, insignificant, and despised things?

According to verse 30, WHAT did Jesus become for the believers?

According to verse 31, WHY is all of the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption found in Jesus instead of people?

Compare Paul's words in Corinthians to Jesus' words in Matthew 9:12:

Reread Matthew 9:11. WHAT is the heart problem behind the Pharisees' question?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:29,31. WHAT word is repeated?

Now put yourself at the dinner with Jesus. In WHAT is your boast? Do you live on the side of the sick and needy or on the side of boasting in your own religious piety? Explain your answer.

WEEK SEVEN – DAY THREE

Can you write Jesus' statement in Matthew 9:12 from memory? If not, copy it again here and try to memorize it:

Now read Psalm 51, which David wrote after Nathan the prophet called him out for the whole Bathsheba scandal. WHAT is David's perspective about his own condition?

WHAT does he want from God?

In verse 1, HOW does David describe God?

In verse 16, David knows God does not want WHAT?

Compare Psalm 51:16 to Matthew 9:12-13.

In Psalm 51:17, WHAT is pleasing to God?

If someone comes to God with a broken and humble heart, WHAT kind of reception can that person expect?

When your heart is broken at the realization of your own sin, HOW do you usually feel about going to God?

WEEK SEVEN - DAY FOUR

Write Jesus' statement in Matthew 9:12 from memory:

Read 1 Timothy 1:15-17. WHAT did Jesus come into the world to do?

HOW does this compare to what Jesus says about his purpose in Matthew 9:13?

In 1 Timothy 1:15, WHAT does Paul say about himself?

Paul was previously a Pharisee. Compare Matthew 9:11 to 1 Timothy 1:15. Do you think Paul previously would have had the same response as his fellow Pharisees, if he had been at this meal?

In 1 Timothy 1:16, WHAT does Paul say about the character of Christ?

Paul's life is a living example of WHAT?

Compare 1 Timothy 1:17 to 1 Corinthians 1:31.

In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul says he *is* (present tense) the worst of sinners. As one of the founding apostles of the church, do you think it's time for him to stop being so hard on himself? Should he stop talking about how sinful he is and feel better about himself? Explain your answer with Scripture:

In 1 Timothy 1:16-17, we see an example of Christ's patience, but we also see an example about "self-esteem." WHAT lesson will you take away from Paul in how you view and speak of yourself and of Christ?

WEEK SEVEN - DAY FIVE

Write Jesus' statement in Matthew 9:12 from memory:

Read Romans 5:6-11. WHAT kind of people did Christ die for?

WHAT condition were people in when he died for them?

According to verse 7, WHAT is rare?

According to verse 8, WHAT remarkable act has God done?

WHAT does Jesus' death prove?

WHAT makes us right with God?

Compare Romans 5:8 to Matthew 9:13.

Is the demonstration of God's love going to result in a high self-esteem? Explain your answer.

As we see the demonstration of God's love through the death of Christ on the cross, **WHAT** is the result in our hearts, according to Romans 5:11?

Does our joy come from a high self-esteem?
Explain your answer.

WHAT is God teaching you through his Word today?

WEEK SEVEN – GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask someone to quote Matthew 9:12 from memory.

Read Matthew 9:9-13. Who are the Pharisees? What do the Pharisees ask the disciples of Jesus? What does Jesus say in reply to the Pharisees? **Read Hosea 6:4-6.** What is the tone of voice in God's message in this passage, and how do you think it compares with Jesus' tone toward the Pharisees? What is it that the very learned Pharisees have failed to learn? What tendencies do you see in yourself to go through religious motions versus truly getting to know God and exercising loyalty to him in every area of your life?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. What does Paul want the believers to remember about the condition they were in when they were called to follow Christ? What kind of people does God choose and why? Compare Paul's words in Corinthians to Jesus' words in Matthew 9:12. In Matthew 9:11, what is the heart problem behind the Pharisees' question? Now put yourself at the dinner with Jesus. In what is your boast? Do you live on the side of the sick and needy or on the side of boasting in your own religious piety? Explain your answer.

