

**THE GOSPEL PROJECT
FOR STUDENTS**
LEADER GUIDE / FALL 2017
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1

**PRODUCTION AND
MINISTRY TEAM**
**VICE PRESIDENT, LIFEWAY
RESOURCES:** Eric Geiger
GENERAL EDITORS: Ed Stetzer and
Trevin Wax
MANAGING EDITOR:
Brian Dembowczyk
CONTENT EDITOR: Andy McLean
**MANAGER, STUDENT MINISTRY
PUBLISHING:** John Paul Basham
DIRECTOR, STUDENT MINISTRY:
Ben Trueblood

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project for
Students Leader Guide*,
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234-0144;
or make comments on the Web at
www.lifeway.com.

**Printed in the
United States of America**

*The Gospel Project® for Students
Leader Guide*
(ISSN 2163-0917; Item 005508633)
is published quarterly by
LifeWay Christian Resources
One LifeWay Plaza,
Nashville, TN 37234
Thom S. Rainer, President.

© 2017 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries,
visit www.lifeway.com, or write LifeWay
Church Resources Customer Service, One
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For
subscriptions or subscription address changes,
e-mail subscribe@lifeway.com,
fax (615) 251-5818, or write to the
above address. For bulk shipments
mailed quarterly to one address, e-mail
orderentry@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5933, or
write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for
its author; salvation for its end; and
truth, without any mixture of error,
for its matter and that all Scripture is
totally true and trustworthy. To review
LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit
www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Scripture quotations are from The
Holy Bible, English Standard Version®
(ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a
publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
Used by permission.

CONTENTS

Word from the Editor	02
About the Authors	03
How to Use	04

UNIT 1: JESUS THE SAVIOR

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

September 3	Session 1: Anointed for Burial	06
September 10	Session 2: Jesus Entered Jerusalem	16
September 17	Session 3: The Last Supper	26
September 24	Session 4: Betrayed and Arrested	36
October 1	Session 5: The King was Crucified	46
October 8	Session 6: Jesus was Raised	56

UNIT 2: JESUS THE RISEN KING

October 15	Session 7: The Emmaus Road	66
October 22	Session 8: Jesus Appeared to the Disciples	76
October 29	Session 9: Thomas Doubted	86
November 5	Session 10: The Call to Follow Him	96
November 12	Session 11: The Great Commission	106
November 19	Session 12: Jesus Ascended	116
November 26	Special Session: A Song of Thanksgiving	126

FROM THE EDITOR



Andy McLean

Editor

*The Gospel Project
for Students*

The current volume of *Jesus Saves* takes us to the central event in all of human history—the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we see repeated over and over throughout the Bible, the events surrounding the cross of Christ are the reason Jesus came. The disciples may have been thrown off by these events, but Jesus wasn't. He knew the cross was His mission to bear, and He knew exactly what it would cost Him. It was the means God chose to reconcile sinners to Himself, making "him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The promise God gave to Adam and Eve long ago would finally be fulfilled. Jesus, the Promised Seed, would crush the serpent's head, and death itself would be defeated in the death of Christ. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham to provide a lamb by sending the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. And, as Isaiah prophesied, the Suffering Servant was wounded for our transgressions and pierced for our iniquities. All of the foreshadowing in the Old Testament not only pointed forward to Jesus, but also pointed to the mission He would complete.

The cross and resurrection of Christ are central to God's Story in human history. Jesus is the Hero who came to rescue a captive people by taking the punishment they deserved. The cross is also central to our faith as believers. It is because of the cross that we can rightly see ourselves, like Barabbas, as being guilty and set free. It is because of the cross that, like Mary, we can live as if Jesus is better than anything this world can offer. It is because of the cross that, like Peter and the other disciples, we can move past our own personal failures and disappointments and be reconciled to God. And God empowers us for the life mission He has called us to.

AUTHORS

UNIT 1



MATT CHANDLER is the Lead Pastor of Teaching at The Village Church in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, and the president of the Acts 29 church-planting network. He has authored several books, including *Mingling of Souls*, *Recovering Redemption*, *Creature of the Word*, and *The Explicit Gospel*. Matt is married to Lauren, and they have three children, Audrey, Reid, and Norah.



GEOFF ASHLEY serves as pastor at The Parkway Church in McKinney, Texas, after having served for ten years of ministry at The Village Church. He received a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary and is married to Kaci. Together they have a beautiful daughter named Larken.

UNIT 2



STEVEN MATHEWSON (Sessions 7–10) serves as senior pastor of CrossLife Evangelical Free Church in Libertyville, Illinois. He received a DMin (preaching) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the author of five books, including *Risen: Fifty Reasons Why the Resurrection Changed Everything*. He and his wife, Priscilla, have four children and seven grandchildren.



TRILLIA NEWBELL (Sessions 11–12) is the author of *Enjoy, Fear and Faith, United*, and *God's Very Good Idea* (forthcoming, September 2017). She is the Director of Community Outreach for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. Trillia is married to Thern, and they reside with their two children near Nashville, Tennessee. You can find her at trillianewbell.com.



DANIEL DAVIS (Special Session) is the content editor for *The Gospel Project* for Adults and a part-time student pastor at Edgefield Baptist Church in East Nashville, Tennessee. He received an MDiv from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Christy, have three children and also provide care for foster children.

HOW TO USE

► INTRO

The two introductory pages begin with a summary that provides a brief overview of the session, including a list of Scriptures. The main point is also listed here, as well as two introductory options to choose from to begin the session.

► HIS STORY

The five His Story pages contain the main teaching material for each session. This section follows the storyline of the Bible, focusing on what God has done in redemptive history throughout the pages of Scripture. The first page restates the main point that is to be emphasized throughout the session and is followed by an overview of the main characters. There is also an introductory plot that serves as a transitional entryway to the main part of the session that begins on the following page.

In addition to these, there are other things to notice throughout the His Story section:

- **Personal Study Guide:** Any time you see a vertical bar in the His Story section, it indicates that the material can also be found in the student's personal study guide.
- **Timeline:** Each session features a timeline of events that corresponds to the timeline located in the student's personal study guide.
- **Going Further With The Story:** Most sessions will include at least one of these. They contain additional material that allows leaders to go deeper into the biblical story. It is up to the leader's discretion whether he or she would like to utilize this material in any way. One can simply bypass this option, however, and not miss anything vital to the session.

01 SESSION ONE

Anointed for Burial

THE POINT
Our heart's condition is revealed either by our giving or our greed.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1
New each can compare with the joy of a young child on Christmas morning. For days, or even weeks, her and gifts have probably been anxiously wrapped, pressed under a tree decorated with ornaments and lights. Their anticipation builds until it is nearly ready to erupt in joy as paper and bows fly through the air in an unrestrained frenzy on Christmas day.

• **What are some of your most memorable Christmas memories?**

New each can compare with that feeling—with the concept of the joy the parents experience. For months, men have dreamed the perfect present and unfolded it for his home and held it away somewhere in the dark recesses of the attic. Words rather it was wrapped with love. Days before, it was placed under the tree, where it waited until the child's anticipation meets with the present. Does it see their child's joy. In those moments, it is abundantly clear that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Option 2
When we think of receiving or giving gifts, we tend to think of birthdays or Christmas, right? People often ask, "What did you get for Christmas?" or "What did you get for your birthday?" In those times, it can be easy for us to focus on our own wish lists, or even the present that didn't make it under the tree on the birthday day. But what about the times we are able to give gifts to others?

• **Think about the last time you gave someone a gift. What was your favorite part of giving that gift?**

• **Was giving the gift worth the cost of buying it? Why or why not?**

The moment we unwrap our gifts, the anticipation is gone. Maybe we even find ourselves wondering what we want to do with our gift with the most interest. However, the Bible teaches an entirely different focus. As believers, our focus is to be laid on the gospel, said to God. He is the ultimate gift Giver—He gave His Son to give us freedom from our sins and eternity with Him. God showed His love for us in His giving. We can also show our love for others in the way that we give.

• **How does God's giving to us affect your view on giving to others?**

6 Leader Guide / Session 1

The Gospel Project for Students 7

HIS STORY 15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT
Our heart's condition is revealed either by our giving or our greed.

CHARACTERS

- Jesus: the central figure of the second semester of the Trinity
- Mary: sister of Lazarus, friend of Christ
- Judas: one of the original twelve disciples, betrayed Christ to the chief priests.

PLOT
This quarter opens up with a scene that teaches us about generosity and devotion, while it shows with one of great and disciples. Our main characters include Jesus and His disciples, and Mary, the sister of Lazarus (whose Jesus raised from the dead). Even though this story teaches us important virtues and acts, it primarily offers us a look at the beginning of the work leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

Remember, every time you see this bar in the His Story section, it indicates the same material is also found in the personal study guide as well.

MARY ANOINTED JESUS' HEAD WITH OIL

Our story begins with Jesus and His disciples in the house of a man named Simon. What would that man mean to him? He was a man of means and wealth, but he was very quickly that what happened under this man's roof should be viewed as an act of devotion and generosity.

• **Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. (Matt. 26:6-7)**

At first glance, it is difficult to picture what was happening in this scene. For starters, who among us would be so all-invested by someone smacking us behind the ear and pouring an entire bottle of oil all over our perfume on our head? We would probably be humiliated, if we honestly considered.

However, according to our text for a number of purposes in Scripture. People are more familiar with it as a function as symbols of an healthy offer of authority. For example, gifts were not considered with oil (Ex. 29:7), as was kings (1 Sam. 10), and even prophets (1 King 19:16). Additionally, certain objects were reserved, as was the case with the ointment (Ex. 40:10). What all of these examples have in common is the consistent theme of setting upon a person or thing for devotion to God.

By looking forward, it becomes clear that Jesus was anointed in preparation for the work ahead of Him, namely His death and burial.

Mary's original intention was not simply that. In this act of devotion, was expressing her belief that Jesus is the Christ, the promised son of God! It was the act of the first in the Gospel to truly understand that the constant message preached through a world? Whether Mary was initially and intentionally aware of the significance of her action or not, Jesus didn't mind at all. He was looking toward the present time to focus. In this simple gesture, she prepared Jesus for burial.

- **The perfume Mary used was expensive. What does this tell you about Mary's sacrifice and her love for Jesus? (J. 12:3)**
- **What does Mary's gift teach us about giving to others? (J. 12:3)**

8 Leader Guide / Session 1

The Gospel Project for Students 9

JESUS PRAISED MARY'S GIFT OF DEVOTION

An early nineteenth century copy of the Declaration purchased for four dollars and later resold for over twenty dollars. A Song Dynasty bowl was purchased for five dollars and another for three dollars. A Song Dynasty bowl was purchased for three dollars and sold for over two million dollars!

Occasionally, national news will share the story of an eight-year-old boy who was given a bicycle and sold it for a large sum of money. He was given a bicycle and sold it for a large sum of money. He was given a bicycle and sold it for a large sum of money. He was given a bicycle and sold it for a large sum of money.

Remember, these sections are optional and can be skipped, if preferred.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

This was an extravagant gift. Matthew noted that it was expensive. John affirmed that it was a pound of pure nard (12), which there was more expensive. According to him, the value of the nard is only 300 denarii (Mark 14:3). Considering that a denarius was roughly equivalent to a day's wages, this gift was worth nearly two year's salary (maybe someone today making \$10,000 and selling it for \$1 million, and you will understand the magnitude of the gift).

Now, imagine someone gave the same gift to the sake of Christ and you will understand Mary's devotion. Our nation never probably not still like that gift that would provide each receive, this was probably a family heirloom that was only worth a lot of money, but also had sentimental value.

Of course, the disciples didn't see the gift as a gift at all. After all, the Bible commands us to care for the poor and the needy, and that's what this gift was.

JESUS PRAISED MARY'S GIFT OF DEVOTION

Take a look at these passages that command us to look after the poor:

- Proverbs 21:13
- Proverbs 21:13
- John 8:17
- Galatians 2:10

• **What are some other passages in Scripture that command us to care for the poor?**

But the Bible also suggests that there is a time for all things (Eccl. 3:1-8). There is a time to give and a time to receive and there is a time to work and a time to rest.

Not only did Jesus praise her action, but He also declared that it would be better to give than to receive (Matt. 23:23). He also declared that it would be better to give than to receive (Matt. 23:23). He also declared that it would be better to give than to receive (Matt. 23:23).

JUDAS PLANNED JESUS' BETRAYAL

While we are a scene of devotion and generosity in Mary, the story here also shows greed and betrayal. Take a look!

• **Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. (Matt. 26:14-15)**

And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. (Matt. 26:16)

Matthew immediately moved from the anointing to the betrayal, and what was implied in the account was made explicit to John. According to John 12, it was Judas who led the crowd of condemnation of the woman's anointing, and it was not from love of man, but of money. Thus, when he was the chief priest and asked for payment, his motivation had already been exposed. Judas was not driven primarily by religious or theological convictions, but by greed.

The reason between Judas and Mary would be to show devotion. Mary was willing to give for Jesus, Judas was willing to give for money.

The tension between Judas and Jesus is even more apparent. Judas justified when he saw Jesus. Jesus justified Himself for the good of people.

How we receive is like Mary who gave her most precious possession for Christ, but even more so like Judas Iscariot, who gave his blood and body and faith that we might be set free from the bondage of greed and sin.

10 Leader Guide / Session 1

The Gospel Project for Students 11

THIS STUDY

- **Essential Doctrines:** Each session will also contain an essential doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material. The essential doctrine is also located in the student's personal study guide, though in an abbreviated format.
- **Christ Connection:** Each session will end with a direct look at how the content studied connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture is pointing to Him. The material in the Christ Connection will also be provided in the student's personal study guide.

▶ YOUR STORY

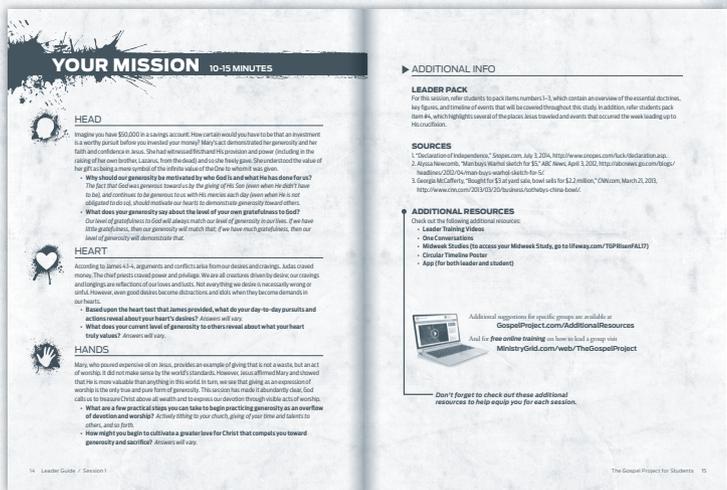
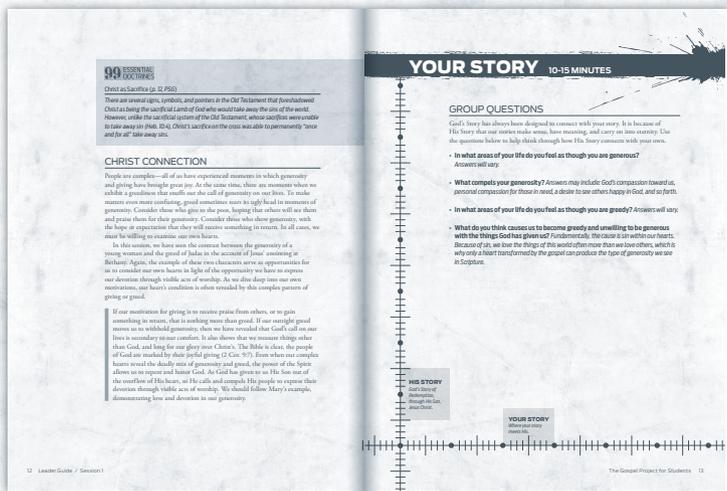
The Your Story section is designed to connect what God has done in the past to students' lives today by introducing group discussion questions that highlight how God's Story connects with their story. There are lead-ins with each question in the Leader Guide to help the leader walk students through each question.

▶ YOUR MISSION

The Your Mission section is designed to show how God's Story is capable of creating lasting transformation into how we think, feel, and live from day to day. By doing so, we emphasize to students that every session goes beyond mere Bible study to a calling to be on mission with God.

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

The final page of each session points leaders to additional resources that can be used in conjunction with each study. The resources listed, such as teaching tips videos and One Conversations, are designed to help leaders prepare for each session. There is also information about the leader pack posters that can be used with each session.



01

SESSION ONE

Anointed for Burial

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will see a contrast between the generosity of a young woman and the greed of Judas as displayed in Jesus' anointing at Bethany. These two encounters, with Judas and the woman, encourage us to consider our own hearts in light of the opportunity we have to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 26:6-16

THE POINT

Our heart's condition is revealed either by our giving or our greed.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Not much can compete with the joy of a young child on Christmas morning. For days, or even weeks, boys and girls have probably seen decoratively wrapped presents under a tree decorated with ornaments and lights. Their anticipation builds until it is nearly ready to erupt in joy as paper and bows fly through the air in an unwrapping frenzy on Christmas day.

- **What are some of your most memorable Christmas presents?**

Not much can compete with that feeling—with the exception of the joy the parents experience. For months, mom has planned the perfect present and enlisted dad to purchase and hide it away somewhere in the dark recesses of the attic. Weeks earlier it was wrapped with love. Days before, it was placed under the tree, where it waited until the child's anticipation meets with the parents' desire to see their child's joy. In those moments, it is abundantly clear that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Option 2

When we think of receiving or giving gifts, we tend to think of birthdays or Christmas, right? People often ask, "What did you get for Christmas?" or "What did you get for your birthday?" In those times, it can be easy for us to focus on our own wish lists, or even the present that didn't make it under the tree or in the birthday bag. But what about the times we are able to give gifts to others?

- **Think about the last time you gave someone a gift. What was your favorite part of giving that gift?**
- **Was giving the gift worth the cost of buying it? Why or why not?**

The moment we unwrap our gifts, the anticipation is gone. Maybe we even find ourselves wondering what we want to add to our wish lists for next year. However, the Bible teaches an entirely different focus. As believers, our focus is to be tied to the gospel, tied to God. He is the ultimate gift Giver—He gave His Son to give us freedom from our sins and eternity with Him. God showed His love for us in His giving. We can also show our love for others in the way that we give.

- **How does God's giving to us affect your view on giving to others?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Our heart's condition is revealed either by our giving or our greed.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Mary:** sister of Lazarus; follower of Christ
- **Judas:** one of the original twelve disciples; betrayed Christ to the chief priests

PLOT

This quarter opens up with a scene that teaches us about generosity and devotion, while it closes with one of greed and deception. Our main characters include Jesus and His disciples, and Mary, the sister of Lazarus (whom Jesus raised from the dead). Even though this story teaches us important virtues and sins, it primarily offers us a look at the beginning of the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

Remember, every time you see this bar in the leader guide, it indicates the same material is also found in the personal study guide as well.

MARY ANOINTED JESUS' HEAD WITH OIL

Our scene begins with Jesus and His disciples in the house of a man named Simon. What took place may seem a little strange in our modern social experiences, but we learn very quickly that what happened under this man's roof should be viewed as an act of devotion and generosity.

⁶ Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. (Matt. 26:6-7)

At first glance, it is difficult to appreciate what was happening in this scene. For starters, who among us would be at all honored by someone sneaking up behind us and pouring an entire bottle of olive oil or strong perfume on our heads? We would probably be humiliated, if not extremely confused.

However, anointing oil was used for a number of purposes in Scripture. People are most familiar with it in its function as symbolic of an Israelite office or authority. For example, priests were to be anointed with oil (Ex. 29:7), as were kings (1 Sam. 10), and even prophets (1 Kings 19:16). Additionally, certain objects were anointed, as was the case with the tabernacle (Ex. 40:9). What all of these examples have in common is the consistent theme of setting apart a person or thing for devotion to God.

By looking forward, it becomes clear that Jesus was anointed in preparation for the task ahead of Him, namely His death and burial.

Mary's original intentions were not entirely clear. In this act of devotion, was she expressing her belief that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one of God? Or was she one of the first in the Gospels to truly understand that the messianic mission marched through a tomb? Whether Mary was initially and intentionally aware of the significance of her action or not, Jesus clearly saw the act as stretching beyond the present into the future. In this simple glorious act, she prepared Jesus for burial.

