

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Mark 4:1-9,14-20

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

People respond in different ways to the message of the gospel.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

Jesus began by telling the crowds to listen, to pay attention. He drew their attention to a sower. According to what Jesus taught, He is the sower and the parable is about Him. He cast His Word (we know this from Mark 1:14-15), and His message was that God's kingdom had come. But this was a rebellious message to Rome and to Pilate. Talk of God's kingdom would be seen as treasonous to the ruling authorities, so Jesus spoke in parables to the crowd— so that only those with eyes could see and only those with ears could hear (vv. 11-12). In other words, only those with receptive hearts will understand and follow.

► **What are some things that can get in the way of a heart understanding the good news of the gospel?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Work diligently the soil while you may. Break up your fallow with the plough. Cast away the stones from your field, and dig out the thorns. Be unwilling to have a "hard heart," such as makes the Word of God of no effect. Be unwilling to have a "thin layer of soil," in which the root of divine love can find no depth in which to enter. Be unwilling to "choke the good seed" by the cares and the lusts of this life, when it is being scattered for your good. When God is the sower and we are the ground, we are called to work to be good ground. —Augustine

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. Why should our family freely share the gospel with people regardless of our perception of them? What are some ways we can share the gospel together?
2. What takeaways can our family gain from Jesus' parable of the sower and the soils and its explanation?
3. What are some practical ways our family can use the lessons in the parable in our lives?
4. As a family, how can we help each other guard our hearts against things that interfere with our spiritual growth?

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Scripture

Matthew 18:21-35

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Christians are to forgive other Christians in the same manner they have been forgiven.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

Jesus' answer is somewhat difficult to understand. Some translations say "seventy-seven times," while others say "seventy times seven." Whichever translation you read, the point is the same. Jesus did not give a specific number of offenses after which we are no longer required to forgive. The number does not matter because Jesus taught that His followers are expected to forgive completely, without limits. Jesus' parable, which followed His response to Peter, teaches this point—Christians should keep on forgiving because of the magnitude of forgiveness that has been granted to us.

► **How would you define forgiveness? How does your definition align with what Jesus said in these verses?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

There is no such creature as an unforgiving Christian. That being doesn't exist. Christians forgive. We forgive because we have been transformed by the power of the gospel. —Douglas Sean O'Donnell

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. As a family, discuss what makes it difficult to sometimes forgive others.
2. What practical steps does our family need to take in light of Jesus' teaching in the parable of the unmerciful servant?
3. How can our family show mercy to those who hurt us instead of seeking revenge?
4. Discuss the importance of realizing how great our debt to God was, and how we could never repay it, so Jesus repaid it for us.

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Scripture

Luke 10:25-37

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus' compassion leads Christians to be compassionate toward others.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

Simple question, simple answer. "You want to inherit eternal life? Love God and love your neighbor." But that answer implies full devotion—a perfection of love for God and people that none of us, if we're honest, can possibly fulfill. Not surprisingly, the expert felt the sting of the law's condemnation, namely the law's exposure of his failure to love God and his neighbor as he ought. And so, he quickly responded with another question, one that he hoped would justify him.

► **What is the difference between doing acts of compassion and being a compassionate person?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

The question Jesus asks here is not about defining (or limiting) who our neighbor is ... It is about *being* a neighbor, even to those society would say we must avoid. —Stan Guthrie

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. As a family discuss this question: Why do you think the two religious leaders passed by the man in distress? What are some modern day examples of something similar happening?
2. What reasons does our family give when we want to "pass by on the other side" and not show compassion?
3. What are some practical ways our family can show compassion to people in need?
4. List two "excuses" our family can give up in order to show compassion this week.

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Scripture

Luke 15:11-32

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

God's grace is offered to those who repent of their sin and self-righteousness.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

The crucial moment in Jesus' story occurred as the son approached his hometown. Jesus said that the father saw his son while he was still a long way off. This implies that the boy was probably at the edge of town, ready to head down the main street (which was usually the road that almost everyone in the village lived on). The father had been watching diligently, hoping to catch a glimpse of his son.

- ▶ **Make a list of several characteristics communicated by the father's actions in this parable. How are these characteristics also true of God?**
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3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Everybody knows that the Christian gospel calls us away from the licentiousness of younger brotherhood, but few realize that it also condemns moralistic elder brotherhood. —Timothy Keller

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. In what ways does God's treatment of our family go beyond what we might hope for?
2. How is our family sometimes tempted to focus on the good deeds we do rather than our relationship with God?
3. Why is it important for our family to guard against the sin of the older brother just as much as guarding against the sin of the younger brother?
4. What are some common examples today of ways our family might waste God's good gifts?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Luke 18:9-14

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

God exalts the humble and humbles the exalted.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

The fact that the tax collector beat his chest shows just how deep his remorse was. His was a prayer for God's judgment to pass over him. It was a prayer for atonement, for the mercy of God delivered through God's atoning sacrifice. The Pharisee focused his attention on all of the things he had done for God. The tax collector knew his only hope was what God could do for him.

