

# Encounter

---

*Student Handouts*

**INTERVARSITY**  
**CHAPTER FOCUS WEEK**

---

**GROWING**  
**DISCIPLES**  
**IN LIKE & WITH CHRIST**

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Track Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Purpose Statement .....	3
<b>Retreat of Silence Guide .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Looking Back: .....	4
Looking at the Bible .....	5
Acts 17:19-29.....	5
Questions to Reflect on: .....	5
Matthew 7:7-11 .....	6
Questions to Reflect on: .....	6
Luke 19:1-9.....	7
Questions.....	8
Prayer.....	8
<b>The Teleological Argument.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Cosmological Argument.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Mental Argument .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Moral Argument .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Prophetic Argument.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Christological Argument.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The Embarrassing Material Argument.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Monday Morning Reflection Questions .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Luke 5:1-11 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Monday Morning Quiet Time .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Reflection Questions: .....	21
<b>Genesis 3.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Monday Afternoon Reflection Questions.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Bread of Life .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Light of the World.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>The True Vine .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Good Shepherd.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Stories of Jesus.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>John 3:1-18.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Wednesday Morning Quiet Time.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Reflection Questions: .....	35
<b>Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Reflections on the Cross .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Thursday Morning Quiet Time.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>John 15:5-8.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Matthew 18:21-35 .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Questions to consider: .....	43
<b>1 Corinthians 12:12-31 .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Recommendations for Further Reading and Study.....</b>	<b>44</b>
InterVarsity Press Books .....	44
Non-IVP Books .....	44
Articles/Websites .....	44

# Track Overview

---

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this track is to help students encounter Jesus and gain a fresh understanding of who He is and what it means to follow Him. As we share about the story of God and our world, we will give students a variety of opportunities to connect with and hear from Jesus including Scripture study, spiritual disciplines such as listening prayer, testimonies, art, and more. We will also work to paint a picture of life as a follower of Jesus and give a compelling invitation to surrender fully to His lordship. No matter where students are at coming in, our hope is that this track helps them come to know Jesus and experience His love, grace, and truth on a much deeper level and take steps forward in their own spiritual journey. (From a skeptic to a seeker, from a seeker to a follower, from a follower to a fully-surrendered disciple who is actively involved in His mission)

# Retreat of Silence Guide

---

What is a retreat of silence? Basically, it is when you are completely silent for a few hours and just try to be alone. We live in such a busy world that it can be good to take time to stop, rest, and reflect. And it is an excellent time to seek God. This is a guide for your time to help you process and investigate further. No matter where you are at on your own spiritual journey, we hope this might be a refreshing time and an opportunity to read Scripture, pray, and connect with God.

## Looking Back:

Sometimes we get so busy, that we never take time to stop and reflect on what has gone on in our life. Take the next few minutes to think about these questions and reflect on the past year.

1. How do you feel like the past year has gone?
2. Where have you experienced joy in the past year?
3. Where have you experienced hurt or frustration in the past year?
4. Why did you decide to come here to CFW?
5. Where would you say you are at on your spiritual journey?
6. What are some important moments from your spiritual journey that have influenced what you think and believe?

## Looking at the Bible

Now, take some time to read these three passages of Scripture. The first passage is from the book of Acts, which tells us about what happened after Jesus left the earth...it tells us the story of how Christianity began. In this passage, a man named Paul, who was a Christian who went around starting churches, was in Athens trying to teach people about Jesus. So the people brought Paul to a place called the Aeropagus, which was basically a court/cultural center in the city, to explain what he was teaching.

### Acts 17:19-29

<sup>19</sup>They brought Paul before a council called the Areopagus, and said, "Tell us what your new teaching is all about. <sup>20</sup>We have heard you say some strange things, and we want to know what you mean." <sup>21</sup>More than anything else the people of Athens and the foreigners living there loved to hear and to talk about anything new. <sup>22</sup>So Paul stood up in front of the council and said:

People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>As I was going through your city and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar with the words, "To an Unknown God." You worship this God, but you don't really know him. So I want to tell you about him. <sup>24</sup>This God made the world and everything in it. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and he doesn't live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup>He doesn't need help from anyone. He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people. <sup>26</sup>From one person God made all nations who live on earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be.

<sup>27</sup>God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He isn't far from any of us, <sup>28</sup>and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. "We are his children," just as some of your poets have said. <sup>29</sup>Since we are God's children, we must not think that he is like an idol made out of gold or silver or stone. He isn't like anything that humans have thought up and made.

### Questions to Reflect on:

1. What did Paul tell the people of Athens about God?
2. Paul found that the people had an altar for an unknown God in Athens. He then tried to tell them that this unknown god they worship can actually be known, and he teaches them more about Him and that God isn't far from them...He wants humans to seek Him and find Him. So we *can* know Him. What do you think about that? Do you think we can know God?
3. Have you ever felt like God was near you? Why? What was that experience like?