- **The perfume Mary used was expensive. What does this tell you about Mary's sacrifice and her love for Jesus?** (p. 10, PSG)
- **What does Mary's gift teach us about giving to others?** (p. 10, PSG)

TIMELINE

ANOINTED FOR BURIAL

Mary anoints Jesus' head with oil.

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

Jesus enters the city riding on a donkey.

THE LAST SUPPER

The fulfilling of the New Covenant.

Whenever you see PSG page numbers listed, it indicates that there is a section in the personal study guide for students to interact with.

JESUS PRAISED MARY'S GIFT OF DEVOTION

An early nineteenth century copy of the Declaration of Independence was purchased for four dollars and later resold for over two million dollars.¹ An Andy Warhol sketch was purchased for five dollars and appraised for two million dollars.² A Song Dynasty bowl was purchased for three dollars and sold for over two million dollars.³

Occasionally, national news will share the story of an epic find of some great fortune among long forgotten and discarded boxes in an attic or garage. As many often say, "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

Essentially, this is what caused the disciples wanted to ask about the waste of the oil.

⁸ And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? ⁹ For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." ¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." (Matt. 26:8-13)

For the disciples there was no compelling reason to empty an entire bottle of valuable oil on Jesus' head. However, they missed the significance of the act of devotion and expressed their belief that her gift is wasted. But by demeaning this woman and the value of this act, the disciples unknowingly demeaned Jesus Himself and His coming death and resurrection.

Remember, these sections are optional and can be skipped if preferred.

● GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

This was an extravagant gift. Matthew noted that it was expensive, John affirmed that it was a pound of pure nard (12:3), while Mark was even more specific. According to him, the value of the nard is roughly 300 denarii (Mark 14:5). Considering that a denarius was roughly equivalent to a day's wages, this jar was worth nearly one year's salary. Imagine someone today taking \$50,000 and setting it on fire, and you will understand the confusion of the disciples.

Now, imagine someone giving her life savings for the sake of Christ and you will understand Mary's devotion. Since women were generally not able to have jobs that would provide such income, this was probably a family heirloom that was not only worth a lot of money, but also had sentimental value.

Of course, the disciples' desire to provide for the poor is noble as well. After all, the Bible commands us to care for the poor and the apostles exemplified such a longing.

Take a look at these passages that command us to look after the poor:

- Proverbs 22:9
- Proverbs 21:13
- 1 John 3:17
- Galatians 2:10
- **What are some other passages in Scripture that command us to care for the poor?**

But the Bible also suggests that there is a time for all things (Eccl. 3:1-8). There is a time to give your oil to the poor and there is a time to use it in devotion to Christ.

Not only did Jesus praise her action, but He also declared that it would be forever etched in the story of the gospel as an example of devotion and love. Throughout Scripture, the people of God are marked by their giving.

JUDAS PLANNED JESUS' BETRAYAL

While we see a picture of devotion and generosity in Mary, the story here also shows greed and betrayal. Take a look:

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

Matthew immediately moved from the anointing to the betrayal, and what was implied in his account was made explicit in John. According to John 12, it was Judas who led the chorus of condemnation of the woman's anointing, and it was not from love of man, but of money. Thus, when he went to the chief priests and asked for payment, his motivations had already been exposed. Judas was not driven primarily by religious or theological conviction, but by greed.

The contrast between Judas and Mary could not be more striking. Mary was willing to forfeit wealth for Jesus. Judas was willing to forfeit Jesus for wealth.

The contrast between Judas and Jesus is even more stunning. Judas sacrificed others for his own gain. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the gain of others.

May we strive to be like Mary who gave her most precious possession for Christ, but even more so to be like Christ Himself, who gave Himself fully and freely that we might be set free from the bondage to greed and lust.

TIMELINE

JESUS IS ARRESTED

Jesus agrees to drink the cup of suffering.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Christ as Sacrifice (p. 12, PSG)

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently "once and for all" take away sins.

CHRIST CONNECTION

People are complex—all of us have experienced moments in which generosity and giving have brought great joy. At the same time, there are moments when we exhibit a greediness that snuffs out the call of generosity on our lives. To make matters even more confusing, greed sometimes rears its ugly head in moments of generosity. Consider those who give to the poor, hoping that others will see them and praise them for their generosity. Consider those who show generosity, with the hope or expectation that they will receive something in return. In all cases, we must be willing to examine our own hearts.

In this session, we have seen the contrast between the generosity of a young woman and the greed of Judas in the account of Jesus' anointing at Bethany. Again, the example of these two characters serve as opportunities for us to consider our own hearts in light of the opportunity we have to express our devotion through visible acts of worship. As we dive deep into our own motivations, our heart's condition is often revealed by this complex pattern of giving or greed.

If our motivation for giving is to receive praise from others, or to gain something in return, that is nothing more than greed. If our outright greed moves us to withhold generosity, then we have revealed that God's call on our lives is secondary to our comfort. It also shows that we treasure things other than God, and long for our glory over Christ's. The Bible is clear, the people of God are marked by their joyful giving (2 Cor. 9:7). Even when our complex hearts reveal the deadly mix of generosity and greed, the power of the Spirit allows us to repent and honor God. As God has given to us His Son out of the overflow of His heart, so He calls and compels His people to express their devotion through visible acts of worship. We should follow Mary's example, demonstrating love and devotion in our generosity.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are generous?**
Answers will vary.
- **What compels your generosity?** *Answers may include: God's compassion toward us, personal compassion for those in need, a desire to see others happy in God, and so forth.*
- **In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are greedy?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What do you think causes us to become greedy and unwilling to be generous with the things God has given us?** *Fundamentally, the cause is sin within our hearts. Because of sin, we love the things of this world often more than we love others, which is why only a heart transformed by the gospel can produce the type of generosity we see in Scripture.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Imagine you have \$50,000 in a savings account. How certain would you have to be that an investment is a worthy pursuit before you invested your money? Mary's act demonstrated her generosity and her faith and confidence in Jesus. She had witnessed firsthand His provision and power (including in the raising of her own brother, Lazarus, from the dead) and so she freely gave. She understood the value of her gift as being a mere symbol of the infinite value of the One to whom it was given.

- **Why should our generosity be motivated by who God is and what He has done for us?**
The fact that God was generous toward us by the giving of His Son (even when He didn't have to be), and continues to be generous to us with His mercies each day (even when He is not obligated to do so), should motivate our hearts to demonstrate generosity toward others.
- **What does your generosity say about the level of your own gratefulness to God?**
Our level of gratefulness to God will always match our level of generosity in our lives. If we have little gratefulness, then our generosity will match that; if we have much gratefulness, then our level of generosity will demonstrate that.



HEART

According to James 4:1-4, arguments and conflicts arise from our desires and cravings. Judas craved money. The chief priests craved power and privilege. We are all creatures driven by desire; our cravings and longings are reflections of our loves and lusts. Not everything we desire is necessarily wrong or sinful. However, even good desires become distractions and idols when they become demands in our hearts.

- **Based upon the heart test that James provided, what do your day-to-day pursuits and actions reveal about your heart's desires?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What does your current level of generosity to others reveal about what your heart truly values?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

Mary, who poured expensive oil on Jesus, provides an example of giving that is not a waste, but an act of worship. It did not make sense by the world's standards. However, Jesus affirmed Mary and showed that He is more valuable than anything in this world. In turn, we see that giving as an expression of worship is the only true and pure form of generosity. This session has made it abundantly clear, God calls us to treasure Christ above all wealth and to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

- **What are a few practical steps you can take to begin practicing generosity as an overflow of devotion and worship?** *Actively tithing to your church, giving of your time and talents to others, and so forth.*
- **How might you begin to cultivate a greater love for Christ that compels you toward generosity and sacrifice?** *Answers will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack items numbers 1–3, which contain an overview of the essential doctrines, key figures, and timeline of events that will be covered throughout this study. In addition, refer students pack item #4, which highlights several of the places Jesus traveled and events that occurred the week leading up to His crucifixion.

SOURCES

1. “Declaration of Independence,” *Snopes.com*, July 3, 2014, <http://www.snopes.com/luck/declaration.asp>.
2. Alyssa Newcomb, “Man buys Warhol sketch for \$5,” *ABC News*, April 3, 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/04/man-buys-warhol-sketch-for-5/>.
3. Georgia McCafferty, “Bought for \$3 at yard sale, bowl sells for \$2.2 million,” *CNN.com*, March 21, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/20/business/sothebys-china-bowl/>.

● ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

Don't forget to check out these additional resources to help equip you for each session.

02

SESSION TWO

Jesus Entered Jerusalem

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will walk through three scenes from the day Jesus entered Jerusalem during the week before His crucifixion. Jesus' entry into the city was welcomed with cheering and celebration, even though He approached in humility while sitting on a donkey. He cleansed the temple of those who took advantage of the worshipers. And, as the true Son of David, He permitted and welcomed the praise of children. In these events, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament expectations and longings for the Messiah; the One who would redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:1-17

THE POINT

Jesus is the Savior who came to restore true worship.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Every year, many people look forward to dyeing and decorate boiled eggs for Easter. Not only that, but the hunt that often follows is always a hit, with kid's running frantically through an open yard looking to snatch every egg in sight, whether real or plastic. Having a basket full of eggs brings with it a sense of accomplishment, especially if that person was fortunate enough to find an egg with some change or a crumbled up dollar bill inside.

Over the years, the phrase "Easter egg" has entered into our cultural vocabulary as a way of referring to things intentionally hidden in books or movies as an inside joke or bonus for die-hard fans. If you go to Disney World, books are devoted to finding Hidden Mickeys. There are cross-references in several Pixar movies, many of them containing hidden references to one of the *Toy Story* movies. Television series do this as well. In fact, there are websites dedicated to finding the hidden "Easter eggs" in many top rated shows today.

The "Easter egg" phenomenon is something not only for Disney and television—the Bible does this as well. The more you study Scripture, the more you begin to realize that there are golden eggs containing treasures untold, intentionally hidden by a good Father for our delight as we see how Jesus fulfills Old Testament hope, longing, and expectation. As we walk through Matthew 21, we will see what "Easter eggs" might be hidden for us to find as Jesus fulfills Old Testament expectation and longing for the Messiah.

- **What immediately comes to mind when you think of the ways Jesus fulfills Scripture?**

Option 2

Imagine this scenario: Your parents promise you that they will take you on a trip if you make As in all of your classes. They made this promise to you at the beginning of the school year, and at the end of every month, they will give you one clue about where you'll get to go if you keep up your grades. The promise of the reward encourages you to focus on doing your work well, and each clue you receive makes you even more excited for the possibility of the trip ahead.

- **If this were a deal between you and your parents, where would you hope they'd take you?**

Just like your parents would give you clues to what was to come, God also told His people what would come through prophecies. The people were excited to meet God's Son, the Messiah, their king. The One promised in the prophecies from long ago had finally come—the Messiah.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus is the Savior who came to restore true worship.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity

PLOT

The last week leading up to Christ's crucifixion is known as Passion Week. There are several notable events surrounding the days leading to the crucifixion, with Jesus entering Jerusalem and cleansing the temple being among them. An incredible amount of Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in these texts—all in the days leading up to the Passover.

TIMELINE

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM
Jesus enters the city riding on a donkey.

THE LAST SUPPER
The fulfilling of the New Covenant.

JESUS IS ARRESTED
Jesus agrees to drink the cup of suffering.

JESUS ENTERED THE CITY ON A DONKEY

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all present the ministry of Jesus as building in a crescendo leading to the capital city. Where we pick up our reading today, with Jesus entering Jerusalem, Jesus was only days away from His death. Let's see what happens:

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, **2** saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3** If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." **4** This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, **5** "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" **6** The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. **8** Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" **10** And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" **11** And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. 21:1-11)

Rolling out the red carpet is a sign of respect and hospitality for the head of state or a celebrity making a grand entrance. Jesus, the anointed King, was entering the city. The long awaited Messiah had finally come. Ages of sorrow, hope, and longing were being fulfilled before their very eyes. In recognition of the gravity of the occasion, the crowds placed their robes and palm branches before the feet of the King who was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The first stop mentioned was Bethphage—an obscure village about a mile or two outside of Jerusalem to the east. In light of Ezekiel's prophecies, it is significant that Jesus and the disciples approached from the east. In Ezekiel 11, the glory of God departed from the temple and went out over the mountains to the east as a symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness (v. 23). But in chapter 43, Ezekiel's vision showed the glory returning from the east (v. 1).

Jesus came from the east, over the Kidron Valley and into the city of Jerusalem. And what did He immediately do? He entered the temple. This seemed to be the realization of hundreds of years of waiting and longing. Surely, this was when the glory of God would return to the temple and restore the kingdom.

JESUS CLEANSED THE TEMPLE

But something unexpected happened when Jesus arrived. Take a look:

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matt. 21:12-13)

The Jesus of our culture is a caricature; He is often pictured kneeling beside a group of children, carrying a sheep, or hugging a stranger. He is always happy and smiling. The idea of Jesus getting mad or sad is completely foreign to the version of the happy hippy Jesus our culture often portrays.

Unlike these cultural caricatures, Scripture presents a Jesus of passion and humanity. However, unlike our frustration with school or responsibilities, Christ’s frustration came from a place of holy discontentment. Jesus was not offering a critique of fair trade or making a statement on economic policy, but was instead declaring that this was neither the time nor the place to be selling. He turned the temple upside down as a sign of cleansing, much like a person might take all the clothes out of a drawer in order to rearrange a dresser.

According to Jesus, the Father is seeking true worship (John 4:23-24), and Jesus seeks those who seek His Father’s face. However, when Jesus entered the temple, He saw inauthentic worship. Rather than a place of gathering for the nations to pray, the temple was a demonstration of commerce with shimmering coins and cooing doves. Far from shining the glory of God, the temple glimmered with the glory of man.

Jesus not only turned the tables on the money changers, but also on the hopes and expectations of the people. For as quickly as Jesus entered the temple, He departed as a sign that the prophecy was not yet fulfilled. Something else would have to happen before God and man could dwell together.

- **Does Jesus’ reaction surprise you? Why or why not?** (*p. 17, PSG*)
- **How would you have responded if you were with Jesus or in the temple when this occurred?** (*p. 17, PSG*)

JESUS HEALED THE LAME AND THE BLIND

For most of Jesus' life, He had remained hidden. His living in the rural backwoods of Galilee and working as a carpenter certainly didn't cause suspicions that history and time itself would bend around Him. Even in His ministry to the multitudes, He tended to command caution and discretion as if His mission was veiled in secrecy, but not this time. The time had come when Jesus would no longer quiet the crowds.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, 16 and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" 17 And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. (Matt. 21:14-17)

Once the tradesmen and animals were driven out of the temple, many of the hurt, lost, and broken filtered in. The blind, lame, and children came to see, hear, and touch Jesus—He healed them all. The temple was in an uproar as the children cried out, calling Him *Hosanna*.

Meanwhile, other eyes were watching and ears were listening. These eyes and ears observed with disdain all that happened as their glory and authority crumbled around the feet of Jesus.

The voices of the chief priests and scribes issued their critique. Would this man really receive praise, honor, and glory in the midst of this temple built for God? It is a great question in and of itself. Had Jesus been anyone else, we would celebrate the priests for their courage and discernment. But Jesus was not an imposter or pretender. Unlike the charade of worship typical of the temple, Jesus is the very face of faithfulness. He is the king who came to redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise. He alone is worthy of the worship.

- **How did the priests and scribes accuse Jesus?** (*p. 18, PSG*)
- **How did Jesus respond to them?** (*p. 18, PSG*)

TIMELINE

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Temple of the Holy Spirit (p. 17, PSG)

The Holy Spirit indwells the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous fruit that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also equips individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:11).

CHRIST CONNECTION

By entering Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. Through His actions in the temple, Jesus conveyed His judgment toward those who would misuse God's house for their greedy purposes. And for the sins of His people, Jesus offered His own body as a temple to be destroyed, and to eventually be raised again.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think the prophecy predicted that the Messiah, the King, would enter the city on a donkey? What does this say about Jesus' humility?**

Answers will vary.

- **What is the difference between regular anger and a holy anger?** *It is important that we distinguish between the selfish and vindictive anger we experience from the holy anger of God over the sinfulness of man. Of course, as Christians, we can also experience anger over sin, and rightly so. However, it is still important to realize that our anger will always be out of proportion to the sin that was committed, unlike God's. God's anger is both holy and justified because of who He is and what He has done for us, and His anger will always be in perfect proportion since He Himself is ultimately the One being sinned against.*

- **What do you think motivated Jesus in this mission of cleansing the temple? What is the takeaway for us today?** *Jesus saw the greed and extortion that was taking place among the people. Wanting to restore true worship and draw people to the fact that God's house is one of prayer, Jesus drove the money changers away. One takeaway along those lines is just that—we should pay more attention to the fact that God's house is a house of prayer. Of course, it is not one of prayer only, but Jesus highlights the importance of the role of prayer in the house of God, something we should do as well.*

- **What is something new and important you have learned from this session?**

Answers will vary.

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The fact that Jesus entered the city riding a donkey is significant. According to 1 Kings 1:32-35, we see that it wasn't the first time a Jewish king had ridden into Jerusalem on a mule. Solomon, the last great king of the united kingdom of Israel, entered the city riding a donkey. The son of David rode into the city on a donkey to be anointed as king. But later, the greater Son of David rode into the city, the One whose reign would be eternal.

- **Why do you think it is important that Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament prophecies?** *These prophecies were given for our benefit—as signs and evidences that Jesus is who He claimed to be, God's Son.*
- **What kind of confidence in your faith does it give you to know that Jesus fulfilled all of these Old Testament prophecies?** *Answers will vary.*



HEART

The good news of *Hosanna* is that Christ has come to save us from our inadequate worship. Just like the blind, lame, and children who came to see, hear, and touch Jesus, we too can be healed. Jesus embodies faithfulness. He is the king who came to restore true worship, even in our unfaithful hearts. He is able to replace a cold or even lukewarm heart with one that overflows with genuine praise for Him.

- **When have you experienced gratitude and hope in Christ to such a degree that it overflowed into praise?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What does a life of praise and worship look like?** *A life of praise and worship is both visible and invisible. Worship starts within the heart and eventually makes its way outward into the very life of the worshiper—in that person's talk, pursuits, actions, and so forth.*



HANDS

It's solely on the basis of what Jesus has done for us that we can boldly and confidently share with others news of the salvation that only He can give. Whether we share with someone who has never heard the gospel or with a believer who is struggling with lukewarm worship, it is easy to point others to Jesus—the only One capable of transforming our lives from the inside out.

- **When have you been driven by a desire for the glory of God?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How do our actions and attitudes change for the better when we are driven by the glory of God?** *Answers will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

03

SESSION THREE

The Last Supper

SESSION SUMMARY

For more than a thousand years, the Israelites celebrated God's deliverance from Egypt through the Passover meal. At the same time, this meal pointed ahead to an even more glorious sacrifice and work of God. Jesus reinterpreted the Passover meal in light of Himself and His coming sacrifice on the cross, where He would pay for the sins of the world. With a demonstration of authority and humility, Jesus set forth the pattern of countless Lord's Supper celebrations that now point back to His new covenant sacrifice and point forward to His coming kingdom.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 26:26-30; John 13:1-15

THE POINT

The Lord's Supper points to Jesus' sacrifice for sins.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the late 15th century, *The Last Supper* is one of the most iconic paintings in the world. Along with the *Mona Lisa*, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and a handful of other works, the painting has been a focal point in the art world since its creation.

On the wall of a converted monastery in Milan sits Jesus, center table, surrounded by His disciples in the very moment that He predicts His betrayal. Respected for its mystery and majesty, the mural has been much copied over the years through cultural caricature. Rather than Jesus and His disciples, you might find world leaders or pop culture icons like Han Solo, Kermit the Frog, or Bugs Bunny gathered around the table.

Although the painting is not the most accurate depiction of the historical setting of the supper, it is hauntingly beautiful and leaves quite the impression upon its viewers. Thousands of years of Passovers pointed ahead to this meal, and thousands of years of Lord's Supper celebrations point back to this supper of humble service, covenantal sacrifice and kingdom anticipation.