Recall Psalm 51. When did David write this song? What is David's perspective about his own condition? What does he want from God? In verse 1, how does David describe God? In verse 16, David knows God does not want what? Compare Psalm 51:16-17 to Matthew 9:12-13. When your heart is broken at the realization of your own sin, how do you usually feel about going to God?

In Matthew 9:11-13, we get to see the perspective of the Pharisees in regard to what they think about Jesus. In 1 Timothy 1:15-17, we get to see a Pharisee who is now an apostle of Christ. Talk about the contrast. Paul's life is an example of what? (Consider both what we learn about Christ but also what we learn from Paul about "self-esteem.")

Read Romans 5:6-11. What kind of people did Christ die for? What is rare? What remarkable act has God done? What does Jesus' death prove? What makes us right with God? Compare Romans 5:8 to Matthew 9:13. Is the demonstration of God's love going to result in a high self-esteem? Explain your answer. As we see the demonstration of God's love through the death of Christ on the cross, what is the result in our hearts, according to Romans 5:11? Does our joy come from a high self-esteem? Explain your answer.

What is the greatest lesson God has taught you this week?

Week Eight



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK EIGHT – DAY ONE

Read Matthew 9:14-15.

WHO approaches Jesus?

WHAT is their question?

HOW does Jesus describe his disciples?

HOW does Jesus describe himself?

WHAT does Jesus suggest is impossible?

WHAT day will come?

WHAT will the disciples do when the groom is taken away from them?

Using only information from verse 15, WHY will the disciples fast when the groom isn't with them?

Read John 14:1-3.

WHERE will Jesus be going?

WHAT will he be doing while he's gone?

Think about Jesus, the groom, being away from you right now. HOW does it make you feel?

WEEK EIGHT – DAY TWO

Read Philippians 1:21-24.

WHAT pressure does Paul describe?

WHY is it necessary for him to keep living in the flesh?

WHAT does living mean for Paul?

HOW does Paul describe dying?

WHAT does he desire?

WHICH option is better, in Paul's perspective?

Compare Philippians 1:21-24 to Matthew 9:15. WHY would Paul have such a desire to die and be with Jesus?

Do you have a similar sadness and intense desire to die and be with the groom? Explain your answer.

WEEK EIGHT - DAY THREE

Read 2 Timothy 4:8.

WHAT does Paul know about his future?

WHO will present Paul with this crown?

HOW does Paul describe the Lord?

WHO else will receive a crown of righteousness?

Compare 2 Timothy 4:8 to Matthew 9:15. According to Jesus' words in Matthew 9:15, **WHAT** is it going to look like to "love his appearing"? (Consider both feelings and actions.)

When people look at your life, do you think they can tell that you carry a sadness that you're not with Jesus? Can they tell that you love the thought of him appearing? **HOW** can they tell? If that's hard to answer, then think instead about someone you know who seems to pine for Jesus. **WHAT** is it like to be around that person? **HOW** does he or she act? **WHAT** kinds of things does he or she say?

WEEK EIGHT – DAY FOUR

Read Colossians 3:1-4.

If you are a follower of Christ, WHAT has happened to you, according to verse 3?

WHAT else has happened to you, according to verse 1?

WHERE is your life?

WHERE is Jesus? (See verses 1 and 3.)

According to verse 4, WHAT is your life?

WHAT will happen someday?

When Jesus is revealed, WHAT will happen to you?

Compare Colossians 3:3 to Matthew 9:15. When the groom is taken away, WHAT does he take with him?

Compare Philippians 1:21-24 to Colossians 3:3. Paul says he is living in the flesh, but in Colossians he says his life is hidden in Christ (and Christ is seated at the right hand of God). Ummm, this seems nuts—body one place and actual soul in another. How does this reality translate into the feelings and actions we have on a daily basis? (Read Matthew 9:15 again before answering this.)

WEEK EIGHT – DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 6:9-13.

WHAT is Jesus teaching his disciples to do?

According to verse 10, **WHAT** should be a continual prayer of Jesus' followers?

Compare Matthew 6:10 to Matthew 9:15. **WHY** do the disciples of Jesus beg for the kingdom of God to come?

Compare the idea of God's kingdom to the imagery that Jesus uses to describe his relationship to his disciples. **WHAT** does this wedding imagery tell you about the kingdom of God? (What's it going to be like?)

