

# **Core Bible Stories**

*For Evangelism Track*



# Core Bible Stories

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Core Bible stories are those central Bible stories which teach the essential Bible truths about God, man, sin, and salvation through faith in Jesus. Core stories are those which would be used without any regard to the worldview of the target people. Most of these stories would be in all chronological presentations of the story of salvation.

The stories are chosen according to the essential truths which must be understood in order for a person to recognize his lostness before a righteous God:

- ❖ that sin in whatever form separates us from God,
- ❖ that man cannot atone for sin by any works of his own,
- ❖ that God has provided the only effective sacrifice for sin in the sinless death of the Son Jesus,
- ❖ that God accepted the death of Jesus in behalf of lost man, and
- ❖ that God raised Jesus to everlasting life again as the first-fruit of the resurrection.

The story series is closed with the understanding that man can appropriate this salvation by believing on Jesus as the one sent from God who died in man's place; and that Jesus will raise him up again to everlasting life. (When storying from the Gospels or New Testament alone, the Old Testament core stories are assumed to be known already or will be referred to during the course of studying the Gospels.)

### *This List*

The current list of core stories has been modified to include a few New Testament stories that target specific beliefs held by those we are trying to reach through the ESL ministry in our community. Many of our ESL students come from Catholic, Orthodox (Greek and Russian) or Muslim backgrounds. All three religious groups generally know many of the Bible stories from their traditions. However, their traditions and Scripture do not always agree. For that reason, when they tell you they know the story, do not assume they actually know the story according to Scripture.

Also, be aware that all three religious beliefs teach that salvation is earned through good works rather than by faith. When teaching the stories pay special attention to and place special emphasis in the fact that salvation depends on trusting in God and believing what He says; that salvation is through faith in Christ only; and that what God wants from us is for us to know Him personally and experientially, not just to know *about* Him – it is a *relationship*, not head knowledge.

BE PATIENT! For a person from any one of these religious backgrounds to finally “get it” and surrender to Christ, takes a long time of Bible study and prayer. Do not

be discouraged if you do not see a response when you think there should be one. Trust the WORD and trust the LORD to do what He has intended for His Word to do! Be faithful in teaching the Scriptures and in praying for the students; and let the Spirit speak to their hearts and bring conviction. It is His job! (John 16:8)

### *The “Commentaries”*

With each story we are including a short commentary focusing on the message we want to impart through each lesson. We hope they are of help to you as you seek to share the message of the Gospel with the lost. Please remember that our goal is not to have an in-depth Bible story but to teach basic Biblical truths and principles that will, hopefully, address the students' religious beliefs. Our goal and prayer is that little by little the students' spiritual eyes may be opened and that they may be able to understand the message of God revealed in Scripture and, as a result, be able to respond positively to the message of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

### *Adapted Core Story List*

1. Creation of the world – Genesis 1
2. Creation of man and woman – Genesis 2:4-25
3. The first sin and judgment – Genesis 3
4. Judgment of a sinful world – Genesis 6-8 (Ezekiel 18)
5. God's promise to Abraham – Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-6 and 15-21; 21:1-7
6. God provides the substitute sacrifice for Isaac – Genesis 22:1-18
7. The Passover: The blood and the lamb – Exodus 12:1-14
8. God gives His holy law: The Ten Commandments – Exodus 20:1-21
9. The sacrifice system – Shedding of sacrificial blood to cover sin – Leviticus 4 (27-31)
10. The Prophet's message and promise of a Redeemer who would suffer for man – Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12
11. Birth of Jesus according to prophecy – Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25
12. Baptism of Jesus – “Behold the Lamb of God,” testimony of John and the Spirit (referencing back to the lamb sacrificed in the Passover and in the system in Leviticus 4) – John 1:29-37 (Luke 3:21-23a)
13. Jesus and Nicodemus – “You must be born again” – John 3:1-12 (John 1:11-13)
14. A dying girl and a suffering woman – Luke 8:40-56 – Jesus is never too busy to hear our plea; He has power over all illness and death. He always knows when someone comes to him in sincere faith: of all the people who touched him, only one woman was healed.

15. Jesus has authority to forgive sin – Paralyzed man and his four friends – Luke 5:17-26
  16. Jesus has power over nature – Calms the sea – Mark 4:35-41
  17. Jesus has authority over demons – Gadarene demoniac – Mark 5:1-20
  18. Jesus is the resurrection – Jesus raises Lazarus to life – John 11
  19. Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man – Man must believe the message of the prophets in this life (there is no “in between”, i.e., purgatory) – Luke 16:19-31
  20. Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary – Jesus is more pleased with those who listen to His Word and spend time fellowshiping with Him than with those who are *busy doing things for Him* (it is not works, it is a relationship) – Luke 10:38-42
  21. Calling Jesus Lord or knowing him – God does not care much about what you *do for Him* unless you have a personal relationship with Him. Again, it is about a personal relationship with Him, not about works – Matthew 7:21-29 (John 6:29 and 40)
  22. The narrow door – Salvation is a personal matter that does not depend on your good works or in participation in church. Salvation depends on your personal relationship with Jesus: Do you know Him? Does he know you? – Luke 13:22-30 (John 10:9-10 and John 14:6)
  23. Traditions vs. true love – Our lofty traditions do not impress God. God is insulted by our “worship” when it does not come from a heart completely surrendered in love for Him – Mark 7:1-13
  24. The story of the wedding dinner – All are invited, but only those who come through Christ are welcomed – Matthew 22:1-14 (only He can provide the right clothes for the celebration: Revelation 7:13-14; 19:7-8)
  25. Jesus tells about his coming death; Jesus submits to the Father’s will to save us – His death was no accident but part of God’s plan to save us. Jesus knew everything that was to happen long before it happened – Matthew 16:21 and 20:18-19; John 10:17-18; and Matthew 26:36-46.
  26. The Last Supper – “This is my broken body and blood shed for you” – Matthew 26:17-30
  27. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, falsely accused, tried and sentenced to death – Matthew 26:14-16, 47-56, and 57-67; Matthew 27:11-31
  28. The crucifixion, *decision for and against Jesus* – “It is finished” – John 19:17-20 and 23-24; Matthew 27:39-44; John 19:28-42
  29. The resurrection and appearance to disciples and followers – Luke 24:1-12 and 36-47; 1 Corinthians 15:3-9.
  30. Jesus returns to the Father: the Ascension, and the promise to return – Acts 1:1-11; Revelation 1:7-8
  31. Jesus, the true High Priest (*Hebrews 8-9*), an advocate before the Father making intercession for believers’ sins – Hebrews 7:23-27, 9:11-12, and 10:11-14; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1
  32. Return of Jesus to receive believers unto himself, to judge and punish unbelievers – Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:3-8, 14, 30-31, and 36; Hebrews 9:27-28; 2 Peter 3:9-14.
- The following are a “stand alone” lessons that can be used at any time.—
33. A warning and a call to repentance – Luke 13:1-5 (some people are not worse than others – we are all sinners in need of repentance); Romans 3:10-18, and 23; 1 John 1:8-9; Acts 3:19
  34. Invitation to believe – John 3:16-18 and 36; John 6:28-29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:8-13
  35. The “I AM”s of Jesus – “I am... the bread of life... the light of the world... like a gate... the good shepherd... the resurrection and the life... the way, the truth and the life...the vine”
  36. Healing of a crippled man – Peter and John – Acts 3 and 4
  37. God makes no distinctions – Acts 10:34-43, Acts 4:12
  38. What does God want you to do? Believe! – John 6:28-40
  39. The story of the lost son – God’s loves us and desires to welcome us back to Him – Luke 15:11-24
  40. Showing gratitude – healing of the ten lepers – Luke 17:11-19
  41. Jesus: The Creator becomes man – John 1:1-3, 14, 11-13; Colossians 1:15-17
  42. The rich young man – Matthew 19:16-29; Matthew 10:37-39
  43. Who is Jesus to you? – Mark 8:27-38

\* Adapted from “Core Stories for Evangelism Track,” from *Chronological Bible Storying: A Methodology for Presenting the Gospel to Oral Communicators*. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997 Edition. International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Edited by Dr. James B. Slack and J. O. Terry.

# PLEASE READ!

The commentaries here are for your benefit as Bible study instructor.

**Please do NOT make copies of these pages for your students!  
Have them read the Scripture passages directly from their Bibles.**

In many religious communities people are taught to trust their leaders' teachings without a second thought or question. For them the word of a priest, a Pope, an Imam, or other teacher or leader has more authority than the scriptures. That is how they are so easily misled and kept in ignorance.

We want them to break with that tradition. **We want them to learn to trust the Bible as God's Word and to view it as the ultimate Authority on all spiritual matters.** We want to teach them by word and example. If we only give them a loose sheet with the passage on it, they will not be making the "connection" with the Bible that we want them to develop. We want them to learn to trust the Bible more than they trust a teacher or leader, no matter who the teacher may be (see the example of the Thessalonians in Acts 17:11). For that reason we ask that you do this:

1. Give each student a copy of the Bible in very simple English (we are using the *New International reader's Version* (NIrV) which is written on a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level). (I let them keep it if they want to.)
2. Teach them how to find the passages (explain the use of chapters and verse numbers)
3. Be patient! Allow time for all students to find each passage before going on with the lesson.
4. Have a volunteer read one verse. Ask them if there are any words they do not understand in that verse.
5. Have another volunteer read the next verse and ask the same question. Go on until the entire passage is read. (This may not be practical if the passage is too long. In that case, you can read the bulk of the passage and ask for volunteers to read some key verses.)
6. Do not lecture them. Discuss the passage and its message by leading them through the use of "targeted" questions – questions that lead them to the truth you want them to discover in the passage.
7. If you want to supplement the message with other Scripture verses, DO NOT quote the verses from memory. Have them find the passage and let them read it for themselves.
8. If they have questions, try by all means to respond using a Scripture passage, allowing them to read it themselves. We want them to learn that they can trust the Scriptures and that they can find answers to important issues in life in the Scriptures. (If you cannot point to the passage at that time, write down the question and make sure you bring the Scripture references for the next class meeting, and have them read the passages then.)

Do try to give each student a copy of the entire Bible in their native language so they can take it home and read it for themselves. We cannot wait for them to learn English before they can hear the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ! We want them to have access to the Word of God and to its message right away!

You can get foreign language Bibles from the International Bible Society ([www.ibsdirect.com](http://www.ibsdirect.com)), from the American Bible Society ([www.americanbible.org](http://www.americanbible.org)), and even from Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). If you need help, call Frances at the Bradley Association at 476-5493 and she will try to find them for you.

## And trust the Word!

**The Lord has said, "The words I speak... will not return to me without producing results. They will accomplish what I want them to. They will do exactly what I sent them to do."  
Isaiah 55:11 (NIrV)**

# 1. Creation of the world *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

## Genesis 1

### The Beginning

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, **God created the heavens and the earth.** <sup>2</sup> The earth didn't have any shape. And it was empty. Darkness was over the surface of the ocean. At that time, the ocean covered the earth. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup> God said, "Let there be **light.**" And there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light "day." He called the darkness "night." There was evening, and there was morning. It was **day one.**

<sup>6</sup> God said, "Let there be a huge space between the waters. Let it separate water from water." <sup>7</sup> And that's exactly what happened. God made the huge space between the waters. He separated the water that was under the space from the water that was above it. <sup>8</sup> God called the huge space "**sky.**" There was evening, and there was morning. It was **day two.**

<sup>9</sup> God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place. Let dry ground appear." And that's exactly what happened. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry ground "**land.**" He called the waters that were gathered together "**oceans.**" And God saw that **it was good.** <sup>11</sup> Then God said, "Let the land produce **plants.** Let them bear their own seeds. And let there be **trees** on the land that bear fruit with seeds in it. Let each kind of plant or tree have its own kind of seeds." And that's exactly what happened. <sup>12</sup> The land produced plants. Each kind of plant had its own kind of seeds. The land produced trees that bore fruit with seeds in it. Each kind of tree had its own kind of seeds.

God saw that **it was good.** <sup>13</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning. It was **day three.**

<sup>14</sup> God said, "Let there be lights in the huge space of the sky. Let them separate the day from the night. Let them serve as signs to mark off the seasons and the days and the years. <sup>15</sup> Let them serve as lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on the earth." And that's exactly what happened. <sup>16</sup> God made **two great lights.** He made the larger light to rule over the day. He made the smaller light to rule over the night. He also made the **stars.** <sup>17</sup> God put the lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on the earth. <sup>18</sup> He put them there to rule over the day and the night. He put them there to separate light from darkness.

God saw that **it was good.** <sup>19</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning. It was **day four.**

- Notice the order in which God creates: he prepares everything to make it ready for the creation of humankind. He has a plan. Things are not just created randomly but with a purpose in mind.

Day one: light

Day two: sky

Day three: dry land and oceans; plants and trees. It is good.

Day four: sun, moon and stars. It was good.

Day five: every creature in the waters, every bird that flies.

- As He creates, God is admiring His own creation and seeing that it is good.
- Notice that up to this point God just says the word and it is done. No other action is necessary on His part. His word alone carries the power to do what He wills.

- His "word" is more than mere human words!

John 1 tells us more:

"<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, the **Word** was already there. The **Word was with God**, and the **Word was God.** <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup> **All things were made through him.** Nothing that has been made was made without him.

<sup>14</sup> The **Word became a human being.** He made his home with us. We have seen his glory. It is the glory of the one and only Son. He came from the Father. And he was full of grace and truth.

- The Word is Jesus! Jesus is God!

<sup>20</sup> God said, “Let the waters be filled with living things. Let birds fly above the earth across the huge space of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the ocean. He created **every living and moving thing that fills the waters**. He created all kinds of them. He created **every kind of bird that flies**. And God saw that **it was good**. <sup>22</sup> **God blessed them**. He said, “Have little ones and increase your numbers. Fill the water in the oceans. Let there be more and more birds on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> There was evening, and there was morning. It was **day five**.

<sup>24</sup> God said, “Let the land produce all kinds of living creatures. Let there be livestock, and creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals. Let there be all kinds of them.” And that’s exactly what happened. <sup>25</sup> God made all kinds of wild animals. He made all kinds of livestock. He made **all kinds of creatures that move along the ground**. And God saw that **it was good**. <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “**Let us make man in our likeness**. Let them rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Let them rule over the livestock and over the whole earth. Let them rule over all of the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So **God created man in his own likeness**.

He created him in the likeness of God.

He created them as **male and female**.

<sup>28</sup> **God blessed them**. He said to them, “Have children and increase your numbers. Fill the earth and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Rule over every living creature that moves on the ground.” <sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I am giving you every plant on the face of the whole earth that bears its own seeds. I am giving you every tree that has fruit with seeds in it. All of them will be given to you for food. <sup>30</sup> “I am giving every green plant to all of the land animals and the birds of the air for food. I am also giving the plants to all of the creatures that move on the ground. I am giving them to every living thing that breathes.” And that’s exactly what happened. <sup>31</sup> God saw everything he had made. And **it was very good**. There was evening, and there was morning. It was **day six**.

Day six: all land creatures, and...

- ...Now things are changing. Pay attention!
  - God is talking to someone!
  - That Someone is His equal = He has the power to create
  - God is creating but not just with His Word – He is doing something personal now.
  - This new creation has something of God – it is similar to God in some attribute = it is made “in the likeness of God.”
  - God creates a pair, male and female.
  - God blessed them.
  - They are both equal in His sight. The instructions, the responsibilities and the privileges apply to both equally.
- That’s why man and woman are so dear to God. He created them in a special way to have something of Him, so they could have a personal relationship with God that nothing else in creation could have.
- That’s why God is so interested in us coming back to Him! We are His special creation. He loves us! He wants to have fellowship with us!
- God saw that everything He had made was very good.

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Extra: Read this passage in Colossians 1:

“<sup>15</sup> Christ is the exact likeness of God, who can’t be seen. He is first, and he is over all of creation. <sup>16</sup> All things were created by him. He created everything in heaven and on earth. He created everything that can be seen and everything that can’t be seen. He created kings, powers, rulers and authorities. Everything was created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> Before anything was created, he was already there. He holds everything together.”

The Bible does not use the word “Trinity”. The Bible makes it clear that there is ONE and only ONE true God. However, the Bible also speaks of God manifesting Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. They were all present at the time of Creation.

## 2. Creation of man and woman *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

*This is a more detailed story of the creation of man and woman, with specific details not mentioned in the general account of creation in Genesis 1.*

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>4</sup> Here is the story of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

The Lord God made the earth and the heavens. <sup>5</sup> At that time, bushes had not appeared on the earth. Plants had not come up in the fields. The Lord God had not sent rain on the earth. And there wasn't any man to work the ground. <sup>6</sup> But streams came up from the earth. They watered the whole surface of the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed a man. He made him out of the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into him. And the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord God had planted a garden in the east. It was in Eden. There he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. Their fruit was pleasing to look at and good to eat.

The tree that gives life forever was in the middle of the garden. The tree that gives the ability to tell the difference between good and evil was also there.

<sup>10</sup> A river watered the garden. It flowed from Eden. From there it separated into four other rivers.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the first river is the Pishon. It winds through the whole land of Havilah. Gold is found there. <sup>12</sup> The gold of that land is good. Onyx and sweet-smelling resin are also found there.

<sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon. It winds through the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris. It runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden. He put him there to work its ground and to take care of it.

<sup>16</sup> The Lord God gave the man a command. He said, "You can eat the fruit of any tree that is in the garden. <sup>17</sup> But you must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you can be sure that you will die."

- God is creating man with His own hands! Before He had said a word to create something. This time it is a very personal creation and He takes time to get His hands 'dirty' to create man. He created a type of "mannequin"...
- And then He breathes life into man! Human life comes directly from God. It belongs to Him!
  
- God put man in the garden He had created for him.
- Two special trees were in that garden:
  - The tree that gives life forever, and
  - The tree that gives the ability to differentiate between what's good and what's evil
  
- We are not certain of the location of the rivers Pishon and Gihon; however, we know where the Tigris and the Euphrates are. They are in what is now the country of Iraq!
  
- God put the man He created in the garden of Eden so he could work its ground and take care of it.
- Work is not a curse from God as some people think. It was not given to man after the fall as a punishment. It was given to him long before, right after he was created so man could take care of God's creation and be blessed in doing so.
- God allowed man to eat from ANY tree in the immense garden He had created. He only forbade man to eat from ONE tree: the tree that gives the ability to differentiate between what's good and what's evil.
  - That means that man was allowed to eat from the tree that gives life forever! From the very beginning God's desire was to give man the blessing of living forever with Him.
  - God allowed man to decide what to do. Man would be blessed by obeying, but he would have to accept the consequences of disobeying.

<sup>18</sup> The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

<sup>19</sup> The Lord God had formed all of the wild animals. He had also formed all of the birds of the air. He had made all of them out of the ground. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give them. And the name the man gave each living creature became its name.

<sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all of the livestock. He gave names to all of the birds of the air. And he gave names to all of the wild animals.