- ▶ **Notice the contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector. Take a few moments to read both descriptions and note the differences.**
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3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Our own righteousness, even if produced by God's grace, is not a sufficient foundation for vindication in God's holy presence. —John Piper

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. What are some ways our family can become more aware of our own need for grace and mercy?
2. As a family, how are we sometimes tempted to judge other people more harshly than we judge ourselves?
3. Go around the room, allowing each family member to answer this question: How does this story challenge you personally?
4. How can our family hold each other accountable in avoiding the trap of looking down on others?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Matthew 21:33-46

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Judgment comes on those who reject God's commands, God's warnings, and God's Son.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

If we were to place ourselves in this story, we would need to see ourselves as the wicked tenants. We are the ones who have rejected God and ignored His warnings. We are the ones who have turned on His only Son. The question now remains: On which side of this furious judgment of God will we be found? It is only in embracing God the Son and humbly trusting in Him that we find salvation. Instead of being the cornerstone that crushes us in judgment, Jesus becomes the cornerstone of our new life in Him, the cornerstone of the new people of God to whom we belong. The story of the wicked tenants is a parable of judgment, but its purpose is to bring us to repentance and faith in the Son.

- ▶ **What are the responsibilities that come with our privilege of being God's people? What kind of fruit are we to bear as Christians?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

[This parable's] purpose is to illustrate God's 'incomprehensible' concern for man, the lengths God will go to keep on his track and maintain contact with him despite his stubbornness and his blind delusion. —Helmut Thielicke

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. List some common warnings your family uses or hears. Why do we tend to think of warnings as a negative thing?
2. As a family, how could we use this parable to explain to both people who are religious and non-religious that our only hope is in knowing the Son, Jesus Christ?
3. What parts of this parable's warning apply to our family today?
4. How does this parable challenge our family in our efforts of sharing Christ with others?

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Scripture

John 2:1-12

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus' miracles reveal His divine authority and power.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

The need was there, and Mary plainly presented it to Jesus. What did Mary expect Jesus to do? We can't be entirely sure. Some speculate that adding Jesus and His disciples to the wedding feast may have overloaded the need for food and drink, causing the embarrassment. Some suggest that perhaps Jesus could have acted as a helper, going to purchase more wine. But Jesus' response to His mother shows that she knew He was capable of a supernatural response.

- ▶ **Imagine you were one of the servants at the wedding. How would you have responded to Jesus' command? His miracle?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

The Lord was invited and came to a wedding. Is it any wonder that he who came to that house for a wedding came to this world for a wedding? ... Therefore he has a bride here whom he has redeemed by his blood and to whom he has given the Holy Spirit as a pledge. —Augustine

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. Why is it sometimes difficult for our family to bring our personal needs before God?
2. What does this story teach us about Jesus' concern for our family, even in the small areas of life?
3. When has our family seen God reveal His glory outside the walls of our church? How were the observers changed?
4. How can God's work of salvation in the lives of our family be used to glorify God to those around us?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Matthew 14:13-21

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Real compassion leads to addressing both physical and spiritual needs in others.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

Before He ever provided the crowd with a meal, Jesus provided them something far more valuable—Himself. The bread from heaven in the exodus nourished God's people, but the Bread of Life satisfies forever (John 6:35-38). So, in His compassion, He healed their sick.

- ▶ **Jesus went away to be alone, but the crowds followed Him. He could have been frustrated or angry, but instead He showed compassion. Think of a time when you needed to be alone. What would your response be if a crowd had approached you with their needs?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Jesus did not come into the world mainly to give bread, but to be bread. He did not come to be an ever-ready bellhop for our bellies, but to be the all-satisfying bread for our souls. O, he cares about our physical lives in this age, but he cares 10 million times more about our eternal lives. —John Piper

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. What are some reasons our family might refuse to show compassion to others? Are any of these justified? Why or why not?
2. What are some circumstances for which our family has been tempted to blame God? What happened?
3. What does blaming God say about our understanding of who God is?
4. How does this story help our family to trust Jesus more in our daily lives?

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Scripture

Matthew 14:22-33

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus has control over all of life's storms.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

According to the Bible, there is no question that God sovereignly ordains trials in our lives at various points in order to reveal His character and nature to us in ways that we would never know apart from the storm (Rom. 8:28-30; Jas. 1:1-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). And it is in the middle of the storm that the presence of Christ becomes all the more real. Because Jesus is the great "I AM" and He is with us always, we can have courage and faith in the midst of our storms. But what if our faith falters?