Compare Matthew 6:10 to 2 Timothy 4:8. **WHY** do we love the appearance of Christ?

This whole week we've been talking about the sadness we feel that Jesus isn't with us and the desire to have him appear and bring his kingdom with him. You've probably either been nodding your head in agreement all week or you've been uncomfortable because truthfully you love your life here and you don't want Jesus to come and ruin it. (Honesty, people. Honesty.) If you're in the "yes" group, **HOW** do you think you got to this place of eagerness? If you're freaked out at the idea of loving to be with Jesus more than being alive on this earth, **HOW** do you think you can move toward a place of loving his appearance? Are there actions you can take as a disciple to move toward loving the coming kingdom more?

WEEK EIGHT – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 9:14-15 and talk about the facts in these two verses.

Using only information from verse 15, why will the disciples fast when the groom isn't with them? **Read John 14:1-3**. Where will Jesus be going? What will he be doing while he's gone? Think about Jesus, the groom, being away from you right now. How does it make you feel?

Read Philippians 1:21-24. What is Paul's perspective on living and dying? Compare Philippians 1:21-24 to Matthew 9:15. Why would Paul have such a desire to die and be with Jesus? Do you have a similar sadness and intense desire to die and be with the groom? Explain your answer.

Read 2 Timothy 4:8. What does Paul know about his future? Who else will receive a crown of righteousness? Compare 2 Timothy 4:8 to Matthew 9:15. According to Jesus' words in Matthew 9:15, what is it going to look like to "love his appearing"? Describe a person you know who loves the appearing of Christ. How does that person talk and act? Do *you* love the appearing of Christ? How does that manifest itself in your own life?

Read Colossians 3:1-4. If you are a follower of Christ, what has happened to you? Where is your life? Where is Jesus? Where is your life now? What is your life? What will happen someday? When Jesus is revealed, what will happen to you? Compare Colossians 3:3 to Matthew 9:15. When the groom is taken away, what does he take with him? Compare Philippians 1:21-24 to Colossians 3:3. Paul says he is living in the flesh, but in Colossians he says his life is hidden in Christ (and Christ is seated at the right hand of God). So it seems that our body is in one place and our actual soul is in another? How does this reality translate into the feelings and actions we have on a daily basis?

Read Matthew 6:10. What should be a continual prayer of Jesus' followers? Compare Matthew 6:10 to Matthew 9:15. Why do the disciples of Jesus beg for the kingdom of God to come? Compare the idea of God's kingdom to the imagery that Jesus uses to describe his relationship to his disciples. What does this wedding imagery tell us about the kingdom of God? Compare Matthew 6:10 to 2 Timothy 4:8. Why do we love the appearance of Christ? Which camp are you in: loving the appearance of Christ or freaked out by it? Encourage one another! If you long for Christ to come, describe how you grew to this place. Certainly we don't all start out there.

Week Nine



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK NINE - DAY ONE

Read Exodus 19.

WHAT has just happened to Israel historically?

WHERE does Moses go?

WHAT message does the LORD want Moses to give to the people?

HOW is the LORD going to approach Moses so that the people will believe him?

WHAT special instructions are to be given to Israel about the mountain?

WHAT happens on the third day? (See verses 16 and 18.)

HOW do the people respond to this event, according to verse 16?

WHAT warning is given in verse 21?

Based on this chapter alone, **HOW** would you describe God to someone?

WEEK NINE - DAY TWO

Read Matthew 9:18-26.

While Jesus is talking to his disciples, **WHAT** does one of the leaders suddenly do?

HOW does Jesus respond to this?

While Jesus is on his way to help this man's daughter, **WHAT** happens?

HOW does Jesus respond to this?

Contrast Matthew 9:18 and 9:20 with Exodus 19.

Read Hebrews 12:18-24. (The book of Hebrews is all about how much better Jesus is than angels, the earthly priests, Moses, and the old covenant.) Instead of the terrifying presence of God on the mountain, **WHAT** have the followers of Jesus come to?

HOW do you feel about approaching God? Does he seem like a gloomy, terrifying mountain of fire to you? Are you afraid to talk to him wrongly, for fear he'll kill you? Or do you feel comfortable coming right up to him and talking to him?