But Adam didn’t find a helper that was right for him. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused him to fall into a deep sleep. While the man was sleeping, the Lord God took out one of his ribs. He closed up the opening that was in his side.

<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God made a woman. He made her from the rib he had taken out of the man. And he brought her to him.

<sup>23</sup> The man said,  
”Her bones have come from my bones.  
Her body has come from my body.  
She will be named ‘woman,’  
because she was taken out of a man.”

<sup>24</sup> That’s why a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The two of them will become one.

<sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were both naked. They didn’t feel any shame.

- From the beginning God’s plan was to create man and woman, but He did not create the woman until after He allowed man to feel the need for her companionship.
- God gave man the task to name all animals so He could appreciate God’s creation... and the fact that each animal had its mate.
- It was not until man realized that there was no one like him and that he felt the need for an equal creation that God then fulfilled His plan of creating the woman.
- God created her from man’s own body = she is part of his own body and essence.
- When man saw her, he immediately recognized she was just like himself, and part of himself.
- (In Hebrew, man is “ish” and woman is “isha”.)
- God institutes marriage! Marriage is designed by God. His purpose is for a permanent, exclusive union of husband and wife, male and female.
  - Leave his father and mother – from this moment on the primary and most important relationship of the husband and of the wife is with each other, not with his or her birth family.
  - Become one - The union is complete (the total of life) and permanent
- God created them in holiness – there was no sense of evil, sin or shame. They were perfect, in perfect communion with God and with one another.

### 3. The first sin and judgment *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

## Genesis 3

#### Adam and Eve Fall into Sin

<sup>1</sup> The serpent was more clever than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. The serpent said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat the fruit of **any tree** that is in the garden?’”

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We can eat the fruit of the trees that are in the garden. <sup>3</sup> But God did say, ‘You must not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. **Do not even touch it.** If you do, you will die.’ “

<sup>4</sup> “You can be sure that **you won’t die,**” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “God knows that when you eat the fruit of that tree, you will know things you have never known before. You will be able to tell the difference between good and evil. **You will be like God.**”

<sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was **good to eat.** It was also **pleasing to look at.** And **it would make a person wise.** So **she took some** of the fruit and **ate it.** She also gave some to **her husband, who was with her.** And **he ate it.**

<sup>7</sup> Then **both of them** knew things they had never known before. They realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made clothes for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife **heard the Lord God walking in the garden.** It was the coolest time of the day. **They hid from the Lord God** among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called out to the man. “Where are you?” he asked.

<sup>10</sup> “I heard you in the garden,” the man answered. “I was **afraid.** I was **naked,** so I hid.”

<sup>11</sup> The Lord God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten the fruit of the tree I commanded you not to eat?”

<sup>12</sup> The man said, “It was the woman **you** put here with me. She gave me some fruit from the tree. And I ate it.”

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What have you done?”

The woman said, “The serpent tricked me. That’s why I ate the fruit.”

- Satan’s favorite trick: to twist God’s words, to take a bit of truth and mix it with a “little lie”. God’s actual command is in Genesis 2:16-17 – God said that there was **only one** tree from which they could not eat.
- Woman’s first mistake: to talk with the enemy.
- Her second mistake: in trying to “defend” God, she exaggerates by adding to God’s words.
- The serpent is actually calling God liar!
  - We have to be VERY careful of what we hear. Pay attention! Anything that adds, takes away or contradicts God’s Word is coming from Satan himself and we MUST NOT listen to it, much less believe it.
- People have always wanted to “be like God” in some way. The devil knows it and he still tempts people with this lie even today.
- The woman ignored God’s command and chose to satisfy her own desire and curiosity.
  - Note that the man was right there with her! If you read the whole story again you will notice that the command about the tree had been given to him BEFORE the woman was created. He had the knowledge to stop her from eating the fruit but not only did he not stop her, he ate with her!
- The purity and holiness God had created them in was lost. Now they saw things with different eyes; they knew about things from which God had protected them.
- As usual, God came to meet them in the garden. They recognized Him as He approached. They had enjoyed intimate fellowship with God since the day they were created but now they were afraid to meet Him.
- The Lord knew what had happened. However, He still asked that they tell Him everything.
  - God knows every little thing we ever do or think, and He is willing to forgive us and restore fellowship with us. However, He asks that we acknowledge our sin and confess it in its entirety.
- Of the many new things they knew now, they knew fear. For the first time they were afraid of the One who created them and loved them.
- In defending himself man accuses the woman and, on top of that, blames God for giving her to him!
- The woman in turn blames the serpent.
  - We are just the same as they were. We like to “pass the buck” – shift the blame, evade responsibility. We always find someone or something to blame for our sins. We even blame the devil for “pushing” us to do things. The truth is that the devil cannot push us – we chose to sin. (James 1:13-15; see also 1 Corinthians 10:13)

<sup>14</sup> So the Lord God spoke to the serpent. He said, “Because you have done this,

”I am putting a curse on you.

You are cursed more than all of the livestock  
and all of the wild animals.

You will crawl on the ground.

You will eat dust

all of the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put hatred

between you and the woman.

Your children and her children will be enemies.

**Her son will crush your head.**

**And you will crush his heel.”**

<sup>16</sup> The Lord God said to the woman,

”I will greatly increase your pain when you give birth.

You will be in pain when you have children.

You will long for your husband.

And he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> The Lord God said to Adam, “You listened to your wife. You ate the fruit of the tree that **I commanded you** about. I said, ‘You must not eat its fruit.’

”So I am putting a curse on the ground because of what you did.

All the days of your life you will have to work hard  
to get food from the ground.

<sup>18</sup> You will eat the plants of the field,

even though the ground produces thorns and thistles.

<sup>19</sup> You will have to work hard and sweat a lot  
to produce the food you eat.

You were made out of the ground.

And you will return to it.

You are dust.

So you will return to it.”

<sup>20</sup> Adam named his wife Eve. She would become the mother of every living person.

<sup>21</sup> The Lord God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and his wife to wear. <sup>22</sup> The Lord God said, “The man has become like one of us. **He can now tell the difference between good and evil.** He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick fruit from the **tree of life** and eat it. **If he does, he will live forever.”**

<sup>23</sup> So the Lord God drove the man out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground he had been made out of. <sup>24</sup> The Lord God drove him out and then placed cherubim on the east side of the Garden of Eden. He also placed a flaming sword there. It flashed back and forth. **The cherubim and the sword guarded the way to the tree of life.**

➤ The curse against the serpent is actually a curse against Satan himself.

➤ “Her son will crush...” is actually a prophecy regarding Jesus Christ: Satan would seem to “defeat” Him on the cross; however, Jesus would actually defeat Satan completely in His resurrection.

➤ The excruciating pain of childbirth **was not** God’s original intention for woman.

➤ Neither was man’s dominion over woman! They had been created equals but their sin changed everything.

➤ God now confronts man. God had given **him** the command regarding the fruit of that tree. Though he had been with the woman when she was tempted, he did not correct the lies the serpent was telling to her neither did he keep her from eating of the fruit. To make matters worse, he himself ate of it, disobeying a direct order from God. Man was responsible for the whole mess.

➤ Because of his sin, man brought a curse over all earth and humanity. The earth God had created to produce good fruit in abundance for the benefit of man, was now going to make man sweat for it.

➤ From the beginning God’s desire was to give eternal life to man (the other special tree in the garden, from which they were allowed to eat, was the **tree of life** – Gen. 2:9, 16-17). Sin brought death instead. Physical death and spiritual death = eternal separation from God.

➤ In His mercy, God could not allow man to eat of the fruit of the tree of life now that he had sinned. If man ate of it, he would get to live for ever but condemned to live separated from God and without hope.

➤ That is not God’s desire for us! He wants to restore us to fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. He wants us to enjoy all the perfect things He has for us in heaven. But to do that, we have to acknowledge our sin, confess it to God, ask for His forgiveness, and allow Him to control our lives = be the Lord (owner, master, boss) of our lives. Then we will know and enjoy the intimate fellowship we were created to have with God!

## 4. Judgment of a sinful world *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Genesis 6**

<sup>9</sup> Here is the story of Noah.

Noah was a **godly man**. He was without blame among the people of his time. **He walked with God.** <sup>10</sup> Noah had three sons. Their names were Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup> The earth was very sinful in God's eyes. It was full of mean and harmful acts. <sup>12</sup> God saw how sinful the earth had become. All of the people on earth were leading very sinful lives.

<sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people. They have filled the earth with their harmful acts. You can be sure that I am going to destroy both them and the earth.

<sup>14</sup> "So make yourself an ark out of cypress wood. Make rooms in it. Cover it with tar inside and out. <sup>15</sup> Here is how I want you to build it. The ark has to be 450 feet long. It has to be 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. <sup>16</sup> Make a roof for it. Leave the sides of the ark open a foot and a half from the top. Put a door in one side of the ark. Make lower, middle and upper decks.

<sup>17</sup> "I am going to bring a flood on the earth. It will destroy all life under the sky. It will destroy every living creature that breathes. Everything on earth will die.

<sup>18</sup> "But I will make my covenant with you. You will enter the ark. Your sons and your wife and your sons' wives will enter it with you.

<sup>19</sup> "Bring two of every living thing into the ark. Bring male and female of them into it. They will be kept alive with you. <sup>20</sup> Two of every kind of bird will come to you. Two of every kind of animal will come to you. And two of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you. All of them will be kept alive with you.

<sup>21</sup> "Take every kind of food that you will need. Store it away. It will be food for you and for them."

<sup>22</sup> **Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.**

*Genesis 7:1*

### **Genesis 7**

<sup>17</sup> For 40 days the flood kept coming on the earth. As the waters rose higher, they lifted the ark high above the earth.

<sup>18</sup> The waters rose higher and higher on the earth. And the ark floated on the water.

<sup>19</sup> The waters rose on the earth until all of the high mountains under the entire sky were covered. <sup>20</sup> The waters continued to rise until they covered the mountains by more than 20 feet.

<sup>21</sup> Every living thing that moved on the earth died. The birds, the livestock and the wild animals died. All of the creatures that fill the earth also died. And so did every human being. <sup>22</sup> Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in it died. <sup>23</sup> Every living thing on the earth was wiped out. People and animals were destroyed. The creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped out.

- Godly = someone who does things God's way, who loves God and wants to please Him. Walk with God = to seek God with all your heart; to have a personal relationship with Him. Sin = anything that is offensive to God, that is contrary to His Word.
- Though Noah lived surrounded by very sinful people, he did not follow their ways and lifestyle. He chose to honor God and to obey Him instead of following the crowd. We are called to do the same wherever we live!
- God does not punish or destroy people just because, but He is a Holy God. He is patient and His desire is not to punish but to forgive (Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32) but He cannot tolerate sin forever. He gives sinners plenty of opportunity to acknowledge their sin and to repent but if they refuse to do so and to come back to God they receive the just payment for their deeds (Romans 6:23).
- God protects those who fear Him and serve Him with their whole heart. Noah is the only one of his generation who walked with God. God wants to save him and, because of him, God is going to save his family too.
- The instructions on the construction of the ark are specific. God knew exactly how much room would be needed for all the animals He wanted to save.
  - (Food for thought: Usually we think of the animals in the ark as being full grown... but that is not necessarily true as it would have been impractical and there would have been not enough room in the ark. However, if the animals brought in were young or babies, then there was more than enough room for hundreds of different kinds of animals who would have had no trouble getting along with each other. Think about it!)
- Noah demonstrates his love for God by being obedient to what He had commanded... even though he had never even seen it rain yet!
  - We too are called to demonstrate our love for the Lord by being obedient to His word (John 14:21).
- Just as God said it would happen, every person and creature over earth was killed.

Everything was destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark were left.

<sup>24</sup> The waters flooded the earth for 150 days.

## Genesis 8

<sup>3</sup> The water continued to go down from the earth. At the end of the 150 days the water had gone down. <sup>4</sup> On the 17th day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup> The waters continued to go down until the tenth month. On the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains could be seen.

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> “Come out of the ark. Bring your wife and your sons and their wives with you.

<sup>17</sup> “Bring out every kind of living thing that is with you. Bring the birds, the animals, and all of the creatures that move along the ground. Then they can multiply on the earth. They can have little ones and increase their numbers.”

<sup>18</sup> So Noah came out of the ark. His sons and his wife and his sons’ wives were with him. <sup>19</sup> All of the animals came out of the ark. The creatures that move along the ground also came out. So did all of the birds. Everything that moves on the earth came out of the ark. One kind after another came out.

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to honor the Lord. He took some of all of the “clean” animals and birds. He sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar.

## Genesis 9

<sup>8</sup> Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons who were with him. He said, <sup>9</sup> “I am now making my covenant with you and with all of your children who will be born after you. <sup>10</sup> I am making it also with every living thing that was with you in the ark. I am making my covenant with the birds, the livestock and all of the wild animals. I am making it with all of the creatures that came out of the ark with you. I am making it with every living thing on earth.

<sup>11</sup> “Here is my covenant that I am making with you. The waters of a flood will never destroy all life again. A flood will never destroy the earth again.”

<sup>12</sup> God continued, “My covenant is between me and you and every living thing with you. It is a covenant for all time to come.

”Here is the sign of the covenant I am making. <sup>13</sup> I have put my rainbow in the clouds. It will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

*The story of Noah should serve as a warning to us. We need to pay attention to the signs of the times and to the warnings God gives us through His Word and through His people, or we will be lost when He comes back to judge the living and the dead. (Matthew 24:36-39)*

- As God had promised, He protected Noah and his family and kept them safe in the ark until it stopped raining.
- After it stopped raining, it took 150 days (about 5 months!) for the earth to be dry again.
- Notice that the Bible gives specific dates and locations for the events. This is no fable!
- The Ararat Mountains are located in what is today eastern Turkey, near the Iranian and Armenian borders.
  
- After the flood, God gives Noah and his family the same command He had originally given Adam and Eve at creation (It is clearer if you compare Genesis 9:1-1-3 with Genesis 1:27-30). God was starting a new chapter in the history of mankind, though this time He is starting with already fallen creatures.
  
- Noah’s first action upon exiting the ark was to build an altar to honor and worship God. We need to learn to be grateful and to honor and worship God in every circumstance (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
  
- God makes a covenant (contract, promise) with Noah and with all humanity after him, and with all creatures over the earth. This covenant is only dependent on God’s faithfulness.
  
- He promises never again to destroy earth with a flood. And as a sign of His promise, God gives us rainbows!
  
- God’s desire from the very beginning of creation was for all people to have a very personal relationship with Him, to enjoy fellowship with Him, and to enjoy all the blessings God has in store for those who love Him. When man and woman chose to disobey God’s command they broke that relationship with God and were forever separated from Him. God is a Holy God so He cannot stand sin. That’s why we are separated from Him. In His mercy, God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins and to offer us forgiveness. If we acknowledge our sin and repent, and come to God through His son Jesus, He will forgive us and give us eternal life and restore us to fellowship with Him.

*God does NOT delight in destroying or killing those who sin against Him. He delights in forgiving those who repent and in giving them life. (Ezekiel 18:20, 23, 30-32; John 3:16-18 and 5:24)*

## 5. God's promise to Abraham (New International reader's Version, Nlrv)

### Genesis 15

<sup>1</sup> Some time later, Abram had a vision. The Lord said to him,

"Abram, do not be afraid. I am like a shield to you.

I am your very great reward."

<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "Lord and King, what can you give me? I still don't have any children. My servant Eliezer comes from Damascus. When I die, he will get everything I own."

<sup>3</sup> Abram continued, "You haven't given me any children. So a servant in my house will get everything I own."

<sup>4</sup> Then a message came to Abram from the Lord. He said, "This man will not get what belongs to you. A son will come from your own body. He will get everything you own."

<sup>5</sup> The Lord took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky. Count the stars, if you can." Then he said to him, "That is how many children you will have."

<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the Lord. The Lord accepted Abram because he believed. So his faith made him right with the Lord.

### Genesis 17

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him. He said, "I am the Mighty God. Walk with me and live without any blame. <sup>2</sup> I will now put into practice my covenant between me and you. I will greatly increase your numbers."

<sup>3</sup> Abram fell with his face to the ground. God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "As for me, this is my covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations.

<sup>5</sup> "You will not be called Abram anymore. Your name will be Abraham, because I have made you a father of many nations.

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, do not call her Sarai anymore. Her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> I will give her my blessing. You can be sure that I will give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations. Kings of nations will come from her."

<sup>17</sup> Abraham fell with his face to the ground. He laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man who is 100 years old? Will Sarah have a child at the age of 90?"

<sup>18</sup> Abraham said to God, "I wish Ishmael could receive your blessing!"

<sup>19</sup> Then God said, "I will bless Ishmael. But your wife Sarah will have a son by you. And you will name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him. It will be a covenant that lasts forever. It will be for Isaac and for his family after him.

- Abram was already an old man. He was a rich man in his time. However, he had no child of his own to inherit all his possessions.
- At the absence of an heir, it was customary for the inheritance to pass on to the man's administrator.
- God makes a promise: you will have an heir! A son will come from your own body!
- Not only is he going to have a son; his descendants will be so many that they will be impossible to count.
- Humanly speaking, he had no hope of ever having children because of his and his wife's old age. But he believed what God said! He chose to trust God's word over what he could see and feel. That is true faith! (See Hebrews 11:11-12)
  - This is all God requires of us: that we believe Him, that we trust that what He says is true and act accordingly.
  - God is not pleased by the lack of faith. (Hebrews 11:6)
  - Faith is more than just believing *in* God. It requires that you believe God – that you trust His word.
  - Faith in Jesus Christ, and not works, is all that is required for salvation! (Ephesians 2:8-9)Do you trust God? Do you believe His word? Do you believe that what He says is true?
- God's promise involved Abraham's wife. She was going to receive God's blessing too. Her name was also changed to point to what God had promised to do.
- Even though Abraham trusted God, in his mind he could not figure out how God was going to do it so he sought God was going to fulfill His promise through Ishmael (we will skip his story at this time).
- There was no mistake! God is the God of the impossible! God reaffirms that the son Abraham is going to have will in fact be Sarah's son too. God has even chosen a name for him: Isaac. God is already planning to make a promise to Isaac that will be valid forever.
  - God loves to do the impossible so we will know that it is He who did it! And He is willing to do the impossible for those who trust Him. Do you trust Him?

<sup>20</sup> “As for Ishmael, I have heard you. You can be sure that I will bless him. I will give him children. I will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of 12 rulers. And I will make him into a great nation.

<sup>21</sup> “But I will establish my covenant with Isaac. By this time next year, Sarah will have a son by you.”

## **Genesis 21**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord was gracious to Sarah, just as he had said he would be. He did for Sarah what he had promised to do. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant. She had a son by Abraham when he was old. He was born at the exact time God had promised him.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah had by him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. He did it exactly as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, “God has given laughter to me. Everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”

<sup>7</sup> She continued, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? But I’ve had a son by him when he is old.”

- God would not leave Ishmael abandoned. God had plans for him too.
  