This next passage is from the book of Matthew, which is about the life of Jesus, and was a part of one of his most famous sermons. In this sermon, he taught about how we are supposed to treat one another, and how to obey and interact with God. So these are Jesus' words to the crowd that was listening.

### Matthew 7:7-11

<sup>7</sup>Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you.<sup>8</sup>Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who searches will find. And the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. <sup>9</sup>Would any of you give your hungry child a stone, if the child asked for some bread? <sup>10</sup>Would you give your child a snake if the child asked for a fish? <sup>11</sup>As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.

#### Questions to Reflect on:

1. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach in this passage about God?
2. Have you ever asked God for anything? Why or why not? And if so, what happened as a result?
3. In the first passage, Paul said that God is not far from us and wants us to search for Him, and then in the second passage, we see Jesus encourage people to search for God and ask for His help. He says that God will help us find what we are looking for and open the door for us. Have you ever "searched" for God? How did that go?

This final passage is from the book of Luke, and tells us about a time when Jesus interacted with a man named Zacchaeus.

### Luke 19:1-9

**19** Jesus was going through Jericho, <sup>2</sup>where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. <sup>3-4</sup> Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.

<sup>5</sup>When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today." <sup>6</sup>Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner<sup>(a)</sup>! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."

<sup>8</sup>Later that day<sup>(b)</sup> Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated."

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you and your family have been saved<sup>(c)</sup>, because you are a true son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost."

1. Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government. Most people hated them and thought they were traitors, and many actually stole money from the people. They were in the lowest level of society.
2. That is, after spending time with Jesus. He probably made the decision to give back what he stole after Jesus taught him and showed him His love.
3. Zacchaeus was not saved because he agreed to give away his property to the poor or pay back the people he cheated. That was a result of being saved. He was saved after spending time with Jesus, seeing who He really was, and believing in Him. (His actions did not lead to God loving him and saving him. God loved him first and saved him, even though Zacchaeus didn't deserve it, and his actions were a result of that incredible love.)

### Questions

1. What kind of man was Zacchaeus?
2. Do you think Zacchaeus expected Jesus to talk with him or spend time with Him? Why or why not?
3. If you were Zacchaeus, how would you have felt when Jesus stopped to talk just to you (in front of a whole crowd)?
4. After spending time with Jesus, Zacchaeus' life was changed. What do you think he thought about Jesus after that day?

Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus and had simply hoped to see Him as He walked by. But Jesus stopped to talk with him and spend time with him. Instead of Zacchaeus having to find Jesus, Jesus found him. As you explore issues of faith and seek an encounter with Jesus, remember that He wants to help you...He wants to show you that He is real and help you know him more. So to finish your retreat of silence, try praying and asking Jesus to show you more about who He is!

### Prayer

Prayer is just talking to God. It is nothing fancy or special! Try spending some time praying right now...even if you aren't sure how you feel about God, there is nothing to lose ☺. Ask Him to help you see if He is real and show you more about who He is!



# The Teleological Argument

---

The classical formulation of this argument was by William Paley (1743-1805). In his *Natural Theology*, he used this analogy: imagine you were walking along the beach and found a working, ticking watch on the ground. You *could* deduct that it exists because of a chance convergence of natural forces: wind, rain, heat, volcanic action, etc., but that seems much less credible than the conclusion that an intelligent watchmaker must have built it. By the same token, a universe that bears intricate evidence of design implies a designer.

Major criticism was formulated by the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-76). Granted the vastness of the universe plus infinite time, probability alone could produce a universe such as the one we inhabit. Hume also noted that even if we grant the success of the argument, such a being is a long way from the personal God of Christianity. The argument has also to cope with the fact of dysteleology, i.e. processes in the universe which appear relatively purposeless as far as present knowledge is concerned.

Its numerous defenders, however, do not believe the argument can be so easily side-stepped, and certainly many people, when meeting design in the universe at close quarters (say, in the wonder of a newborn baby, or in the staggering complexity of the rod and cone cells of the human eye), find Hume's objections somewhat academic. Most respond to Hume's criticism using 'the fine-tuning argument'. This notes the way in which the modern scientific community has been astonished by the discovery of how complex and sensitive a balance of initial conditions had to be given in the 'big bang' for the universe to permit the origin and evolution of intelligent life on earth. For example, Stephen Hawking has estimated that if the rate of the universe's expansion one second after the big bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have re-collapsed into a hot fireball. British physicist P.C.W. Davies has calculated the odds against the initial conditions being suitable for stars to be able to form (without which planets, including our own, could not exist) as one followed by a thousand billion billion zeroes, at least. There are around fifty such quantities and constants which must be fine-tuned in this way to permit life. Astronomer Hugh Ross estimates that the probability of all fifty of the qualifications being met is around one chance in one hundred billion trillion. So, by having a planet on which life can form, we must admit that we beat the odds in a statistically improbable way, or assume that there is a Being who carefully designed the universe in such a way to meet the requirements necessary for life.