- **Why do you think the Last Supper painting has been so popular?**

Option 2

Every sports team has a uniform, and sports fans tend to associate a team with a uniform color, like "Kentucky Blue" or "Carolina Blue." But people are probably even more likely to recognize their team's mascot, like the Kentucky Wildcats, the Carolina Tarheels, the Minnesota Vikings, the Denver Broncos, or the Baltimore Orioles. To sports fans, each of these colors or mascots represent their teams.

- **What's your favorite sports team? Who is the team's mascot? What are the team's colors?**

In a much more meaningful way, the Lord's Supper represents Jesus' sacrifice for us. And the last supper—Jesus' final meal with His disciples—pointed forward to the way Jesus would die on the cross where His body would be broken and His blood would be poured out for us. So, when we participate in the Lord's Supper at church, we should remember Jesus and His sacrifice for us.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

The Lord's Supper points to Jesus' sacrifice for sins.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

PLOT

Our story progresses to an event that is well known even among those unfamiliar with the Bible—the last supper. In celebration of Passover—the miraculous event that took place in Egypt during the time of Moses—Jesus and the disciples gathered together to share a meal, the elements of which would point to what He would eventually accomplish on the cross.

TIMELINE

THE LAST SUPPER

The fulfilling of the New Covenant.

JESUS IS ARRESTED

Jesus agrees to drink the cup of suffering.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.

JESUS WASHED THE DISCIPLES' FEET

To set the scene of the last supper, we'll dig into the account in the Gospel of John. Take a look:

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **4** rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. **5** Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" **7** Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." **8** Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." **9** Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" **10** Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." **12** When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. **14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." (John 13:1-15)

Undercover Boss is a television series that sees owners and/or senior executives posing as an employee, under a fake identity, in order to evaluate the working culture within their companies and get to know entry-level employees. Each show features a different executive working undercover for a period of a week or two during which the boss will inevitably face some sort of predicament and get to know his or her employees.

The turning point of each episode is the big reveal when the various lower-level workers are transported to company headquarters or some other central location where the boss discloses his or her true identity after having worked with these employees. Depending on how those workers performed their various roles over the course of the episode, the boss either rewards or disciplines them.

Jesus' entire life was marked by service. He served the crowds and His disciples constantly, escaping only for a few short breaks to rest in prayer and contemplation. One might think this last meal would surely be the moment of His big reveal. Like the undercover boss, maybe we imagine that—having taken the form of a servant until the end of the episode—the King removes His blue-collar uniform and sits enthroned in royal robes to the amazement of His followers. That is what we might expect. Instead, the King removes His robe and kneels in yet another act of service to the amazement of His followers.

One might say that Jesus' entire life was marked by service—it was the very reason He came. Far from a peripheral aspect of His life and ministry, service was at the very heart of who He is and what He does.

What would motivate such service? What kind of posture of heart would cause someone to lay aside privilege and preference for the sake of others? In a word—*humility*. Christ's service was not begrudging or selfish, but selfless and sacrificial. He sees the needs of His people and He responds.

After washing the dusty feet of His disciples, Jesus reclined again at the table and issued a challenge and a command: Go and do likewise. If the King should serve His people, how much more should His servants serve each other?

- **Is your life marked more by serving or being served?** (*p. 23, PSG*)

JESUS EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE OF THE SUPPER

Each week, faithful followers of Christ all around the world take part in the Lord's Supper. As deacons, ushers, or other members distribute the bread and juice, a pastor recites this passage from Matthew, a parallel passage from Mark or Luke, or perhaps 1 Corinthians 11. Here is Matthew's account.

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt. 26:26-28)

For thousands of years, God required sacrifices of His people. From Adam to Noah to Abraham to David, God's were a people of sacrifice. But as our God seeks to serve rather than be served, He always intended to be the One to offer the ultimate sacrifice for His people. As Jesus came to serve and not be served, He would offer up His life as a ransom for others. His blood would be poured out for our sins—and the last supper was a representation of that.

Think of it this way: the Statue of Liberty, the Vietnam Memorial, and the U.S. Flag are each an iconic representation of something. Each tells a story of hope, sacrifice, or patriotism, and each communicates a vision of purpose and meaning. Every culture has these types of symbols, and seeing them brings to mind certain ideals or, in some cases, misplaced hopes.

When Jesus broke the bread and lifted the cup, He was painting a picture of a new reality. He crafted a visual depiction of the events that would soon occur—His body would hang between earth and air, and His blood would flow from His pierced side. His broken body: the breaking of bread. His blood poured out: the drinking of the cup. Even now, as we participate in the Lord’s Supper together, we do so to remember what He sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 11:17-26).

JESUS POINTED FORWARD TO A FUTURE SUPPER WITH ALL BELIEVERS

Patience is something that does not come naturally to any of us. A favorite meal on the stove requires a taste test. An incredible dessert demands to be eaten long before the party even begins. Technology has rendered many completely unable to wait in patience. Why spend the time shopping and cooking the elaborate meal when you can order a pizza or heat a frozen dinner? Why take the time to write a letter and wait on the mail when you can text?

But there is something about waiting and anticipation that are inherent to the Christian faith. In fact, we see the importance of patience and waiting even in the account of the Lord’s Supper.

29 “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 26:29-30)

There in that tiny upper room, what must have seemed like an offhand remark is actually a beautiful promise. Jesus would not drink of the vine again soon, but He would drink it again. Not only would He drink it again, but He would do so in the kingdom of His Father, with the disciples.

The message of the coming kingdom is a message of hope, joy, and fulfillment and is the longing of the Christian heart. So, we pray for God’s kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10). We hunger and thirst for the kingdom, because we hunger and thirst for the King.

- **When have you felt the deep desire, or need, for God’s kingdom? For Jesus?** (p. 24, PSG)

TIMELINE

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS SENDS

The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Lord's Supper (p. 24, PSG)

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer, and anticipate His second coming (1 Cor. 11:26).

CHRIST CONNECTION

One of the great commands we find throughout Scripture is to remember. Remembering resets our identity on where we have come from and on what we have come through. Remembering not only solidifies our identity by looking into the past, but it also fortifies our mission as we look to the future. In the Passover meal, the Israelites remembered their God who served, delivered, and guided them. As Christians partake in the Lord's Supper, we remember Christ, whose entire life was marked by service in the mission of God and service for the good of His people.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How does the Lord's Supper provide a picture of salvation in Christ?** *The bread—Jesus' body—was broken for us as He endured the punishment our sins deserved. The wine—His blood—was the blood shed for the atonement of our sins.*
- **The Lord's Supper can become a church ritual rather than a meaningful remembrance. What are some ways that you can cultivate a more intentional experience next time you take the Lord's Supper with your church?**
One way would be to spend some time in personal prayer before you take the elements, confessing any sins before God and asking Him for the grace to participate in the Lord's Supper in a meaningful way.
- **What is the last thing you can remember waiting for in anticipation?**
Answers will vary.
- **Do you honestly look forward to the full arrival of God's future kingdom? Why or why not?** *It is not surprising that many young people have conflicting emotions regarding Jesus' imminent return. They look forward to it for sure, but they also hope that it is distant as well—after all, they want to grow up, get married, have kids, and experience life as they imagine it. Be sympathetic to students in your group who think this way. The reason they do is because of the simple fact that they haven't grasped how much better everything will be when Jesus returns. They haven't fully grasped that life experiences won't go away, but will be infinitely enhanced as things are done directly under the lordship of Christ, for both His glory and our good.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Earthly kings are not typically known for their service. However, our God has established a different kingdom—one marked by humility and selflessness. Every time we partake in the Lord's Supper now, we are constantly reminded of the servant nature of our God because the Lord's Supper points to the sacrificial nature of Christ's death for our sins.

- **Read Mark 10:45 and Acts 17:24-25. What do these passages say about how God relates to us?** *In essence, they both tell us that God doesn't need to be served by us, but because of our great need for Him, we are the ones who are served by the almighty God.*
- **Why do you think people often believe they must first serve God in order for Him to respond with love and grace?** *Many people have a works-based understanding of God, thinking a person needs to do something in order to receive something from God in return.*



HEART

The Lord's Supper has a way of increasing our expectation of the day Jesus will return. It points our attention to and increases our anticipation of the day when we will no longer need symbolic representations of Christ's sacrifice since Christ Himself will be with His people. Jesus mentioned the anticipation of His return, as did Paul (Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26). We should never allow the Lord's Supper to become dull or ritualistic; instead, we should allow it to guide our imaginations into what that day will be like when the people of God are gathered together for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:1-9).

- **How can the Lord's Supper encourage believers in their faith?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does this session give you a renewed understanding of the Lord's Supper?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

Just as the Lord's Supper points toward the fact that Jesus' service is not selfish, but selfless and sacrificial, we should remember our servant identity in the kingdom of God. In partaking of the Lord's Supper, we agree with God's mission of sharing the gospel with others. Because of Jesus' humble service to us and because of His new covenant sacrifice, we can live lives of service as we excitedly wait for His return.

- **In what areas of your life are you serving others?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some practical ways you can practice service toward those in your home, church, school, and community this week?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #5, which contains a quote poster related to the last supper.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



04

SESSION FOUR

Betrayed and Arrested

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will see that Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, chose to obey His Father and drink the full cup of suffering and wrath in order to purchase eternal life for believers. Even though He would be betrayed and endure false accusations, mockery, physical abuse, and death, Jesus accepted the foretold plan of His Father and fulfilled His identity as the promised Messiah sent to be the Savior of the world.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 26:36-49,56,59-66

THE POINT

Jesus was sent by the Father to face judgment for our sins.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Tabloid magazines and websites make a lot of money off of celebrity arrests. Hardly a month goes by when another movie or television star is not featured on the cover of a newspaper, website, or magazine with headlines about a shocking arrest. Some are not so shocking, while others are rather surprising.

Perhaps no arrest has ever been so shocking as Jesus' arrest. For years, His disciples assumed His approach to Jerusalem would be an ascent to the throne. Even Jesus' multiple predictions of His own arrest and suffering did not curb the disciples' hopes and expectations, though these predictions may have tempered the excitement a bit. Whether to purify the temple or overthrow the Romans, Jesus was there to lead the people to liberty and life, not to be led to captivity and death—or so they thought. Besides, He was the only innocent person to ever live. After all the good He did, who would want to falsely accuse Him of a crime and see Him convicted?

- **Have you ever been falsely accused or punished for something you didn't do? How did you respond?**

Option 2

Just like the world outside of your school walls, schools have rules that they ask their students to follow. Those rules are in place to keep the students, teachers, and the rest of the staff, safe. Sometimes, teachers come up with rules for their own classrooms to create a better learning environment for their own students. Maybe you're homeschooled and your teacher has strict rules that apply during the hours you focus on school work. And just like laws in the real world, the rules of our schools have consequences for when we don't follow them.

- **What are some school rules or class rules you're asked to follow?**
- **What are some common consequences schools give for broken rules?**

Similarly, God gave the law through Moses to the Israelites. The law required sacrifice for sins. But humans can't obey God's law perfectly. So, because of His love and mercy, God would send His own Son to be the once for all sacrifice for our sins. He would take on every consequence for every law every broken—because He was the only One who could obey those laws perfectly. He was a final, perfect sacrifice. Jesus experienced pain, temporary separation from God, death, and sin—all so that we wouldn't have to experience those things eternally.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus was sent by the Father to face judgment for our sins.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others
- **Chief priests and elders:** the religious leaders of Jerusalem during Jesus' earthly ministry

PLOT

Following the last supper, the disciples were still in the dark about what would soon take place. They knew Judas was certainly involved in some suspicious activity, but they did not know the extent. They also had not fully realized that what they celebrated during the Passover pointed to Jesus—the Lamb of God who would atone for the sins of those who believe.

TIMELINE

JESUS IS ARRESTED

*Jesus agrees to drink
the cup of suffering.*

THE CRUCIFIXION

*Jesus as our
substitute sacrifice.*

HE IS RISEN

*The resurrection of
the Son of God.*

JESUS AGREED TO HIS MISSION

Gethsemane was a familiar gathering place for the disciples. *Gethsemane*, a name meaning *oil press*—as it probably had a press on site for the harvesting of oil from the olives littering the landscape—was a little olive tree orchard on the western slope of the Mount of Olives.

The account of the night in the garden of Gethsemane is filled with struggles. The disciples struggled to stay awake. Jesus struggled with the disciples over their inability to remain alert. Later, Peter struggled with the guards, and all the disciples would struggle to understand. But in the garden, the greatest struggle seemed to be within Jesus Himself. As Jacob wrestled with the Lord through the night, Jesus wrestled with the weight of His identity and mission.

Taking leave of His friends, Jesus headed off alone into the night for solitude, as was His custom (Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16). But this was no customary prayer time. Jesus, the Son of God, was overwhelmed with sorrow as He faced what was before Him.

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”
³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”
(Matt. 26:36-46)

Three times Jesus prayed, each time resolving Himself to the mission that awaited Him. After each prayer, He returned to the disciples only to find them asleep. The One who would soon feel forsaken by the Father first tasted the bitterness of being forsaken by His friends.

Having prayed a third time, Jesus rose in the night to the sound of approaching swords, spears, and armor piercing the silence. Flickering lights danced in the darkness that enveloped Him. The time had come.

JESUS' MISSION WAS FORETOLD IN SCRIPTURE

We have previously seen Judas' motivations on display in the events surrounding the last supper. At this point in the narrative, He was fully immersed in his wicked intent. Whereas he had formerly left the upper room alone, he returned accompanied by a mob armed with weapons to suppress any resistance. The chief priests and elders took no chances that this would be the night—the conclusion of years of opposition.

47 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." 49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ... 56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled. (Matt. 26:47-49,56)

No one could take Jesus' life from Him. He had made that clear before (John 10:18). If He wanted to retreat, He could pass through the midst of a crowd (Luke 4:30). If He wanted to fight, He could call down 12 legions of angels (Matt. 26:53). Anyone who can calm a storm, walk on water, and cast out demons can control a little crowd. But rather than demonstrate control through lightning or fire, Jesus exercised the self-control of restraint.

In this moment of crisis, there would be no retreat, no revolt, no rescue. Jesus was resolute in accepting what Scripture had foretold. Everything that occurred on that night was foretold, but this was no comfort for the disciples in the dark. Jesus had steadied Himself in His Father's provision and plan, but the disciples were shaken and afraid. The Old Testament message illuminated the events of this night, but the disciples failed to see it. The narrative would not end without even more fulfillment to come, but the sheep were scattered and the Shepherd was led willingly across the dark valley into the city of Jerusalem.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—leave the identity of the swordsman shrouded in secrecy, perhaps because the culprit was still alive and didn't need treason and attempted murder added to the charge of preaching the gospel. By the time John wrote his Gospel, Peter had probably already been martyred, so he felt free to share the name of the guilty party (John 18:10). It should be no surprise that the One who would soon die for His enemies (Rom. 5:8) would show compassion on this injured adversary, demonstrated when He touched the man and healed the severed ear (Luke 22:51).

JESUS AFFIRMED THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS IDENTITY AS THE MESSIAH

For most of His life, Jesus' true identity was hidden under a veil. Occasionally someone would perceive His divine identity, but such revelation was mostly met with a call to secrecy and silence. But this was the moment of truth, the culmination of three decades of life and three years of ministry.

59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"
⁶² And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." (Matt. 26:59-66)

The high priest's voice dripped with disdain as he asked Jesus to tell them the truth about His identity as the Messiah. Jesus' silence must have infuriated the priests. After all, part of the reason they felt threatened by Jesus was that He endangered their sense of authority and control. They assumed they would have the upper hand on their home court, but Jesus remained silent. Person after person came forward and took the stand to charge Jesus with wrongdoing. However, as is the case when most people lie, the lies contradicted each other.

When Jesus finally spoke, it was in response to a call for an oath to the living God, and He went all in. Though His response appears cryptic to us (v. 64), it most likely represents an idiom that would have been a strong confirmation of the charge.

By equating Himself with the Son of Man from Daniel 7:13-14 and referring to His descent from heaven, Jesus doubled down on the charge of blasphemy in the eyes of the Sanhedrin. At this point there was no mistake to be made. He was either blasphemous or blessed. He was the Christ or guilty of the charge of idolatry. To the leaders, the conclusion was obvious.

With these words, Jesus sealed His fate and set the stage upon which He would lay down His own life. What had begun in the garden in darkness would soon be finished in the light of day on Golgotha.

- **What does this passage tell you about Jesus' commitment to follow through with His Father's plan? (p. 30, PSG)**

TIMELINE

HEARTS ON FIRE
All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS SENDS
The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

OVERCOMING DOUBTS
Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Christ as Propitiation (p. 29, PSG)

Because of God's righteousness and holiness, humanity's sins must be atoned for in order for people to be reconciled to God. As the propitiation for sins, Christ's death is the appeasement or satisfaction of God's wrath against sin. Christ's propitiation for our sins demonstrates both God's great love toward sinners (1 John 4:10), as well as the necessary payment that results from the penalty of sins (Rom. 3:26).

CHRIST CONNECTION

In the garden of Eden, Adam failed to resist the serpent and chose to follow his way over God's. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, the second Adam, submitted fully to His Father's purpose and plan. He willingly submitted to death upon the cross. Jesus demonstrated His identity as the Son of God through His words and actions as He was betrayed, arrested, and put on trial.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think the disciples were unable to make the connection between the events of this night and Jesus' prophecies of His impending betrayal and death?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it significant that the Old Testament prophesied many of the events surrounding the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?** *The prophecies of the Old Testament are important because they give us signs and evidences that Jesus really is the Messiah.*
- **What are some occasions in our own lives in which we can follow in Jesus' example and show restraint even when we are persecuted or treated unfairly for our faith?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some accusations the world makes against the church? Which of these should we reject or embrace? Why?** *Some accusations include that the church is judgmental, hypocritical, unable to adapt to the changing views of culture, morally behind the times, and so forth.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The “cup” was a familiar symbol of judgment and wrath in the Old Testament (Ps. 11:6; Isa. 51:17; Ezek. 23:33). Death itself would have been enough to upset even the bravest of men. The threat of torture and crucifixion was an even more imposing imminent reality. But Jesus faced something even worse. Before Him was a cup full of wrath and judgment from the holy God. By drinking it fully, Jesus would know abandonment, sin, desolation, and death.

- **What do we learn about Jesus from this biblical narrative?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does Jesus’ willingness and resolve to drink “this cup” on our behalf affect you?** *Answers will vary.*



HEART

The fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture is of particular relevance to Matthew as he crafted his Gospel through a Hebrew lens for a Jewish audience. Matthew demonstrated the various ways in which Jesus fulfilled Old Testament expectations and hopes. From birth to these events in the garden of Gethsemane, Matthew saw fulfillment (Matt. 1:22-23; 3:15; 21:4-5). In this account, fulfillment may have occurred for a combination of Scripture passages (Ps. 55:12-14; Zech. 13:7).

- **How can the fulfillment of these prophecies inspire hope and confidence in one’s faith?** *They can bolster and support one’s faith, especially knowing the tremendous odds against Jesus in fulfilling each and every prophecy.*
- **How can you use this knowledge of fulfilled prophecies when talking with a skeptic?** *If a skeptic asks you what evidence you have in believing Jesus to be the Son of God, one level of evidence you can discuss would be the fulfilled prophecies.*



HANDS

Discussing the wrath of God isn’t a popular topic in many American churches. It is a tough truth to accept. This is especially true when we consider that God’s wrath against sin will be justly poured out on people who haven’t found shelter under the gospel of Jesus Christ. By drinking this cup fully, Jesus experienced abandonment, sin, desolation, and death—and Jesus did that for you and me, so that we would not have to know the eternal torment of these realities.