- But God’s promise relates only to Isaac.
- God gives him a specific time to fulfill his promise: one year!
  
- Just as God had promised, 90-year-old Sarah had her first son! Their old age was no problem to God. He has the power to do the impossible, if you only trust Him.
  - God’s promises are true! You can trust Him every time! He never fails! He will always do what He says He will do. Do you trust Him?
  
- God is so good! He made Sarah laugh! And she knew that anyone who heard their story would be laughing too!
  
- God delights in blessing His children when they trust Him. Do you trust Him?
- Sometimes we want to see God’s blessings *before* we trust Him. We want Him *to prove* Himself to us so we can believe. That attitude proves our lack of faith in Him. God will not honor that kind of attitude. We have to trust Him *first* and *then* we will see His wonders. Do you trust Him?

## 6. God provides the substitute sacrifice for Isaac *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### Genesis 22

<sup>1</sup> Some time later God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," Abraham replied.

<sup>2</sup> Then God said, "Take your son, your only son. He is the one you love. Take Isaac. Go to Moriah. Give him to me there as a burnt offering. Sacrifice him on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

<sup>3</sup> Early the next morning Abraham got up. He put a saddle on his donkey. He took two of his servants and his son Isaac with him. He cut enough wood for the burnt offering. Then he started out for the place God had told him about.

<sup>4</sup> On the **third day** Abraham looked up. He saw the place a long way off. <sup>5</sup> He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there and worship. Then **we'll come back to you.**"

<sup>6</sup> Abraham put the wood for the burnt offering on his son Isaac. He himself carried the fire and the knife. The two of them walked on together.

<sup>7</sup> Then Isaac spoke up. He said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said. "But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

<sup>8</sup> Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." The two of them walked on together. <sup>9</sup> They reached the place God had told Abraham about. There Abraham built an altar. He arranged the wood on it. He tied up his son Isaac. He placed him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand. He took the knife to kill his son.

<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven. He said, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," Abraham replied.

<sup>12</sup> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you have respect for God. You have not held back from me your son, your only son."

<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up. There in a bush he saw a ram. It was caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram. He sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

<sup>14</sup> So Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide. To this day people say, "It will be provided on the mountain of the Lord."

<sup>15</sup> The angel of the Lord called out to Abraham from heaven a second time. <sup>16</sup> He said, "I am taking an oath in my own name. I will bless you because of what you have done," announces the Lord. "You have not held back your son, your only son. <sup>17</sup> "So I will certainly bless you. I will make your children after you as many as the stars in the sky. I will make them as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. Your children will take over the cities of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> All nations on earth will be blessed because of your children. All of that will happen because you have obeyed me."

- God had given Isaac to Abraham and Sara when they were very, very old. God promised that through him they would have many, many descendants. Now God is asking Abraham to kill Isaac in sacrifice to Him!
- God wanted to see if Abraham loved Him more than he loved the son God had given him.
  - We can become so attached to the blessings God gives us that we turn them into idols. (An idol is anything that becomes more important to us than God; anything that takes up God's time in our lives; anything that we give preference over our service and devotion to God; anything we are not willing to sacrifice in order to obey God.) It could be things like money, possessions, a position or a person. Do you have idols in your life? Do you love God's blessings more than you love God? What keeps you from giving your all to God? Is there anything you would **not** be willing to give up for God?
- Abraham's reaction to God's command: immediate unquestioning obedience! Abraham had waited 100 years for this son! Now God wants him to kill him. Abraham OBEYED God without a second thought!
  - God has never asked anything like that from you, however, when was the last time you showed God such an obedient attitude? When was the last time you obeyed God without questioning or 'negotiating' with Him?
- They walked for 3 days – plenty of time for Abraham to change his mind but he did not. He would obey God.
- Isaac was about 17 at this time. He could have easily overpowered his very old dad! It is obvious that Abraham had done a great job in teaching his son to love, fear, and obey God, to the point of being willing to allow his father to tie him up and lay him on the altar as the sacrifice.
  - What are you teaching your children or grandchildren about God? What kind of an example are you giving them?
- Abraham proved beyond doubt that he loved God more than he loved his own son. His obedience also demonstrated his absolute trust in God (see Hebrews 11:17-19).
- God never requested human sacrifice (see Jeremiah 7:30-31) and He was not going to let Abraham kill Isaac. God provided a substitute to take Isaac's place on the altar: a ram.
  - The Bible says that God also provided a substitute for us, One who could die in our place and pay the penalty for our sins. His name is Jesus! (Romans 5:6-8)
- God's blesses those who obey His Word. (James 1:22-25)

## 7. The Passover – The blood and the lamb *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Exodus 12**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Egypt. <sup>2</sup> He said, "From now on, this month will be your first month. Each of your years will begin with it.

<sup>3</sup> "Speak to the whole community of Israel. Tell them that on the tenth day of this month each man must get a **lamb** from his flock. A lamb should be chosen for each family and home.

<sup>4</sup> "Suppose there are not enough people in your family to eat a whole lamb. Then you must share some of it with your nearest neighbor. You must add up the total number of people there are. You must decide how much lamb is needed for each person.

<sup>5</sup> "The animals you choose must be **males** that are **a year old**. They **must not have any flaws**. You may choose **either sheep or goats**. <sup>6</sup> Take care of them until the 14th day of the month. Then the whole community of Israel must kill them when the sun goes down. <sup>7</sup> Take some of the **blood**. **Put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where you eat the lambs**.

<sup>8</sup> "That same night eat the meat cooked over the fire. Also eat bitter plants. And eat bread that is made without yeast. <sup>9</sup> Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water. Instead, cook it over the fire. Cook the head, legs and inside parts. <sup>10</sup> Do not leave any of it until morning. If some is left over until morning, burn it.

<sup>11</sup> "Eat the meat while your coat is tucked into your belt. Put your sandals on your feet. Take your walking stick in your hand. Eat the food quickly. It is the Lord's **Passover**.

<sup>12</sup> "That same night I will pass through Egypt. I will strike down every oldest son. I will also kill all of the male animals that were born first to their mothers. And **I will judge all of the gods of Egypt**. I am the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> "**The blood on your houses will be a sign for you. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. No deadly plague will touch you** when I strike Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> "Always remember this day. For all time to come, you and your children after you must celebrate this day as a feast in honor of the Lord. It is a law that will last forever.

- [Explain briefly about the situation of the people of Israel in Egypt, and about God sending Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Talk about the Pharaoh's (king's) reluctance to let them go and about the 9 plagues the Lord had already sent against the Egyptians.]
- Each of the plagues targeted one of the many Egyptian gods. God proved He is the only true living, all-powerful God. All others are idols.
- The Egyptian king himself was worshiped as a god by his people. With this last plague God is going to show His power over the king and his family by taking the life of his own heir.
  
- Note the requirements for the animal:
  - Must be male
  - A lamb (young sheep or goat)
  - A year old
  - Must not have any flaws
- The animal must be killed at sundown
- It's blood must be applied to the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses
- The whole animal must be cooked over fire
- Eat it with bitter plants and bread made without yeast
- Must not leave anything for the morning (leftovers must be burned)
  
- They must be fully dressed and ready to travel.
- The food must be eaten in a hurry
  
- The Lord will kill the eldest son of every family that did not have the blood of the lamb on their house's door frame.
  
- The blood was the sign. That's what made the difference in who lived and who died.
  - This required them to
    - trust in God – to believe what God said
    - obey God – do exactly as He had instructed
  - The result would be salvation from certain death!
  
- That is exactly what the blood of Jesus does to those who trust in Him! If we trust God's Word and believe in Jesus Christ we will be saved from certain spiritual death!
  - Jesus is our "Passover Lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7).
  - Through His blood we are forgiven of our sins (Romans 3:23-25; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7b).
  - We are made right with God ('justified') so we do not fear punishment for sin (Romans 5:9-10)
  - We are saved to live with Him forever! (1 John 5:11-12)

## 8. God gives His holy law: The Ten Commandments (NirV)

### Exodus 20

<sup>1</sup> Here are all of the words God spoke. He said,

<sup>2</sup> **“I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. That is the land where you were slaves.**

<sup>3</sup> **“Do not put any other gods in place of me.**

<sup>4</sup> **“Do not make statues of gods that look like anything in the sky or on the earth or in the waters. <sup>5</sup> Do not bow down to them or worship them. I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.** I punish the children for the sin of their parents. I punish the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who hate me. <sup>6</sup> But for all time to come I show love to all those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> **“Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.** The Lord will find guilty anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup> **“Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. <sup>9</sup> Do all of your work in six days. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a Sabbath in honor of the Lord your God. Do not do any work on that day.** The same command applies to your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and your animals. It also applies to any outsiders who live in your cities. <sup>11</sup> In six days I made the heavens and the earth. I made the oceans and everything in them. But I rested on the seventh day. So I blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

<sup>12</sup> **“Honor your father and mother.** Then you will live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> **“Do not commit murder.**

<sup>14</sup> **“Do not commit adultery.**

<sup>15</sup> **“Do not steal.**

<sup>16</sup> **“Do not give false witness against your neighbor.**

<sup>17</sup> **“Do not long for anything that belongs to your neighbor.** Do not long for your neighbor’s house, wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey.”

<sup>18</sup> The people saw the thunder and lightning. They heard the trumpet. They saw the mountain covered with smoke. They trembled with fear and stayed a long way off.

<sup>19</sup> They said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself. Then we’ll listen. But don’t let God speak to us. If he does, we’ll die.”

<sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. God has come to put you to the test. **He wants you to have respect for him. That will keep you from sinning.**”

<sup>21</sup> Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. But the people remained a long way off.

- The first four commandments refer to the relationship we are to have with God:
  - He is to be our One and only God
  - God is spirit; there is nothing created that can represent Him. When He revealed Himself to the people of Israel, they did not see any kind of figure or image (Deut. 4:15-18). We are not to make statues or images of any kind to represent Him or any other god, much less worship them.
  - Our God is a jealous God! His jealousy is good: He is protecting His property! We are to be His and His alone.
  - We are to give an account of how we use the name of the Lord. Using His name in ways that do not bring honor to Him is a sin.
  - We are to separate a day of rest to honor Him. The Sabbath was made for our benefit (Mark 2:27) since our bodies need rest. God’s commands are for our own good!
- The next six commands refer to our human relationships:
  - The first and most basic relationship we have is with our parents. We are to show them respect and honor – and God will reward us for it.
  - ‘Do not commit murder... adultery.’ These two seem self explanatory, though there is more to them than just their literal interpretation.
    - Jesus explained that sin begins in the intentions of the heart, and then manifests itself in our actions. Murder and adultery are only two examples of this. See Matthew 5:21-22 and 5:27-28.
  - The next three follow the same idea, as Jesus said in Mark 7:20-23: sin starts in the heart, and then it manifests itself in our actions. No amount of washing can take that stain away. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sin (1 John 1:7).
- The purpose of the commandments is not to keep us *from* good things but to keep us *for* good things.
- The commandments teach us the things that are contrary to God’s holiness and thus offensive to Him. These commandments (the Law) make us aware of our sin but there is no salvation or reward from keeping them (Romans 3:20).
- Only faith in Jesus can make us right with God (Romans 3:28)

## 9. The sacrifice system: shedding of sacrificial blood to cover sin (NirV)

### Leviticus 4

<sup>1</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses. He said, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel. Tell them, ‘Suppose someone sins without meaning to. And that person does something the Lord commands us not to do.

<sup>3</sup> “ ‘Suppose it is the anointed **priest** who sins... he must bring a *young bull* to the Lord. It must not have any flaws...

<sup>13</sup> “ ‘Or suppose **the whole community** of Israel sins... they must bring a *young bull* as a sin offering...

<sup>22</sup> “ ‘Or suppose a **leader** sins... he must bring an offering. It must be a *male goat*. It must not have any flaws...

<sup>27</sup> “ ‘Or suppose **someone** in the community sins without meaning to. If he disobeys any of the Lord’s commands, he is guilty. <sup>28</sup> “ ‘But suppose he is made aware of the sin he has committed. Then he must bring an offering for the sin he has committed. It must be a *female goat*. It must not have any flaws. <sup>29</sup> **He must place his hand on the head** of the animal for the sin offering. **It must be killed** at the place where the animals for burnt offerings are killed. [*The sinner must kill it himself.*]

<sup>30</sup> “ ‘Then the priest must dip his finger into some of the **blood**. **He must put it on the horns** that stick out from the upper four corners **of the altar** for burnt offerings. He must **pour out the rest of the blood at the bottom of the altar**.

<sup>31</sup> “ ‘He must remove all of the fat in the same way the fat is removed from the friendship offering. He must burn it on the altar. It gives a smell that is pleasant to the Lord. When the priest burns the offering, he will pay for the sin of that person. **And he will be forgiven**.

<sup>32</sup> “ ‘Suppose he brings a **lamb** as his sin offering. Then he must bring a *female animal*. It must not have any flaws. <sup>33</sup> **He must place his hand on its head**. **He must kill it** as a sin offering. He must do it at the place where the animals for burnt offerings are killed.

<sup>34</sup> “ ‘Then the priest must dip his finger into some of the blood of the sin offering. He must put it on the horns that stick out from the upper four corners of the altar for burnt offerings. He must pour out the rest of the blood at the bottom of the altar.

<sup>35</sup> “ ‘He must remove all of the fat in the same way the fat is removed from the lamb for the friendship offering. He must burn it on the altar on top of the offerings that are made to the Lord with fire. When he does, he will pay for the sin that person has committed. And he will be forgiven.

- Not “meaning to” or claiming ignorance does not excuse a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.
- The passage addresses sin from all people, beginning with the religious leaders to the whole community. Note that the sacrifice for sin is basically the same, though the type of offering varies.
- In every case, the sinner is to bring before the Lord the prescribed animal for the sacrifice (young bull, male goat, female goat, or female lamb)
- The animal must be perfect, without blemish of any kind.
- The sinner must place his hands on the head of the animal and confess his sin.
- The animal now takes the place of the sinner – becomes his substitute – and will receive the penalty for the person’s sin. [Aside: this is where the phrase, “escape goat” comes from; in Spanish, “chivo expiatorio”]
- The sinner himself must kill the animal. This is a very personal and shocking way of making one aware of how horrendous sin is to God.
  - God’s desire is not to destroy but to forgive (Ezekiel 18:30-32), however, God’s holiness demands justice. Sin cannot be ignored. The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). The sinner must die. In His grace and mercy, God allowed that an animal take the place of the sinner.
- The animal’s blood is completely spilled for one’s sin.
  - Without the spilling of blood, no one can be forgiven (Hebrews 9:22).
  - However, the blood of animals cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:4) – it can only clean on the outside (Hebrews 9:13). Only the blood of the perfect Lamb of God, His Son Jesus Christ, can take away sin (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:14). That’s why He died on the cross. Jesus spilled His own blood to take away the sin of those who trust in Him.

## 10. The prophet's message and promise of a Redeemer that would suffer for man *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Isaiah 52**

<sup>13</sup> The Lord says, "My servant will act wisely and accomplish his task.

He will be highly honored. He will be greatly respected.

<sup>14</sup> Many people were shocked when they saw him.

He was so scarred that he did not look like a man at all.

His body was so twisted that he did not look like a human being anymore.

<sup>15</sup> But many nations will be surprised when they see what he has done.

Kings will be so amazed that they will not be able to say anything.

They will understand things they were never told about.

They will know the meaning of things they never heard about."

### **Isaiah 53**

Who has believed what we've been saying?

Who has seen the Lord's saving power?

<sup>2</sup> His servant grew up like a tender young plant.

He grew like a root coming up out of dry ground.

He didn't have any beauty or majesty that made us notice him.

There wasn't anything special about the way he looked that drew us to him.

<sup>3</sup> Men looked down on him. They didn't accept him.

He knew all about sorrow and suffering.

He was like someone people turn their faces away from.

We looked down on him. We didn't have any respect for him.

<sup>4</sup> He suffered the things we should have suffered.

He took on himself the pain that should have been ours.

But we thought God was punishing him.

We thought God was wounding him and making him suffer.

<sup>5</sup> But the servant was pierced because we had sinned.

He was crushed because we had done what was evil.

He was punished to make us whole again.

His wounds have healed us.

<sup>6</sup> All of us are like sheep. We have wandered away from God.

All of us have turned to our own way.

And the Lord has placed on his servant the sins of all of us.

- This prophecy was given well over 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ!
- The Lord (God the Father) declares that His servant (Jesus) will accomplish His task – He will fulfill God's plan completely.
  - Jesus' suffering and death were not an accident, mistake or a failed plan. It was exactly what God intended – that Jesus take the punishment that we deserve for our sins; that He become the substitute sacrificial Lamb for us.
- The first part of the prophecy gives us a glimpse at what Jesus might have looked like after He was beaten by the Jewish leaders and by the Romans (Matthew 26:67-68; and 27:26-31):
  - twisted (deformed, bent, out of shape)
  - scarred (disfigured, mutilated, wounded)
  - He did not look like a human being anymore
- But it also speaks about the wonderful work He will accomplish – it will cause surprise and amazement. It will also open their understanding about things that had been hidden from them.
- The Servant is something special and unexpected (as a plant coming out of dry ground), but physically there was nothing in Him that would get people's attention. He came as a normal human being.
- He was rejected by men (John 1:10-11; 11:47-53).
- He has experienced human sorrow (grief, sadness, distress) and suffering (pain, agony, torment) (John 11:33-35; 19:28; Matthew 26:38; Hebrews 4:14-15).
- They mocked (ridicule, make fun of, laugh at) Him (Luke 23:35-39).
- Verses 4-7 are packed with theological truths. They present Jesus work of salvation in our favor.
  - He suffered our punishment
  - He took our pain
  - We did not appreciate what He was doing. We thought He was suffering for His own sins when He had none (Hebrews 4:14-15)
  - Our sin caused His wounds
  - All our sins came upon Him
  - Because of what He did we can be healed; we can have peace with God because of Him
- There is not one person who can be considered "good" before God (Romans 3:10-12). All our sins were upon him on the cross. (1 Peter 2:24)

<sup>7</sup> He was beaten down and made to suffer.  
 But he didn't open his mouth.  
 He was led away like a sheep to be killed.  
 Lambs are silent while their wool is being cut off.  
 In the same way, he didn't open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> He was arrested and sentenced to death.  
 Then he was taken away.  
 He was cut off from this life.  
 He was punished for the sins of my people.  
 Who among those who were living at that time  
 could have understood those things?

<sup>9</sup> He was given a grave with those who were evil.  
 But his body was buried in the tomb of a rich man.  
 He was killed even though he hadn't harmed anyone.  
 And he had never lied to anyone.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord says, "It was my plan to crush him  
 and cause him to suffer.  
 I made his life a guilt offering to pay for sin.  
 But he will see all of his children after him.  
 In fact, he will continue to live.  
 My plan will be brought about through him.

<sup>11</sup> After he suffers, he will see the light that leads to life.  
 And he will be satisfied.  
 My godly servant will make many people godly  
 because of what he will accomplish.  
 He will be punished for their sins.