# The Cosmological Argument

---

This argument, which was developed by medieval Islamic, Jewish, and Christian thinkers, was classically formulated by Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74). It draws attention to the fact that everything that exists has an explanation of its existence, an efficient cause, and asserts that the existence of the world requires explanation in terms of an adequate cause, or in other words, an infinite, transcendent being, God. A significant theistic argument in the cosmological area is the Kalam Cosmological Argument. This was first developed by Arabic philosophers in the late Middle Ages, hence the title *kalam*, which denotes Arabic philosophy. The argument has three steps: (1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause. (2) The universe began to exist. (3) Therefore the universe has a cause. The first premise is intuitively obvious to the vast majority of those who seriously consider it. The second premise can be defended philosophically by showing the impossibility of an infinite number of things actually existing. But additionally it has gained major scientific endorsement in our time by the many confirmations of the 'big bang' model of the emergence of the universe. 'It can be confidently said that no cosmogonic model has been as repeatedly verified in its predictions, or as concordant with empirical discoveries and as philosophically coherent, as the Standard Big Bang model' (William Lane Craig).

The same conclusion, of the universe having had a beginning in time, finds another, possibly even more powerful, scientific support in the second law of thermodynamics, which states that in any closed system, unless energy is constantly being fed into the system, it will always tend to run down and finally quit. Some atheistic views argue that the universe has always existed, yet they also hold that it is a closed system as previously described. But if there was no act of creation 'in the beginning', then the universe has already existed for an infinite amount of time, which means it SHOULD have come to a state of equilibrium and suffered 'heat death'. Obviously, that has not happened. 'Cosmologist can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape; they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning' (Alexander Vilenkin). Granted that beginning, even a prominent atheist, J.L. Mackie, concedes that the notion of the universe coming into existence out of 'nothing at all' (the necessary implication of a denial of God) is hard to accept, as indeed it most surely is. While it may seem hard to comprehend an eternal God creating the universe as we know it, it seems equally incomprehensible that it simply began out of nothing, with no cause at all. Both beliefs require a level of faith!

## The Mental Argument

---

This argues that pure materialism is unable to explain the capacity of the mind to move logically from premises to conclusions; only the existence of a transcendent Mind explains the effective operation of our human intelligence. More generally, physicalism, the view that matter/energy is all that exists, has to confront the reality of non-physical entities such as numbers, values, propositions, laws of logic, etc. It also has difficulty with the rationality implicit in all our experience of the physical world; life, and its capacity for autonomous action; consciousness, the capacity for awareness; conceptual thought, the power for articulating and understanding meaningful symbols such as are embedded in language. Physicalism also fails to account for the non-identity of brain and mental phenomena, the fact of private access- our ability to know our own thoughts with a directness and certainty which eludes any brain surgeon examining brain stimuli and, as a number of philosophers have argued effectively, it cannot account for the sense of 'I' as the organizing and conscious center of all experiencing. All of these phenomena, however, are explainable in terms of an infinite, eternal Mind. Roy Varghese asks us to consider a marble table. "Do you think that, given a trillion years, or infinite time, this table could suddenly or gradually become conscious, aware of its surroundings, aware of its identity the way you are?" He answers, "It is simply inconceivable...and what holds for the table holds for all the other matter in the universe." As Calvin observed, "No man can survey without directly turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the abilities which we possess cannot possibly come from ourselves."

1

# The Moral Argument

---

The moral argument begins with the fact that all people recognize some moral code (that some things are right, and some things are wrong). Every time we argue over right and wrong, we appeal to a higher law that we assume everyone is aware of, holds to, and is not free to arbitrarily change. Right and wrong imply a higher standard or law, and law requires a lawgiver. Because the Moral Law transcends humanity, this universal law requires a universal lawgiver. This, it is argued, is God.

In support of the moral argument, we see that even the most remote tribes who have been cut off from the rest of civilization observe a moral code similar to other cultures. Although differences certainly exist in civil matters, virtues like bravery and loyalty and vices like greed and cowardice are universal. No known society naturally or generally embraces sexual abuse, especially of infants, or torture or justifies moral infamy such as the Holocaust. If man were responsible for creating this moral code, it is assumed it would differ as much as every other thing that man has invented. Further, it is not simply a record of what mankind does—rarely do people ever live up to their own moral code. It seems to be a result of a universal, inner sense of how men and women ‘ought’ to live.<sup>2</sup>

To put it negatively, proponents of the moral argument hold that atheism provides no basis for morality. If we are only the result of natural evolution (apart from any influence of a transcendent being), what basis do we have to declare some actions ‘right’ and others ‘wrong’? While this does not disprove atheism by itself, if the logical outworking of a belief system fails to account for what we instinctively know to be true, it should make one reconsider.