- **Why is it important to talk about God’s wrath to others even though it may be an unpopular topic of conversation?** *The more people know about the wrath their sins deserve, the more grateful they will be to a Savior who was willing to take their place.*
- **How might it dishonor Jesus and His sacrifice if we neglect to talk about God’s wrath?** *If we minimize the wrath of God against sin then we minimize the magnitude of Jesus’ sacrifice for sinners.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #6, which contains an informational chart of prophecies related to Jesus' sufferings.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



05

SESSION FIVE

The King was Crucified

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will not only reflect upon the manner of Jesus' death, but also the meaning. Jesus' crucifixion was brutal and unjust, and yet, He willingly laid down His life in obedience to the Father and for the salvation of sinners. As the substitute sacrifice, Jesus died in our place. As the crucified King, He demonstrated the true wisdom and power of God. And as the forsaken Son, He endured the punishment of our sin so we could become the righteousness of God in Him.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 27:15-51

THE POINT

Jesus is the King who willingly took upon Himself the punishment for sin.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

What do you think of when you hear the word *sacrifice*? Maybe your mind goes to the game of baseball and an at-bat scenario that results in an out but moves a base runner into scoring position. Maybe you think of giving up social media around the season of Lent or sacrificing that planned outing with friends due to some unexpected family emergency. While all of these are sacrifices in some sense, none really convey the power of the biblical imagery of a sacrifice.

For most of the first-century world, the word *sacrifice* brought to mind blood. Sacrifice carried the image of a bull, a goat, or other such animal lying upon an altar and struggling as its life drained from its body.

Jesus was the perfect, once for all substitute sacrifice for our sins. He took the place of the bulls and goats—we would never need to sacrifice animals again. But His death was no less gruesome than theirs—His blood was spilled as He was beaten, crowned with thorns, and finally nailed to the cross.

- **Why is it important to not only stress the fact that Jesus died for our sins, but also the manner in which He died?**

Option 2

Have you ever seen a stalagmite? What at first appears to just be a rocky column that stretches from the floor of a cave upward is actually the result of mineralized water that trickles down from cracks in the cave ceiling. Over time, a carbonate mineral called *calcite* solidifies in the shape of a cone. Stalagmites look like they rise on their own from the floor, but in reality, they are formed from the dripping from above. Over time the stalagmite may rise to connect with the stalactite above to form a single column.

Like stalagmites, salvation always begins from above. Grace doesn't rise; it falls. According to the Bible, there is nothing we can do to rise up from the ground and stretch our way to God. The gravity of sin is simply too strong. No matter how many "good" actions we perform, how many times we go to church, or how good our intentions may be, we cannot get to the ceiling of God's love through our own means or in our own strength. Salvation falls in one direction—top to bottom. And we see this clearly in our session today as we look at Christ's atoning blood being poured out on the cross for our sins.

- **What are some ways we seek to make ourselves acceptable to God? Why are these ways doomed to failure?**
- **Why is it important to understand salvation as being top-down rather than from the ground up?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus is the King who willingly took upon Himself the punishment for sin.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Pontius Pilate:** Roman governor of Judaea during Jesus' earthly ministry
- **Barabbas:** murderer and rebel who was set free from prison in exchange for Jesus' crucifixion

PLOT

After being arrested under the darkness of night, Jesus was then ushered off before an agitated judge and jury all seeking one thing—His immediate execution. However, as we have seen time and time again throughout Scripture, what man intends for evil God intends for good.

TIMELINE

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS TOOK BARABBAS' PLACE

After being arrested and falsely accused by the chief priests and elders, Jesus was then taken to the governor, Pontius Pilate, for questioning and sentencing. What would seem like a strange series of events unfolded, which allows us to glimpse Jesus' innocent life being given for those who are guilty.

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" 24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." 25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. (Matt. 27:15-26)

Pilate was looking for a way out. He knew the priests and elders all too well and was not blind to the situation before him. He knew Jesus was undeserving of death, but he also knew that the chief priests would stop at nothing to silence any and all perceived threats to their position and privilege.

Knowing that personally confronting the priests and elders during the Passover would be politically dangerous, Pilate considered the potential of having the people put the pressure on their leaders. If the crowd were to excuse Jesus, then the elders and priests would have no recourse but to drop their accusation against Him. After all, they had been too concerned about the crowd's perception of Jesus as a prophet to make a public arrest (Matt. 21:46).

Barabbas was a murderer and rebel. He deserved the punishment that awaited him. Even if the crowd would not proclaim Jesus innocent, surely they would recognize His relative innocence when contrasted with a man like Barabbas.

Pilate's plan was brilliant, but it was doomed by the sinfulness of man and God's divine plan. On that day, the guilty would walk free while the innocent would walk to death.

In Barabbas' release, we see a picture of our own promised release. Like Barabbas, we are guilty of rebellion, but not against the Roman Empire. We have each conspired to commit cosmic treason against the Lord and rightly deserve death. If not for Jesus, we too would stand before the Judge's seat to be convicted. But as Jesus took Barabbas' place before Pilate, so He takes the place of those who love and trust Him before His Father.

JESUS WAS MOCKED, TORTURED, AND CRUCIFIED

As Jesus was tortured and prepared for the cross, He was treated with contempt and mocked as the Messiah. He was given royal robes and a crown (of thorns)—the entire display a mockery of justice. Take a look:

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. 32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. (Matt. 27:27-44)

This passage of Scripture screams humiliation—torture, mockery, abuse, insults, and taunts. Jesus was a spectacle to be laughed at and disregarded by the soldiers and the spectators.

Who could endure such torture, especially when the endurance is a matter of choice and not a necessity? At any point Jesus could have resisted; at any point He could have fought back. His resistance is never futile, and yet, He endured.

This passage also screams humility—patience, love, grace, and mercy. Jesus on the cross was a spectacular drama showing just how far the Son of God was willing to go in perfect obedience to His Father, and we are encouraged to share in that same humility (Phil. 2:5-11).

The irony in this passage is thicker even than the blood. The King of kings was mocked by being called a king. He was told to display His glory by coming down from the cross, when doing so would have undone all that He was accomplishing for His glory. By saving Himself, He would sacrifice others. So, He stayed on the cross and endured the pain, the shame, and the wrath, and we are the heirs to the benefits of His endurance.

JESUS SERVED AS THE SUBSTITUTE LAMB

How does a Father sacrifice His Son, especially when we know that this Father is good and loving? Precisely because He is good and loving, as is the Son. This sacrifice was planned before the foundation of the world, and this sacrifice had a holy purpose (Acts 2:23,36).

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. (Matt. 27:45-51)

Jesus’ cry should have resonated in the minds of the onlookers, but they missed His reference. These are the opening words of Psalm 22, a psalm dripping with messianic meaning (especially verses 1-2,6-8, and 12-18). Jesus was not calling upon Elijah, as the crowd supposed. He was identifying Himself as the One to whom the Psalm pointed and demonstrating the horror of feeling forsaken by His Father.

TIMELINE

JESUS SENDS
The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

OVERCOMING DOUBTS
Thomas’ doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

FOLLOW ME
Jesus’ forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

Then, with another cry, Jesus yielded up His spirit in death. In that moment, heaven and earth could take no more. A creation subjected to futility began to quake, and earth and rock split. With it, the veil in the temple that separated heaven and earth was split from top to bottom, signifying that this act was accomplished from above.

In the torn curtain, a message was proclaimed. A Son was rejected so that the Father would have many more sons and daughters. The Father forsook His only Son that He might extend forgiveness to a great many children. A Son's sacrifice was accepted in the holy of holies, so that all who trust in Him might be accepted before the very throne of God.

- **How does it affect you to know Jesus was forsaken and rejected so that you could have forgiveness for your sins?** (p. 36, PSG)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Christ as Substitute (p. 35, PSG)

At the heart of the atonement is Jesus Christ substituting Himself for sinners as He died on the cross. This truth is seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which provided a picture of humanity's need for sin to be covered and guilt to be removed by an innocent sacrifice. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of humanity from sin.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Unjustly condemned to death, Jesus willingly took up His cross and suffered the judgment our sins deserve. At the moment He died, the curtain in the temple sanctuary was torn in two, signifying the truth that sinners have access to God through the blood of Christ. Jesus' crucifixion is the center of history, revealing God's holiness and justice, our sinfulness and unrighteousness, and Christ's humility and love.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How do you think Barabbas responded to this turn of events in his favor? How should we respond to Jesus taking our place?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some ways we can be guilty of choosing something or someone over Jesus?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How do the details surrounding Jesus' physical torture and crucifixion affect you?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the fact that Jesus' friends abandoned Him in His greatest need add to Jesus' suffering?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Before God spoke light into existence, there was darkness. Before the Israelites' redemption from Egypt, the plague of darkness covered the nation. And at the crucifixion, darkness swallowed the whole land for three hours as a marker of the moment's cosmic significance.

- **What do the events at Golgotha demonstrate about the love of the Father and the love of the Son?** *Answers will vary.*
- **If a non-Christian asked you why Jesus died, how would you respond?** *Answers will vary, but should include something like: Jesus not only chose to bear the consequences that our sins deserve, but He also gives us His righteousness so that we can be in a right relationship with God as a result.*



HEART

The narrative of the events leading up to and including the crucifixion certainly does not do justice to the full horror on display. Black print on a Bible's pages can never fully express the scarlet blood flowing from a wounded back and pierced brow. A few paragraphs read in a matter of seconds cannot adequately convey the dread and shock of hours of torture Jesus experienced for the guilty. As Jesus marched to Golgotha, He did so not only in Barabbas' place, but also for all who would believe. He was crucified and condemned so that we might be ransomed and redeemed. He became sin so that we might become the righteous of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

- **How does knowing the extent of Jesus' sacrifice increase your love for Him?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does it affect you to know Jesus bore the punishment our sin's deserve?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus is the King who willingly took upon Himself the punishment for sin. In light of this, we don't need to be afraid of talking about sin and calling people to faith. Our Father does not abandon us on our mission to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, through His Holy Spirit, He strengthens our faith and fuels our worship and witness.

- **How does the reality of what Jesus endured for us protect us from viewing evangelism simply as an obligation?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it important for Christians to first talk about sin when sharing the good news of what Christ has done for us?** *The bad news of our sinful condition and our need for a Savior must always precede the good news of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus. Without mention of sin, people will no necessarily understand what they are being saved from and so forth.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #7, which contains a quote poster related to the session.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

06

SESSION SIX

Jesus was Raised

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will consider the wondrous mystery of Jesus' resurrection. Some women traveled to Jesus' resting place on Easter Sunday, but an angel invited them to come and see His empty tomb. Then, they saw Him and stopped to worship the risen Lord. Finally, they went to tell Jesus' disciples what they had seen and experienced. We should also see the empty tomb with the eyes of faith: We must worship our risen Savior, and we must go and tell the world about all He has done for us.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:1-15

THE POINT

Sin's curse was removed and death was defeated in Jesus' resurrection.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Every good fight story involves at least one point at which you would think the hero was defeated. Sherlock Holmes tumbles to his apparent death in “The Reichenbach Fall” episode of the BBC TV series, *Sherlock*. In *The Matrix*, Neo lies at the feet of Agent Smith riddled with bullets. *The Empire Strikes Back* concludes with Han Solo encased in carbonite and Luke Skywalker nursing a severed hand. And really, what kind of story would it be if the bell rang and Rocky immediately knocked out Ivan Drago?

For the three days after Jesus' crucifixion, it would seem like real life did not much resemble fiction. The Hero of this story was not merely lying on the mat; He was lying in a tomb. Hope trickled out of the disciples' hearts and minds as blood and water seeped from the Savior's side. There was no getting around the bitter reality that He was dead.

But then came Sunday.

- **Why do you think people in our culture are so fascinated by come-from-behind and death-to-life stories?**
- **What would have been the result if Easter Sunday never came and Jesus remained in the tomb?**

Option 2

We've all heard of things like the underdog, the dark horse, the Cinderella story, or a rags-to-riches story. These are the people we don't expect to succeed—to make it out of a tough situation, or to achieve whatever it is they set out to do—and they overcome.

- **What are some of your favorite underdog or Cinderella stories?**
- **Why do you think these stories inspire us?**

In Jesus' story, most of the religious leaders didn't believe Him when He said He was the Messiah, but to believe Him when He said He would rise again in three days was crazy. Going up against death, sin, and abandonment and winning—that was unthinkable. Even His own disciples scattered and lived in fear when He died. But the story didn't end on the cross. Three days after He was buried, Jesus rose again, having defeated sin and death.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Sin's curse was removed and death was defeated in Jesus' resurrection.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary:** two of the women who came to Jesus' grave to anoint Him with spices; the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection

PLOT

Jesus' disciples, His closest companions for the past three years of His ministry, were nowhere to be found after His arrest and crucifixion. In self-preservation mode, they all took off in fear that a similar fate awaited them. What would explain the sudden shift from living in paralyzing fear to living out courageous faith? The answer: Jesus' resurrection.

TIMELINE

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS SENDS

The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

THE ANGEL INVITED THE WOMEN TO COME AND SEE

The process for burying Jesus was rushed because of the coming Sabbath. Prohibited by tradition from carrying out work or coming into contact with the dead on this sacred day, those who placed Jesus in the tomb quickly carried out a partial preparation that would have to do until after the day of rest.

¹ Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” (Matt. 28:1-6)

The two Marys in this narrative were not expecting to see anything spectacular as they approached Jesus’ borrowed tomb. They were looking for a conclusion and closure, but what they found was certainly more than they bargained for. In a moment, their expectations were turned upside down and hope, which had once been buried alongside their Teacher, no longer inhabited a grave.

According to Matthew, the two Marys went to see the tomb, but we know from Mark and Luke that their purpose was not only to observe or pay respects. Instead, they intended to further prepare Jesus’ body with various spices for burial (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55–24:1).

As they drew near to the tomb, there was a violent earthquake. This was no random fault line friction but the result of an angelic appearance. One might expect an earthquake to have moved the stone, but something even more spectacular occurred. A gravestone in that time and place would have weighed somewhere between 2,000 and 4,000 pounds, but the angel easily moved it and sat upon it to declare the good news of Jesus’ resurrection.

Then, the angel spoke. Imagine the scene from the perspective of the two Marys for a moment. They expected to see a tomb; instead, they experienced an earthquake, found paralyzed guards, and saw a blindingly bright angel sitting upon a massive gravestone that had been rolled away from the tomb. The angel’s speech would surely have inspired fear, but he immediately told the women not to fear.

One might expect the angel to have followed up the command to not be afraid with something along the lines of “I am not here to hurt you” or

“I am here to help,” but the reason to relinquish fear went much deeper than the angel’s intentions. The Marys should abandon their fear, not in light of the angel that they had seen, but in response to what they had not yet seen—the Lord was not there; the tomb was empty.

THE WOMEN WORSHIPED THE RISEN JESUS

The angel gave four commands to the women: come, see, go, and tell. Let’s take a look:

7 “Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. (Matt. 28:7-9)

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

It is remarkable that women were the first to testify to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus’ resurrection. From a first-century legal perspective, they were unworthy to be witnesses in that particular time and place. Indeed, that fact has often been offered as a strong supporting piece of evidence for the historical accuracy of the event. After all, how likely would it be for someone in that culture to create a story based off of the testimony of witnesses who would have been viewed as relatively unreliable?

The message entrusted to these women was threefold. First, the angel told them to repeat what they had already been told: Jesus had been raised from the dead. That would be incredible enough, but the message of their mission continued. The angel also instructed them to proclaim that Jesus was going to Galilee, the region of the majority of His ministry. Finally, the angel tasked them with telling the disciples that they would see Him there.

Imagine the sense of awe and hope the women must have felt at the news. They ran in haste to carry out this sacred calling but were soon interrupted by the appearance of Jesus Himself.

The women went from a full sprint to a sudden halt in a second. In overwhelming relief and delight, the women fell at His feet, took hold of Him, and worshiped. The women were not content with remaining at a distance. They were anxious to experience the full measure of the encounter, and so they clung tightly to His feet in faithful adoration.

- **Imagine you were with the women visiting the tomb. How would you respond to what you saw?** (*p. 41, PSG*)
- **Why do you think the women clung to Jesus when they saw Him again? How can you also cling to Jesus?** (*p. 41, PSG*)

JESUS COMMANDED THE WOMEN TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

What is your first response to receiving good news? Most of us immediately seek to share the news with those we love. Whether we post it on social media, send out a mass text, or call our mom and dad, we instinctively seek to share good news with others. When the women encountered Jesus, they could not help but share the good news.

- **What are the easiest things in life for you to get excited about and want to share with others? What are some of the most difficult?** (*p. 42, PSG*)

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” ¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. (Matt. 28:10-15)

Jesus’ words to the women were almost exactly the same as the angel’s. Fueled by their joy and the message of resurrection, the women headed back to the city. They had received urgent news to share.

Meanwhile, another message was being devised and delivered. The women had just received the greatest news of their lives, but for the guards, perhaps it was the worst. In that culture, allowing a prisoner to escape would mean certain death for a guard. How much worse it would have been if the prisoner were already dead! The meaning of the empty tomb was not a lifesaver for these guards but a death sentence.

In fear and trembling, they approached the chief priests and delivered the dreaded update. They expected to be berated and beaten at best, but they received a bribe instead. The chief priests knew that they had a problem on their hands, but they assumed that a little money and a few lies could cover the truth. After all, something similar had worked with Judas.

These women were not the last in the Book of Matthew to be told to share what they saw and heard. In fact, in just a few verses—which covered forty days—Jesus Himself commissioned His disciples to “go and tell.”

TIMELINE

OVERCOMING DOUBTS

Thomas’ doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

FOLLOW ME

Jesus’ forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

AS YOU GO...

Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Glorification (p. 40, PSG)

Glorification is the final stage in the process of salvation. It refers to the future time when a Christian reaches moral and spiritual perfection at the time of death or at Christ's return (Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:22). Glorification also involves the physical perfection that we will have once our bodies have been resurrected. When we are glorified, we will have a fuller knowledge and understanding of God and His Word (1 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 3:20-21).

CHRIST CONNECTION

On Easter Sunday, God vindicated His Son's perfect sacrifice by raising Him from the dead and beginning the new creation He had long promised His people. Through faith, we are united to Christ, we are part of His new creation, and we share in the promise of being resurrected in His likeness. Sin's curse has been removed, death has been defeated, and we are assured of everlasting life with God.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think Jesus chose to appear first to these women rather than appearing directly to the disciples?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the message of Jesus' resurrection help believers fight fear?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the message of Jesus' resurrection offer hope to those who have none?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What circumstances surrounded your life when you came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? How did that change you?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Have we become so familiar with the truth of Jesus' resurrection that we have lost our amazement over its implications? For people like you and me, death can be a paralyzing fear. For many, death represents the great unknown. Death is chilling in its finality. With all of our advances in medical technology, death is the one thing we cannot avoid. But the one thing that man cannot defeat, Jesus Christ triumphed over. And for Christians, His victory is our victory.

- **How should a Christian approach the reality of one day dying?** *Christians should see death for what it is—a defeated enemy who no longer has the last say. Death itself died in the death of Christ, and all who believe in Jesus will share in His resurrected life.*
- **What are some ways Christians can offer hope to those who fear death?** *Christians should always be sensitive and gentle when speaking about such topics, pointing those who fear death to the reality that there is something beyond the grave, and Jesus freely offers life with Him for those who believe.*



HEART

Matthew didn't record the words the women must have spoken or the questions they must have asked upon seeing Jesus raised from the dead—he simply recorded that they worshiped the risen Jesus. In the presence of the sacred, there is nothing better to do. And really, before we can go and tell others, worship must be our first priority.

- **How does our personal worship of Jesus fuel our mission to tell others about Him?** *Fulfilling God's mission will always be done best while we are simultaneously loving Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.*
- **How might a lack of pursuing God's mission be a spiritual warning sign that something is missing in our personal worship?** *How well we are living on mission can and often does serve as a spiritual thermometer of sorts. If we are lacking passion, purpose, and desire in our mission, then it may be an indicator that our worship is suffering.*



HANDS

Go and tell others the truth about Jesus. Though the call and commission of Matthew 28 was delivered specifically to Jesus' disciples, it certainly extends to all of His disciples—all the ones who love and trust Him. After all, how could we fail to share such good news with the world?

- **What are some reasons people give today for not believing in the risen Savior?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the women's immediate obedience in telling others about Jesus serve as an example for us?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #8, which contains an informational chart detailing the historical evidences of the resurrection.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



07

SESSION SEVEN

The Emmaus Road

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, the risen King Jesus joined two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. By taking a look at their conversation, we learn that the risen King draws near to His people in times of sorrow and confusion. We also see how all of Scripture is a testimony to Jesus Christ, who reveals Himself to those who trust Him. As witnesses to the risen King, we proclaim the Bible's grand story, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:13-35

THE POINT

Jesus is the central focus of Scripture and our worship.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

In J. R. R. Tolkien's story, *The Two Towers*, Sam posed a question to his fellow hobbit, Frodo. Both had encountered wonders. Both had survived danger on their journey. As they traveled the perilous road to Mordor, Sam asked, "I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?"¹

What a profound question! It must be similar to what Jesus' disciples wondered on the third day after His death. They were confused. They thought they were following a victorious king, but Jesus had been crucified as a criminal. Three days later, they heard an astounding report that suggested Jesus was alive. What kind of a tale had they fallen into?