WEEK NINE - DAY THREE

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

WHAT do believers have?

WHO is Jesus?

WHERE has he gone?

WHAT is he able to do?

WHAT has he experienced?

Because we have this great high priest,
HOW should we approach the throne?

WHAT word is used to describe this throne?

WHAT attitude should we have as we approach?

WHAT two things can we expect when we approach the throne of grace with confidence?

Contrast the above passage to what you read in Exodus 19. **WHAT** has changed and **WHY**?

Compare Hebrews 4:14-16 to Matthew 9:18-22.
HOW are the approach and reception similar?
With WHAT attitude do you approach the throne
of God in prayer?

WHAT do you expect to receive when you pray?

HOW has today's study affected the way you'll
pray in the future?

WEEK NINE - DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 6:1-5.

WHAT does Isaiah see?

According to verse 1, **WHAT** fills the temple?

WHAT do the seraphim call to one another?

WHEN the seraphim speak, what happens?

WHAT is Isaiah's response?

Compare this passage from Isaiah to the following passages. Write **WHAT** they have in common:

Exodus 19:

Matthew 8:8:

Now contrast the Isaiah passage to the following passages. **WHAT** is different?

Hebrews 4:16:

Matthew 9:18-22:

Describe what it's like for you personally to keep in mind the grandeur, power, and holiness of God's throne when you pray, but also to be bold and comfortable coming and asking for whatever you need. Do you tend to lean more one way in your thinking than the other?

WEEK NINE - DAY FIVE

Read Exodus 19:12-13. WHAT is the specific warning?

Read Luke 6:17-19. According to verse 19, WHAT is the whole crowd trying to do?

Read Matthew 9:18-26 again and write down everything you read about *touch*.

Contrast once again the experience Israel had with God in Exodus 19 and the experiences the people are having with Jesus as it specifically relates to touch:

Compare Matthew 9:21 to Luke 6:19. WHY would the woman be so eager to touch Jesus?

It's very interesting that Jewish rabbis of today refuse Jesus as Messiah and won't even say his name (Yeshua) correctly, but instead refer to him with a similar sounding curse word (Yeshu). They teach the people of Israel that God is very distant. After this week of study, WHAT would you say to Israel about their God and Messiah?

Does God seem distant to you, or do you feel like you can reach out your hand to him in prayer and receive what you need?

WEEK NINE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Recall together what happens in Exodus 19. What special instructions are to be given to Israel about the mountain? What happens on the third day? Based on this chapter alone, how would you describe God to someone?

Read Matthew 9:18-26. What two different people approach Jesus, and how does he respond to each? Contrast Matthew 9:18,20 to Exodus 19. **Read Hebrews 12:18-24.** Recall what the theme of the book of Hebrews is. Instead of the terrifying presence of God on the mountain, what have the followers of Jesus come to? How do you feel about approaching God?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What does this passage teach us about approaching God in prayer? Contrast the above passage to what you read in Exodus 19. What has changed and why? Compare Hebrews 4:14-16 to Matthew 9:18-22. How are the approach and reception similar? How has this study affected the way you'll pray in the future?

Read Isaiah 6:1-5 and describe Isaiah's experience. How does this compare to what you read in Exodus 19? Talk about God's holiness in comparison to the approachability of Jesus, as seen in the stories you've read in Matthew over the last weeks. Describe what it's like for you personally to keep in mind the grandeur, power, and holiness of God's throne when you pray, but also to be bold and comfortable coming and asking for whatever you need. Do you tend to lean more one way in your thinking than the other?

Read Luke 6:19. Talk about *touch*. Compare the woman reaching out to touch Jesus' robe to the experience of Israel at the mountain in Exodus 19. Rabbis teach the people of Israel that God is very distant. After this week of study, what would you say to Israel about their God and Messiah? Does God seem distant to you, or do you feel like you can reach out your hand to him in prayer and receive what you need? How has this week of study affected your answer to this question?

Week Ten



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK TEN – DAY ONE

Read Matthew 9:27-31.

WHO follows Jesus?

WHAT do they shout?