# The Prophetic Argument

---

This argument draws attention to the multiple ways in which the circumstances of the life and mission of Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies which were written many centuries before about the Messiah. The sheer manner and number of these fulfillments defies explanation other than God's action in the whole biblical process of messianic anticipation and fulfillment. Louis Lapide, a highly reputed Jewish scholar, identifies forty-eight messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. Lapide was so impressed by this 'prophetic argument' that it brought him to trust in Jesus as his Messiah and he now pastors a church. Opponents of this argument hold that it would be easy to have altered the texts of the Old Testament prophecies after Jesus came to make them *appear* to be referring to him, but the Dead Sea Scrolls (which contain sections of the Old Testament that match up with current translations) have been dated to 150 years BCE, and therefore were written before Jesus was born. The odds against all this prophetic material being fulfilled, to the letter in many cases, by one human being, hundreds of years later are phenomenal... "vanishingly small".<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Article from *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* by Bruce Milne

## The Christological Argument

---

This approach appeals to the canons of historical probability to show that Jesus Christ can be satisfactorily accounted for only if we assume God's presence and activity in him. Its advocates cite his unimpeachable personal character, his astonishing claims for himself and his mission, his miracles, and especially the evidence for his resurrection. In this latter case, attention is particularly drawn to the overwhelming difficulty in giving any other, more adequate explanation for the emergence of the Christian church so hard upon the heels of Jesus humiliating death. (Plus, when it comes to the resurrection, almost all scholars who have studied the resurrection of Jesus, whether they are Christian or non-Christian assent to the following truths: 1) The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion. 2) Jesus' disciples had experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ. 3) As a result of the preaching of these disciples, which had the resurrection at its center, the Christian church was established and grew. They assent to these truths because of both biblical and extra-biblical evidence. And if these are true, it's hard to find an adequate explanation other than the actual resurrection of Jesus.) One might also note the incredible way that Christianity has spread across the globe to hundreds and hundreds of incredibly different people groups and cultures, whereas other religions have tended to stay within similar ethnic groups.

This argument has to face critical questions concerning the historical reliability of the New Testament text, and also the philosophical difficulties raised by alleged miracles. These questions, however, have all been repeatedly responded to in the recent period and today many accredited biblical scholars stand with popular apologists in claiming that all of these objections can be satisfactorily answered, and that purely historical considerations drive us to the brink of faith.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Article from *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* by Bruce Milne

## The Embarrassing Material Argument

---

There are some who hold that the stories found in the Bible are made up and that the religion of Christianity is based on a massive conspiracy. Proponents of the embarrassing material argument ask this question: if the disciples and members of the early Christian church made all these stories up, why would they have included so many elements that were embarrassing and might cause them to lose credibility? If, instead of reporting actual events, they were making up myths to spread, couldn't they have chosen to exclude certain elements that made them look foolish or inconceivable? In his book, Faith is Like Skydiving, Rick Mattson puts it this way:

"It is difficult to imagine the followers of Jesus inventing stories about him that were essentially counterproductive to their overall message. If they wished to commend the message of salvation to both Jews (at first) and Gentiles (later), why include material that would be perceived as damaging to the credibility of Jesus? But that's just what they did. A small sampling would include the people of Jesus' hometown rejecting him and limiting his ministry of miracles (Mark 6:3-6), his family thinking him out of his mind" (Mark 3:21), his brothers not believing in him (John 7:5) and his crucifixion at the hands of Israel's sworn enemy, Rome (John 19:16)- hardly a fitting death for the long-awaited Messiah. None of this material (and much else that could be cited) makes sense as a fabrication, but only as facts of the matter.

Another category of detrimental material involves the disciples of Jesus- those who first propagated the stories about him. In the Gospel accounts they come off as foolish and obstinate. They are scolded for their lack of faith (Mark 4:40) and for fighting among themselves over who is greatest (Luke 9:46); Peter is called "Satan" for trying to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die (Mark 8:33); they fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46); Peter promises to lay down his life for Jesus (John 13:37) only to deny him three times (John 18:17-27); the first witness and reporters of the empty tomb are not the slow-minded apostles but women (Matthew 28:1-10), whose testimony was generally not trusted in the ancient world.

But perhaps, the skeptic thinks, the Gospel writers should be seen as conspirators and more clever than we think. Perhaps they deliberately created flaws in the characters in order to make them appear more well-rounded and authentic. Perhaps the disciples were willing to appear foolish in the Gospel stories in order to get their evangelistic message across. But I say it stretches the limits of credulity to suppose that a first-century band of fishermen and tax collectors with little formal education could have orchestrated a scheme so thoroughly ingenious as this- and made the world believe it."