<sup>12</sup> So I will give him a place of honor among those who are  
 great.  
 He will be rewarded just like others who win the battle.  
 That is because he was willing to give his life as a  
 sacrifice.  
 He was counted among those who had committed  
 crimes.  
 He took the sins of many people on himself.  
 And he gave his life for those who had done what is  
 wrong."

- Even through the worst of His pain and agony, He never opened His mouth to defend Himself or to attack others (Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:33-34; 1 Peter 2:23).
- The first part of verse 8 pretty much repeats what has already been said in previous verses.
- Jesus was buried in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man of that time (Matthew 27:57-60).
- He had never lied to anyone (Hebrews 4:15b ; 1 Peter 2:22)
- This was God's plan from the beginning! Hundreds of years before it happened, God wanted everyone to know what He was going to do on our behalf. God loves us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son for our sins so we would not have to die. We just have to come to Him and trust Him.
- God's plan of salvation is through, and only through, Jesus. There is no other option or alternative. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)
- Through His sacrifice, He has made us members of His royal family (Revelation 1:5-6)
- Because of His obedience to the Father and His sacrifice for us, God has given Jesus a name above every name and the highest place of honor in heaven (Philippians 2:5-11).

## 11. Birth of Jesus according to prophecy (*New International reader's Version, Nlrv*)

### Luke 1

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

<sup>27</sup> He was sent to a **virgin**. The girl was **engaged** to a man named Joseph. He came **from the family line of David**. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel greeted her and said, "The Lord has given you special favor. **He is with you.**"

<sup>29</sup> Mary was **very upset** because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid**, Mary. God is very pleased with you. <sup>31</sup> You will become **pregnant** and give birth to a **son**. You must name him **Jesus**. <sup>32</sup> He will be **great** and will be called the **Son of the Most High God**. The Lord God will make him a **king** like his father David of long ago. <sup>33</sup> He will **rule forever** over his people, who came from Jacob's family. **His kingdom will never end.**"

<sup>34</sup> "How can this happen?" Mary asked the angel. "I am a virgin."

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The **Holy Spirit** will come to you. The power of the **Most High God** will cover you. So the **holy one** that is born will be called the **Son of God**. <sup>36</sup> Your relative Elizabeth is old. And even she is going to have a child. People thought she could not have children. But she has been pregnant for six months now. <sup>37</sup> **Nothing is impossible with God.**"

<sup>38</sup> "I serve the Lord," Mary answered. "May it happen to me just as you said it would." Then the angel left her.

### Matthew 1

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the **Holy Spirit**. <sup>21</sup> She is going to have a **son**. You must give him the name **Jesus**. That is because **he will save his people from their sins.**"

<sup>22</sup> All of this took place to bring about what the **Lord had said** would happen. He had said through the prophet, <sup>23</sup> "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called **Immanuel.**"—(*Isaiah 7:14*) The name Immanuel means "**God with us.**"

<sup>24</sup> Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not make love to her until after she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

[Note that Luke, the author of this account, was a medical doctor by profession, and that he speaks of Jesus' birth from a virgin as a fact!]

- Mary loved God and her life was pleasing to Him. He chose her as a vessel to provide the human element for His Son to enter the world.
- The most important part of the angel's message is about Jesus: who He is and what He will do.
  - His name is Jesus (which means 'God saves')
  - He will be great (important, impressive, famous)
  - Son of the Most High God = He is God! (John 1:1-2)
  - King of the house of David – In His humanity, Jesus was a direct descendant of king David from both sides of the family (Joseph's genealogy – Matthew 1:1-16; Mary's genealogy – Luke 3:23-38). Fulfillment of God's promise to David (2 Samuel 7:16). In His divinity, He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).
  - His kingdom is eternal – it will never end! All human kingdoms end when the king dies. It is certainly speaking of a King and a kingdom that are not of this world.
  - Son of God – The repetition of the title (v.32 & 35) indicates the certainty of His nature – He is God. [The Jewish people understood the implication of this title immediately, but they did not believe it and instead they rejected Jesus - John 5:18]
- The angel explains that the Holy Spirit will provide the divine element in the conception of this baby. That's why He will be called the Son of God.
  - [Aside: Parting from Jesus deity, Catholic and Orthodox theology give Mary almost equal ranking with God the Father. Their thinking is that, for Jesus to be God, Mary had to have some of that same divine nature. That is very flawed human reasoning. A careful reading of the Scriptures makes it clear: His deity comes through the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary's contribution is His humanity.]
- A marriage engagement in their culture was an extremely serious legal commitment. To break up an engagement a decree of divorce was required.
- Joseph must have been extremely upset, in all possible senses of the word!
- The angel confirms Mary's story: she has not been unfaithful; her baby is from the Holy Spirit.
  - His name is Jesus
  - He will save people from their sins
  - This is the fulfillment of a prophecy made over 600 years ago!
  - Immanuel – more than a name this is a title indicating who He is: God with us!
- Joseph proved his faith in God: he believed and obeyed

## 12. Baptism of Jesus – “Behold the Lamb of God” (NIRV)

### John 1

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, “Look! **The Lamb of God! He takes away the sin of the world!**” <sup>30</sup> This is the One I was talking about. I said, ‘A man who comes after me is more important than I am. That’s because **he existed before I was born.**’ <sup>31</sup> I did not know him. But God wants to make it clear to Israel who this person is. That’s the reason I came baptizing with water.”

### Luke 3

<sup>21</sup> When all the people were being baptized, **Jesus was baptized too.** And as he was praying, heaven was opened.

<sup>22</sup> The **Holy Spirit** came down on him in the form of a dove. **A voice** came from heaven. It said, “**You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you.**”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his special work for God and others...

### John 1

<sup>32</sup> Then John told them, “I saw the Holy Spirit come down from heaven like a dove. The Spirit remained on Jesus.” <sup>33</sup> I would not have known him. But the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and remain on someone. He is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I have seen it happen. I give witness that this is the Son of God.”

<sup>35</sup> The next day John was again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> He saw Jesus walking by. John said, “Look! **The Lamb of God!**”

<sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this. So they followed Jesus.

- Lambs (young sheep, usually under a year old) were killed daily in sacrifices for the sins of people (see Leviticus 4). The payment for sin is the death of the sinner (Romans 6:23). All Jewish people knew that lambs were killed as substitutes for sinners – the lambs died in place of the person who had committed the sin.
- What they had never heard of was of a PERSON being called “lamb of God”. They probably scratched their heads wondering what that meant. Was that person going to die for the sins of another? They could not know it yet but, yes! Jesus was going to die in place of many sinners – an entire world of sinners –, including you and me.
- John (the Baptist) says several interesting things about Jesus:
  - Jesus is more important than John was though John was a known public figure and Jesus was a yet unknown person from a small town.
  - Jesus existed before John was born! This was shocking because John was born 6 months before Jesus was. John was referring to the fact that Jesus has existed since before the creation of the world. Jesus created the World! He is God! (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-16)
  - John and Jesus probably did know each other growing up (their mothers were related; see Luke 1:36, 39-40) but John did not *really* know *who* Jesus was until it was revealed to him by God.
- Jesus was baptized when he was 30 years old, and that’s when his ministry got started.
- John (the Baptist) and all those present witnessed this event: the Holy Spirit came down and “remained” on Jesus as a sign to John that this man was the Son of God. A voice from heaven – God – said: This is my son. I am pleased with [Him].
  - What would have you done if you had witnessed such an event? What would you think about Jesus? Who would you say Jesus was?
- John could not keep quiet about Jesus! He had to tell others what had been revealed to him: Jesus is the perfect “lamb” of God who was going to die in place of sinners to take away their sin.
  - The Bible says that we cannot save ourselves. Our sin condemns us to death – spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God. But Jesus was willing to die in our place – to be our substitute lamb – so we could be forgiven of our sins (Romans 5:6-8). If we receive this gift from God through faith in Jesus, we can also have eternal life with Him – a life that never ends (Romans 3:21-28 and 6:23)
  - Would you follow Jesus like John’s disciples did?

## 13. Jesus and Nicodemus: “You must be born again” (NIV)

### John 3

<sup>1</sup> There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He was one of the Jewish rulers. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. We know that God is with you. If he weren’t, you couldn’t do the miraculous signs you are doing.”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can see God’s kingdom without **being born again.**”

<sup>4</sup> “How can I be born when I am old?” Nicodemus asked. “I can’t go back inside my mother! I can’t be born a second time!”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can enter God’s kingdom without **being born through water and the Holy Spirit.** <sup>6</sup> People give birth to people. But **the Spirit gives birth to spirit.** <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised when I say, ‘**You must all be born again.**’

<sup>8</sup> “The wind blows where it wants to. You hear the sound it makes. But you can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone who is **born through the Spirit.**”

<sup>9</sup> “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup> “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus. “Don’t you understand these things?”

<sup>11</sup> “What I’m about to tell you is true. We speak about what we know. We give witness to what we have seen. But still you people do not accept our witness. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you about earthly things, and you do not believe. So how will you believe if I speak about heavenly things?”

### John 1

<sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own. But his own people did not accept him.

<sup>12</sup> Some people did **accept him**. They **believed in his name**. He gave them the right to become **children of God**.

<sup>13</sup> To be a child of God has nothing to do with human parents. Children of God are not born because of human choice or because a husband wants them to be born. **They are born because of what God does.**

- The Pharisees were the strictest followers of the Jewish law (the Law of Moses, the commandments); they held many positions of authority in government; they were rich. They opposed Jesus in union with the High Priests.
- Nicodemus came to Jesus at night probably for fear of his fellow Pharisees.
- In his introduction, Nicodemus reveals what he and the other leaders knew and what they thought about Jesus:
  - Calls Him “Rabbi” which is a title of respect for a Jewish scholar or teacher qualified to expound and apply Jewish law
  - Reveals that he and the Jewish leaders knew He was “a teacher who has come from God”
  - They recognized the evidence –all the miracles Jesus was performing– pointed to one fact: God was with Him.
- Jesus “cut to the chase” (cut to the point, leaving out an unnecessary preamble). Jesus knew what Nicodemus was seeking and, before he could even ask, Jesus gave him the answer: To see the kingdom of God (go to heaven) you have to be born again.
- Nicodemus had no idea what Jesus was talking about. He asked the obvious question.
- Jesus speaks with authority. If you want to see the kingdom of God (go to Heaven), you must be born again; you must be born through the Spirit.
- Flesh can only give birth to flesh (people can only give birth to people). To be born again you have to be born spiritually – an only the Spirit of God can give birth to spirit. This is something that only God can do.
- That’s what John 1:11-13 talks about. To become a child of God (to be born of God/the Spirit) you have to **believe in Jesus’ name and accept (receive) Him in your heart.**
  - Some people think that every human being is a child of God. That is contrary to Scripture. Only those who make a conscious decision to believe in Jesus (believe that He is who the Bible says He is, and believe what He has said is true), and who receive Him in their hearts (that is, allow Him to be the owner and boss in their lives), only they will have the right to become children of God. That means that you are not a child of God just because your parents were (God has no grandchildren) or just by attending church or doing good works. You have to repent from sin and surrender to Him and let Him be the Lord and master of your life. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 3:19)
- As we cannot see the air but can see its effect on the leaves of the trees and can feel it on our faces, so it is with the work of the Spirit in a person’s life. We cannot see or understand the actual working of the Spirit but we can see the evidence in the person’s life.

## 14. A dying girl and a suffering woman *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### Luke 8

#### *A Dying Girl and a Suffering Woman*

<sup>40</sup> When Jesus returned, a **crowd** welcomed him. They were all expecting him.

<sup>41</sup> Then a man named Jairus came. He was a synagogue ruler. He fell at Jesus' feet. He begged Jesus to come to his house. <sup>42</sup> **His only daughter was dying.** She was about 12 years old.

As Jesus was on his way, **the crowds almost crushed him.**

<sup>43</sup> A woman was there who had a sickness that made her bleed. **Her sickness had lasted for 12 years.** No one could heal her. <sup>44</sup> **She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his clothes.** Right away **her bleeding stopped.**

<sup>45</sup> **"Who touched me?"** Jesus asked.

They all said they didn't do it. Then Peter said, "Master, **the people are crowding and pushing against you.**"

<sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, **"Someone touched me.** I know that power has gone out from me."

<sup>47</sup> The woman realized that people would notice her. Shaking with fear, she came and fell at his feet. In front of everyone, she told why she had touched him. She also told how **she had been healed in an instant.**

<sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, "Dear woman, your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace."

<sup>49</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus. Jairus was the synagogue ruler. **"Your daughter is dead,"** the messenger said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore."

<sup>50</sup> Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. **Just believe.** She will be healed."

<sup>51</sup> When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let everyone go in with him. He took only Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother.

<sup>52</sup> During this time, **all the people were crying and sobbing loudly** over the child. "Stop crying!" Jesus said. **"She is not dead. She is sleeping."**

<sup>53</sup> **They laughed at him. They knew she was dead.**

<sup>54</sup> But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!"

<sup>55</sup> **Her spirit returned, and right away she stood up.** Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. <sup>56</sup> Her parents were amazed. But Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

- There are many things that can be learned from this story but let's focus on one detail: How Jesus is never too busy to notice one person who comes to Him in sincere faith.
- Of all the people –all the crowds who crushed Him– only one woman got His attention even before He saw her. Only one woman felt His power working in her life.
- Many people want to know **about** Jesus and many come to church for "the show." There are others who like to be associated with God and church because it makes them look good. But only those who seek Him wholeheartedly (entirely, unreservedly, sincerely, unconditionally, with all your heart), an who meet Him personally will get to experience salvation and forgiveness of sin, a new personal relationship with God, and all the blessings Jesus has for them, all He is willing to do for those who love Him and surrender to Him. They will never be "lost in the crowd", they will never escape His attention.
- He has promised: "I will never send away anyone who comes to me." (John 6:37)
  
- Jesus is never bothered by our requests. All He asks is that we trust Him to give us the RIGHT answer or response to our requests. He knows what's best for us.
  
- The people knew –they were witnesses– to Jairus' daughter's death. There was no doubt the girl was dead! That's why the mocked Jesus when He said she wasn't.
- Jesus shows His power over death. Only God can raise the dead. Jesus himself came back from the dead after three days in a tomb. Jesus is God.
  
- John 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even if he dies." <sup>26</sup> And those who live and believe in me will never die. **Do you believe this?"**

## 15. Jesus has authority to forgive sin (New International reader's Version, NlrV)

### Luke 5

#### Jesus Heals a Man Who Could Not Walk

<sup>17</sup> One day Jesus was teaching. Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. They heard that the Lord had given Jesus the power to heal the sick.

<sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a man who could not walk. He was lying on a mat. They tried to take him into the house to place him in front of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> They could not find a way to do this because of the crowd. So they went up on the roof. Then they lowered the man on his mat through the opening in the roof tiles. They lowered him into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> When Jesus saw that they had faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

<sup>21</sup> The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to think, "Who is this fellow who says such an evil thing? Who can forgive sins but **God alone**?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?" <sup>23</sup> Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven'? Or to say, 'Get up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he spoke to the man who could not walk. "I tell you," he said, "get up. Take your mat and go home."

<sup>25</sup> Right away, the man stood up in front of them. He took his mat and went home praising God. <sup>26</sup> Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with wonder. They said, "We have seen unusual things today." Jesus is always teaching the Word of God.

- People would come from far away places to hear him, walking for days just to see him.
  - You can 'hear' his teaching by reading the Bible. Everything Jesus taught is important for us to know. Through his teaching we know what God wants from us and about his love.
- These men proved their love for their friend and a **great faith in the power of Jesus** because they would not allow anything or anyone to stop them from reaching Jesus.
  - God rewards those who seek Him earnestly
- This is a desperate act. They were determined to make sure their friend would see Jesus. Their actions demonstrated that they truly believed that Jesus had the power to heal their friend.
- Jesus saw the demonstration of their faith and gave their friend something greater than the physical healing they came for: the forgiveness of sins and the salvation that we all need!
  - You can be perfectly healthy or be miraculously healed of a mortal illness, but you will still die someday. What we need more than health is to be right with God. The Bible says that we ALL are sinners—we do things that do not please God, and do not do things that please Him—and that we cannot earn our way to heaven by ourselves. We need His forgiveness and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to go to heaven. (*Romans 3:23 & 6:23; Acts 3:19; John 14:6*)
- Jesus knows your every thought.
- Saying to someone "Your sins are forgiven" is easier because you cannot prove sins have or have not been forgiven.
- However, telling a crippled man to get up and walk—and have him do it—is proof positive that you have the power you claim to have and that you can do whatever you say you can do.
  - **By proving his power over a permanent condition Jesus proved that He is God because only God has that kind of power**

**He proved that he is who he said he is: the Son of God and the only one who can forgive our sins. We need to trust Him only. He alone forgives sins!**

## 16. Jesus has power over nature: Calms the sea (NirV)

### Mark 4

<sup>35</sup> When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.” <sup>36</sup> They left the crowd behind. And they took him along in a boat, just as he was. There were also other boats with him.

<sup>37</sup> A wild storm came up. Waves crashed over the boat. It was about to sink. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the back, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up. They said, “Teacher! Don’t you care if we drown?”

<sup>39</sup> He got up and ordered the wind to stop. He said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down. And it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Don’t you have any faith at all yet?”

<sup>41</sup> They were terrified. They asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

- What we know as the Sea of Galilee is in reality a fresh water lake that is part of the Jordan River system. (In the Bible, when it is not called the sea or lake of Galilee, it is referred to as the sea or lake of the closest town in the area: sea/lake of Tiberias, sea/lake of Capernaum, sea/lake of Gennesaret, and sea/lake of Kinneret.) The lake is roughly 13 miles (21 km) long by 8 miles (13 km) wide, and little over 150 feet deep.
- Notice that it was already evening (dark) when Jesus and his disciples got in the boat.
- Sudden, severe storms are common in the lake. The lake waters are easily stirred up due to the shallowness of the lake causing massive waves that can put at risk even the larger fishing boats.
- Many of the disciples were experienced fishermen who had probably faced many storms before. For them to be that scared it must have been a massive storm.
- Jesus must have been exhausted when not even the shaking of the boat and the waves crashing against it could wake Him up!
- Jesus calmly got up and commanded the wind and the waves – and they immediately obeyed!
  - Who can make things happen just by His word? (Remember the story of creation in Genesis 1.) Only God, and God alone! = Jesus is God!
- Considering the danger they had been in, Jesus’ question might sound silly. But it is a very serious question: “Why are you so afraid?”
  - They had been with Jesus for a time now and they had seen Him perform many miracles. Their fear demonstrated that they still did not fully understand and believe who Jesus was. That’s why He asked, “Don’t you have any faith at all yet?” What He was really asking was, “Don’t you believe in me? Don’t you trust me to protect you?”
- The disciples still did not get it! They still wondered who Jesus was. They could not even think straight. Who alone has the power and authority to command nature to do His will?
  