Perhaps you ask a similar question: What kind of story do I belong to as a follower of Jesus Christ? This question haunts us when we face times of sorrow and confusion—especially as people in our community become more hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' death and resurrection stands in line with the great story of God working to redeem and restore His people to life in His presence, where true fullness and joy are found. This is the tale into which we, as followers of Jesus, have fallen!

- **People often think of life in terms of a story—with a beginning, middle, and end goal in mind. How does seeing ourselves within a story help us through times of sorrow and confusion?**

Option 2

We all have expectations. We have expectations concerning our families, our friends, our schools and the work we do there, our sports teams or clubs, our small groups, what we want for Christmas and birthdays, God, and so on. Gather students and ask the following:

- **When have you heard an idea or person described in a way that was completely different from what you found when you encountered that person or idea? Was it better or worse than what you expected?**

We don't quite know what to expect when our expectations meet reality. Sometimes things are worse than we expected, and sometimes they're better. Jesus' followers expected a conquering leader, the Messiah, but Jesus had died. It was the third day after His death, and they were still expecting something. What would they do next? In the midst of their confusion, Jesus met them (literally) on the road to Emmaus. They didn't recognize Him immediately. He didn't come to them as they expected, but He did come. And with Him being raised from death to life came the offer of a new life for all who believe in Him—one far better than anyone could have ever expected.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus is the central focus of Scripture and our worship.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Cleopas:** one of the two travelers on the road to Emmaus who was approached by the resurrected Jesus

PLOT

The eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection' continued to pile on. Jesus first revealed Himself to the women at the tomb. Then, on His way to meet the disciples in Galilee, He found an opportune time to reveal Himself to two more people as they were traveling to the town of Emmaus.

TIMELINE

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS SENDS

The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

OVERCOMING DOUBTS

Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

JESUS ENCOUNTERED TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

How often has our sorrow and confusion blinded us to the presence of Jesus? That's what happened to two travelers on the day Jesus was raised from the dead.

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." (Luke 24:13-24)

Luke highlighted two travelers having a heated discussion about the events of the weekend—the arrest, trial, sentencing, and death of Jesus (v. 20). Jesus' crucifixion had shattered their dreams. And then, Jesus appeared.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Luke gives us “insider information” that the two travelers did not know—that the identity of the man who joined them was Jesus (vv. 15- 16). The passive voice of the verb, “were prevented,” suggests that someone other than the disciples was responsible for their blindness. Presumably, Jesus looked similar after His resurrection as He did before. So, God supernaturally prevented their eyes from recognizing Him. They likely assumed this man was just another worshiper returning home from Jerusalem.

But why prevent them from recognizing Jesus? As New Testament scholar Darrell Bock says, “God still had things to teach them. ... Part of the drama is when and how they will realize who their discussion partner is.”²

JESUS EXPLAINED HOW ALL SCRIPTURE POINTS TO HIM

How did Jesus respond to the disciples as He walked with them to Emmaus? Take a look:

25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

Jesus expressed disappointment that the two disciples failed to understand what the Scriptures said. The combination of “foolish” and “slow” suggests they were slow to accept by faith what the Scriptures taught about the Messiah.

The reference to Moses and other prophets referred to the Hebrew Bible—what Christians today refer to as the Old Testament. In Jesus’ day, the Old Testament was read as a story in search of a conclusion. The Jewish people in Jesus’ day were waiting for the last chapter in their story to begin. Essentially, Jesus said to Cleopas and the other disciple, “I am the one who brings the story to its completion. I am the focus of all the Scriptures.”

Our challenge, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to read the Old Testament Scriptures in light of His death and resurrection. We can do this well by asking three questions every time we read a passage from the Old Testament.

First, ask: Does anything in this passage point directly to Jesus? A few places in the Old Testament speak directly about the coming Messiah, such as Genesis 49:10-12, Isaiah 9:6, and Micah 5:2, to name a few. Of course, direct prophecies of Jesus do not occur in every passage, but you will find them throughout the Old Testament.

Second, ask: Does anything in this passage foreshadow or anticipate Jesus? Sometimes the most powerful way to communicate is through subtlety. In addition to direct prophecies, the Old Testament foreshadows Jesus in subtle,

indirect ways. For example, knowing that the Gospel of Matthew begins by identifying Jesus as “the Son of David” and “the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1), we can look for ways that events in David and Abraham’s lives anticipate who Jesus is and what Jesus would do. Abraham’s “sacrifice” of Isaac in Genesis 22 foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus’s love for His enemies was indicated by David’s love for Mephibosheth—a potential enemy given that he was descendent of King Saul (2 Sam. 9; Rom. 5:8).

Third, ask: How does the gospel of Jesus shape my understanding of this passage? The Old Testament is full of wise sayings, principles, and commands. The Apostle Paul made it clear that these still have relevance for us as followers of Jesus Christ. However, we can only understand how these wise sayings, principles, and commands apply when we read them through the lens of Jesus’ life and teaching. He came to bring the Old Testament to its complete expression (Matt. 5:17).

JESUS MADE KNOWN HIS IDENTITY

Cleopas and the other disciple still did not know Jesus’ identity as they approached Emmaus. But that was about to change. Luke reported what happened next.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:28-35)

Imagine the men’s surprise when they discovered that the One whose explanation of Scripture set their hearts ablaze turned out to be their risen King! The text explains that the followers’ eyes were opened, and Jesus’ identity was made known to them. But as suddenly as Jesus’ identity was revealed, He vanished from their sight. Why did Jesus disappear when the two disciples finally recognized Him? It is likely that His disappearance created the opportunity for a meeting with the Eleven and the other disciples (Luke 24:36-49). His disappearance caused the two to return to Jerusalem and report what happened (vv. 33-35), setting the stage for Jesus’ dramatic appearance to them in the next to last scene of Luke’s Gospel.

- **What do you think the men meant when they said that their hearts were burning while they walked with Jesus? (p. 49, PSG)**

TIMELINE

FOLLOW ME

Jesus’ forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

AS YOU GO ...

Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THE ASCENSION

Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

- **Why do you think Jesus made Himself known to them in this way? How would you respond if you were with these two men?** (p. 49, PSG)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Illumination of Scripture (p. 50, PSG)

Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours, and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through the process of illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not ultimately rely upon human reason in the process of interpretation, and we do not rely solely upon an institution or body of scholars. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is upon the work of the Spirit of God who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 8:18).

CHRIST CONNECTION

On the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus explained how the Old Testament Scriptures pointed forward to His suffering and glory. Like the disciples, we read the whole Bible in light of Christ's death and resurrection, focusing our attention on the gospel that lies at the heart of God's written Word to us.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why does God allow us to endure times of sorrow and confusion? How does it affect us to know that He is with us, even if He seems hidden or disguised?** *There's no question that the disciples were extremely upset and sorrowful over the weekend's events. Furthermore, even in knowing their sorrow and confusion, Jesus still decided to prevent them from recognizing Him (at least for a short while) in order for them to learn certain things first. This time of heartache was a teachable moment for them and can be for us as well. Whatever our circumstances, we can be sure of the fact that Jesus will never leave nor abandon us.*
- **How has God used His Word and His people to remind you of Jesus' presence when you have faced distressing situations?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Consider some of the famous stories in the Old Testament. In what ways do they point to Christ? Why is it important to see Bible stories in their relation to Christ?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does this story highlight the importance of personal devotion time in the Word?** *The disciples commented that their hearts were "burning" as a result of Jesus talking to them about the Scriptures. Being able to connect the dots of Scripture and understand how it all fits together is incredibly rewarding, which is why constantly being in the Word and praying are so important.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The mission God has given to us is not to present the Bible as a book of virtues or as a moral improvement program. Our mission is to introduce people to the risen King who came to redeem, restore, and reconcile people to God. When Jesus makes Himself known to us, He makes God known to us. As John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

- **Why is it important to not primarily see the Bible as a big book of good behaviors we should live by, but instead as God’s story of saving humanity through His Son?** *There are commands and principles we are called to live by in Scripture. However, the call to live a certain way is always a result of first knowing Jesus and being changed by Him.*
- **If Jesus makes God known to us, and if the Bible is the best means to learn about Jesus and His teaching, then what is ultimately at stake if we neglect the Scriptures?** *The obvious conclusion is that we are at risk of not knowing God if we neglect His Word. His Word has been given for our benefit and is the primary means the Holy Spirit uses to reveal Christ.*



HEART

These disciples rightly captured what happens when we correctly understand the Bible when they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). For the disciples and countless Christians over the centuries, understanding the Bible and seeing how all of the stories and events point to Jesus sets our hearts on fire, creating a love and passion for the Word and a hunger for more of it.

- **Share about a time when, like the disciples, the Word stirred your heart.** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can cultivate a passion and hunger for God’s Word in your own life?** *Having a consistent devotional time in the Word (reading contributes to more reading), listening to good sermons, reading good books about the Bible from credible authors, and so on.*



HANDS

Note how the disciples on the road to Emmaus quickly went to share the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. An encounter with Jesus is not meant to be kept secret. It leads to mission. When Jesus reveals Himself to us, He expects us to spread His glory and fame through our witness to others.

- **Why was it natural for these two disciples to share the news of Jesus’ resurrection?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What can help our evangelism feel more natural?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #9, which contains an artistic biblical timeline. The timeline highlights how all of Scripture points to Christ and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.

SOURCES

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), 362.
2. Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke, Vol. 2, 9:51-24:53* (Ada: Baker Academic, 1996), 1910.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

08

SESSION EIGHT

Jesus Appeared to the Disciples

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we see how Jesus spoke to His disciples on the evening of the day He was raised again to new life. The instructions Jesus gave His disciples reflect the mission of God that drives the storyline of the Bible. God the Father sends His Son, God the Son sends His people to the world, and the Father and Son send the Spirit to empower us for mission. As followers of Jesus, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior. We are not alone on our mission but are all the while empowered by the Spirit of God.

SCRIPTURE

John 20:19-23

THE POINT

Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

There are two kinds of witnesses. The first is someone who sees something happen. The second is someone who has experienced something personally. Both kinds of witnesses are important. But the first kind changes your perspective; the second kind changes your identity.

Consider the examples from Scripture of witnesses who were forever changed after an encounter with God. Abram became Abraham. Moses went from refugee to deliverer. Ruth went from being a widow picking up leftovers to being the wife of the landowner. One day, David was a shepherd boy; the next, he was anointed king. Mary was an ordinary teenager until an angel told her she would be the mother of the Messiah. On the road to Damascus, Paul went from murderer to missionary. The list could go on.

There's a difference between watching others follow Jesus and following Him daily ourselves. The watchers witness something. The followers become witnesses of Someone.

- **What is something remarkable you have seen that changed your perspective?**

Option 2

Place students in two large groups. If desired, allow students to come up with fun names for their groups. Ask Group 1 to play Simon Says, and instruct Group 2 to watch the followers. Group 2 will tell you when someone from Group 1 has neglected to follow Simon's instructions. Those who do not obey what Simon says must take a seat where they are. Allow Group 1 to play Simon Says for three minutes, and then switch it up so that Group 2 is playing Simon Says and Group 1 is helping you keep an eye on the followers. After allowing Group 2 to play for three minutes, call the entire group together. Ask:

- **How did you know what Simon said when you were a follower? How did you know what Simon said when you were watching the followers?**
- **Which time did you remember who acted as Simon?**

When playing Simon Says, you have to pay attention to Simon directly. Some people will intentionally throw you off or fake you out, and cause you to have to sit out for the rest of the game. And those watching from the sidelines won't let you get away with a wrong move. When following Jesus, it's important that our focus is on Him. We are His witnesses, not witnesses of His followers. While His followers can often teach us about Him, He should be our main point of interest and information.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

PLOT

The night of Jesus' arrest, His disciples abandoned Him and scattered. Terrified and overwhelmed with fear, the disciples ran because they thought that would be the only way to save themselves. Our story picks up with a frightened bunch of disciples who were hiding in fear of the Jews and all that had happened, only to be completely amazed when Jesus revealed Himself to them.

TIMELINE

JESUS SENDS
The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

OVERCOMING DOUBTS
Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

FOLLOW ME
Jesus' forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

JESUS OFFERS HIS PEACE

It had been a devastating weekend for Jesus' disciples. The One they expected to restore the kingdom to Israel had been crucified (Acts 1:6). But on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene announced to them that she had seen Jesus (John 20:18). We pick up with the story as the disciples huddled together in fear.

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19)

Jesus' disciples locked the doors because they feared that the Jewish leaders might try to get rid of them too. However, neither the grave clothes nor the locked door was an obstacle to Jesus. He simply appeared in their midst.

John's account of this astounding appearance focuses on three statements Jesus made to His disciples. The first was a greeting that recalled Jesus' promise to give them a peace that would overcome their troubled hearts and their fear (John 14:27; 16:33).

What an encouragement for Jesus' followers who are sent into the world on His mission. Through faith in the King who was raised so that we may be right with God, we now have peace with God (Rom. 4:25-5:1). God no longer counts our sins against us. Even in a troubled world where we face suffering and death, God's peace guards our hearts against fear and anxiety.

- **How does the peace of God guard our hearts against fear and anxiety? When have you experienced God's peace even though you were facing the troubles of the world? (p. 54, PSG)**

JESUS SENDS OUT HIS DISCIPLES

The announcement of peace was only the beginning of Jesus' message when He appeared to His disciples. With the next statement, He was ready to send them on a mission.

20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:20-21)

Here we have the second statement Jesus made to His disciples. Jesus prepared His disciples for this statement in two ways. First, He showed them His hands and side. The scars on His hands and side were marks of His suffering and His victory. He had overcome death, which was exactly why His disciples were overjoyed when they saw Him.

Second, Jesus repeated His greeting of peace. With this, He offered them this a stunning commission: Just as Jesus was sent by God, Jesus would also send His disciples out into the world. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently referred to Himself as One sent by God. In alignment with that sending, He sends His followers.

We speak of this "sending" as a mission because the Latin word for *send* is *mission*. But what exactly is this mission of God?

Each Gospel includes a commission from the risen King to His disciples, and Matthew's account that concisely summarizes the mission: make disciples everywhere (28:19). That is still our mission today. We are to multiply our numbers, leading people to faith in Jesus Christ and then teaching them to obey His commands (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus' words here echo His prayer the night before His death. Jesus prayed a number of things for His disciples, but He also declared that He would send them just as He had been sent (John 17:18). Jesus invites us to participate in the same mission in which He participated. His Father sent Him, and He asks us to go on mission with Him, sending us with His peace, commanding us to love others and speak the truth with grace.

Pastor Timothy Keller offers this helpful reminder: "God never calls you in to bless you without also sending you out to be a blessing (Gen 12:1-3; cf. 1 Pet 2:9). So a Christian is not a spiritual consumer, coming in to get his or her emotional needs met and then going home. A missional church, then, is one that trains and encourages its people to be in mission as individuals and as a body."¹ Whether through being a student, band member, athlete, or whatever jobs you may have throughout your life, you are called to live on mission to make disciples.

- **How does Jesus' victory over sin and death and His promise of peace encourage you as you live on mission? (p. 55, PSG)**

JESUS GIVES HIS SPIRIT

The mission Jesus gave to His followers is not doable without help. The night before Jesus was crucified, He promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to guide and help them on their mission (John 14:15-17,25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15). With His third statement after the resurrection, Jesus made good on that promise.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” (John 20:22-23)

At first, the timing seems confusing. It appears that Jesus gave His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of His resurrection. Yet, about forty days after His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This gift came on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, enabling the disciples to carry out the mission they had been given (Acts 2:1-47).

The key to understanding verse 23 is the detail that Jesus “breathed on them.” This is most likely some sort of symbolic action. D. A. Carson suggests that the exhaling and command to receive the Spirit “are best understood as a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full endowment still to come (though in the past for John’s readers).”²

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

This was not the first time the Gospel of John mentioned Jesus referring to an event in the near future as if it had already arrived. Jesus announced that the time had come for Him to be glorified, yet His crucifixion was still a few days away (John 12:23). It did not take place as Jesus spoke. Similarly, we understand the command about receiving the Holy Spirit to refer to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church on the Day of Pentecost.

One difficulty with verse 23 is the impression that Jesus’ followers have some kind of free rein or complete freedom to forgive sins. However, we must remember that this is tied to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The focus is on the pronouncement of forgiveness or the announcement that forgiveness has not been granted.

TIMELINE

AS YOU GO...
Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THE ASCENSION
Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

**Bonus Session*
SONG OF THANKSGIVING
Being grateful for God’s salvation leads to public proclamation.

Think of it this way: When you go on a mission, you have the authority to say to someone, “Your sins are forgiven if you repent and believe in Jesus.” Likewise, you can and must inform people that they remain in their sins if they do not repent and believe the good news. This resembles a salesperson at a retail store saying, “You will receive 20 percent off of today’s purchase if you open a charge account with us.” The salesperson says this on behalf of the store, not on their own authority.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God in Three Persons (p. 56, PSG)

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The Bible portrays God the Father sending His Son, God the Son sending His people to the world, and the Father and Son sending the Spirit to empower us for mission. As Christians, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our Sending God and our suffering Savior.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why is it important for people to experience the peace that only God can bring?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it important to remember that, as Christ's ambassadors, we are on a mission of offering peace?** *We often don't see the task of being on mission as offering peace. Instead, we often think of it as trying to get people saved and in a right relationship with God. However, one aspect of salvation, or its fruit, is peace with God—something every person on earth desperately needs.*
- **What are some steps a believer can take in order to live as a disciple who is sent on God's mission by Jesus?** *For starters, a disciple can begin to see that living on mission doesn't necessarily mean leaving one's home for the foreign mission field—though for some it might! However, it does mean that believers purposely live out the gospel in every area of our lives, sharing and showing others the love of God in Christ.*
- **What adjustments might your church consider making to be more focused on God's mission?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The gift of the Spirit is linked closely with forgiveness for sins. Forgiveness is a great blessing of the gospel that the Spirit empowers us to proclaim. But what exactly is the forgiveness of sins? It is God's act of blotting out our sins and not counting our trespasses against us (Acts 3:19). The basis for this forgiveness is Jesus' shed blood and sacrifice on the cross. Jesus' death makes it possible for God to satisfy His love and the demands of His justice.

- **What roles does the Spirit play in the life of a Christian?** *Answers may include: conviction (John 16:8-11), calling (Eph. 4:4), regeneration (John 3:3-8), indwelling (John 14:17; Rom. 5:5), assurance (Rom. 8:16), and so on.*
- **If the Spirit is vital to the life of a believer, what are some ways we can express more of our dependence upon Him?** *One way would be to ask the Spirit to open your eyes and heart every time you sit down to read the Bible, given that understanding and illumination come from Him.*



HEART

The peace Jesus promised to His disciples is rooted in the Old Testament and comes from the Hebrew term *shalom*. It means much more than the absence of conflict. Instead, it refers to a condition of prosperity, welfare, completeness, and wholeness. In essence, it is a state of everything being right, just as God intended it to be. It is a peace that the world is incapable of giving—one only that can be given by God Himself.

- **Share about a specific time when you felt overwhelmed with the peace of Christ.** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does knowing God's peace strengthen your faith in Him?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

It's always worth reminding each other that we, as Christians, are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior. This information should lead us to represent Jesus in His mission—as we go to the people in our schools, communities, and all other networks of relationships—to proclaim the gospel of peace.