## Monday Morning Reflection Questions

---

1. What stood out to you during the apologetics discussion? Which arguments did you find compelling?
2. What stood out to you during the testimony videos? What parts of their stories did you find compelling?
3. Do you tend to be motivated by your head or your heart? Why do you think that?
4. Why did you choose to take this track at CFW? What makes you want to encounter Jesus?
5. What are your biggest questions about encountering Jesus at this point?



## Luke 5:1-11

---

**5** Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, **2** he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." **5** Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." **6** When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. **7** So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. **8** But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" **9** For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; **10** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." **11** When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## Monday Morning Quiet Time

---

When we study Scripture together, we try and dissect a passage and look at everything in it in order to figure out the main truth God is trying to communicate. It is a helpful way to learn more of God's truth and hear His voice. But it is not the only way to read Scripture!

We understand what wind is by feeling it blow in our face. We know what snow is like when we make a snowball or watch snowflakes collect on our mittens. This sort of knowing transcends the intellect; it is direct, sensate, and experiential. Devotional reading, or *lectio divina*, invites us into this kind of knowing. It is the kind of knowing for which Paul prayed when he said,

"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to *know this love that surpasses knowledge* – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:17-19, emphasis added)

The first 1,500 years of church history were characterized by the practice of *lectio divina*. Since many people were illiterate and many that could read didn't have Bibles, *lectio divina* offered a way of attending to Scripture as it was read in church, with an ear to hearing a word from God. Some brief and memorable word or phrase became bread for the soul throughout the week. Devotional reading is not an exercise in mentally critiquing or exegeting the text. It exists to further divine companionship. *Lectio divina* invites us into God's presence to listen for his particular, loving word *to me* at this particular moment in time. In *lectio* one listens to the word as you read the text, preferably aloud.

Devotional reading of Scripture is rooted in the assurance that every part of the biblical story – letters, parables, Gospels, Prophets, history – is inspired and can give voice to God's particular word to us.

*(taken from the Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun)*

For your quiet time, use Psalm 27, a poem written by David, one of the most famous kings of ancient Israel, on the next page and follow the instructions below.

- 1. Silence – quiet preparation of the heart.** Come into God's presence, slow down, relax, and intentionally release the chaos and noise in your mind to him. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and sit for a minute or two in silence.
- 2. Read the word.** Read Psalm 27 slowly, taking time to pause between each line, considering the invitation that reading Scripture is a chance to encounter God and hear his voice. Allow the words to resonate and sink in to your heart. As you read, listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you or catches your attention. When it does, pause and repeat the word or phrase to yourself, meditating on it. This is a word that is meant for you. Be open to what God might be trying to speak to you through this word.
- 3. Meditate.** How is your life touched by this word? Once you have heard the word that is meant for you, read the passage again, and listen for the way this passage connects with your life. Ask, how might God be trying to speak to me or show me something through this word? Allow several moments of silence following this reading, and explore thoughts, perceptions and sensory impressions. What might this word mean for you?
- 4. Respond.** Read the Scripture a third time. Now is the moment to enter into a personal dialogue with God. There is no right or wrong way to do this. The important thing is to respond truthfully and authentically. What feelings has the text aroused in you? What might he be trying to invite you to through this text? Become aware of where you feel God's presence in this process. Talk to God about these feelings.
- 5. Rest.** Rest in the presence of God. Allow some time for the word to sink deeply into your soul. Then to close, ask God to help you to respond to His word appropriately.

Psalm 27

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me  
to eat up my flesh,  
my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his  
tent;  
he will lift me high upon a rock.

6 And now my head shall be lifted up  
above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud;  
be gracious to me and answer me!

8 You have said, "Seek my face."  
My heart says to you,  
"Your face, Lord, do I seek."

9 Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.  
Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!

10 For my father and my mother have  
forsaken me,  
but the Lord will take me in.

11 Teach me your way, O Lord,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

12 Give me not up to the will of my  
adversaries;  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they breathe out violence.

13 I believe that I shall look upon the  
goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living!

14 Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take  
courage;  
wait for the Lord!

Reflection Questions:

1. What was this experience like for you?
2. What stood out to you in the passage? Did you sense God's voice at all?
3. What do you think about the idea of encountering God? Have you experienced anything like it before?
4. What do you think are some barriers to you being able to encounter Jesus? (Fear, doubt, confusion, lack of belief, distractions, lack of desire?)

## Genesis 3

---

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" **2** The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" **4** "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. **5** "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. **8** Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" **10** He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." **11** And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" **12** The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." **13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." **14** So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, 'Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush[b] your head, and you will strike his heel.'" **16** To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." **17** To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. **18** It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. **19** By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'" **20** Adam[c] named his wife Eve,[d] because she would become the mother of all the living. **21** The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. **22** And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." **23** So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. **24** After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

## Monday Afternoon Reflection Questions

---

1. Where have you experienced brokenness in the world?
2. Where have you experienced brokenness in your own life?
3. How have you responded to these situations?
4. What might God have to say about these situations?