Read the following verses and write what you learn about mercy (the word “compassion” in some translations):

Deuteronomy 4:25-31

Nehemiah 9:31-32

Psalms 78:36-39

Luke 6:35-36

If we cry out to Jesus for mercy, as the blind men did, **WHAT** posture does that put us in before him?

Think of the word “deserve.” As Americans, we’re prone to feel we deserve a high level of treatment (as I just witnessed in an ER waiting room recently). **WHAT** do we deserve from Jesus?

HOW has Jesus been merciful to you?

WEEK TEN – DAY TWO

Read Matthew 9:27-28.

WHAT question does Jesus ask of the blind men?

Compare Matthew 9:28 to the story of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-7. **WHY** do you think Jesus asks the blind men if they believe he is able to help but doesn't ask the centurion the same question?

Compare Matthew 9:28 to Matthew 8:1-2. The man with leprosy declares he believes Jesus can make him clean, but **WHAT** condition does he add to this statement?

Does it feel like the phrase "if you are willing" kind of cripples the bold statement "I believe you can"? Does it create a loophole that a person's faith can slip through? "I believe God can do this, but he probably won't want to"...allowing a little bit of Eeyore to creep in? Or does the expression "if you are willing" add something valuable to our firm belief that God is able? Explain your answer:

Write down your hardest life circumstance (maybe someone with cancer, a challenging job, parenting, marriage strife, financial strain) and evaluate your own beliefs about God regarding this situation. Jesus' words are in front of you, asking if you believe he can take care of this problem. **WHAT** is your answer? And **WHAT** happens if you add the phrase "if you are willing" to your prayers?

WEEK TEN - DAY THREE

Read Matthew 9:27-30.

After the men declare their belief that Jesus can heal them, **WHAT** does Jesus do?

WHAT does Jesus say as he touches the men's eyes?

“According to” means: down from, throughout or according to, toward, along. As we read verse 29 and keep in mind the meaning of “according to,” **WHAT** question do you think we should we ask next? **WHY** does Jesus heal the men? Or **HOW** does Jesus heal the men? (The answer is “according to your faith,” but what is the question?) Explain why you chose your question:

Do you think Jesus only acts in accordance with people's faith? Explain your answer:

WHAT connection, if any, have you seen between your faith and the work Jesus has done in your life?

WEEK TEN - DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 9:27-30.

WHAT happens to the men's eyes?

Read Exodus 4:1-11. WHY does Moses want to beg out of the assignment to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt?

In verse 11, WHAT does the LORD tell Moses about himself?

Compare Matthew 9:30 to Exodus 4:11. WHAT does this teach you about Jesus?

Read Isaiah 42:1-7. According to verse 5, WHAT is true about God?

In verse 7, WHAT three things will God do for the nations?

Compare Isaiah 42:7 to Matthew 9:30.

Read Luke 2:8-14 regarding Jesus' birth. Compare Luke 2:14 to Isaiah 42:8 and Matthew 9:30. Make notes about the glory of God.

As we've looked at stories of healing over the last several weeks, WHAT application should we make to our own lives? Is the point of these stories that we learn to pray for every sick, blind, and lame person we know, believing Jesus can and will heal them, or is the main point that we see who Jesus really is? Or both? Explain your answer.

HOW does today's study affect how you see Jesus?

WEEK TEN – DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 9:29-31.

WHAT stern warning does Jesus give to the men?

WHAT do the men do?

WHY do you think the men ignore Jesus' warning and spread the news about him?

Read Luke 19:28-40.

WHERE is Jesus riding the donkey?

WHO is around him?

WHAT does this crowd begin to do?

HOW are they praising God?

WHY are they loudly praising God?

WHAT are they loudly proclaiming about Jesus?

WHAT do the Pharisees in the crowd command Jesus to do?

WHY do you think the Pharisees insist on this?

WHAT is Jesus' answer to the Pharisees?

WHAT do you think Jesus means by this?

Compare Matthew 9:30-31 to Luke 19:40. WHY is Jesus silencing the testimony of the blind men who have been healed but encouraging the testimony of this crowd of disciples?