- ▶ **When have you had to endure a struggle in your life that God did not immediately resolve? How were you challenged to grow in your faith through that struggle?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

If the sight of Jesus bowing his head into that ultimate storm [the cross] is burned into the core of your being, you will never say, 'God, don't you care?' And if you know that he did not abandon you in that ultimate storm, what makes you think he would abandon you in the much smaller storms you're experiencing right now? And, someday, of course, he will return and still all storms for eternity. —Timothy Keller

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. How does it encourage our family to know that Jesus walks on top of the raging storms of life?
2. How might this story challenge the way our family views current "storms" of life we're dealing with?
3. What can our family learn from Peter's mistake of taking his eyes off of Jesus during the storm?
4. What are some ways our family can show courage and faith in Jesus in the midst of our difficult life situations?
5. How can our family allow the storms of life to improve our prayer life rather than harm it?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Mark 2:1-12

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Faith in Jesus results in forgiveness of sins.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

In our day, it is imperative we preach the superiority of spiritual restoration over physical restoration. That is why Paul reminded the church (and us) that they are Jesus' ambassadors who lead others to Him and ask them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). It should be our main concern that sinners are aware of the fact that they need to be reconciled to God by placing their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:1-10).

► How does it affect you to know that Jesus was punished for you?

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. —C. S. Lewis

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. How does Jesus' compassion toward the multitudes challenge the way our family shows compassion to those nearest to us?
2. Allow each family member some time to answer this question: How as this story challenged you personally?
3. What are some ways our family can help others understand the priority of having our sin sickness healed, even over our desire for physical healing?
4. Who are some friends, neighbors, classmates, or other family members who don't know Jesus? How can we encourage and pray for them this week?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Mark 5:1-20

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

All followers of Christ have a mandate—to tell those who don't know God about what He has done for them. Jesus told him to go home to his own people and tell them what happened to him. This is the power of a personal testimony. While God does sometimes use seminary-trained preachers who proclaim the Word of God to lead people to faith in Christ, the Great Commission is not reserved for preachers alone. Rather, the Great Commission is for ordinary Christians to take the good news of Jesus to new people and places.

► **What are some ways we can carry out our mission of sharing what Jesus has done for us both locally and globally?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Unbelief about the existence and personality of Satan has often proved the first step to unbelief about God. —J. C. Ryle

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. What are some radical changes we've seen in the lives of people who trust in Jesus, particularly in our family?
2. What are some ways each member of our family has changed since becoming a follower of Jesus?
3. How does this session challenge our faith as a family?
4. List a few ways your family can work to resist the Devil's schemes?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

Mark 5:21-43

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus' power overcomes the shame of impurity and curse of death.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

First, we trust Jesus because of His power. Death is no match for the power of Christ—it does not get the final word. Why else do we pray to the Lord on behalf of those who are on their deathbeds? Because that's what we are supposed to do? No. We seek the face of God because we are sure of His sovereign ability to heal.

Second, we trust Jesus because of His presence. Jesus was with Jairus every step of the way, giving you and I an example of His promise that He will never leave us or forsake us (Josh. 1:5). No matter what you are facing today, by faith, take hold of the promise that Jesus is with you.

- ▶ **Take a moment to list several signs in the story that the characters are desperate. What other actions do you associate with desperation?**

3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

Christ has not changed since the day when this woman was healed. He is still generous and still powerful to save.

—J. C. Ryle

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. What are some ways our family is currently “waiting” on God?
2. Why is it sometimes so difficult to wait on God? What does this reveal about our family's heart toward God's timing in our lives?
3. How can this story change the way our family views sickness, death, and loss in our own lives?
4. Discuss what this story shows us about Jesus love and compassion for our family?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.

Scripture

John 11:1-7,17-44

1. Opening Statement

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

Jesus grieved over death and overturned its power.

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

2. Thought From the Study

Did Lazarus' family want Jesus to know about his sickness and do something about it right then? Absolutely. However, Jesus had a different plan. Jesus told His followers Lazarus' sickness wouldn't end in death, and then He even stayed where He was for two more days.

- ▶ **How might complete trust in God have helped Mary and Martha as they faced their brother's death? How might it help you as you face losses?**
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3. Quote for Discussion

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

God wept, in order that God might do, with tears and compassion, what human beings do on behalf of their fellow human beings. —Potamius

4. Conversation Questions

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. Imagine our family is grieving a loss, just like Mary and Martha grieved their brother, Lazarus. How would we have responded to Jesus' delay?
2. Think back to a time when our family experienced a devastating loss. How did we respond? How could we respond in faith in the future?
3. As a family, discuss what it means to trust?
4. What are some practical ways our family can grieve with those who are hurting?