## Bread of Life

---

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." – Jesus (John 6:35)

Take a minute to reflect on these questions:

- What stands out to you about Jesus' statement? Why?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this statement?
- How does this claim by Jesus make you feel?
- What do you hunger or thirst for in life? What are your desires?
- How do you try to satisfy those desires?
- How might Jesus fulfill your hunger?

Many times in life we try to satisfy our hungers and thirsts in life by many different things in this world: relationships with a friend or significant other, academic success, fame, money, substance abuse, etc. However, it feels like none of these can ultimately give us the spiritual fulfillment that we desire. Jesus says that he has the power to give us the fulfillment for which we are searching.

**Prayer:** Think again about the ways you have been trying to satisfy your spiritual hunger and thirst. If you feel ready, say a prayer to Jesus to give up those things. Imagine yourself holding them in your hands and giving them to him. Tell him that you want to be filled with his "Bread of Life." If you said this prayer, take a piece of the bread and eat it, to symbolize taking Jesus as the "Bread of Life."



# Light of the World

---

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." –Jesus (John 8:12)

Take a minute to reflect on these questions:

- What stands out to you about Jesus' statement? Why?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this statement?
- How does this claim by Jesus make you feel?
- Where have/do you experience darkness or hopelessness in life?
- How might Jesus be able to be a light in that situation?

We saw in yesterday's session that the world is in a state of darkness (or brokenness) because of the rebellion of humans against God. Our relationship with God was damaged but God sent Jesus to be the light in our dark world, to bring healing and restoration.

In the Old Testament we see that light often refers to God's presence. We see here that Jesus is claiming to be the presence of God with us here in the world.

**Prayer:** Take a minute to think again about the areas where you are experiencing darkness. Invite Jesus' presence into that situation. Let him be your "light of life". As you do this, light a candle to symbolize inviting God's presence into the darkness you're experiencing.

## The True Vine

---

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" –Jesus (John 15:4-5)

Look at the poster and take a minute to reflect on Jesus' words. Now reflect on these questions:

- What stands out to you about Jesus' statement? Why?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this statement?
- How does this claim by Jesus make you feel?
- What might it look like for you to remain in Jesus?
- If we remain in Jesus we will bear much fruit, what would it look like for you to bear fruit in your life?

When we remain in Jesus he is the source and center of our life. When we do this we share life with God and we naturally do things out of love towards him. We bear much fruit.

**Prayer:** If you are comfortable, share your thoughts with Jesus. Ask him how your life might look differently if you were to remain in him fully and completely.

# The Good Shepherd

---

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep." –Jesus (John 10:14)

Take a moment to reflect on these questions:

- What stands out to you about Jesus' statement? Why?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this statement?
- How does this claim by Jesus make you feel?
- Is it comforting to know that Jesus cares so much for his sheep?

Jesus is the *good* shepherd because he gave his life for us. Jesus commits the ultimate act of love by sacrificing his life so that we might have life through a relationship with him.

**Prayer:** Share your thoughts with Jesus. What would it look like if you were under Jesus' care and protection?

## Stories of Jesus

---

The poster in front of you shows pictures of various stories of Jesus interacting with different people. As you look at the poster, which image stands out to you? Why?

Look at “The Story Project: Map” handout and find the description of the image that stood out to you.

Take some time to read about the other stories included on the poster. Think about these questions:

- What do you learn about Jesus from the different stories?
- Which story do you connect with the most? Why?
- How might Jesus transform your life as he did for the person in the story?

**Prayer:** If you are comfortable, share what you are feeling with Jesus. Bring your brokenness before him whether its: loneliness, depression, fear, doubt, racism, sickness, failure, rejection, addiction, etc. Ask Jesus to heal this broken area of your life as he did with the characters in the story.

**#thestoryproject** - Read this "map" familiarize yourself with the stories. Give yourself 10-15 min, and enjoy!

- Loneliness    ◆ Sickness / Loss  
● Depression    ◆ Failure  
■ Fear & Doubt    ★ Rejection  
■ Racism    ✕ Addiction

Samaritan woman | John 4:1-42 ● ■ ◆ ★ ✨

**The Raising of Lazarus!**  
**John 11:1-44** ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
 - Lazarus dies, and Jesus goes to weep and mourn with Lazarus's sisters. However, it does not end there, but Jesus raises Lazarus back to life. What was "dead and lifeless" is "brought back to life."



**Peter Walking on Water | Matt 14:22-33** ◆

- Peter takes a bold step when his boat meets Jesus walking across the water. He's afraid, but he wants to take that scary step of faith, and he starts to walk. Because of his fear & doubt, he starts to fall but Jesus catches him. This images shows Jesus and Peter dancing on water. Peter goes from "fearful" to "bold risk and faith".