Think about praising God joyfully and loudly for the things you've seen him do and the realization that he is the King of heaven. Have you ever worshiped God in this kind of undignified, I-don't-care-who-hears-this-or-what-they-think manner? Write down your thoughts about joyful, loud praises:

WEEK TEN – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 9:27-31 and describe the facts in this story.

What did you learn about God’s mercy this week, from looking at other Scripture passages? If we cry out to Jesus for mercy, as the blind men did, what posture does that put us in before him?

Think of the word “deserve.” As Americans, we’re prone to feel we deserve a high level of treatment. What do we deserve from Jesus? How has Jesus been merciful to you?

What question does Jesus ask of the blind men who call out for mercy? Compare this to the story of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-7. Why do you think Jesus asks the blind men if they believe he can help them but doesn’t ask the centurion the same question? Compare Matthew 9:28 to Matthew 8:1-2. The man with leprosy declares he believes Jesus can make him clean, but what condition does he add to this statement? Does it feel like the phrase “if you are willing” kind of cripples the bold statement “I believe you can”? Does it create a loophole that a person’s faith can slip through? Or does the expression “if you are willing” add something valuable to our firm belief that God is able? Explain your answer. As you think about your hardest life circumstance, do you believe Jesus can work in this situation? What happens if you add the phrase “if you are willing” to your prayers?

After the blind men declare their belief that Jesus can heal them, what does Jesus do and say? What does he mean by “according to your faith”? What question did you choose to correspond with Jesus’ statement (see Day 3 of this week’s study), and why did you choose it? Do you think Jesus only acts in accordance with people’s faith? Explain your answer.

What happens to the eyes of the blind men? Recall Moses’ conversation with God in Exodus 4. What did you learn about God in Exodus 4:11? Compare this to Matthew 9:30. What does this teach you about Jesus? **Read Isaiah 42:1-7.** What does God plan to do for the nations? Recall what the angels sang about Jesus in Luke 2:14. Talk about the glory of God and the glory of Jesus, in regard to healing the blind. As we look at all of these stories of healing, what application should we make to our own lives? Is the point of all this that we learn to pray for every sick, blind, and lame person we know, believing Jesus can and will heal them? Or is the main point that we see who Jesus really is? Or both?

Read Luke 19:28-40. Talk through the facts of this passage. Compare Matthew 9:30-31 to Luke 19:40. Why is Jesus silencing the testimony of the blind men who have been healed but encouraging the testimony of this crowd of disciples? What are your thoughts on joyful, loud praises to God in worship?

Week Eleven



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY ONE

Read **Matthew 9:35-38**.

WHERE does Jesus go?

WHAT does he do in these places?

Read the following passages and write what you learn about the kingdom of heaven:

Matthew 13:31-32

Matthew 13:44

Matthew 13:47-50

Matthew 18:1-4

Matthew 19:23-24

Matthew 20:1-16

Revelation 11:15

Pastor Timothy Keller, in *Jesus the King*, describes the kingdom of heaven as a “new administration,” and with a new administration comes a new list of values. Give some examples of HOW your old list of values was completely different than the values you’ve had to adopt as you’ve entered the kingdom of Jesus:

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY TWO

Read Matthew 9:35-36.

WHAT two words are used to describe how the crowds feel?

Read Matthew 23:1-4.

WHO is seated in "the chair of Moses"?

WHAT does it mean to be seated in "the chair of Moses"?

WHAT do these religious leaders do to the people?

WHAT are the religious leaders unwilling to do?

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

WHOM does Jesus address?

WHAT does he command them to do?

WHAT will people get if they come to him?

WHAT does Jesus want people to put on their shoulders?

WHAT is a yoke?

WHAT will happen in that yoke?

HOW does Jesus describe himself?

WHAT will people find for their souls if they come to Jesus?

HOW does Jesus describe his yoke?

Contrast Matthew 11:28-30 with Matthew 23:4. Both talk about what is placed on the shoulders of the people. HOW are these things different?

Reread Matthew 9:36. Based on what you've read today, WHAT is one big reason why the people of Israel are weary and worn out?

Have you ever been in a position where religious leaders were placing heavy demands on your shoulders and wearing you out? Describe that experience:

Describe what it's been like for you to be "in the yoke" with Jesus. HOW is that different than just living under a bunch of religious rules? Describe the learning in that experience and also HOW it's made your soul feel:

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY THREE

Read Matthew 9:35-36.