- We too can face severe storms in our lives, situations that threaten us in many ways: divorce, unemployment, serious illness, death of a loved one, etc. Like the disciples, we can feel hopeless, as if the world –our world– is coming to and end. And truly, on our own, we have no hope.
- However, if we put our trust completely in Jesus, we will be able to enjoy rest, like He did, knowing that He is in control of all things and that nothing –absolutely nothing – will ever happen without His knowledge and permission. With Him in our ‘boat’ we can face any of life’s storms. He promised never to leave or forsake those who love and seek Him (Hebrews 13:5b)

## 17. Jesus has authority over demons (New International reader's Version, NlRV)

### Mark 5

#### Jesus Heals a Man Controlled by Demons

<sup>1</sup> They went across the Sea of Galilee to the area of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> Jesus got out of the boat. A man with an **evil spirit** came from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup> The man lived in the tombs. **No one could keep him tied up anymore.** Not even a chain could hold him. <sup>4</sup> His hands and feet had often been chained. But he tore the chains apart. And he broke the iron cuffs on his ankles. **No one was strong enough to control him.** <sup>5</sup> Night and day he screamed among the tombs and in the hills. He cut himself with stones.

<sup>6</sup> When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran to him. **He fell on his knees in front of him.** <sup>7</sup> He shouted at the top of his voice, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Promise before God that you won't **hurt me!**" <sup>8</sup> This was because Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus asked the demon, "What is your name?"  
"My name is Legion," he replied. **"There are many of us."** <sup>10</sup> And he **begged** Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

<sup>11</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup> The demons **begged** Jesus, "**Send us** among the pigs. **Let us go** into them." <sup>13</sup> **Jesus allowed it.** The evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs. There were about 2,000 pigs in the herd. The whole herd rushed down the steep bank. They ran into the lake and drowned.

<sup>14</sup> Those who were tending the pigs ran off. They told the people in the town and countryside what had happened. The people went out to see for themselves.

<sup>15</sup> Then they came to Jesus. They saw the man who had been controlled by many demons. He was sitting there. He was now **dressed and thinking clearly.** All this made the people **afraid.** <sup>16</sup> Those who had seen it told them what had happened to the man. They told about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup> **Then the people began to beg Jesus to leave their area.**

<sup>18</sup> Jesus was getting into the boat. The man who had been controlled by demons begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup> Jesus did not let him. He said, "**Go home to your family. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how kind he has been to you.**"

<sup>20</sup> So the man went away. In the area known as the Ten Cities, **he began to tell how much Jesus had done for him.** And all the people were amazed.

*This story demonstrates Jesus' absolute power over the evil spirits. However, we also want to point out the people's response to Him.*

- It was well known by all people in this region that this man was possessed by evil spirits – demons – and that his physical power was enormous. No one could control him.
- When the possessed man saw Jesus he immediately recognized Him as the Son of God:
  - he immediately fell on his knees at Jesus' feet – an act of submission to a higher authority
  - begged Jesus not to hurt him
  - begged Jesus not to **send** them away from there
  - begged Jesus to **send** them to the pigs
  - they required Jesus **permission** before they could go to the pigs
- A Roman Legion was made up of over 5,000 men. There were many demons in this man! However, they could not do anything against Jesus; they all had to obey Him!
- Only God himself has absolute power over evil spirits or demons. Jesus demonstrated He is God!
- After seeing such a demonstration of power and authority over evil spirits the people did not have the kind of reaction you would expect. Instead of being grateful and welcoming Him they were afraid of Him!
- They kicked Jesus out! They were more comfortable with the situation as it was. They preferred to have their pigs and not the Son of God! They did not want anyone to change their lives. They liked things just the way they were. And for that they rejected Jesus, the Son of God; they rejected the life and the blessings He was bringing to them; they rejected the freedom from evil spirits He provided them.
  - What will you do about Jesus? You know **about** Him. Do you want to have a personal relationship with Him? What are you trying to "protect" from Jesus?
  - Will you allow Jesus to take control over your life and to free you of fear and of the punishment of sin? Will you let Him bless you or do you prefer things the way they are? Will you choose to keep your "pigs" (whatever your "pigs" are) or will you let Jesus in your life? Will you welcome Jesus in your heart or will you kick Him out? (**John 1:11-12**)
- (John 3: " <sup>17</sup> "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Anyone who **believes** in him is not judged. But anyone who **does not believe** is judged already. He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.  
<sup>19</sup> "Here is the judgment. **Light** [Jesus] has come into the world, but **people loved darkness** instead of light. They loved darkness **because what they did was evil.** <sup>20</sup> "Everyone who does evil things hates the light. They will not come into the light. They are afraid that what they do will be seen.")

# 18. Jesus is the resurrection and the life: Jesus raises Lazarus to life

(NirV)

## John 11

<sup>1</sup> A man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. <sup>2</sup> Mary would later pour perfume on the Lord. She would also wipe his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was sick in bed. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus. “Lord,” they told him, “the one you love is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory. God’s Son will receive glory because of it.”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> But after he heard Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days.

<sup>7</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

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<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> For your benefit, I am glad I was not there. Now you will believe. But let us go to him.”

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<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found out that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup> Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary. They had come to comfort them because their brother was dead.

<sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. But Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “I wish you had been here! Then my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you anything you ask for.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, “I know he will rise again. This will happen when people are raised from the dead on the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even if he dies. <sup>26</sup> And those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God. I believe that you are the One who was supposed to come into the world.”

- Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were very close friends. When Lazarus got gravely ill, the sisters knew that only Jesus could heal him. Because of their close relationship with Jesus, they expected Him to come running to save His beloved friend Lazarus.
- Jesus knew better. He knew something no one else could understand yet: God was going to use this situation to bring glory to Himself and to Jesus. So He did not respond immediately to their request. He waited until Lazarus died and was buried before starting on His way to their home.
  - Many times we pray fervently to God but He does not seem to respond. We need to learn to trust Him completely. He has a plan that we may not understand. He will always do what is best in every situation, even when sometimes it may not be what we want.
- Jesus timed His arrival so He would get there “late”. He was allowing time so there would be absolutely no doubt that Lazarus was dead. In fact, by the time He got there four days later, Lazarus’ body had already started to stink as only a decomposing body can (v. 39).
- Many people had come to console the deceased’s family. (Note: When it talks about “the Jews” it usually refers to people who did not follow Jesus. It was not meant as a derogatory label as Jesus, the apostles and all His first disciples were Jews themselves.)
- Jesus’ consoling words are not empty words. He really means what He says!
- In her words Martha declares her belief that Jesus had the power and authority over all illness.
- Martha had been taught well and she knew God’s word: the dead will come back to life one day, to receive reward from Jesus or to be judged by Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:4-6; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15).
- However, Jesus wanted to teach her something deeper: the resurrection and the life are not ‘things’ but a PERSON. Jesus is the resurrection! Jesus is the life! If you want eternal life—a life that will never end—, you must believe in Jesus and surrender your life to Him completely. Do you want to have eternal life? You must come to Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him.
- Look at Mary’s confession carefully. That’s a confession that brings salvation: to believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by God as Messiah (Christ); and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10).
  - Have you ever made such a confession of faith in Jesus Christ?

<sup>28</sup> After she said this, she went back home. She called her sister Mary to one side to talk to her. “The Teacher is here,” Martha said. “He is asking for you.”

<sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Jesus had not yet entered the village. He was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> Some Jews had been comforting Mary in the house. They noticed how quickly she got up and went out. So they followed her. They thought she was going to the tomb to cry there.

<sup>32</sup> Mary reached the place where Jesus was. When she saw him, she fell at his feet. She said, “Lord, I wish you had been here! Then my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> Jesus saw her crying. He saw that the Jews who had come along with her were crying also. His spirit became very sad, and he was troubled.

<sup>34</sup> “Where have you put him?” he asked.

”Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus sobbed.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how much he loved him!”

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “He opened the eyes of the blind man. Couldn’t he have kept this man from dying?”

<sup>38</sup> Once more Jesus felt very sad. He came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone in front of the entrance.

<sup>39</sup> “Take away the stone,” he said.

”But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad smell. Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days.”

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see God’s glory?”

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone.

Then Jesus looked up. He said, “Father, I thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup> I know that you always hear me. But I said this for the benefit of the people standing here. I said it so they will believe that you sent me.”

<sup>43</sup> Then Jesus called in a loud voice. He said, “Lazarus, come out!”

<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of linen. A cloth was around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the clothes he was buried in and let him go.”

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did. So they put their faith in him.

- Mary too believed that Jesus had the power and authority over all illness.
- Jesus had come specifically to bring Lazarus back to life, however, He is not insensitive to people’s pain. He saw their sorrow and responded in a compassionate way: He cried with them!
  - God is not ignorant or insensitive to our needs and our pains. He knows and understands. It is not His desire to see us suffer, but we live in a fallen world and suffering is part of it. If He allows something to happen to us, that does not mean He does not care or does not have a plan to bless us. We have to trust Him and wait on Him to do what’s best.
- He is ready to act now! Martha did not understand what He was doing. She only thought of the obvious: the body has been rotting in there for 4 days - it stinks.
- Jesus calls her to have faith in Him, to trust Him completely regardless of the circumstances.
- Jesus declares the reason He had allowed Lazarus to die: so that in raising him from the dead, people would believe that Jesus had been sent by God.
- At Jesus’ command the dead man comes back to life. (I think He had to call him out by name so the other dead people would not come out too!) Lazarus came out wrapped in the cloth he had been buried in for all the world to see!
- Who alone can give life to the dead? Would you put your faith in Jesus?
- Jesus alone had the power and the authority to give life to those who trust Him completely. It is God’s will for everyone who believes in Jesus to have eternal life and Jesus will bring them back from the dead at the end of the world (John 6:40).
- Do you believe Jesus has the power and authority to give life? Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe He died on the cross, was buried, and God brought Him back to life on the third day? Will you trust Him with your life? Will you ask Him to forgive you of your sins and take control of your life? If you do that He will give you a new life, one that lasts forever, and you will spend eternity with Him in Heaven (John 3:36, 5:24; and 1 John 5:11-12).

[NOTE: Ask the questions but do not force people to give an answer right then. Let them think about it. Tell them to come and talk to you if they have questions or if they want to respond to your questions/invitation.]

## 19. Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### Luke 16

<sup>19</sup> “Once there was a rich man. He was dressed in purple cloth and fine linen. He lived an easy life every day.

<sup>20</sup> A man named Lazarus was placed at his gate. Lazarus was a beggar. His body was covered with sores. <sup>21</sup> Even dogs came and licked his sores. All he wanted was to eat what fell from the rich man’s table.

<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died. The angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In hell, the rich man was suffering terribly. He looked up and saw Abraham far away. Lazarus was by his side. <sup>24</sup> So the rich man called out, ‘Father Abraham! Have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water. Then he can cool my tongue with it. I am in terrible pain in this fire.’

<sup>25</sup> “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember what happened in your lifetime. You received your good things. Lazarus received bad things. Now he is comforted here, and you are in terrible pain. <sup>26</sup> Besides, a wide space has been placed between us and you. So those who want to go from here to you can’t go. And no one can cross over from there to us.’

<sup>27</sup> “The rich man answered, ‘Then I beg you, father. Send Lazarus to my family. <sup>28</sup> I have five brothers. Let Lazarus warn them. Then they will not come to this place of terrible suffering.’

<sup>29</sup> “Abraham replied, ‘They have the teachings of Moses and the Prophets. Let your brothers listen to them.’

<sup>30</sup> “ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said. ‘But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will turn away from their sins.’

<sup>31</sup> “Abraham said to him, ‘They do not listen to Moses and the Prophets. So they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ “

- The rich man demonstrated his lack of love and fear of God by ignoring the needs of the people around him.
- Jewish people saw riches as sign of God’s blessings. They thought that that person’s life was pleasing to God and was assured heaven. Jesus’ story was a shocker to his listeners.
- In death the rich man is conscious and suffering terrible pains with no hope of relief. However, even in death the rich man cannot even “lower himself” to talk to a beggar: he calls to the person in authority to order the beggar to serve him.
- There is an abyss (deep hole or trench) in between heaven and hell. No one can cross it either way. The choice of where you will end up in eternity is made while you are alive. Once dead, there is no way to change your destination. No one can do that for you either. The choice is yours, the time is now.
- “Moses and the Prophets” refers to the Bible (specifically the OT). What you need to know to please God and to go to heaven is already given to you in the Scriptures. There are no secrets! God loves you so much that He has made His will and His plan of salvation easy and readily available for you. It is up to you to read it and obey it.
- Dead people cannot come back to intervene with the living (*Ecclesiastes 9:5-6*)
- Again, we are told that we need to listen to the Bible! If you do not listen to what God has already told you in the Scriptures, there will be no other message from God. He has already spoken! **Are you listening?**

## 20. Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### **Luke 10**

#### **Jesus at the Home of Martha and Mary**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on their way. Jesus came to a village where a woman named Martha lived. She welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary.

**Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.**

<sup>40</sup> But Martha was busy with all the things that had to be done. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, my sister has left me to do the work by myself. Don't you care? Tell her to help me!"

<sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered. "You are worried and upset about many things. <sup>42</sup> But only one thing is needed. **Mary has chosen what is better.** And it will not be taken away from her."

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### **John 17:3**

<sup>3</sup> "And what is eternal life? It is **knowing you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus, the man whom Jesus brought back to life after 4 days in the tomb.

Sitting at someone's feet was the position of a disciple who was desiring, willing and ready to learn from his teacher. In Jewish society, this was a place for men! Mary was so ready and willing to know Jesus and to learn from Him that she did something that was not expected of a woman in her time. Jesus did not mind. In fact, He never rejects anyone who desires to know Him and to spend time with Him. *(John 6:37b)*

Martha was a good hostess; she wanted to do the best she could to serve Jesus and the many people who came with Him. She wanted to do things to please Him. The host usually offered a meal to his/her guests. In that time, that meant preparing everything from scratch – from the bread to killing an animal (usually sheep or goat) and cooking it, etc. etc. It was a lot of work! No wonder Martha complained!

Jesus' response was a surprise. He knew Martha was trying to make a great meal for Him; He knew she was trying to please Him. However, Jesus response told her that **He was more pleased with what Mary was doing.** Mary was doing something better than Martha: **Mary was spending time with Jesus and listening to Him to learn from Him.**

That's what Jesus really wants from us! He does not care about the things we may want *to do for God*. He is more interested in us getting to **know Him person-ally**. He is more interested in us **spending time with Him**. He is more interested in us **learning His Word**. **He wants to have a personal relationship with us!**

It is in knowing Him personally and intimately that we will find eternal life! True life is in Jesus. He IS Life! *(John 14:6)*

## 21. Calling Jesus Lord or knowing Him *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Matthew 7**

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do what my Father in heaven wants will enter.

<sup>22</sup> “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord! Lord! Didn’t we prophesy in your name? Didn’t we drive out demons in your name? Didn’t we do many miracles in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them clearly, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who do evil!’

#### **The Wise and Foolish Builders**

<sup>24</sup> “So then, everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man. He builds his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against that house. But it does not fall. It is built on the rock.

<sup>26</sup> “But everyone who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man. He builds his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against that house. And it falls with a loud crash.”

<sup>28</sup> Jesus finished saying all these things. The crowds were amazed at his teaching. <sup>29</sup> He taught like one who had authority. He did not speak like their teachers of the law.

- You do not go to heaven just because you know about Him or know who He is.
- What does the Father want you to do?
  - John 6

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “God’s work is to believe in the One he has sent.”

<sup>40</sup> My Father wants all who look to the Son and believe in him to have eternal life. I will raise them up on the last day.” *(This verse is clearer in the NIV.)*

- These people did good and worthy things – even miracles. However, the Lord calls them “doers of evil”! God does not care much about what you *do for Him* unless you have **a personal relationship with Him**. He condemns them because **He never knew them**. You can not earn your way into heaven by doing good and “saintly” deeds. You have to **know Jesus personally** (John 17:3) – it is about a **relationship with Him**, not about works for Him.
- Wisdom is in trusting and obeying what Jesus says. Trusting Him is the only way to be safe – and to save your life.
- Not trusting Him is wasting your life – condemning yourself to eternal perdition.

## 22. The narrow Door (New International reader's Version, NlrV)

### Luke 13

#### *The Narrow Door*

<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching the people. He was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, “**Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?**”

He said to them, <sup>24</sup> “**Try very hard to enter through the narrow door.** I tell you, many will try to enter and will not be able to. <sup>25</sup> The owner of the house will get up and close the door. Then you will stand outside knocking and begging. You will say, ‘Sir, **open the door for us.**’

”But he will answer, ‘**I don’t know you.** And I don’t know where you come from.’

<sup>26</sup> “Then you will say, ‘**We ate and drank with you. You taught in our streets.**’

<sup>27</sup> “But he will reply, ‘**I don’t know you.** And I don’t know where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil!’

<sup>28</sup> “You will sob and grind your teeth when you see those who are in God’s kingdom. You will see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets there. But you yourselves will be thrown out. <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south. They will take their places at the feast in God’s kingdom. <sup>30</sup> Then the last will be first. And the first will be last.”

### John 10

<sup>9</sup> **I’m like a gate (or door). Anyone who enters through me will be saved.** He will come in and go out. And he will find plenty of food. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so they can have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way.

### John 14

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**”

- People want to know who will be saved (from the punishment of sin).
- Jesus does not tell who, but how. He said: “enter through the narrow door.” It is easy to follow the crowd through the wide door; it requires a decision and commitment to go alone, away from the crowd, and through a narrow path. Do not follow the crowds!
- This illustration refers to heaven. It compares heaven to a house whose owner – God – has closed a door. That means, no one else will be allowed in.
- Those outside beg to be let in claiming to know Him. They claim to have participated in fellowships with Him (“ate and drank with you”) and claim they heard his teachings (“you taught in our streets”).
- However, that is not enough. Twice the owner (God) tells them, “I don’t know you.” He does not know them personally – they do not have a relationship with Him.
- Salvation is a very personal matter that does not depend on your good works or on participation in church. It requires a personal relationship with God, not just to know about Him or to participate in Christian activities or even to listen to the teaching/preaching of His Word. (Good works and church participation count only **after** salvation.)
- You have to enter Heaven through Jesus himself. He is the only “door” or “gate” to Heaven. That’s why you have to **know Him** – not just *about* Him – and have a personal relationship with Him.
- This is reaffirmed again in this passage where Jesus again points to Himself as the **ONLY WAY** to get to Heaven and to God the Father.
- You cannot come to God and enter into Heaven unless you come through Jesus – through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## 23. Traditions vs. true love *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### Mark 7

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees gathered around Jesus. So did some of the teachers of the law. All of them had come from Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They saw some of his disciples eating food with “unclean” hands. That means they were not washed.

<sup>3</sup> The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands to make them pure. That’s what the elders teach. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they wash. And they follow many other teachings. For example, they wash cups, pitchers, and kettles in a special way.

<sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law questioned Jesus. “Why don’t your disciples live by what the elders teach?” they asked. “Why do they eat their food with ‘unclean’ hands?”

<sup>6</sup> He replied, “Isaiah was right. He prophesied about you people who **pretend to be good**. He said, ” “These people honor me by what they say.

But **their hearts are far away from me.**

<sup>7</sup> **Their worship doesn’t mean anything to me.**

They teach nothing but **human rules.**’ —(*Isaiah 29:13*)

<sup>8</sup> **You have let go of God’s commands. And you are holding on to the teachings that men have made up [human traditions].**”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus then said to them, “You have a fine way of **setting aside God’s commands!** You do this so you can **follow your own teachings [traditions].** <sup>10</sup> Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother.’—(*Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16*) He also said, ‘If anyone calls down a curse on his father or mother, he will be put to death.’—(*Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9*) <sup>11</sup> But you allow people to say to their parents, ‘Any help you might have received from us is Corban.’ (Corban means ‘a gift set apart for God.’ ) <sup>12</sup> So you no longer let them do anything for their parents. <sup>13</sup> **You make the word of God useless by putting your own teachings [traditions] in its place.** And you do many things like that.”

- The Pharisees were very strict in keeping the law and the many traditions they had attached to it, and they were quick to condemn anyone whom they thought was not keeping it to the letter.
- Washing of hands is really good – especially this flu season – as is washing of containers and utensils used for food. However, following those rules did not, and will not, gain you “points” with God, much less a place in heaven.
- The exaggerated emphasis the Pharisees placed on following their rules and traditions made them ignore the Word of God and the fact that, above anything else, what He really wanted from them was a their love and a personal relationship with them. (*Deut. 6:5 & 10:12*)
- God sees the heart and He alone knows the truth of our words and intentions.
- God is insulted by our “worship” when it does not come from a loving heart. He does not care about our ceremonies, our sacrifices and offerings, or anything we could do to “worship” Him unless our hearts are completely surrendered to Him and cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Ignoring the Word of God (the Bible) to follow our own traditions is like spitting in God’s face! It is like saying to God, “We know better than you,” and then expect Him to be happy with us.
- This is an example of a way people pretended to honor God while actually disobeying Him.
- When we try to “earn” God’s favor by following traditions that are based on men’s ideas, while ignoring God’s Word in the Bible, we are offending Him and “earning” His displeasure. If we want to please Him we have to do things His way, when He says, and in the way He says. Doing otherwise –no matter how good it may seem to us– is to actually disobey Him, and that is sin. That’s why you have to study the Bible!

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him. He said, “Listen to me, everyone. Understand this. <sup>15-16</sup> Nothing outside of you can make you ‘unclean’ by going into you. It is what comes *out of you* that makes you ‘unclean.’ “

<sup>17</sup> Then he left the crowd and entered the house. His disciples asked him about this teaching.

<sup>18</sup> “Don’t you understand?” Jesus asked. “Don’t you see? Nothing that enters people from the outside can make them ‘unclean.’ <sup>19</sup> It doesn’t go into the heart. It goes into the stomach. Then it goes out of the body.” In saying this, Jesus was calling all foods “clean.”

<sup>20</sup> He went on to say, “What comes *out of people* makes them ‘unclean.’ <sup>21</sup> **Evil thoughts** come from the inside, from people’s hearts. So do **sexual sins, stealing and murder. Adultery,** <sup>22</sup> **greed, hate and cheating** come from people’s hearts too. So do **desires that are not pure, and wanting what belongs to others [envy].** And so do **telling lies** about others and **being proud [arrogance]** and **being foolish.** <sup>23</sup> All those evil things come from inside a person. They make him ‘unclean.’ “

- He is not speaking of physical cleanliness here. He is talking about spiritual matters.
- What comes out of us – out of our hearts and minds – is what makes us “dirty” spiritually.
  
- You are not made “holy” or “saint” by what you eat or not eat.
- What makes the difference is what you let into your heart and mind. Are you allowing God’s Word into your mind? Have you allowed Jesus into your heart?
- We count some bad deeds as sin because we only see the actions of people. However, God sees the root of the sin in our thoughts and intentions long before we actually commit the sinful action. For example, long before you kill someone you have hate or envy or desire for revenge in your heart. All these things are sins in themselves. Our deepest thoughts and intentions are all before God, as are the words we speak and the actions we perform.
- “Washing” the outside through following rules or making sacrifices or keeping traditions or ceremonies can do nothing to cleanse the heart and mind of a person.
- The only way to be cleansed from all sin is by surrendering yourself to Jesus Christ and asking His forgiveness. Only His blood can take away sin. Only He can make you clean before a Holy God.

## 24. The story of the wedding dinner *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### **Matthew 22**

#### **The Story of the Wedding Dinner**

<sup>1</sup> Jesus told them more stories. He said, <sup>2</sup> “Here is what the **kingdom of heaven** is like. A **king** prepared a wedding dinner for **his son**. <sup>3</sup> He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the dinner. The servants told them to come. But **they refused**.

<sup>4</sup> “Then he sent some more servants. He said, ‘Tell those who were invited that I have prepared my dinner. I have killed my oxen and my fattest cattle. Everything is ready. **Come to the wedding dinner.**’

<sup>5</sup> “But **the people paid no attention**. One went away to his field. Another went away to his business. <sup>6</sup> The rest grabbed his servants. They treated them badly and then killed them.

<sup>7</sup> “**The king became very angry**. He sent his army to destroy them. They killed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup> “Then the king said to his servants, ‘The wedding dinner is ready. But those I invited were not fit to come.’ <sup>9</sup> Go to the street corners. **Invite to the dinner anyone you can find.**’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants went out into the streets. They gathered all the people they could find, **both good and bad**. Soon the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> “**The king came in to see the guests**. He noticed a man there who was not wearing **wedding clothes**. <sup>12</sup> ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without **wedding clothes?**’ The man couldn’t think of anything to say.

<sup>13</sup> “Then the king told his servants, ‘Tie up his hands and feet. Throw him outside into the **darkness**. Out there people will sob and grind their teeth.’

<sup>14</sup> “**Many are invited, but few are chosen.**”

This is what happens in the kingdom of heaven.

- The king is God himself; the Son is Jesus.
- The servants were those who spoke God’s word to the people – the prophets of the Old Testament
- Those invited to dinner from the beginning were the Jewish people, God’s chosen nation
- They *refused* to come – They chose to ignore God’s loving invitation. They said “no” to God’s word.
- God still loves them and wants them to enjoy the blessings He has prepared for them. He sent even more servants – prophets – to invite them to enjoy of the many blessings and provisions He had for them.
- They paid no attention – they willingly ignored Him. It is as if they had been children covering their ears not to hear God’s word while mocking Him.
- The reason why people -then and now- do not come to God to receive His free offer of salvation in Christ and to enjoy a loving, joyful relationship with Him is not because the cannot come; it is because **they do not want to**. People take what Jesus has done lightly and show God no respect or gratitude for what it cost Him. They do not appreciate what’s being offered nor do they appreciate the One who offers it. That’s what condemns people to eternal death and hell (John 3:19-21). How are you taking God’s invitation? How have you responded to His love in Christ?
- God showed His wrath in the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Babylonians.
- Now God has made the invitation open to the people of all nations, including us. He invites everyone to come and to enjoy His salvation and His blessings.
- Good and bad (according to human standards) are all invited to come to God. But all have to come in the same way: through Jesus.
- In ancient times, the host at a royal wedding would provide special clothes to the guests, clothes the guests could not provide for themselves.
- Only God can provide the clothes for His guests. You cannot earn or make your own or “use what you have” in your own power. Only Jesus through His own blood can provide you with the right clothes for this celebration (Revelation 7:13-14; 19:7-8).
- You cannot fool God! You cannot make or earn your own way into Heaven. You have to come through Christ –and only through Him (John 14:6)– and be covered by His blood to be acceptable into Heaven. Otherwise, your destiny is in the darkness away from God (God is light) - That is hell.
- All are invited but only those who accept God’s gift in Jesus are the chosen ones to enjoy Heaven with Him.
- What are you going to do about God’s invitation????

## 25. Jesus tells about his coming death; Jesus submits to the Father's will to save us *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Matthew 16**

<sup>21</sup> From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples what would happen to him. He told them he must go to Jerusalem. There he must **suffer many things** from the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law. He **must be killed** and **on the third day rise to life again**.

### **Matthew 20**

<sup>18</sup> "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said. "The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will **sentence him to death**.<sup>19</sup> Then they will turn him over to people who are not Jews. The people will **make fun of him and whip him**. They will **nail him to a cross**. **On the third day, he will rise from the dead!**"

### **John 10**

<sup>17</sup> "The reason my Father loves me is that **I give up my life**. But **I will take it back again**.<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me. **I give it up myself. I have the authority to give it up. And I have the authority to take it back again**. I received this command from my Father."

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## **Matthew 26**

### **Jesus Prays in Gethsemane [Mount of Olives]**

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

<sup>37</sup> He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him. He began to be **sad and troubled**.<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is **very sad**. **I feel close to death**. Stay here. Keep watch with me."

<sup>39</sup> He went a little farther. Then **he fell with his face to the ground**. **He prayed**, "My Father, **if it is possible**, take this cup of suffering away from me. But let what you want be done, not what I want."

<sup>40</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.<sup>41</sup> "Watch and pray. Then you won't fall into sin when you are tempted. The spirit is willing. But the body is weak."

<sup>42</sup> Jesus went away **a second time**. **He prayed**, "My Father, **is it possible for this cup to be taken away?** But if **I must drink it**, may what you want be done."

<sup>43</sup> Then he came back. Again he found them sleeping. They couldn't keep their eyes open.<sup>44</sup> So he left them and went away once more. For **the third time he prayed the same thing**.

<sup>45</sup> Then he returned to the disciples. He said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look! The hour is near. The Son of Man is about to be handed over to sinners.<sup>46</sup> Get up! Let us go! Here comes the one who is handing me over to them!"

Why did Jesus die on a cross? Why would God allow Him to go through so much suffering and death if He had done nothing wrong, and had never sinned against God? Was it a mistake? Did Jesus know what was going to happen to Him or was He as surprised as His disciples were? Why did He die?

- These passages in Matthew 16 and 20 and in John 10 prove that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to Him from beginning to end long before it happened. It was no accident, no mistake, and no surprise.
- He knew He was going to be rejected by the Jewish leaders; He knew He was going to be abused, mocked (ridiculed, made fun of, laughed at) and put to death on a cross.
- But He also knew He was coming back from the grave after three days! Death had no power over Him.
- They could kill His earthly body but He was still God. No one could do anything to Him unless He allowed them to. He had the power to avoid all this. He had the authority to stop it. Then why did He allow it?
- The night before He was arrested, Jesus had dinner with his disciples. They celebrated the Passover – a celebration of how God had liberated the Jews from slavery in Egypt.
- After the dinner He went with his disciples to pray. He was very, very sad and troubled (anxious, tense, upset). He knew exactly what was going to happen to Him and He was experiencing human fear of the abuse, torture and suffering that was coming to Him.
- He prayed, and prayed, and prayed. Three times He asked the Father if it was possible not to let Him suffer. If it was possible... But it was not possible to avoid His sacrifice.
- You see, in **Romans 3:23** the Bible says that **we all have sinned** (disobeyed and offended God; done things that are not pleasing to God, and not done the things that are pleasing to Him). It also says in **Romans 6:23** that **the payment for sin is death**. That means that you, as a sinner, will be separated from God forever: that is spiritual death; that is hell.
- However, the Bible also says that **God loves us** so much that He was willing to send His son to pay for our sins – to die in our place. In **Romans 5:6-8** it says that we are unable to save ourselves – we do not have that power; there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. But God demonstrated how much He loves us by sending Jesus to take the punishment we deserve in our place. And He did that long before we knew about Him.
- Do you understand that kind of love?! God does not want to punish you or to send you to hell. He wants to forgive you and to give you life forever in Heaven with Him. But you have to decide what to do. Forgiveness and eternal life are gifts from God (Rom. 6:23) – you don't deserve them and you cannot earn them – but you have to decide if you want to receive those gifts or reject them. God will not force you to accept it. It is up to you.
- What are you going to do about Jesus now? You can have eternal life – guaranteed – only if you receive Jesus in your heart (**1 John 5:11-12**). Do not let His sacrifice go to waste! Believe Him and receive His gift of love!

## 26. The Last Supper: “This is my broken body and blood shed for you” (NirV)

### Matthew 26

<sup>17</sup> It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The disciples came to Jesus. They asked, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?”

<sup>18</sup> He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man. Tell him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover at your house with my disciples.”’ “

<sup>19</sup> So the disciples did what Jesus had told them to do. They prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>20</sup> When evening came, Jesus was at the table with the Twelve. <sup>21</sup> While they were eating, he said, “What I’m about to tell you is true. One of you will hand me over to my enemies.”

<sup>22</sup> The disciples became very sad. One after the other, they began to say to him, “It’s not I, Lord, is it?”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will hand me over. <sup>24</sup> The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But how terrible it will be for the one who hands over the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

<sup>25</sup> Judas was the one who was going to hand him over. He said, “It’s not I, Rabbi, is it?”

Jesus answered, “Yes. It is you.”

<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks and broke it. He handed it to his disciples and said, “Take this and eat it. This is my body.”

<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup. He gave thanks and handed it to them. He said, “All of you drink from it. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the new covenant. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many. <sup>29</sup> Here is what I tell you. From now on, I won’t drink wine with you again until the day I drink it with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

<sup>30</sup> Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

- The Feast of Passover is the most important annual celebration for the Jews. [*For your own benefit, read the full story in Exodus 12.*]
- The Passover begins with the seven-day Feast of the Unleavened Bread when homes are thoroughly cleaned of all yeast (in the Bible, yeast usually represents sin). After that, they celebrate the Passover, when they sacrifice a lamb (baby sheep), and eat it roasted with bread made without yeast, and bitter herbs.
- Every single item used during the celebration is also a symbol or representation of what Jesus did for us. Jews celebrated it for thousands of years (and still celebrate it) but they could not know what it all really pointed to. When Jesus celebrated His last Passover with His disciples, He explained two of the symbols to them.
- Jesus prophesied that one of the apostles was going to deliver Him to those who were going to kill Him. [Jesus selected His disciples and He knew beforehand what Judas would do, and still He welcomed him as a friend. Judas was given a chance to get to know Jesus intimately. Perhaps the Lord was hoping that, after Judas delivered Him to His enemies, he would repent from his sin and turn back to Him. Only He knows!]
- Three loafs of flat bread without yeast were kept in a special bag with three individual pockets. They would only take out the loaf in the middle. [It is said that these loafs represent the three Persons of the Trinity. The middle loaf would represent the Son, second Person of the Trinity, the only one who has been revealed in visible form.] It was that loaf that Jesus pulled out. He said it represented His body, which would be broken for us (Luke 22:19).
- Four cups of wine are used during the celebration; each one represents of one of the covenants God made with His people. All covenants were sealed with blood. Jesus picked up the “cup of the new covenant” and explained that it would be sealed with His own blood. The new covenant is in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Hebrews 8:8-12) and it says that every one who participates of the covenant will know God personally and God will forgive his/her sins, never to remember them again.
- Jesus also made a promise: He will celebrate this meal with His followers even in Heaven!
- Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). He was the pure, perfect, sinless One who would take the place –be the substitute– for sinners, and die in our place, suffering the punishment we all deserve.
  - All the blood of all the sacrifices ever made could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Only Jesus’ blood can take away sin (Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; 1 John 1:7). Only He can forgive our sin, if we only come to Him in repentance. Would you?

## 27. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, falsely accused, tried and sentenced to

**death** (NIRV) [This is a really long passage. Just have volunteers read in turn and make comments as you go. Focus on Jesus' commitment to fulfill God's will and all prophecies in Scripture – **just to save us!** THAT is LOVE without measure.]

### Matthew 26

<sup>14</sup> One of the Twelve went to the chief priests. His name was Judas Iscariot. <sup>15</sup> He asked, "What will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?" So they counted out 30 silver coins for him. <sup>16</sup> From then on, Judas watched for the right time to hand Jesus over to them.

<sup>47</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, Judas arrived. He was one of the Twelve. A large crowd was with him. They were carrying swords and clubs. The chief priests and the elders of the people had sent them.

<sup>48</sup> Judas, who was going to hand Jesus over, had arranged a signal with them. "The one I kiss is the man," he said. "Arrest him."

<sup>49</sup> So Judas went to Jesus at once. He said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him.

<sup>50</sup> Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came to do."

Then the men stepped forward. They grabbed Jesus and arrested him. <sup>51</sup> At that moment, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword. He pulled it out and struck the servant of the high priest with it. He cut off the servant's ear.

<sup>52</sup> "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him. "All who use the sword will die by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Do you think I can't ask my Father for help? He would send an **army of more than 70,000 angels** right away. <sup>54</sup> But then **how would the Scriptures come true? They say it must happen in this way.**"

<sup>55</sup> At that time Jesus spoke to the crowd. "Am I leading a band of armed men against you?" he asked. "Do you have to come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courtyard teaching. And you didn't arrest me. <sup>56</sup> But **all this has happened so that the words of the prophets would come true.**"

Then all the disciples left him and ran away.

<sup>57</sup> Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest. The teachers of the law and the elders had come together there. <sup>58</sup> Not too far away, Peter followed Jesus. He went right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see what would happen.

<sup>59</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for something to use against Jesus. They wanted to put him to death. <sup>60</sup> But they did not find any proof, even though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally, two other witnesses came forward. <sup>61</sup> They said, "This fellow claimed, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God. I can build it again in three days.' "

- This part of Jesus' story is familiar to most but do not assume they understand what's going on.
- No one knows exactly why Judas committed treason against Jesus, but he fulfilled a prophecy made over 500 years before Christ (Zachariah 11:12-13)
- Jesus had been praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22: 39-46). His apostles were nearby, mostly sleeping.
- Kissing the hand or cheek of a teacher or rabbi was a sign of great respect. Judas used the custom to point the Teacher out to the mob seeking to arrest Him.
- Though Jesus knew exactly what Judas was doing, He still calls him 'friend'! Jesus still shows him love!
- Jesus was **not** defenseless! He had the armies of Heaven at His disposal! No one could take His life unless He allowed it (John 10:17-18). He gave it up because He knew that it was necessary –for our sake– that He fulfill all the prophecies in Scripture that said that the Messiah (the Christ) would be rejected by men, mocked and beaten, and that He would be crucified but at the third day He would raise back from the dead.
- Jewish law prohibited trials at night. They could not even arrest someone during a Sabbath or Festival. Caiaphas, the priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders were all doing what they knew was illegal for them to do.
- Though they were jealous of Jesus' popularity, and very angry at Him, they could not find anything to accuse Him of. They had to hire false witnesses, but even then they could not find two false witnesses who agreed on their stories. Finally two false witnesses came up with a story to make their case: they said Jesus had threatened to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem. (Jesus had prophesied the destruction of the Temple but He did not say He was going to do it – Matthew 24:1-2. In John 2:19-21 He was actually speaking of His own body.) Still, that would not work.