- **Why do you think Christians don't see themselves as being ambassadors for Christ in this world?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some common distractions in life that may cause us to neglect our mission? How can we overcome these distractions?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Timothy J. Keller, *Serving a Movement: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).
2. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 655.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

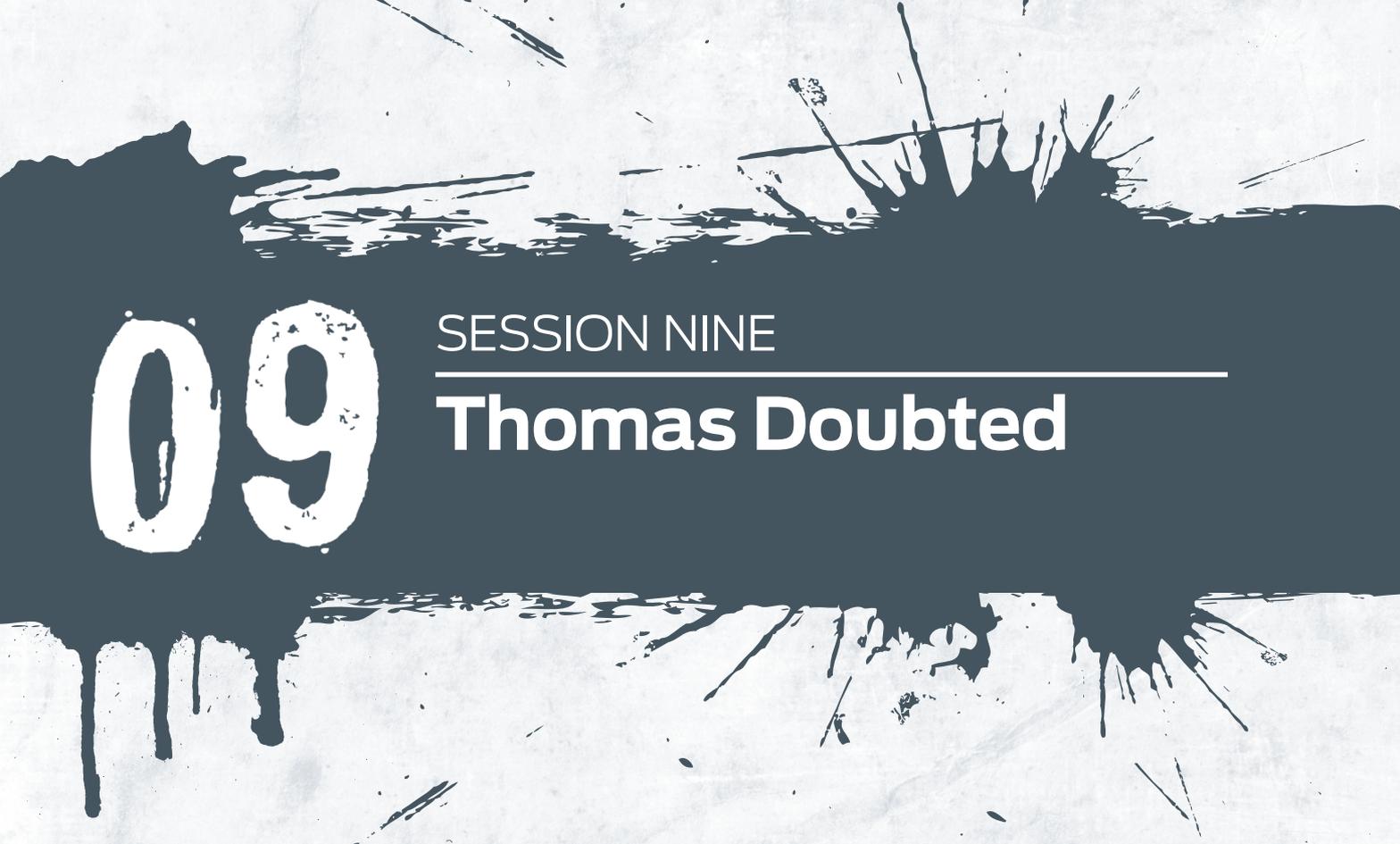
Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



09

SESSION NINE

Thomas Doubted

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we learn about the nature of doubt and faith and how Jesus responds to those whose faith may waver. As we look at different kinds of both doubt and faith, we come to understand that faith is the assurance of our hope and the proof of what we cannot see. As believers, we are called to trust God with our own doubts and questions and to strengthen the faith of others.

SCRIPTURE

John 20:24-29

THE POINT

Faith is the assurance of our hope and the proof of what we cannot see.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

The Apostle Thomas has received harsh judgment over the years. We typically refer to the twelve disciples by their first names or with the title “Apostle”—as in the Apostle Peter or the Apostle John. Not so with Thomas. He is known as “Doubting Thomas.”

Some children’s songs include lines warning against being a “Doubting Thomas.” Even the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* has an entry for “Doubting Thomas,” defining the expression as “an incredulous or habitually doubtful person; someone who rarely trusts or believes things before having proof: a doubtful or skeptical person.”¹

But this nickname is not completely fair. A close look at the episode in which Thomas expressed his doubt also highlights his faith. We could just as well refer to Thomas as “Believing Thomas.” Still, his story helps believers today who struggle with doubt or who demand proof or evidence for what we believe. Furthermore, the way that Jesus responded to Thomas’ doubt guides us in showing patience to others who may struggle with doubt.

- **What are some doubts you’ve struggled with? In what ways do Thomas’ doubts and questions encourage you in your faith?**

Option 2

Place students into groups of two to four depending on how many students are in your group. Instruct the groups to think about three statements they can share with their group members: They should share two truths and one statement that’s completely made up. The catch: They have to make the lie sound realistic, because the other people in their groups will attempt to discover which statements are true and which one is a lie. Allow enough time for each student to present their statements. Then ask:

- **Was it difficult to identify which statements were true and which were lies? Why or why not?**
- **Were there any signs that helped you to know if a person was lying or telling the truth? Explain.**

Sometimes, the truth is difficult to see. Doubts can come from all different directions and make us ask questions. But asking questions isn’t a bad thing. Even the disciples had doubts and asked questions, asked for proof. This is how the disciple Thomas got the nickname “Doubting Thomas.” Thomas asked tough questions, but Jesus didn’t look down on him, rebuke him, or roll His eyes at Thomas’ questions. Instead, He gave Thomas the proof He sought. He restored Thomas’ faith through evidence of the truth. Asking questions when we doubt is often one of the key ways our faith is strengthened.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Faith is the assurance of our hope and the proof of what we cannot see.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Thomas:** one of Jesus' disciples who wasn't with the other disciples during Jesus' first appearance; needed to see Jesus for himself in order to believe in the resurrection

PLOT

Have you ever doubted your Christian beliefs? Have you ever had questions that needed answering? Have you wondered whether or not your beliefs have any evidence or reasons to support them? If so, then you're certainly not alone. Many people experience doubt, and it isn't something to feel shame over. The disciple Thomas expressed doubts and wanted to consider the evidence. Instead of a harsh rebuke, Jesus graciously responded to Thomas and addressed his doubts.

TIMELINE

OVERCOMING DOUBTS

Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

FOLLOW ME

Jesus' forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

AS YOU GO...

Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THOMAS DOUBTED JESUS' RESURRECTION

In today's passage Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, appeared for the third time in the Gospel of John.

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:24-25)

For some undisclosed reason, Thomas was not present when the risen King appeared to His disciples on the day He was raised from the dead. When the other disciples claimed that they had seen the Lord, Thomas remained unconvinced and established a condition for belief. The condition was physical evidence. He needed to see and even touch the wounds of the risen Lord.

Like Thomas, all of us struggle with doubt in one form or another. Even believers in Jesus have moments of doubt. In fact, it has even been noted that there are different kinds of doubts, and that these different types of doubts can vary from person to person.

For some people, the doubts are intellectual. In other words, the doubter finds something about Christianity that seems to contradict with something in science, history, philosophy, and so on. This means some people must overcome intellectual hurdles before having assurance about the truthfulness of Christianity.

For others, doubts grow out of an emotional state. People may find it easy to doubt God and/or His goodness in their lives because of a tragic event or because of deep depression and anxiety. It is also important to note that emotional doubts often masquerade as intellectual doubts; however, when we get to the root issue, it becomes apparent that the doubter is experiencing emotional pain and frustration. Since the pain and frustration is emotionally based, intellectual answers offer little help to those struggling with emotional doubts. For emotional doubters, a pastoral response with biblical counseling is what is most often needed.

The third type of doubt is volitional, meaning the doubter makes a decision, or acts out of his or her own free will, to forsake the truth. Volitional doubt is essentially an unwillingness to obey. James refers to volitional doubt when he speaks of the indecisive or "double-minded" person (1:6-8). This kind of doubt can come from weak faith, stubbornness, arrogance, or a lack of repentance. For example, if a person is involved in an inappropriate physical relationship before marriage, then it would all of a sudden become "convenient" for that person to start doubting Christian teaching on purity and so on. We should take this kind of doubt seriously because it expresses itself in disobedience and rebellion.

THOMAS WITNESSED THE RESURRECTED JESUS

What does Jesus say to those with doubts? What is His response to those like Thomas who refuse to believe unless certain conditions are met? The next two verses in our study reveal Jesus' response:

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." (John 20:26-27)

Readers of the Gospel of John will experience a sense of déjà vu here. Jesus had appeared the exact same way a week earlier. The fact that eight days had passed signals that this was the following Sunday, what John would eventually refer to as "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Jesus came through locked doors and offered the same greeting of peace, just as He did the previous Sunday. Then, He turned to Thomas and issued a challenge—maybe even a mild rebuke.

The preliminary part of the challenge was for Thomas to handle the evidence, thus seeing for himself that his condition for belief had been met. Jesus' offer provided proof that the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14).

The core part of the challenge Jesus issued to Thomas was this: "Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer." Thomas had been a loyal disciple of Jesus up to that point, but he needed to exercise faith in the crucified and risen King. Throughout the Gospel of John, we see that faith (belief) in Jesus is necessary for receiving God's salvation and gift of eternal life.

- **Why do you think Jesus singled out Thomas when He appeared to His disciples this second time?** (p. 61, PSG)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Faith (p. 60, PSG)

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

THOMAS CONFESSED THAT JESUS IS LORD AND GOD

This brief account has a wonderful resolution, as Thomas confessed his faith in the risen King. Take a look:

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:28-29)

Thomas’ response was amazing—it was one of conviction and confession. His confession not only displayed faith in Jesus, the risen King, but also revealed who Jesus Christ is. Notice Thomas’ use of the terms “Lord” and “God” so close together. It’s important for us to note that in the Old Testament, “Lord” and “God” frequently stand side-by-side with reference to Yahweh. Simply put: Jesus is none other than God Himself!

But how do we understand Jesus’ response in verse 29? While Jesus affirmed Thomas’ faith, He also seemed to issue a slight rebuke. Or did He?

The second part of Jesus’ statement is what we call a *beatitude*—a *statement of blessing*. The most famous beatitudes Jesus spoke are recorded in Matthew 5:3-12. But here, after His resurrection, Jesus offered another. Rather than rebuking Thomas, Jesus anticipated a time when He would ascend to heaven and no longer be physically present on the earth. Once that happened, all those who believe would do so without the benefit of having seen their resurrected Lord.

This is our situation today. We do not see Jesus physically, in the flesh. We do not need to do so. Peter affirmed this by explaining to the churches that, even though we have not seen Jesus, we are still able to love Him and rejoice because we have received the goal of our faith: salvation (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

In fact, John would later reveal that he recorded certain events while deliberately leaving out others with one purpose in mind: so that we might believe Jesus was who He claimed to be and that we might have life in Him (20:30-31). In other words, John pointed to physical evidences and eye-witness testimony to support belief in the historical resurrection of Christ. While we may want the type of evidence Jesus offered to Thomas when He told Thomas to observe His hands and side, we can’t deny that Jesus has left us with other types of overwhelming evidence regarding His resurrection. And for those who look to the evidence—to Jesus—and believe, a blessing is given. How encouraging that Jesus’ response to doubters is not one of anger, but one of loving encouragement for those who doubt because the resurrection really took place.

- **We may not physically see Jesus and believe, but we have the evidence recorded in His Word. Which do you think would be easier, to be like Thomas and be able to base your belief off of physical sight? Or to be able to believe without seeing? Explain.** (p. 62, PSG)

TIMELINE

THE ASCENSION

Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

**Bonus Session*

SONG OF THANKSGIVING

Being grateful for God’s salvation leads to public proclamation.

**Beginning*

Winter 2017-18

PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

CHRIST CONNECTION

It's not difficult to see Thomas' qualities in ourselves and others. Most of us will have mild doubts or try to answer our friends' tough questions. As we have learned, our doubts can be intellectual, emotional, or volitional (of the will). Whatever form, doubts cause a level of uncertainty within us that must be addressed.

Thankfully, we serve a Savior who welcomes those who have questions and doubts—One who calls us to believe, not in spite of the evidence, but because of the evidence. Christianity has never been about having a blind faith. Rather, it has always pointed to the historic resurrection of Jesus as grounds for believing. The Christian faith is a genuine faith because the object of our hope is real—Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think having doubts or asking questions can be a common experience, even for Christians?** *One likely answer is that doubts often come from the fact that we are not all-knowing (omniscient) creatures. Since we don't know everything, we sometimes lack certainty and confidence.*
- **Why is it important to distinguish between different kinds of doubt? How will your response to doubters change, based on the kind of doubt they express?** *Answering someone with intellectual doubts will be quite different from addressing emotional doubts or volitional doubts, and vice versa. For intellectual doubts, one would help the other person see the rationality and evidence of whatever it is they may be doubting. However, for emotional doubters, more of a pastoral response would be more effective because the doubting is rooted in something more emotional than intellectual.*
- **How does Jesus' response to Thomas both challenge and comfort those who doubt?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Who can you turn to with your doubts? Why is it important to have someone you can talk with openly about faith and doubts?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The words *believe*, *belief*, and *faith* in the New Testament come from the same word. In other words, to believe is to have faith and to have faith is to believe. But what exactly is faith/belief? It might be helpful to think about three aspects to faith. The first aspect is factual; it is agreement with the facts about Jesus and His provision of salvation. However, while faith is not less than mental agreement with the facts, it is more than that. After all, James says that while believing is great, even the demons believe (2:19).

- **Why is the factual part of faith important?** *For starters, it shows that faith neither contradicts actual evidence and physical support, nor is it blind belief in something despite the evidence. Instead, faith is reasonable and supported by the best evidences.*
- **How would you explain to someone that while important, factual faith isn't enough?** *Answers might include references to James 2:19 and so on.*



HEART

The second aspect of faith is emotional; it is a confidence in Jesus, as well as a love for Him. Of course, faith is more than a feeling. At times, even the strongest feelings of confidence and trust can waver, which is why faith is more than our emotions. However, this internal love and heartfelt confidence in God is part of genuine faith—Christians should not overlook it.

- **What is the danger of only paying attention to the emotional side of faith?** *If faith is only an emotion, what happens when those emotions change? What happens when people no longer feel the same way about Christ as they did the month before? What happens when their hearts grow a little cold? It is during these times that faith must be more than feelings alone.*
- **Read Romans 4:18-21. How was Abraham strengthened in his faith?** *Abraham was strengthened in his faith when he focused on the promises of God's Word, setting an example for how our faith and confidence in God can increase.*



HANDS

The third aspect of faith is volitional; it is an act of the will. Volitional faith is the decision to depend on Jesus each day, to exercise our belief in Him in all areas of our lives. It is the emotional and volitional aspects of faith that the demons lack. They cannot deny the truth, but they do not love it or willingly submit to it.

- **How would you explain or define faith to a friend who didn't grow up in church? What analogies or illustrations would you use to help a child understand biblical faith?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What can we learn from Jesus' response to Thomas about how to respond to doubters—both those who are already believers in Jesus and those who are not?** *At the very least, we should always welcome those with questions and never make people feel ashamed for asking questions they genuinely want to have answered.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCE

1. "Doubting Thomas," *Merriam-Webster*, accessed March 5, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doubting%20Thomas>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



10

SESSION TEN

The Call to Follow Him

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples for the third time after His resurrection. Through this breakfast encounter, Jesus demonstrated the reality of His restorative power. Because He fulfilled God's plan to rescue people from sin, Jesus was able to forgive the disciples for their sins and failures, and then recommission them in their task of following Him. As Jesus' followers, we trust in the power of His restoration to enable us to move beyond our sins and failures to accomplish great things in His name.

SCRIPTURE

John 21:1-23

THE POINT

Jesus forgives past failures and offers the opportunity to follow Him once again.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

When Christ-followers consider the mission He has given us, we confront two challenges that often cause us to fall back and retreat from the task. The first challenge is our unworthiness, and the second is the cost. We struggle with unworthiness because of the times we lapse into unfaithfulness to the One who has sent us. We struggle with cost because of the high price we might have to pay to follow Him.

Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, was aware of his unworthiness. As a young man, Luther became extremely afraid as he led a worship service. He thought to himself: “Who am I that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine majesty? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin.”¹

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was aware of the cost. He refused to stay in the safe haven of America where he had taken refuge in 1939 and returned to his homeland, Hitler’s Germany. He wrote: “I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people.”²

If we are to heed the call of our risen King to join His mission, then we must be confident in His forgiveness, His restoration, and His sovereignty over the direction of our lives, even if that direction involves suffering for the sake of His call.

- **Of these two challenges, which one discourages you more from fulfilling Jesus’ mission: your feeling of unworthiness or the cost of following Jesus? Why?**

Option 2

Following Jesus isn’t always the easiest choice. At the top of a white board or large poster board, write out the title *The Cost*. Instruct students to call out different “costs” of following Jesus that they have specifically experienced. Next, encourage students to list some general costs of being Christ-followers mentioned throughout the Bible. Then, ask:

- **What are some of the “costs” you fear the most?**
- **What are some costs that tempt you not to wholly follow Jesus’ commands?**
- **What are some famous “failures” in following Jesus that you know from the Bible?**

We will all fail to follow Jesus at some point in our lives and on multiple occasions. Sometimes the failure to follow Jesus fully in the past causes us to fear that we won’t be able to follow Him fully in the future. But, just as Jesus forgave Peter for His denial and restored Him to ministry, He will also forgive and restore us when we repent of our failure to follow. And He will ask us, again, to follow Him fully, no matter the cost.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus forgives past failures and offers the opportunity to follow Him once again.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

PLOT

In past sessions we have seen Jesus reveal Himself to the disciples after His resurrection. However, we have not seen a discussion about why the disciples abandoned Jesus or denied knowing Him on the night of His arrest. One might expect a conversation about that to take place—maybe one where Jesus expressed personal hurt and feelings of betrayal because of their actions. Instead of adding to their emotional failure and fears, Jesus once again reached out with grace and mercy, recommissioning His disciples for their mission ahead.

TIMELINE

FOLLOW ME

Jesus' forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

AS YOU GO...

Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THE ASCENSION

Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

JESUS PROVIDED FOR THE DISCIPLES

In Matthew 4:18-20, Peter and several other disciples left their nets to follow Jesus. In this passage, we find that the disciples had returned to fishing.

The Gospel of John did not give a reason for this decision or tell us that this decision was inappropriate. However, it does not seem to be the response we would expect from disciples Jesus had sent on a mission.

¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. (John 21:1-14)

Whether it was the early morning hour, the distance from shore, or another instance in which they were kept from recognizing their risen Lord (Luke 24:16,37), the disciples did not recognize Jesus. It was not until they took the fishing advice of this "stranger" and had amazing success that they recognized Jesus. It was the disciple Jesus loved (presumably the Apostle John) who first announced that the stranger on the shore was Jesus.

This affirmation prompted Peter to immediate action. His eagerness to get to Jesus on the shore confirms that the disciples were not running away from Jesus or turning from Him—no matter how uncertain or hesitant they were about their mission.

Jesus would have a conversation with Peter eventually, but His first priority was to provide breakfast to His disciples. This is a significant act. By feeding them breakfast, Jesus reassured His disciples of His presence, met their physical needs, and served them as He did before He went to the cross.

- **How have you experienced the reassuring presence of Jesus in your life? What has Jesus done to remind you that He is with you and cares for your needs?** (*p. 67, PSG*)

JESUS CALLED PETER TO FOLLOW HIM

Then, Jesus demonstrated His restorative power to Peter, the one who had denied Him three times on the eve of His crucifixion (John 18:15-27). John also recorded the remarkable and stirring conversation between Jesus and Peter. Take a look:

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 21:15-19)

Jesus began by restoring Peter with a “triple commission” to match Peter’s “triple denial” (John 18:15-27; 21:15-17). Three times, Jesus asked if Peter loved Him.