Leper | Luke 5:12-15

- - A man's disease kept him away from him). When Jesus doesn't cringe but heals him. He is able and unlovable" to be able and able to rejoin society and being healed by God.
- ◆
- ★

**The Blind Man | John 9:1-41** ◆ ● ★

- A lonely man born blind is able to see when Jesus takes mud (made from his spit and some dirt) and places it on his eyes and heals him. He goes from being rejected by society and "living in the dark" to "seeing light", both literally and also spiritually.

**Peter Walking on Water** | Matt 14:22-33

- Peter takes a bold step when his boat meets Jesus walking across the water. He's afraid, but he wants to take that scary step of faith, and he starts to walk. Because of his fear & doubt, he starts to fall but Jesus catches him. This images shows Jesus and Peter dancing on water. Peter goes from "fearful" to "bold risk and faith".

## John 3:1-18

---

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." <sup>4</sup>"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup>You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup>"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. <sup>10</sup>"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup>I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.



## Wednesday Morning Quiet Time

---

For this quiet time, you will read John 18 and 19, which describe Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. It is considerably longer than other passages we've looked at this week, so try and view it as more of a story to read than a passage to dissect and study. (If you are more of an audio learner, you can use a Bible app like YouVersion on your phone that will read the text aloud to you.) As you read the passage, imagine what it would be like to be present in the story. Pay attention to your emotions and reactions to what you read. Enter into the story and let your imagination lead you.

Before you start, pray and invite Jesus to help you encounter Him through this story.

**John 18:1** After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. **2** Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. **4** Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" **5** They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. **6** When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. **7** Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." **8** Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." **9** This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." **10** Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. **11** Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" **12** So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. **13** First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

**15** Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, **16** but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. **17** The

woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." **18** Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

**19** Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.

**20** Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. **21** Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." **22** When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" **23** Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" **24** Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. **25** Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." **26** One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" **27** Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

**28** Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. **29** So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" **30** They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." **31** Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." **32** (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

**33** Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" **34** Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" **35** Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" **36** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." **37** Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." **38** Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. **39** But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do



you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" **40** They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

**19:1** Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. **2** And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. **3** They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. **4** Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." **5** So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" **6** When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." **7** The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." **8** Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. **9** He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. **10** Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" **11** Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." **12** From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

**13** When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. **14** Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" **15** They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." **16** Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; **17** and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. **18** There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. **19** Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." **20** Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. **21** Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" **22** Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." **23** When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. **24** So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

**25** And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." **27** Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**28** After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." **29** A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. **30** When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**31** Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. **32** Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. **33** But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. **34** Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. **35** (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) **36** These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." **37** And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

**38** After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. **39** Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. **40** They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. **41** Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. **42** And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection Questions:

1. What did you notice about Jesus throughout the passage?
2. What did you notice about others (disciples, Pilate, High priest, etc) throughout the passage?
3. What emotions did you feel as you read the story of Jesus' death?
4. Why do you think Jesus never seemed to fight back when he was arrested or when he was being tried?
5. Who did you connect with most in the story?

## Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

---

**13** See, my servant shall prosper;  
he shall be exalted and lifted up,  
and shall be very high.

**14** Just as there were many who were  
astonished at him—so marred was his  
appearance,  
beyond human semblance, and his form  
beyond that of mortals—

**15** so he shall startle many nations;  
kings shall shut their mouths because of  
him;  
for that which had not been told them they  
shall see,  
and that which they had not heard they  
shall contemplate.

**53** Who has believed what we have heard?  
And to whom has the arm of the Lord  
been revealed?

**2** For he grew up before him like a young  
plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should  
look at him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should  
desire him.

**3** He was despised and rejected by others;  
a man of suffering and acquainted with  
infirmity;  
and as one from whom others hide their  
faces[d]  
he was despised, and we held him of no  
account.

**4** Surely he has borne our infirmities  
and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted.

**7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is  
silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.  
stricken for the transgression of my  
people.

**8** By a perversion of justice he was taken  
away.  
Who could have imagined his future?  
For he was cut off from the land of the  
living,  
stricken for the transgression of my  
people.

**9** They made his grave with the wicked  
and his tomb with the rich,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

**10** Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush  
him with pain.  
When you make his life an offering for sin,  
he shall see his offspring, and shall  
prolong his days;  
through him the will of the Lord shall  
prosper.

**11** Out of his anguish he shall see light;  
he shall find satisfaction through his  
knowledge.  
The righteous one, my servant, shall  
make many righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

**12** Therefore I will allot him a portion with  
the great,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the  
strong;

**5** But he was wounded for our  
transgressions,  
    crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us  
whole,  
    and by his bruises we are healed.

**6** All we like sheep have gone astray;  
    we have all turned to our own way,  
and the Lord has laid on him  
    the iniquity of us all.

because he poured out himself to death,  
    and was numbered with the  
transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
    and made intercession for the  
transgressors.