<sup>62</sup> Then the high priest stood up. He asked Jesus, “Aren’t you going to answer? What are these charges that these men are bringing against you?”

<sup>63</sup> But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I command you under oath by the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

<sup>64</sup> “Yes. It is just as you say,” Jesus replied. “But here is what I say to all of you. In days to come, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One. You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.”

<sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothes. He said, “He has spoken a very evil thing against God! Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard him say this evil thing. <sup>66</sup> What do you think?”

“He must die!” they answered.

<sup>67</sup> Then they spit in his face. They hit him with their fists. Others slapped him.

## **Matthew 27**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus was standing in front of the governor. The governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Yes. It is just as you say,” Jesus replied.

<sup>12</sup> But when the chief priests and the elders brought charges against him, he did not answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the charges they are bringing against you?”

<sup>14</sup> But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge. The governor was really amazed.

<sup>15</sup> It was the governor’s practice at the Passover Feast to let one prisoner go free. The people could choose the one they wanted. <sup>16</sup> At that time they had a well-known prisoner named Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to set free? Barabbas? Or Jesus who is called Christ?” <sup>18</sup> Pilate knew that the leaders were jealous. He knew this was why they had handed Jesus over to him.

<sup>19</sup> While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him a message. It said, “Don’t have anything to do with that man. He is not guilty. I have suffered a great deal in a dream today because of him.”

<sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and the elders talked the crowd into asking for Barabbas and having Jesus put to death.

<sup>21</sup> “Which of the two do you want me to set free?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

<sup>22</sup> “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

<sup>23</sup> “Why? What wrong has he done?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted even louder, “Crucify him!”

- They marveled at the fact that Jesus did not try to defend Himself against their lies. (Isaiah 53:7)
- Put under an oath, Jesus was forced to speak. Not speaking now would have been interpreted as a denial. Jesus could not deny Himself.
- Claiming to be the Christ (Messiah) was not an offense but claiming to be the Son of God, making Himself equal with God (John 5:18) could have been seen as a blasphemy (speaking evil against God) unless He could ‘prove’ to them He really was God, which they were not willing to believe anyway. The priests wanted Him to say it in front of everyone to condemn Him by His own word.
- Tearing up ones clothes was a sign of deep sorrow or indignation (offense, anger). However, it was all a big show. They had decided to kill Jesus long before they arrested Him (Matthew 12:14; 26:3-4). They just needed an excuse to justify their actions.
- Immediately started abusing Jesus with the three most offensive actions against a Jewish person (Isaiah 50:6).
- Since the Jewish nation was under the control of the Roman Empire and its laws, the Jewish leaders had no authority to carry out the death sentence. They had to fabricate a political charge against Jesus so the Romans would condemn Him to death.
- They decided to accuse Jesus of inciting the Jewish people to rebellion against the Romans (see Luke 23:1-2). That was a charge of treason, which carried a death sentence.
- Jesus cannot deny Himself or Who He is. He is King, but not the kind of political king the Jewish leaders were implying. Apparently, Pilate knew that Jesus did not seek political power because he did not insist on the charge.
- After that Jesus did not answer or argue any of their false charges. He demonstrated control over His emotions; He knew it would be useless to argue with people whose minds were closed to God’s word. He had also submitted Himself to the will of the Father: He knew He had to die (Matthew 20:17-19; 26:35-36).
- Pilate, the Roman governor, knew that the Jewish leaders had turned Jesus to him out of jealousy over His followers (see John 11:45-53). He knew all charges against Jesus were false (v.23). Even his wife knew it!
- This crowd was most probably made up of priests and Temple servants (there were thousands of them) who would have been alerted by the Jewish leaders to come to Pilate’s place at that early time of the morning (see Mark 15:1 and John 18:28). It is obvious that they knew what the plan was and they made sure it was accomplished by their insistence on asking for Jesus’ crucifixion. They even asked to have a known murderer set free!

<sup>24</sup> Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere. Instead, the crowd was starting to get angry. So he took water and washed his hands in front of them. "I am not guilty of this man's death," he said. "You are accountable for that!"

<sup>25</sup> All the people answered, "We and our children will accept the guilt for his death!"

<sup>26</sup> Pilate let Barabbas go free. But he had Jesus whipped. Then he handed him over to be nailed to a cross.

<sup>27</sup> The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the palace, which was called the Praetorium. All the rest of the soldiers gathered around him. <sup>28</sup> They took off his clothes and put a purple robe on him. <sup>29</sup> Then they twisted thorns together to make a crown. They placed it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand. Then they fell on their knees in front of him and made fun of him. "We honor you, king of the Jews!" they said. <sup>30</sup> They spit on him. They hit him on the head with the stick again and again.

<sup>31</sup> After they had made fun of him, they took off the robe. They put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him away to nail him to a cross.

- Washing of one's hands in this manner is a symbol of a refusal to take responsibility in the outcome.
- They willingly claimed all responsibility for Jesus' murder! No one in their right mind would take responsibility for the murder of an innocent man!
- The Roman "whipping" was outright torture meant to inflict serious body damage (Isaiah 52:14).
  - "A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh. The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, *hematidrosis* (a very rare condition in which a human being sweats blood; it may occur when a person is suffering extreme levels of stress, for example, facing his or her own death) had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical." *From: <http://www.frugalsites.net/jesus/scourging.ht>*
  - "The Romans would, according to custom, scourge a condemned criminal before he was put to death. The Roman scourge, also called the "flagrum" or "flagellum" was a short whip made of two or three leather (ox-hide) thongs or ropes connected to a handle... The leather thongs were knotted with a number of small pieces of metal, usually zinc and iron, attached at various intervals. Scourging would quickly remove the skin.  
"According to Jewish law (discipline of the synagogue) the number of stripes was forty less one (Deut. 25:3)... Nevertheless, scourging among the Romans was a more severe form of punishment and there was no legal limit to the number of blows, as with the Jews. Deep lacerations, torn flesh, exposed muscles and excessive bleeding would leave the criminal "half-dead." Death was often the result of this cruel form of punishment though it was necessary to keep the criminal alive to be brought to public subjugation on the cross. The Centurion in charge would order the "lictors" to halt the flogging when the criminal was near death." —*From: <http://www.bible-history.com/past/flagrum.html>*
- "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." — Isaiah 53:5-6

## 28. The crucifixion – Decision for and against Jesus – “It is finished”

(NirV)

### John 19

<sup>17</sup> He had to carry his own cross. He went out to a place called The Skull. In the Aramaic language it was called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they nailed Jesus to the cross. Two other men were crucified with him. One was on each side of him. Jesus was in the middle.

<sup>19</sup> Pilate had a notice prepared. It was fastened to the cross. It read, ~jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews.= <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read the sign. The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. The sign was written in the Aramaic, Latin and Greek languages.

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<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes. They divided them into four parts. Each soldier got one part. Jesus' long, inner robe was left. It did not have any seams. It was made out of one piece of cloth from top to bottom.

<sup>24</sup> “Let's not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let's cast lots to see who will get it.”

This happened so that Scripture would come true. It says, “They divided up my clothes among them.

They cast lots for what I was wearing.”  
So that is what the soldiers did.

### Matthew 27

<sup>39</sup> Those who passed by shouted at Jesus and made fun of him. They shook their heads <sup>40</sup> and said, “So you are going to destroy the temple and build it again in three days? Then save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

<sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders made fun of him. <sup>42</sup> “He saved others,” they said. “But he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross! Then we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him. He's the one who said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ “

<sup>44</sup> In the same way the robbers who were being crucified with Jesus also made fun of him.

- As you go over this lesson, remind students that Jesus' death was caused by our own sin against God. We had a hand in His death. He is the Lamb of God who died in our place so that, if we accept Him as Lord and Savior, our sins might be forgiven.
- [Remember that when it mentions “the Jews” it refers to people who did not follow Jesus –who was a Jew himself–, and that the actual crucifixion was carried out by the Romans.]
- Crucifixions were common Roman punishment for the worst kinds of criminals. However, even the worst criminal could not be crucified if he/she was a Roman citizen. It was the most horrible way to die.
- The sign Pilate ordered to be placed on the cross of Jesus was meant as a mockery.
- EVERY prophecy ever delivered regarding the Messiah (Christ) of God was fulfilled in Jesus. King David's Psalm 22, written about 1,000 years before the birth of Christ, especially describes what Jesus would see and feel while hanging from the cross!
  - “A group of sinful people has closed in on me. They are all around me like a pack of dogs. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can see all of my bones right through my skin. People stare at me. They laugh when I suffer.” (verses 16-17)
  - “They divide up my clothes among them. They cast lots for what I am wearing.” (verse 18)
  - “People treat me like a worm and not a man. They hate me and look down on me. All those who see me laugh at me. They shout at me and make fun of me. They shake their heads at me. They say, ‘He trusts in the Lord. Let the Lord help him. If the Lord is pleased with him, let him save him.’” (verses 6-8) See also Matthew 27:42-43.
  - “My strength is dried up like a piece of broken pottery. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.” (verse 15)

## John 19

<sup>28</sup> Later Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” He knew that everything was now finished. He knew that what Scripture said must come true. <sup>29</sup> A jar of wine vinegar was there. So they soaked a sponge in it. They put the sponge on a stem of the hyssop plant. Then they lifted it up to Jesus’ lips.

<sup>30</sup> After Jesus drank he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and died.

<sup>31</sup> It was Preparation Day. The next day would be a special Sabbath. The Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath. So they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. <sup>32</sup> The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus. Then they broke the legs of the other man.

<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead. So they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus’ side. Right away, blood and water flowed out. <sup>35</sup> The man who saw it has given witness. And his witness is true. He knows that he tells the truth. He gives witness so that you also can believe.

<sup>36</sup> These things happened in order that Scripture would come true. It says, “Not one of his bones will be broken.”—(*Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20*) <sup>37</sup> Scripture also says, “They will look to the one they have pierced.”—(*Zechariah 12:10*)

<sup>38</sup> Later Joseph asked Pilate for Jesus’ body. Joseph was from the town of Arimathea. He was a follower of Jesus. But he followed Jesus secretly because he was afraid of the Jews. After Pilate gave him permission, Joseph came and took the body away.

<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus went with Joseph. He was the man who had earlier visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought some mixed spices, about 75 pounds. <sup>40</sup> The two men took Jesus’ body. They wrapped it in strips of linen cloth, along with the spices. That was the way the Jews buried people’s bodies.

<sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. A new tomb was there. No one had ever been put in it before. <sup>42</sup> That day was the Jewish Preparation Day, and the tomb was nearby. So they placed Jesus there.

- God’s Word is absolutely trustworthy. Everything He said regarding Jesus came true.
- The Greek word for, “it is finished” is *tetelestai*.
  - “The word *tetelestai* was also written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times indicating that a bill had been *paid in full*... The connection between receipts and what Christ accomplished would have been quite clear to John’s Greek-speaking readers; it would be unmistakable that Jesus Christ had died to pay for their sins.” —*From: [www.bible.org/](http://www.bible.org/)*
  - “...When Jesus spoke this word, announcing that all was finished, He had paid in full for the sins of all people. He accomplished the atoning sacrifice for the sins of all, and that includes you and me! This single word assures us that all is done and our salvation in Jesus is sure! There is nothing we need to do or add to Jesus’ completed work! “Tetelestai”! “It is finished”! And Jesus’ resurrection on the third day proves the truthfulness of this single, dying word.” —*From: [www.mollfoto.com/tssv/sermons/Tetelestai.htm](http://www.mollfoto.com/tssv/sermons/Tetelestai.htm)*
- Jews would not allow crucified men to be left to die during their day of rest, Sabbath.
- Crucified people could hang from crosses for many days before dying. Breaking their legs usually made them die quickly as they could not push themselves up to breathe, when their position on the cross—hanging from their arms—made it extremely difficult to do so.
- Jesus was already dead after only six hours on the cross. That gives us another indication of the kind of beating He had suffered before being crucified.
- It is believed that the blood and water that came from Jesus’ wound came from the piercing of the heart and the pericardium, a membrane that surrounds the heart. This membrane contains a lubricating fluid which looks like water, which prevents the surface of the heart from becoming dry by its continual motion. It was this which was pierced and from which the ‘water’ flowed together with the blood.
- More prophecies are fulfilled. God is faithful to His Word. He is absolutely trustworthy.
- Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy and well connected man (*Matthew 27:57-58*). The Pharisee Nicodemus (*John 3*) apparently had become a follower of Jesus. They came to embalm Jesus’ body for burial.
- And yet another prophecy is fulfilled here! *Isaiah 53:9*—“He was given a grave with those who were evil. But his body was buried in the tomb of a rich man.”
- “At just the right time Christ died for ungodly people. He died for us when we had no power of our own. It is unusual for anyone to die for a godly person. Maybe someone would be willing to die for a good person. But here is how God has shown his love for us. **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” (*Romans 5:6-8*)
- **PLEASE READ *John 3:16* with the students.**

## 29. The resurrection and appearance to disciples and followers (NirV)

The resurrection of Christ is the most important event in human history: it is our guarantee that Jesus is who He said He is and that He has the power and authority to do what He said He would do. Our salvation depends on it! (Romans 10:9) If Jesus had not risen from the dead we would have no hope (1 Corinthians 15:17-20). His resurrection is what separates Him above any other religious leader in human history – they are all dead and in their graves while Jesus is very much alive and in Heaven! I picked this version of the story in Luke because of the details he includes. The focus will be on: Jesus promised He would come back from the dead and He did; angels testified about His resurrection; people saw and touched Him, and He ate with them: He was no ghost – He had a physical body with special characteristics (He came through closed doors, and disappeared from them); all the Scriptures –from the books of Moses (Torah) to the prophets and the Psalms- talk about Him; anyone who believes in Him *and* believes Him will have his/her sins forgiven and a place guaranteed in Heaven! (1 John 5:11-13)

### Luke 24

#### Jesus Rises from the Dead

<sup>1</sup> It was very early in the morning on the first day of the week. The women took the spices they had prepared. Then they went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from it. <sup>3</sup> When they entered the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> They were wondering about this.

Suddenly two men in clothes as bright as lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> The women were terrified. They bowed down with their faces to the ground.

Then the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? **Jesus is not here! He has risen!** Remember how he told you he would rise. It was while he was still with you in Galilee. <sup>7</sup> He said, ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinful people. He must be nailed to a cross. On the third day he will rise from the dead.’ “

<sup>8</sup> Then the women remembered Jesus’ words.

<sup>9</sup> They came back from the tomb. They told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. <sup>10</sup> Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them were the ones who told the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But the apostles did not believe the women. Their words didn’t make any sense to them.

<sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. He bent over and saw the strips of linen lying by themselves. Then he went away, wondering what had happened.

#### On the Road to Emmaus

<sup>13</sup> That same day two of Jesus’ followers were going to a village called Emmaus. It was about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

<sup>15</sup> As they talked about those things, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. <sup>16</sup> But God kept them from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?”

They stood still, and their faces were sad. <sup>18</sup> One of them was named Cleopas. He said to Jesus, “You must be a visitor to Jerusalem. If you lived there, you would know the things that have happened there in the last few days.”

<sup>19</sup> “What things?” Jesus asked.

- The first day of the week is our Sunday
- The spices were for embalming Jesus’ body – to delay decay (decomposition) and to help minimize the stench (stink, disgusting smell) of a decomposing body.
- The stones used to seal tombs were enormous –some weighing up to 2 tons (2000 pounds or 907 kilos).
- The women found an empty tomb!
- Two angels appeared and they were very afraid.
  
- The angels’ question could be paraphrased as, “What are you doing here? He told you He would rise from the dead! You should know that!”
- Jesus had predicted everything that had happened to Him, including the fact that He would come back from the dead after three days in a tomb: see Matthew 12:40, 16:4 and 21, 17:9 and 22-23, 20:19, 26:32.
- The apostles did not believe the women’s story
  - They had forgotten what Jesus had said! They did not even believe or understand what Jesus had said anyway. (Mark 9:9-10, Luke 18:31-34)
  - At that time, they did not accept the testimony of women. How marvelous that Jesus chose to give the news of His resurrection to women first. The other gospels indicate that He appeared to them and that they spoke with Him and touched Him. *He always gave women a special place and included them in everything He did or taught.*
  
- These other disciples did not believe the testimony of the women who had seen Jesus alive. They did not even recognize Jesus when He walked and talked with them!

”About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet. He was powerful in what he said and did in the eyes of God and all of the people.<sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed Jesus over to be sentenced to death. They nailed him to a cross.<sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to set Israel free. Also, it is the third day since all this happened.

<sup>22</sup> “Some of our women amazed us too. Early this morning they went to the tomb.<sup>23</sup> But they didn’t find his body. So they came and told us what they had seen. They saw angels, who said Jesus was alive.<sup>24</sup> Then some of our friends went to the tomb. They saw it was empty, just as the women had said. They didn’t see Jesus’ body there.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are! How long it takes you to believe all that the prophets said!<sup>26</sup> Didn’t the Christ have to suffer these things and then receive his glory?”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures. He began with Moses and all the Prophets.

<sup>28</sup> The two men approached the village where they were going. Jesus acted as if he were going farther.<sup>29</sup> But they tried hard to keep him from leaving. They said, “Stay with us. It is nearly evening. The day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> He joined them at the table. Then he took bread and gave thanks. He broke it and began to give it to them.<sup>31</sup> Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. But then he disappeared from their sight.

<sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “He talked with us on the road. He opened the Scriptures to us. Weren’t our hearts burning inside us during that time?”

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them. They were all gathered together.<sup>34</sup> They were saying, “It’s true! The Lord has risen! He has appeared to Simon!”

<sup>35</sup> Then the two of them told what had happened to them on the way. They told how they had recognized Jesus when he broke the bread.

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

<sup>36</sup> The disciples were still talking about this when Jesus himself suddenly stood among them. He said, “May peace be with you!”

<sup>37</sup> They were surprised and terrified. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled? Why do you have doubts in your minds?<sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is really I! Touch me and see. A ghost does not have a body or bones. But you can see that I do.”

<sup>40</sup> After he said that, he showed them his hands and feet.<sup>41</sup> But they still did not believe it. They were amazed and filled with joy.

So Jesus asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of cooked fish.<sup>43</sup> He took it and ate it in front of them.

<sup>44</sup> Jesus said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything written about me must happen. Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true.”