Jesus’ commission to Peter, His repentant follower, was to care for Jesus’ followers as a shepherd cares for his sheep. This was a huge commission. Jesus, the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep (John 10:10-16), entrusted this responsibility to Peter. In essence, Peter would demonstrate his love for Jesus by caring for Jesus’ followers.

As it turns out, Peter would eventually lay down his life for the sheep just as Jesus did (John 10:11,15). Jesus informed Peter that his ministry would involve death (John 21:18-19). Yes, the stretching, tying, and being carried around Peter would experience in his old age likely referred to something more drastic than being feeble. The point was not that someone else would need to care for Peter like a retirement home may take care of elderly patients today. Instead, these images show a condemned criminal being tied to the horizontal crossbeam that he would carry to the place of his execution.

Like Jesus' crucifixion, Peter's crucifixion would be a victory, not a defeat—it would be a means of glorifying God (v. 19), which is our highest calling. For some of Jesus' followers, this means a martyr's death. The Apostle Paul, whose great expectation was not comfort or self-exaltation but to exalt Christ (Phil. 1:20), was eventually put to death. And so was the Apostle Peter.

Jesus' final words as He recommissioned Peter were "Follow Me" (v. 19). This was a call to consistent discipleship until his death—a call made possible by the gracious forgiveness of the Lord.

JESUS TAUGHT PETER TO NOT FOCUS ON OTHERS, BUT ON HIM

This call to consistent discipleship until his death as a martyr prompted Peter to ask Jesus a question. His question is one we tend to ask when we reflect on the difficulties we face for following and serving our risen King. The question is: "What about him? What about her?" The conversation between Jesus and Peter continued, but this time, Peter asked the question.

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?"
21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" **22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"** **23 So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"** (John 21:20-23)

John was most likely "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (v. 20). Peter's question likely reflects a bit of a competitive spirit. Peter's implication was that John should have to face whatever Peter would face. If we are willing to admit it, we often ask the same question. We have a keen sense of fairness whenever we suspect that we might have a more difficult path to walk than someone else.

In essence, Jesus' response to Peter was, "What happens to John is of no concern to you. Focus on me and what I have called you to do."

TIMELINE

**Bonus Session*
SONG OF THANKSGIVING
Being grateful for God's salvation leads to public proclamation.

**Beginning*
Winter 2017-18

PENTECOST
The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES
John and Peter perform miracles and preach the gospel with boldness.

It is a mystery why some Christ-followers suffer more than others for the sake of the gospel. For example, King Herod attacked some believers and even executed John's brother, James (Acts 12:1-2). Around that time, Peter was kept in prison, but the church continually and fervently prayed for him (Acts 12:5). Eventually, an angel of the Lord rescued Peter, and Peter went on with his service (Acts 12:6-19). Why did God spare Peter, but not James?

The answer is the same as it is to the question, why did John get to die peacefully in his old age, as it appears he did, when Peter had to face martyrdom? In both cases, the answer is: *We don't know*. God does not tell us. What He tells us is to refocus our attention on following Him—that's what really matters.

Years later, the Apostle Peter wrote about how we can follow Jesus and serve Him even during times of intense suffering. In his first New Testament letter, he challenged believers to follow Jesus' lead and entrust themselves to God, the One who judges justly (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

Trust makes all the difference. When we entrust ourselves to our faithful Creator, we can continue to do good even as we face suffering for the sake of Christ (1 Pet. 4:19).

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Imputation (p. 68, PSG)

When God pardoned sinners at the cross, our sins were imputed or transferred to Christ, who became sin on our behalf. Our sin was imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness was imputed to us (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30). When God the Father looks at those who have trusted in Christ, He does not see their sins, but the righteousness of Christ as belonging to them (Rom. 4:6).

CHRIST CONNECTION

Through His breakfast encounter with His disciples, Jesus showed the reality of His restorative power. Because He fulfilled God's plan to rescue people from sin, Jesus was able to forgive the disciples of their sins and failures, and then recommission them in their task of following Him.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How has Jesus revealed Himself to you through His power and provision? Think about a situation in which you knew the answers and fulfilled needs could have only come from the Lord.** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some ways in which Jesus is a shepherd to His people?** *For starters, like a good shepherd, Jesus went after Peter and the other disciples, even though they denied and abandoned Him after His arrest. Like a good shepherd, Jesus doesn't respond vindictively, but with patience and grace, knowing His sheep need Him.*
- **What are some ways in which we, as Jesus' followers, can "feed His sheep?"** *Examples may include serving those with needs in the church or community, volunteering to help Vacation Bible School (VBS) in the summer, or encouraging friends by pointing them to God's Word, and so forth.*
- **What kinds of costs must believers be prepared to pay for following Jesus in the world in general and in our specific communities?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

God calls us to demonstrate our love for Jesus by following Him—no matter where the journey leads and no matter what happens to us in comparison to other followers of Jesus. It takes grace to not play the comparison game and to have an eternal perspective when it comes to our momentary sufferings; sufferings that will one day seem incredibly small.

- **When have you experienced a sense of competitiveness with your brothers and sisters in Christ?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why do we find it so easy to question God's reason for having different plans for different people?** *Answers will vary.*



HEART

When it comes to obeying the command to “follow Jesus,” it is safe to say people often focus all their attention on the verb rather than the object of that verb. In other words, we place a lot of attention on the idea of “following” and what that might entail in our lives—the potential discomfort, persecution, hostility, and so on. While those things may be real possibilities in our task of following Him, our primary focus shouldn't be on the act of following, but on the person we follow—Jesus! We aren't following an ethical code or philosophical way of life. No, we are following the One who is Life! And when we center our attention on Him and Him alone, we gain a correct perspective on the difficulties of following Jesus.

- **How is it possible for believers to focus on following and serving Jesus when the cost is high and the pain is deep?** *It is possible for believers to follow Christ during difficult times solely due to the fact that they find a level of joy and satisfaction in Christ that far outweighs the sufferings this life may bring.*
- **Why is it more important for believers to focus on who they follow rather than the command to follow?** *Focusing on the command only leads to a sense of duty and obligation. Focusing on the object of our following—Christ—is what produces joy and purpose in the act of following.*



HANDS

Our past failures do not have to define the course of our lives. When we turn from our fearful denials of Christ and recommit ourselves to loving Him, He forgives us and recommissions us to the mission on which He has sent.

- **How does Peter's recommission by Christ encourage you in times of personal unfaithfulness?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How can we use Peter's recommission story to encourage someone we know who feels overwhelmed by personal sin and failure?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language, 4th ed.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 248.
2. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography, rev. ed.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 655.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



11

SESSION ELEVEN

The Great Commission

SESSION SUMMARY

Believers are called to go to all nations with the authority of the risen King, Jesus—the One who empowers us to go. We are called to make disciples by proclaiming Jesus as the risen King. Jesus alone has the power to save, and we teach other believers to obey all that He has commanded, knowing that Jesus will finish the good work He began and that He will never forsake us.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:16-20

THE POINT

Jesus calls all of His followers to go and make disciples.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Jim was rough around the edges. Blunt and brash; independent, yet insecure. Jim was struggling with some difficult life situations. Jim didn't need friends who only invited him to a Sunday event or offered worn out cliches. He needed friends who would listen, walk beside him, and bring the love and goodness of God near to him in everyday language and everyday rhythms. Tom and Kevin went to school, played baseball, and spent time with Jim, and they constantly spoke about the Bible in ways that defined their perspectives and relationships. They identified themselves by Christ and with Christ, and it made Jim curious.

Jim eventually asked Tom and Kevin if he could go to church with them. They had invited Jim before, but this time Jim wanted to go. So he did. One year later, Jim was in the baptismal waters, declaring himself as a follower of Jesus. And Tom and Kevin were still obeying the Great Commission.

- **Which of Tom and Kevin's actions in this story seemed easy? What actions do you think may have been difficult? Why?**

Option 2

Jesus has called all of His disciples—including us—to go and make disciples. Sometimes the command to “go” means that Jesus will ask us to pick up everything and go across the world to tell others about Him. Some of us are not called to go to a foreign country, but we are all called to reach out to all of the people we meet—the people around us, in the places we “go” all the time.

- **Where are some places you “go”?**
- **How can you make disciples in those places?**

People often face the temptation to only reach out to people who are like them, who are already their friends, or who go to the same school or church. Encourage students to reach out to people they don't always talk to or know well, even if that feels uncomfortable at first. Remind them that Jesus made no exceptions in His command about who we should “go” to, and neither should we.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus calls all of His followers to go and make disciples.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

PLOT

Before finally ascending to the Father, Jesus gave His disciples a commission to make disciples of all nations. We know this section of Scripture as the Great Commission. This call—the Great Commission—is one all Christians should take seriously because it contains specific instructions for how we should go about our daily lives as believers.

TIMELINE

AS YOU GO...
Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THE ASCENSION
Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

**Bonus Session*
SONG OF THANKSGIVING
Being grateful for God's salvation leads to public proclamation.

JESUS AFFIRMED THAT ALL AUTHORITY BELONGS TO HIM

The King had risen from the grave, death had been conquered, and He was ready to give instructions to His disciples. The disciples were informed that Jesus would be heading to Galilee and wanted them to meet Him there (Matt. 28:7).

16 “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matt. 28:16-18)

The disciples went to Galilee to see the One they had been waiting for, the One they thought they had lost forever. As Jesus predicted, they worshiped when they saw Him. However, verse 17 also says that some of the disciples doubted.

It is not clear whether some of the Eleven doubted or whether a larger crowd followed the disciples to Galilee and some of that crowd doubted. We cannot be certain of the answer to that question. What is important is for us to see that doubt and hardness of heart were present in that moment.

Jesus wasn't shaken by their unbelief, and He wasn't discouraged. He was focused on the mission He would pass on to His disciples. But before He shared His commission with His disciples, He established the strength behind it—Himself. Jesus received complete authority and power from God the Father.

- **What are some other places in Scripture where we see Jesus possessing divine authority?** (p. 72, PSG)

If your students get stuck, have them read the following verses: Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:9-10; Philippians 2:9-10; and Colossians 2:9-10.

Jesus has supreme authority. God has exalted Jesus, and His resurrection was further proof of His authority and His power. Here, at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus directed His disciples to go out in the world under His authority. They went and we also go—not on our own authority or in our own strength but with and by the authority of the risen King.

JESUS COMMISSIONED HIS DISCIPLES

The Great Commission isn't a long command and can be easily understood and memorized. The most difficult part of what Jesus commissions us to do is living it out.

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19)

Jesus' disciples needed to understand the importance of His authority over all things, and this is still important for us to understand today. The reality of His power and authority didn't end with His resurrection or ascension or at the writing of the biblical text. Jesus' kingdom and His authority are eternal. Jesus began this commission with the statement of His authority and then connected it to the command to “go,” indicating that the power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him by the throne of grace is the same power available to us to live out this call to go and make disciples of all nations.

The disciples were instructed to go (Matt. 28:19). This was not a suggestion. Jesus wasn't telling the disciples that maybe they should go, or they could go if they could squeeze it into their schedules. Jesus used an imperative, a command, an order to be obeyed. Jesus, the risen King, commanded them to go.

“Go” in this passage is a verb that means to travel or journey, and the disciples were expected to obey. Our temptation and theirs would be to wait, but in essence, Jesus said, “Now that you've heard of My authority and seen My power—even over death—go out into the world and let others know of this good news for the forgiveness of sins.”

But where do we go? Since Jesus has authority over all the earth, He commands His disciples to go to all nations. Every tribe, tongue, and nation is under Jesus' authority, even if they have not yet submitted their lives to Him. After all, we have been told that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord at the mention of His name (Phil. 2:10-11). So, we go.

For the disciples, going would mean being scattered among the peoples and nations of the world, and for many of us, it means the same. Jesus' call is for a multi-ethnic, cross-cultural focus of missionaries that may require leaving home and the known to travel into foreign lands of the unknown. But the Lord didn't tell us here exactly where to go. He didn't demand that we all leave home; He simply said to go and make disciples of all nations.

Does this mean we are called to go to a foreign land or to our neighbor across the street? He didn't say. But we do know that the call to make disciples is a call to action. Jesus' call to go to *all* nations was very intentional—*all* encompasses every place on this earth. Jesus wanted no one excluded, no land to be barren of His name—His desire was for us to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Once we have proclaimed the good news to all people, and once they have placed their faith and trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross, then Jesus commands us to baptize these new disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Peter, as recorded in the Book of Acts, obeyed this command. Preaching to the crowds in Judea, Peter called the people to repentance and baptism, and repeated Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Repentance and faith come before baptism. Baptism is the faithful display of the saving work of Jesus—a proclamation of the work that has been done in the believer's heart, which calls out to an unbelieving world that Hope has come. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward transformation of the believer, a move from death (to sins) to life (in Jesus).

Baptism is also a part of the normal, everyday call of the Christian mission. In other words, just as evangelism or disciple-making is a part of the call to mission, so is baptism. Baptism does not save, but it is an important aspect of our Christian witness. Baptism publicly proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ to a watching world.

JESUS ENCOURAGED HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE MISSION AHEAD

Jesus commanded the disciples to go, to act—preaching the gospel to all nations and baptizing believers in the name of our trinitarian God. But we see in the next verse that this isn't the end of the work.

20 “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)

Once again, Jesus didn't shy away from the use of the word *all*. Jesus told the disciples that they were to teach all the things Jesus had commanded them to those who believed the gospel so the new believers could, in turn, obey their Savior. On their own, this would be another daunting task, but we know Jesus gave them this instruction in light of His own authority and power. Teaching others is a daunting task for you and me as well, but God has given us His authoritative Word.

Baptism is a faith-filled proclamation of the finished work of Jesus in a believer's life, and obedience is the evidence of that work. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commands (John 14:15). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and leads to obedience to our Savior. But if faith comes by hearing, why would we stop teaching once a person has believed?

That's why the Great Commission isn't only about evangelism—it's also about discipleship. God promises to finish the good work He begins (Phil. 1:6), and He instructs us to participate in that work through learning about and obeying Him. Christians are further instructed to disciple the disciple, and as we see in these passages, no one is exempt from teaching others (Matt. 28:20). We are all called to go and disciple believers in Christ.

TIMELINE

**Beginning
Winter 2017-18*

PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES

John and Peter perform miracles and preach the gospel with boldness.

COMMUNITY OF GENEROSITY

The church displays unity and generosity.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Mission of the Church (p. 74, PSG)

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

At the conclusion of His instructions and commands, Jesus lovingly reminded the disciples (and us) that they will not be alone in their mission: He would always be with them. What began with a declaration of His power and authority, ended with the declaration of His faithful presence to the end of time and then forevermore.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He commissioned His disciples to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. Under Jesus' authority, we make disciples by baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by teaching them everything Christ commanded us. As we go, we trust in the presence of Christ, who promises to be with us on mission.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What fears do you have that could keep you from obeying the mission Jesus has given to us?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the reality of Jesus' authority over all of heaven and earth overcome those fears?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How might we unintentionally downplay the importance of baptism as a part of the Great Commission?** *We often think of the Great Commission only in terms of evangelism. However, as we have studied, the Great Commission is about much more than evangelism. The act of baptism does not save, but it publicly identifies the believer with Jesus—proclaiming the gospel message through action.*
- **What are some practical ways you can teach others Jesus' commands and encourage obedience?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The disciples were commanded to go and make other disciples. By biblical definition, a disciple is a follower of Jesus, someone who learns from Him in order to live like Him. So, these Jesus-followers were commanded to go and find other people to become Jesus-followers. In other words, even though salvation belongs to the Lord and only He can save, He allows us to play a wonderful part in salvation. We do this by sharing the gospel, through discipleship of new believers, and by equipping them with a Christian worldview.

- **How have you experienced discipleship from a mature believer in your own life?**
Answers will vary.
- **How can we encourage one another toward making disciples?** *Answers will vary.*



HEART

Our temptation not to share with others is often rooted in fear: *What should I say? What if they won't accept me? How will I look in their eyes? What if the response is violence?* When Jesus is the focus and the message, we can rest from our fear. We don't need to fear human beings because, Jesus instructed: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

- **What are some ways we can unintentionally make the message of the gospel about us instead of about Jesus?** *If we always focus on the reasons we don't share—fear, ridicule, not knowing what to say—then we are essentially, though unintentionally, making this about us when it is about God and what He has done for us.*
- **How does Jesus' authority help us when we feel fearful?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

Like most people, we become busy with life and our own schedules, and our busyness can lead us to forget our ultimate mission. We have a great treasure in the gospel. We have the best and only news this world needs. We also have been given the power to share it by the grace of God through His Holy Spirit, who is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to always be with us. Let's ask God for opportunities to go and make disciples of all nations and pray for our faithfulness and boldness as we share about our risen King—Jesus Christ.

- **What places have you gone in order to share the gospel and make disciples?**
Answers will vary.
- **How can your group/church work together and support one another in this shared mission to go and make disciples of all nations?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #10, which contains an interactive poster designed to help students intentionally think about their part in the Great Commission.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

12

SESSION TWELVE

Jesus Ascended

SESSION SUMMARY

After Jesus' death, resurrection, and appearances for 40 days after His resurrection, it was time for the King to ascend into heaven and sit down on His throne at the right hand of God the Father. He had already given the Great Commission, so He would share His final words on Earth until His return. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples for their mission, and He foretold the steps their mission would take as they took the gospel to the ends of the earth. Finally, Jesus ascended to the Father, where even now He rules over all of creation and intercedes for His people until He comes again.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:4-14

THE POINT

God's mission can't take place apart from the help of the Holy Spirit.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

I think it is safe to say that many of you have seen an Olympic competition. Some of the more popular competitions tend to be in swimming, women's gymnastics, volleyball, and track and field. Each person is drawn to different sports represented in the Olympics, as well as the different iconic athletes who compete.

If you have seen some of the Olympic competitions, chances are you watched a medal ceremony as well. The medal ceremonies take place after a competition and award the victors of the gold, silver, and bronze medals. While receiving any medal would be an honor in itself, there is something particularly special about receiving the gold. Not only does this medal represent first place, but the gold medal winner also gets to stand and represent his or her country while the national anthem is played. The experience is incredibly moving for the gold medal winner and for those watching, and many of the winners become emotional, to the point of tears, as they stand on the platform. The winner is overwhelmed with emotion over the chance to represent his or her nation, and the ability to bring home the gold only adds to the honor of carrying the country's flag in competition.

- **Like the Olympian who represents his or her country, how should a Christian's citizenship in the kingdom of God be represented from day to day? What are some of the distinguishing marks that a person is part of the kingdom of God?**

Option 2

Before digging into this session, take a minute to review last week's study by playing a game. For the game to go smoothly, prepare beforehand two sets of the same questions for competition stations. Make sure to type the answers on the card as well. Some good questions are:

- **What is the Great Commission?** *Jesus' command to go and make disciples*
- **Where did the disciples travel to meet with Jesus after His resurrection?** *Galilee*
- **How much authority did Jesus have in heaven and on earth?** *All authority*
- **What three things did Jesus commission His disciples to do?** *Go, make disciples, baptize*

Then, prior to students' arrival, set up two stations (these can be desks or tables) at opposite ends of the room. Place one chair on either side of the table. Ask for two volunteers to be the time keepers, and two more volunteers to ask the questions on the cards. Place the rest of the students in four equally-sized groups. Assign one questioner, one time keeper, and two teams to each station. One at a time, team members will face-off. They will have 30 seconds to answer as many of the questions as possible. Then, the team with the most points wins. If able, provide a prize for the winning team.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God's mission can't take place apart from the help of the Holy Spirit.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

PLOT

The disciples received instructions on what they should do with all they learned from Jesus—make disciples of all nations. Jesus' commission the disciples was a big task, but it was their new ministry and mission. How would they accomplish something like this on such a massive scale? Would Jesus go with them? Would they still be persecuted? What would they say, and why would anyone listen to them? Whatever questions may have been in their minds, Jesus' last words to them while He was here on Earth would tell them what they needed to know.

TIMELINE

THE ASCENSION

Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

**Bonus Session*

SONG OF THANKSGIVING

Being grateful for God's salvation leads to public proclamation.

**Beginning*

Winter 2017-18

PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

JESUS PROMISED THE DISCIPLES THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

After three years of walking with Jesus, witnessing His resurrection, and having received their commission, it was time for the disciples to hear Jesus' last words to them on Earth before He returned to the Father.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

Following Jesus' resurrection and before His ascension into heaven, as Jesus prepared the disciples for their ministry in His name, He ordered them to wait in Jerusalem for the Father's promise to come (Acts 1:4).