## Reflections on the Cross

---

“He was pierced for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities,  
The punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
And by his wounds we are healed.”  
Isaiah 53:5

1. In Jesus’ story of the two sons, we see that our sin is a result of a flawed view of God. We disobey because we don’t see God as He truly is. And that disobedience can play out in many different ways. How have you acted in disobedience and harmed other people? (Take a moment and ask God to bring things to mind.)
2. How have you acted in disobedience and harmed yourself?
3. How have you acted in disobedience towards God specifically?
4. Consider your answers to the questions above and the passages from Scripture we have looked at this morning. How do you respond to the idea that Jesus died for YOUR sin?
5. What emotions do you feel as you reflect on Jesus’ death and your own sin? How might Jesus’ death bring healing into your life?

Take a moment in silence and ask God to fully open your eyes to your own sin. Ask Him to help you see it as it truly is. Then, once you feel ready, take a notecard and write out a confession of your sin that acknowledges the ways you have acted selfishly and harmed others and yourself.

Once it is written, offer the card to God in a prayer of confession. Then, take the card and place it on the cross at the front of the room as a symbolic act to remind yourself of how Jesus died to pay the punishment for this sin on the cross. Afterwards, meditate on the prayer of confession on the next page.

## Prayer of Confession

Lord, I have betrayed you  
By choosing my own way.

I have denied you  
By fearing to choose yours.

And I have scorned you  
By not taking your death seriously.

Of selfishness, I am guilty.  
Of pride, I am guilty.  
Of lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy,  
idolatry, and many other sins, I am guilty

Lord, I am lost.  
Let your forgiveness find me.

Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name, what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment. Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

Taken from the PCUSA Book of Common Worship

## Thursday Morning Quiet Time

---

All believers have the Holy Spirit given to us by Jesus but there is a lot of confusion even among Christians surrounding the Holy Spirit. Some questions we may ask are: who is the Holy Spirit? Why did Jesus give us the Holy Spirit? What purposes does the Holy Spirit serve in a believer's life? How does one receive the Holy Spirit?

Let's take a look at what Jesus has to say about the Holy Spirit to help us answer some of these questions.

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."  
--Jesus (John 14:15-21)

Jesus in this section refers to the Holy Spirit as "another advocate". What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from what Jesus says in this section?

What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit, Jesus and the Father as described by Jesus in this quote?

What does Jesus mean when he says, "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you"?

Let's look at another quote:

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." **—Jesus (John 14:25-27)**



What roles does Jesus say the Holy Spirit has in this quote?

One more quote:

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning... ..I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” **—Jesus (John 15:26-27, 16:12-15)**

What else do we learn about the Holy Spirit from this quote?

What does it mean when Jesus says, “he will testify about me. And you also must testify...”??

How does the Spirit glorify Jesus?

Using what you’ve learned from what Jesus had to say about the Holy Spirit, try to answer some of these questions:

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Why did Jesus give us the Holy Spirit?

What purpose does the Holy Spirit serve in a person’s life?

## John 15:5-8

---

**5** I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

## Matthew 18:21-35

---

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. <sup>26</sup> "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' <sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. <sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. <sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' <sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. <sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. <sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

### Questions to consider:

1. What stood out to you about this story? Anything shock or surprise you?
2. How do you think the servant felt when the King cancelled his debt (v. 27)?
3. Why would the servant not cancel his fellow servant's debt (v.28-30)? Is he wrong?
4. How does the master react when he finds out what the servant has done (v. 32 - 34)? Why does he react this way?
5. What do we learn about God's view of forgiveness in this story?
6. Why is hard for us to forgive others?
7. Is there someone in your own life that you have had a hard time forgiving?

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

---

**12** Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. **14** Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

**15** Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. **19** If they were all one part, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

**21** The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" **22** On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, **24** while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, **25** so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. **26** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

**27** Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. **28** And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? **31** Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

# Recommendations for Further Reading and Study

---

## InterVarsity Press Books

1. The Story of God, The Story of Us - Sean Gladding
2. Basic Christianity - John Stott
3. Kingdom Come - Allen Wakabayashi
4. The Smell of Sin - Don Everts
5. Jesus with Dirty Feet - Don Everts
6. Know Who You Believe – Paul Little
7. Redeeming Sex – Deb Hirsch

## Non-IVP Books

1. The Reason for God – Tim Keller
2. Mere Christianity – CS Lewis
3. Song of A Wanderer by Li Cheng (for Chinese international students specifically)
4. The Case For Christ – Lee Stroebel

## Articles/Websites

1. [www.exploregod.com](http://www.exploregod.com)
2. [www.launch.intervarsity.org](http://www.launch.intervarsity.org)
3. college.bible (yes, this is the COMPLETE site address...just type it in as is!)