WHAT image describes how Jesus views the crowds?

Read the following passages and write what you learn about the Shepherd:

Psalm 23:1

Psalm 28:9

Psalm 80:1

Isaiah 40:11

Jeremiah 31:10

Ezekiel 34:12

Zechariah 9:16

Matthew 2:6

John 10:11-15

Hebrews 13:20

1 Peter 5:4

Revelation 7:17

Based on the Old Testament passages listed above, **WHAT** should Israel have been looking for in the Messiah?

Read this story by Ann Voskamp from *The Broken Way*:

“The old and weathered man who drove us out to this field in the wilderness picks up the rod lying there across the roots of the tree, and says, ‘A shepherd is only about compassion and comfort. No matter what—always compassion, always love.’”

Does this description fit your experience with Jesus?
HOW has he been a good shepherd to you?

WEEK ELEVEN – DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 9:36-38. Besides sheep, WHAT other image does Jesus use to describe the crowds?

WHAT do you think Jesus means by referring to the crowds as a “harvest”?

Read Mark 2:15-17. WHAT image does Jesus use to describe the group of people he’s hanging out with?

Reread Matthew 9:36. WHAT does Jesus feel for the crowds of people?

“Compassion” means to be moved in love and pity. In Matthew 9:35, we read that Jesus is going around preaching about the kingdom of heaven. As we think about kingdoms in our world, we know there have been and still are many kingdoms that use, abuse, and even kill their own citizens. What does it mean for people to be invited into a kingdom defined by compassion?

Jesus models how people are viewed from his kingdom leadership position. Next to each of the following images, write notes about how you view people. (Does your perspective match that of Jesus?)

sheep

the sick

abundant harvest

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 9:37-38.

WHAT is the problem?

WHAT does Jesus tell his disciples to pray?

WHAT does Jesus call God?

To **WHOM** does the harvest belong?

In Matthew 9:36, we read about the compassion Jesus feels for the weary, worn-out people. **HOW** do you think this compassion is related to Jesus' concern for workers to go into the harvest?

Sending people into the harvest can seem like a cold business model, as if there's a job that needs done and we need people to fill these positions. **HOW** does the word "compassion" enter into this and change the tenor of the idea of "harvest"?

Do you find yourself lying awake at night, worrying about a group of people? Can you see their weariness and sickness of soul? Can you feel their fragility as sheep who need a shepherd? Do you see them as a beautiful harvest and long to see them "brought in from the field"? Describe these people and how compassion is stirring you to pray and act on their behalf:

WEEK ELEVEN – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 9:35-38. Where does Jesus go, and what does he do in these places? What did you learn about the kingdom of heaven this week? Pastor Timothy Keller, in *Jesus the King*, describes the kingdom of heaven as a “new administration,” and with a new administration comes a new list of values. Give some examples of how your old list of values was completely different than the values you’ve had to adopt as you’ve entered the kingdom of Jesus.

Reread Matthew 9:35-36. What two words are used to describe how the crowds feel? Contrast Matthew 23:1-4 with Matthew 11:28-30. What is one big reason the people of Israel are weary and worn out? Have you ever been in a position where religious leaders were placing heavy demands on your shoulders and wearing you out? Describe that experience. Then describe what it’s been like for you to be “in the yoke” with Jesus. How is that different than just living under a bunch of religious rules? Describe the learning in that experience and also how it’s made your soul feel.

Read Psalm 23:1. How has your relationship with Jesus shown him to be a good shepherd to you? In what ways has it always been about compassion and love?

Jesus preaches about a kingdom that is obviously characterized by compassion. What does this kind of kingdom mean for people? Talk about the ways Jesus viewed the crowds: as sheep, the sick, and an abundant harvest. Do you see people this way? If not, how do you think we can move toward that kingdom perspective?

Sending people into the harvest can seem like a cold business model, as if there's a job that needs done and we need people to fill these positions. How does the word "compassion" enter into this and change the tenor of the idea of "harvest"? Do you find yourself lying awake at night, worrying about a group of people? Describe these people and how compassion is stirring you to pray and act on their behalf.