But what was this promise? Jesus had already been crucified as the perfect sacrifice for sins, and in being raised from the dead, He had defeated sin. Furthermore, He had already commissioned His followers and strengthened and encouraged them for the mission ahead with His many appearances and conversations. So, what promise from the Father remained?

Jesus described to the disciples the Father's promise in Acts 1:5. He informed them that they would soon receive the gift of the third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. This was the Father's remarkable promise—the gift of the Holy Spirit—a baptism that would forever define their identity as the followers of Jesus.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a foretelling of the events that occurred at Pentecost, which took place in Acts 2. At that time, the believers would be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive power to boldly proclaim the gospel. They would be given the supernatural gift to speak in various languages for the benefit of many Jews who had come for the festival from their various nations with various languages (Acts 2:1-11). This was the promised power and gift awaiting them—the Holy Spirit, the fuel for obeying the Great Commission.

- **What is the most difficult part about waiting on God?** (*p. 78, PSG*)
- **What was so amazing about God's promise to the disciples in this passage? How does this promise affect you today?** (*p. 78, PSG*)

JESUS REMINDED THEM OF THEIR MISSION

After Jesus shared about the Father's promise, the disciples wondered if this was finally the point when Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel. This was His response:

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

This was a familiar question for Jesus. Luke recorded the Pharisees' asking about the coming of the kingdom of God, and Jesus responded that God's kingdom wouldn't necessarily come in some observable form, but that it was already among them (Luke 17:20-21).

The kingdom of God is associated with Jesus Himself. So the kingdom had been with the disciples and would continue to be with them to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Only God the Father knows the day and time of Jesus' return, when the fullness of the kingdom comes and the restoration of God's people and all of His creation will be complete.

I can imagine that the disciples were hoping for an end. They were living in a time of persecution. Their friend and Savior had been crucified just a few weeks ago, but as promised, Jesus rose from the grave. They encountered the resurrected King just outside of Jerusalem, the holy city of God with the temple and where the king's throne should be, and once again they were told to wait. They were also told not to worry about the details; those are God's prerogative.

Instead of allowing the disciples to focus on the details of the kingdom, which they couldn't know, Jesus redirected their attention to the task at hand—it was a time for mission. Jesus had laid out the details of His mission for them in Matthew 28: Jesus' disciples are to go and make disciples of all nations. Before He ascended, Jesus expounded on the mission He previously shared.

Jesus was serious about His disciples making disciples of all nations. They would not only proclaim the gospel in Judea, but they would also share about Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and, if the mission wasn't clear enough, "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This was an impossible mission for the first disciples on their own, but how comforting it must have been for them to know they wouldn't go alone. Jesus had promised to be with them, and He would be, not physically but spiritually through the promise of the Father. They were going with and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Isn't it comforting for us to know that we don't have to go alone on our mission to share the gospel of Jesus either?

JESUS ASCENDED TO THE FATHER

After Jesus encouraged His disciples to wait for the Father's promised gift and prophesied about spreading the gospel to the end of the earth, He was taken up in a cloud to heaven.

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (Acts 1:9-14)

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

The term *cloud* in the Bible is often found in relation to the presence of God, as it most certainly is here as well. Examples of this connection can be seen in the following passages:

- "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night" (Ex. 13:21).
- "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever'" (Ex. 19:9).
- "An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them" (Isa. 19:1).
- "He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'" (Matt. 17:5).
- "Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).
- "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).
- "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen" (Rev. 1:7).

TIMELINE

COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES

John and Peter perform miracles and preach the gospel with boldness.

COMMUNITY OF GENEROSITY

The church displays unity and generosity.

THE FIRST MARTYR

Stephen reflects Jesus in his life and his death.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Moral Influence Theory of Atonement (p. 79, PSG)

According to this theory, Christ's sacrifice should be seen as a demonstration of God's love, a display that produces a change of attitude within humanity. This theory falls short of all Christ accomplished on the cross, since it leaves out God's wrath against sinners and His requirement of satisfaction for sin. Still, it does remind us that the cross is the greatest example of God's love, and this love must provoke gratitude and praise on our behalf.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why are we prone to overlook our need of God's Spirit in our lives?**
Different answers may be given, but some answers may include: A lot of people downplay the role of the Spirit because they aren't aware of their need for Him or the various roles He plays in their spiritual development, and we have a natural tendency to rely upon ourselves and personal strength, making it easy to ignore our dependence upon the Holy Spirit in our lives, and so on.
- **Like the disciples not knowing God's plan or timing regarding the kingdom, how do you handle the mysteries of life (what is God's plan, how is God working, etc.)?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does Jesus' response to the disciples in this passage encourage you regarding the unknowns in life?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does Jesus' interceding on your behalf encourage you as you face these unknowns?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The disciples could wait confidently for the promise's fulfillment because God's words are true, pure, and sure. When God says He is going to do something, He will. His promises aren't like our promises. We might make a promise to do something or to be somewhere, but we may break that promise in order to do something else or be somewhere else. Of course, our promises aren't always broken deliberately or out of spite; there are times when our circumstances lead us to break promises previously made. But God isn't governed by circumstances. When He makes a promise, it will be fulfilled.

- **How does our perspective of earthly promises impact how we view God's promises?**
Answers will vary.
- **What can get in the way of your belief that God will be faithful to His promises?**
Answers will vary.



HEART

When Jesus departed, the disciples didn't try to come up with a plan right away. So often preparation for us looks busy, intense, and maybe even a bit frantic, but not for Jesus' disciples. They waited in anticipation of the Spirit and prayed. Their hearts were settled, and they were unified in their belief, resolve, and love. So they waited, rested, and prayed for what was to come. Jesus gave them the mission, and the incredible gift of the Holy Spirit would work powerfully through them—and us—to accomplish it.

- **What are some areas of life where you are tempted to have an unsettled heart and lack of faith in God and His promises?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How should we respond when faced with such times?** *One way to respond would be to pray and ask God for the grace to believe, and then rest secure in the promises He has made. Another way would be to do what the disciples did—surround ourselves with other believers and wait for God to act.*



HANDS

Jesus told the disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them—when He baptized them with the Holy Spirit. This isn't just any power, it's power from the third Person of the Trinity—the power of God. This same power brought Jesus out of the tomb alive. The Holy Spirit helps Christians in many ways as they strive for holiness, obedience, and faithfulness to Jesus' mission. One way, as the disciples experienced, was His enabling power to boldly speak and proclaim the gospel.

- **What are some examples of the Holy Spirit's power that you have seen in Scripture?**
Answers will vary.
- **How does the reality of being empowered by the Holy Spirit impact the way we carry out the Great Commission?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #11. This visual illustration shows how we, as Christians, are to move forward in our own context to fulfill the Great Commission.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject



SPECIAL SESSION

A Song of Thanksgiving

SESSION SUMMARY

The prophet Isaiah recorded a song of thanksgiving inspired by God. The people of God would one day sing this song to God's honor and glory. On account of His mercy and salvation—which were promised and eventually delivered in His Son, Jesus Christ—we thank God, enjoy His gifts, and proclaim His greatness to every person and in every place. Gratitude to the Lord for salvation leads to public proclamation of His glory.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 2:1-6

THE POINT

Christians thank the Lord, sing His praises, and proclaim His greatness in all the earth.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Thankfulness can be an easy thing to express but much more difficult to embody. We say “thank you” to someone who did something for us, but do we mean it or is it simply a polite courtesy hiding ungrateful thoughts? For example, your pencil runs out of lead right before a test, and the person beside you passes you an extra pencil. Maybe you mouth the words *thank you* or maybe you smile at that person. Or maybe you find yourself thinking, “After all the pencils and paper I have given to you, it’s about time you came through for me.”

Thankfulness is a matter of the heart and that is why we struggle to be thankful. The sinful nature we inherited from Adam constantly directs us to feel entitled to other people’s actions and attention. It is true that people can take advantage and work an angle to get their way—this is also the work of sin in our lives—but the struggle with thankfulness is more often internal than external. We think we are deserving; we think we are owed.

Sadly, sin would have us believe the same in our relationship with the Creator God. The holy God owes us nothing except judgment for our sin, yet He freely offers His love, mercy, and grace to us undeserving sinners because He paid the cost for our sin Himself.

- **In what circumstances have you struggled to be grateful for the words or actions of another?**
- **Why do we have sometimes have a difficult time being thankful toward other people?**

Option 2

A metaphor is a symbol, a representation of a particular subject; a word picture that helps us understand complicated subjects. Throughout the Bible, prophets and apostles used metaphors to help people understand the complexity of things like God’s salvation, wisdom, life, and safety. As a group, discuss some common metaphors students may have heard before. Then, discuss some metaphors in the Bible:

- “Hook,” “bit,” and “bridle” are often metaphors for God’s restraint (2 Kings 19:28).
 - “Walls” are often a metaphor for security and safety (Isa. 26:1; 60:18).
 - “Lamp” is often a metaphor for life, wellbeing, or God’s guidance (2 Sam. 21:17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 13:9).¹
 - “Fountain” is often a metaphor for the source of something, such as wisdom.²
 - “Water” is often a metaphor for God’s salvation (Isa. 12:3; John 4:10-15).
- **How do these descriptions help you better understand God’s character and things like salvation?**

When we better understand God and His character, we better understand all the reasons we have to praise Him. Today’s session will help us see how to give thanks for our salvation.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Christians thank the Lord, sing His praises, and proclaim His greatness in all the earth.

CHARACTERS

- **Isaiah:** prophet of God who wrote the book of Isaiah; prophesied about a future Messiah as a Suffering Servant

PLOT

This session takes a look into the Book of Isaiah, specifically at a recorded song of thanksgiving. This song was inspired by God, and one day, God's people would sing this song to His honor and glory.

THANK THE LORD FOR HIS MERCY AND COMFORT

In the 11 chapters preceding this passage, the Lord indicted His chosen people for their idolatry and rebellion against Him. He was angry with them for turning their backs on Him, the One who brought them out of slavery in Egypt and settled them in His promised land. His judgment would come in the form of the nations of Assyria and Babylon, and it would be severe: war, siege, death, and exile. Even in the midst of His anger, the Lord pronounced a day of mercy, grace, and redemption for His people, which would result in giving thanks.

¹You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ²“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” (Isa. 12:1-2)

Isaiah’s song refers to a “day” that for him was yet to come, but it was not a reference without context. In the first 11 chapters of Isaiah, “day” was used multiple times with positive and negative implications, depending on where you should stand on that day. Imagine you’re a child again and your dad is coming home from work. Depending upon your behavior toward your mom that day—respectful obedience or disrespectful rebellion—you know whether your dad’s arrival is something to be happily anticipated or dreaded. In a similar way, for the proud enemies of God, the “day” is a day of judgment and humiliation (Isa. 2:5-17). At the same time, for the remnant of the Lord’s people, it is a day of preservation and salvation, even a full restoration from exile (Isa. 11:10-16). The Old Testament prophets often called this “the Day of the Lord.”

In light of the potentially destructive nature of this day, it makes sense that Isaiah’s future-oriented song begins with a note of thanksgiving to the Lord. After all, without God’s grace, we would all face judgment on His day.

According to Isaiah 1, Judah was on trial before God for being sinful, doing evil, and abandoning the Lord and turning their backs on Him (1:4). And in Israel, all the people were godless and doing evil deeds (Isa. 9:17). The Lord had been patient, slow to anger, faithful in His discipline, and gracious in His prophetic warnings, but He would be true to His word to exile His sinful people from their land.

Of course God was angry! His people defied, rebelled against, devalued, and despised Him. But this wasn’t only a general populace thing, it was a specific, personal thing. The Lord was angry with individual sinners. Isaiah’s song says, “you were angry with me” (v. 1). Just in case we think we get a pass, let’s not

TIMELINE

**Bonus Session*
SONG OF THANKSGIVING
Being grateful for God’s salvation leads to public proclamation.

**Beginning*
Winter 2017-18

PENTECOST
The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES
John and Peter perform miracles and preach the gospel with boldness.

forget that the New Testament makes it clear “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We have all personally been under the wrath of God for our sin (Eph. 2:3).

Returning to Isaiah 12, we are faced with this question: How can God be just in His anger against sin and sinners and then turn His anger away? Not only that, but how can God also graciously comfort the sinner (Isa. 12:1)? The answer: atonement is provided by God (Isa. 6:5-6)—the reason for giving thanks to the Lord. Those who want to stand on their own before the Lord, believing they are entitled and owed by their Creator, stand condemned in their sin. The Lord promises to humble the proud and to bring low the arrogant (Isa. 2:11,17). But those who humble themselves and confess their sin before the holy God will find that they can sing, “God is my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

- **How does your view of this song of thanksgiving change, knowing that we have all been under God’s wrath?** (p. 84, PSG)

TAKE JOY TOGETHER IN THE LORD’S PROMISE OF SALVATION

The Lord is the God of mercy and comfort, turning His anger away from sinners and taking them into His arms as beloved children. We give thanks to the Lord because He does this for individuals—for you and for me—so we will sing of His salvation. But if our singing stops there, if we only confess, “God has become my salvation,” to ourselves in the mirror, then we are missing out on an inevitable result of God’s salvation—the joyful community of the redeemed.

3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. (Isa. 12:3)

While, the previous verses of Isaiah 12 were an individual’s proclamation of praise and thanks for God’s salvation, the “you” in this verse is plural—this broadens the view of the people praising because it addresses the community of individuals who will receive God’s mercy and comfort in spite of their sins. And the message is that you are not alone.

An agricultural society settled in a relatively dry and arid land such as ancient Israel would have been keenly aware of the necessity and potential scarcity of water. Rainwater in particular fueled their yearly provision and national economy. If it rained as it should, crops would grow and supply the people’s needs; if a drought came, crops, animals, and people would die because water is a life-sustaining requirement.

God, in His justice and loving discipline, promised to remove all of His people’s water sources because of their rebellion and sin (Isa. 3:1). God did this to drive the people to repentance and to find their joy in Him alone rather than in the idols they had created. The rain would return when the people returned to the Lord, not just with sacrifices, but with a whole heart set upon obedience to Him. No wonder water was an appropriate metaphor for salvation from the Lord.

PROCLAIM THE GLORY AND GREATNESS OF GOD ALL OVER THE EARTH

The Lord has shown His mercy and comfort to His people on an individual basis. Then we love, encourage, and comfort one another with the love, encouragement, and comfort that we have received from God. But again, if the joy of our salvation stops with the community of the redeemed, then we are short-circuiting the full purpose of that community. We don't gather to stay; we gather to encourage one another to go with a message for the world.

⁴ And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.”

⁵ “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. ⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” (Isa. 12:4-6)

Isaiah continued by addressing the community of God as a whole (v. 4). On the Day of the Lord, God's people will be speaking to one another, and their message will be full of mutual instruction—honor the Lord and do so everywhere so everyone can hear the Word and honor Him too.

The individual gave thanks to God for His salvation in verse 1, but here the saved individuals who have gathered together also encouraged one another to give thanks to God and publicly honor His name. The picture of praise in this chapter flows like this: *I thank the Lord that He has saved me! Hey, you are here with me, so you have been saved too. Thank the Lord that He saved you!* But the praise of God can't stop there. This salvation from God is so great, gracious, and kind that everyone needs to hear about it, so let's go tell more people—even those who haven't heard about our God and His salvation!

- **How does thanking and praising God with other believers encourage us to go to those who do not know God and His salvation? (p. 85, PSG)**

TIMELINE

COMMUNITY OF GENEROSITY

The church displays unity and generosity.

THE FIRST MARTYR

Stephen reflects Jesus in his life and his death.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Philip faithfully shares the message of the gospel.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Body of Christ (p. 86, PSG)

The New Testament describes the church as the body of Christ. The church lives and operates as Christ's representatives here on earth, with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18). This means that the church is an extension of Christ's ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). In addition, the picture of the church as the body of Christ shows us the interconnectedness of individual Christians, with each member dependent upon one another for growth and sanctification (1 Cor. 12:12).

CHRIST CONNECTION

Isaiah looked forward to a day when the blessing of God would once again be experienced by His people and God's glory would be proclaimed in all the earth. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we thank the Lord for His mercy, enjoy His gift of salvation, and commit to spreading the songs of His praise throughout the earth.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Isaiah used water as a metaphor describing God's salvation. What are some metaphors from our culture that we could use to describe salvation from the Lord?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How can we make the community of faith a priority in our lives and in the church?** *Becoming more involved in the student ministry at your church, being faithful to your small group, making a commitment to being disciplined by someone older in the church, and so on.*
- **What should we do when we find that our joy in salvation is decreasing?** *One thing is to remind yourself of the gospel—the fact that you were a terrible sinner who was desperately in need of a wonderful and powerful Savior, and that God gave you the gift of grace and forgiveness. We should also pray, and ask God to forgive us for not feeling the gratitude we should and for the grace to once again experience the joy of our salvation. Finally, we should look at our hearts and lives to see if any sin remains that may be causing a lack of spiritual joy in our lives.*
- **What works of God in your life can you make known among the people of the earth?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

“The Day of the Lord” was a day of God’s decisive action in the world. In Isaiah’s immediate context, the “day” addressed the destruction that would come upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria, as well as their attempt to destroy Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Isa. 7:17-25). Truth be told, there have been many “Days of the Lord” in Scripture, but there is also one “Day of the Lord” to end all “Days of the Lord.” The apostle Peter described this ultimate day: the second coming of Christ (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Christians long for that day.

- **What are some reasons people may not eagerly look forward to the “Day of the Lord”?** *For many, the answer is that since they are not followers of Jesus, His return would be a day of judgment and accountability for them instead of one of joy and peace.*
- **What do you think are some reasons Christians long for that day?** *Examples might include: the fact that Jesus will make all things new, personal sin will finally no longer be a struggle, and there will no longer be tears of sadness or physical suffering.*



HEART

The God who pays on our behalf what we rightfully owe is One worthy of our full trust. We never need to be afraid of Him because He Himself takes care of our punishment; all that is left is loving, purposeful comfort and discipline that shape us into His image. We also should not be afraid in our life circumstances because our salvation is found in the God who created and governs all things. He infuses us with His strength and power to do what is right, and He works in our hearts to become the delight of our hearts, that His praise would forever be the song we sing.

- **How would you explain the relationship between thanksgiving and praise in your own words?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What is your favorite song of praise and thanksgiving to sing to the God of your salvation? Why?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

If we are saved in Christ, it is because others who experienced His salvation decided to go and share about His glorious works. If we want to worship Jesus rightly, then we must go to all the world and share about His glorious works in our own lives (Matt. 28:18-20). According to the pattern of thanksgiving and praise for salvation in Isaiah 12, worship must lead to evangelism.

- **How would you explain the connection between worship and evangelism in your own words?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How can we encourage one another to share the gospel with the nations?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Matthew George Easton, *Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (New York: Cosmo Classics, 2005), accessed via mywsb.com.
2. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), accessed via mywsb.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

STUDY PLAN

YEAR 1

Fall 2015

God the Creator (Genesis 1-11)
God the Covenant-Maker
(Genesis 12-50)

Winter 2016

God the Redeemer
(Exodus)
God the Lawgiver
(Exodus, Leviticus,
Deuteronomy)

Spring 2016

God the Savior
(Numbers, Joshua)
God the Judge (Judges,
Ruth, 1 Samuel)

Summer 2016

God the King (1-2 Samuel)
God All Wise (1 Kings, Job,
Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs)

YEAR 2

Fall 2016

God the Revealer
(1-2 Kings, Isaiah)
God the Pursuer (Major
and Minor Prophets,
1-2 Chronicles)

Winter 2017

God the Sustainer
(Daniel, Ezra)
God the Provider (Esther,
Nehemiah, Malachi)

Spring 2017

God the Son (Gospels)
God Among Us (Gospels)

Summer 2017

Jesus the Storyteller
(Synoptic Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker
(Gospels)

YEAR 3

Fall 2017

Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King
(Gospels, Acts)

Winter 2018

The Spirit Who
Empowers (Acts)
The God Who Sends (Acts)

Spring 2018

The God Who Directs His
People (Epistles)
The God Who Changes
Us (Epistles)

Summer 2018

God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)
The God Who Makes All
Things New (Epistles,
Revelation)