- They tell Jesus what has happened to Him!
- They even mention the testimony of the women about His resurrection but they still do not believe it.
- Jesus is kind of annoyed! They had not believed what the prophets had said. They had not believed what Jesus had said about His resurrection.
- Jesus took the time to explain everything that is written about Him in the entire Bible.
  - From the very beginning of the world and through all of human history as registered in the Bible, God has revealed His plans of salvation through a Messiah or Christ – the chosen One. Jesus is the promised Messiah/Christ of God.
  - All the prophecies of a Savior are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His resurrection confirms what He said and guarantees that He will do what He said He would do. All other great leaders and prophets are dead but Jesus is alive!
  - All the prophecies about the future – judgment, eternal life in Heaven, God’s reign, etc – are to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is all about Him!
  - There is no other name (Acts 4:12) in which we can find salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
  - There are no other leaders or prophets or Messiah’s after Christ. Jesus said that anyone who came pretending to be one of those after Him was a false Christ and a false prophet (Matthew 24:23-24)
- They only recognized Jesus when they sat down to eat with Him. But then He disappeared!
- They finally realized that they had really sensed it was Him the whole time – they had felt a burning in their hearts – but they were slow to believe it was really Him alive again.
- They ran back to Jerusalem only to find that Jesus had already appeared to the others too.
- Jesus appeared right then again! They were very afraid.
- They still not understand that He was back in a physical body. Jesus had to ask them to touch Him!
- He even ate their fish so they could see He was real.
- Then He told them, again, that the entire Bible talks about Him and that everything it says about Him had, and has, to happen.

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written. The Christ will suffer. **He will rise from the dead** on the third day. <sup>47</sup> His followers will preach in his name. **They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be forgiven.** People from every nation will hear it, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You have seen these things with your own eyes.

<sup>49</sup> “I am going to send you what my Father has promised. But for now, stay in the city. Stay there until you have received power from heaven.”

### **Jesus Is Taken Up Into Heaven**

<sup>50</sup> Jesus led his disciples out to the area near Bethany. Then he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them. He was taken up into heaven.

<sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him. With great joy, they returned to Jerusalem. <sup>53</sup> Every day they went to the temple, praising God.

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## **1 Corinthians 15**

<sup>3</sup> What I received I passed on to you. And it is the most important of all. Here is what it is. Christ died for our sins, just as Scripture said he would. <sup>4</sup> He was buried. He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as Scripture said he would be. <sup>5</sup> He appeared to Peter.

Then he appeared to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than 500 believers at the same time. Most of them are still living. But some have died.

- God is faithful to His word. What He said He will do.
  - He has promised that anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved and will have eternal life in Heaven. (John 3:16 and 35-36). You do not have to work to earn your salvation. God offers you free salvation and eternal life if you just trust in Jesus, His only Son (Ephesians 2:8-9).
  
- Jesus went up into Heaven after appearing to many people for 40 days and nights.
- Many people saw Him alive and spoke to Him and ate with Him and touched Him.
  
- And one day He will come back again! (Revelation 1:7)
  
  
- This is an account of some of the people who saw Jesus alive after he resurrected. The writer, the apostle Paul, tells them that many of those who saw Jesus after His resurrection were still alive then – they could check out the story with the many witnesses!
- There was no doubt He was alive... there is no doubt He is alive! Those who surrender their lives to Him have the privilege of talking to Him in prayer everyday.

## 30. Jesus returns to the Father: the Ascension and the promise to return (NirV)

[NOTE: Lesson 32 also speaks of Jesus' return; you may skip lesson 31 and go directly to 32 if necessary.]

### Acts 1

<sup>1</sup> Theophilus, I wrote about Jesus in my earlier book. I wrote about all he did and taught <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before Jesus left, he gave orders to the apostles he had chosen. He did this through the Holy Spirit. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering and death, he appeared to them. In many ways he proved that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days. During that time he spoke about God's kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> One day Jesus was eating with them. He gave them a command. "Do not leave Jerusalem," he said. "Wait for the gift my Father promised. You have heard me talk about it. <sup>5</sup> John baptized with water. But in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>6</sup> When the apostles met together, they asked Jesus a question. "Lord," they said, "are you going to give the kingdom back to Israel now?"

<sup>7</sup> He said to them, "You should not be concerned about times or dates. The Father has set them by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You will be my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. And you will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other."

<sup>9</sup> After Jesus said this, he was taken up to heaven. They watched until a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup> While he was going up, they kept on looking at the sky. Suddenly two men dressed in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. But he will come back in the same way you saw him go."

### Revelation 1

<sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds!

Every eye will see him.

Even those who pierced him will see him.

All the nations of the earth will be sad because of him.

This will really happen! Amen.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," says the Lord God. "I am the One who is, and who was, and who will come. I am the Mighty One."

- [Jesus is the Son of God, second person of the Trinity. Through Him all things were created (John 1:1-3); everything was created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:15-16). He is one with the Father (John 10:30) and shared the Father's glory before the world began (John 17:5, 24). He became man (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8) to live like one of us and be tempted like one of us, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He died in our place taking upon Himself the penalty for our sin (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Peter 3:18).]
- After three days in the tomb God raised Him back from the dead and many, many people saw Him and touched Him and ate with Him and walked with Him (refer back to previous lesson and other related passages).
- For 40 days he appeared to many witnesses and taught them about God's kingdom.
- Now, even after all they had seen and heard from Jesus, the disciples still did not understand. They were thinking about an earthly political kingdom. They still thought Jesus was going to overthrow the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel! They were still thinking in human terms of political and military power.
- Jesus basically told them, "that's none of your business." Jesus gave them a task to do: tell everyone about Him and make disciples. (See also Matthew 28:18-20)
- After He finished speaking and while they were still looking at Him, he went up in the air toward heaven! (See also Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51).
  - Jesus had spoken to them about this before but they probably did not understand what He meant. (See John 14:12; 16:5 and 28; 17:11, 13).
- They were probably in shock, staring at the sky even after Jesus had disappeared from view. The angels called them back from their shock to tell them: He is coming back!
  - In the clouds, and everybody will see Him (Matthew 24:30; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:17)
  - "With a blast from God's trumpet" (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
  - When you least expect Him (Matthew 24:27, 36, and 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10)
  - To bring salvation to those who await Him (Hebrews 9:28) and to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1)
- People who do not believe the Word of God question Jesus' promise and mock those who await His return. However, they forget that God's time table is eternal, and that Jesus is only being patient, giving them time to repent (2 Peter 3:3-9).
- Believers need to be alert and prepared to meet their Savior, walking in a manner worthy of Him (2 Peter 3:14; Luke 21:34-36; Colossians 1:9-14).

## 31. Jesus, the true High Priest *(New International reader's Version)*

### **Hebrews 7:23-27**

<sup>23</sup> There were many priests in Levi's family line. Death kept them from continuing in office. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus lives forever. So he always holds the office of priest. <sup>25</sup> People now come to God through him. And he is able to save them completely and for all time. Jesus lives forever. He prays for them.

<sup>26</sup> A high priest like that meets our need. He is holy, pure and without blame. He isn't like other people. He does not sin. He is lifted high above the heavens.

<sup>27</sup> He isn't like the other high priests. They need to offer sacrifices day after day. First they bring offerings for their own sins. Then they do it for the sins of the people. But Jesus gave one sacrifice for the sins of the people. He gave it once and for all time. He did it by offering himself.

### **Heb 9:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> Christ came to be the high priest of the good things that are already here. When he came, he went through the greater and more perfect holy tent. The tent was not made by people. In other words, it is not a part of this creation.

<sup>12</sup> He did not enter by spilling the blood of goats and calves. He entered the Most Holy Room by spilling his own blood. He did it once and for all time. He paid the price to set us free from sin forever.

### **Heb 10:11-14**

<sup>11</sup> Day after day every priest stands and does his special duties. He offers the same sacrifices again and again. But they can never take away sins.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus our priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. Then he sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>13</sup> Since that time, he waits for his enemies to be put under his control. <sup>14</sup> By that one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

### **Rom 8:34**

<sup>34</sup> Who can sentence us to death? Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also praying for us. He died. More than that, he was raised to life.

- The book of Hebrews presents a contrast between the law and its sacrificial system and the work of salvation performed by Jesus Christ. The law only presented a faint image or symbol of the perfect work God was going to do through Christ.
- Unlike human priests who are themselves bound to sin and death, Jesus lives forever and is absolutely pure and sinless.
- We come to God only through Jesus (John 14:6).
- Those who come to Jesus are saved forever – they do not have to be “resaved” every time they fail.
- Jesus intercedes (intervenes, mediates, pleads, prays) for them before the Father (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1)
- Human priests have to ask forgiveness for their own sins through the sacrifice of animals before they offer sacrifices for the sins of others.
- In contrast, who Jesus never sinned, offered Himself as the one and only perfect sacrifice that can take away sin once and forever.
- To obtain pardon for the sins of people, priests had to take the blood of the sacrificed animals into Most Holy Room of the tent or the Temple made by human hands.
- In contrast, Jesus Christ entered the real tent or Temple in Heaven –not made by human hands– and He entered it carrying His own blood.
- Priests had to do their sacrifices continually, but Jesus sacrifice is perfect and had to be done only once. His one perfect sacrifice is sufficient to set us free from sin forever!
- The blood from the many, many sacrifices human priests made could not take away sin; it could only cover it for a time. That's why they had to keep doing them.
- But the blood of Jesus can take away sin forever. By His own sacrifice He can make us perfect and holy before the Father, and we do not have to fear anymore.
  - Those who trust in Jesus and surrender their lives completely to Him do not have to fear punishment or condemnation for their sins anymore (John 3:18; 5:24; Romans 8:1).
    - That assurance, however, does not give the believer a license to live in a manner that is not pleasing to God. On the contrary, the believer is now under the direct authority of the Holy Spirit and he/she is called to live in a manner that will honor God (1 Corinthians 10:23; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:17-32 and 5:1-33; Colossians 1:9-14; 2:6-8; 3:1-17).



## **1 Tim 2:5**

<sup>5</sup> There is only one God. And there is only one go-between for God and human beings. He is the man Christ Jesus.

## **1 John 2:1**

<sup>1</sup> My dear children, I'm writing this to you so that you will not sin. But suppose someone does sin. Then we have one who speaks to the Father for us. He stands up for us. He is Jesus Christ, the Blameless One.

- Jesus constantly intercedes for the believers before the Father. We can come to Him freely, without fear of rejection.
  
- God's desire is for us to live a life of holiness (purity, sanctity, godliness, righteousness), always seeking to do what is right before God and avoiding whatever is not pleasing to Him.
- However, He knows that we are not perfect and that we will fail in our desire to please Him. When we realize that we have offended God and we repent from our sin, we can come back to Him through Jesus Christ who alone stands for us and defends us before the Father.
- No other being on heaven or on earth can forgive and save us. No one but Jesus!

## 32. Return of Jesus to receive believers unto himself, to judge and punish unbelievers [Also see Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:27-28] (NlrV)

### Matthew 24

<sup>3</sup> Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives. There the disciples came to him in private. “Tell us,” they said. “When will this happen? And what will be the sign of your coming? What will be the sign of the end?”

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “Keep watch! Be careful that no one fools you. <sup>5</sup> Many will come in my name. They will claim, ‘I am the Christ!’ They will fool many people.

<sup>6</sup> “You will hear about wars. You will also hear people talking about future wars. Don’t be alarmed. Those things must happen. But the end still isn’t here. <sup>7</sup> Nation will fight against nation. Kingdom will fight against kingdom. People will go hungry. There will be earthquakes in many places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the beginning of birth pains.

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<sup>14</sup> This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world. It will be a witness to all nations. Then the end will come.

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<sup>30</sup> “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. All the nations on earth will be sad. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky. He will come with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call. They will gather his chosen people from all four directions. They will bring them from one end of the heavens to the other.

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<sup>36</sup> “No one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows.

### 2 Peter 3

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. Fire will destroy everything in them. God will judge the earth and everything in it.

<sup>11</sup> So everything will be destroyed. And what kind of people should you be? You should lead holy and godly lives.

<sup>12</sup> Live like that as you look forward to the day of God. It will make the day come more quickly. On that day fire will destroy the heavens. Its heat will melt everything in them.

<sup>13</sup> But we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. Godliness will make its home there. All of this is in keeping with God’s promise.

<sup>14</sup> Dear friends, I know you are looking forward to that. So try your best to be found pure and without blame. Be at peace with God.

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<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to keep his promise. He is not slow in the way some people understand it. He is patient with you. He doesn’t want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins.

- Everybody wants to know about the end of the world and the disciples were no different. They had a chance to talk to the only One who knows exactly what’s going to happen, and they did.
- Signs the end is near: impostors (fake Christs or religious leaders), wars and rumors of new wars; enmity (hostility, hate, antagonism), hunger, earthquakes... It reads like today’s newspaper! What does that tell you?
- One of the most important signs: the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be preached to everyone in every nation. The fact that you are hearing God’s Word today and learning about Jesus and His love for you is part of this prophecy. How does that make you feel?
- No one knows what the “sign of the Son of Man” could be, but you can be certain He is coming! He promised to do so and, in the same way all the old prophecies about Him have been fulfilled, this one is guaranteed to be fulfilled too. Are you ready to see Him coming in the clouds (Revelation 1:7)?
- When He comes back, Jesus will not come as a humble servant to save the lost. He is coming as what He really is: Almighty God in all His power and Majesty, ready to judge the world. Are you ready to face judgment? You will not face judgment if you are a born-again believer, one who has surrendered his life to Jesus, one who has accepted Him as his Lord and Savior. If you have, then you will have nothing to fear when He comes back.
- No one knows when He is coming – and no one has this life guaranteed. That’s why it is so important that you establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ now while you are alive and well. Don’t wait till tomorrow because tomorrow may not come for you.
- If you already have a relationship with Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then you should remember that He has called us to live in a way that is pleasing to God. That’s what living a holy and godly life means.
- If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can look forward with joy to the day He returns to take you to Heaven with Him, as He has promised (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- If you still do not know Him – if you have not received Him as Lord and Savior – then consider this: He has not returned yet because He is giving you and all those who still do not know about Him time to hear the good news of the Gospel, to repent and turn away from your sins, and to come back to God.
- He is a loving God who wants to have you in Heaven with Him for ever! His desire is not to punish anyone but to save all who trust in Him (John 3:17). But the decision is up to you. He has done everything He could. Now you have to decide what to do about Jesus.

## 33. A warning and a call to repentance *(New International reader's Version, NlRV)*

### **Luke 13**

<sup>1</sup> Some people who were there at that time told Jesus about certain Galileans. Pilate had mixed their blood with their sacrifices.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus said, "These people from Galilee suffered greatly. Do you think they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans?" <sup>3</sup> I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too.

<sup>4</sup> Or what about the 18 people in Siloam? They died when the tower fell on them. Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?" <sup>5</sup> I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too."

### **Romans 3**

<sup>10</sup> It is written,

"No one is right with God, no one at all.

<sup>11</sup> No one understands.

No one trusts in God.

<sup>12</sup> All of them have turned away.

They have all become worthless.

No one does anything good,

no one at all."

<sup>13</sup> "Their throats are like open graves.

With their tongues they tell lies."

"The words from their lips are like the poison of a snake."

<sup>14</sup> "Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness."

<sup>15</sup> "They run quickly to commit murder.

<sup>16</sup> They leave a trail of failure and pain.

<sup>17</sup> They do not know the way of peace."

<sup>18</sup> "They don't have any respect for God."

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<sup>23</sup> Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory.

### **1 John 1**

<sup>8</sup> Suppose we claim we are without sin. Then we are fooling ourselves. The truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> But God is faithful and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.

### **Acts 3**

<sup>19</sup> So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away. The time will come when the Lord will make everything new.

### **A Warning and a Call to Repentance**

- People thought that the Galileans had suffered greatly and were killed and burned with their sacrifices because they were very bad sinners.
- Jesus said, "No". They were not worse sinners. We are all sinners before God. We all need to repent or we will suffer spiritual death too.
- Same with the people from Siloam. The falling tower did not kill them because they were more guilty than others. We are all guilty before God. We all have to repent or face spiritual death forever.
  - Some people think that bad things only happen to bad people. That is not true. They can happen to anyone. We are all "on the same boat".
- God does not have a "sin scale" or different levels of sin and punishment. There are no "white lies" or "little sins." All sin – whether we consider it big or small – is offensive to God.
- All sin receives the same punishment: spiritual death, eternal separation from God = hell. (Romans 6:23)
- We cannot compare to one another to see who is the worse or the least sinner. It is God who judges us. We have to compare ourselves to God's holiness – that's when we realize how awful our sin is before God.
- There is not one person who has ever been perfectly sinless before God, except for Jesus who never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22).
- Our thoughts and actions, our words and desires, all condemn us.
  
- No one measures up to God's standard. We are all sinners in desperate need of forgiveness.
  
- God is ready and willing to forgive all those who come to Him in sincere repentance. God is ready to make us clean and to give us a new life in His Son Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- To receive forgiveness you first have to admit, confess, your sin before God. Not in a general way, as when people say, "Forgive my sins," without mentioning any specific sin. We have to recognize what we have done wrong against God and confess each sin individually.
  
- Confess your sin, turn away from it, and turn to God through Jesus Christ, and seek to live your life the way that is pleasing to Him. God will be faithful and will completely forgive you and make everything new – give you a new life in Christ.

## 34. Invitation to Believe *(New International reader's Version, NIV)*

Note: Before teaching this lesson, pray for the students; pray for the Lord to speak to their hearts and to make His Word clear in their minds. This lesson is an invitation to believe and receive Christ as Lord and Savior. It is not a presentation of the entire plan of salvation; the emphasis is on **believing** as opposed to **doing works** to earn salvation. (If you are teaching this to non-Hispanics you may need to actually go through the entire plan of salvation, or even talk more about Jesus' deity and holiness and man's sinful condition.) Explain that salvation depends on their decision to receive or reject Christ, not on a feeling or on circumstances. It is a gift from God –free but costly– but they have to decide if they want it or not. Do invite the students (heads bowed and eyes closed) to consider what they want to do about Christ but DO NOT ask them to come to the front to indicate their decision. Do invite those who either want to trust Christ or who want to know more to talk to you at the end of the class. If anyone does talk to you after the class, ask several questions to see what exactly they understand and if they are ready to receive Christ or if they are just beginning to see the light and want to know more. In either case, take time to pray with and for the student. If possible, set up a time to meet with them afterwards or visit them at home.

### **John 3**

<sup>16</sup> “God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who **believes** in him will not die but will have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> “God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.

<sup>18</sup> Anyone who **believes** in him is not judged. But anyone who **does not believe** is judged already. He has **not believed** in the name of God's one and only Son.

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<sup>36</sup> Anyone who **believes** in the Son has eternal life. Anyone who **says no** to the Son will not have life. God's anger remains on him.”

### **John 6**

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, “What does God want from us? What **works** does he want us to do?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “God's work is to **believe** in the One he has sent.”

### **Ephesians 2**

<sup>8</sup> God's grace has saved you because of your **faith in Christ**. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is **God's gift**. <sup>9</sup> It is **not** based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.

### **Romans 10**

<sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart.” That means the word we are preaching. You must put your **faith** in it.

<sup>9</sup> Say with your mouth, “**Jesus is Lord.**” **Believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Then you will be **saved**. <sup>10</sup> **With your heart you believe and are made right with God. With your mouth you say that Jesus is Lord. And so you are saved.** <sup>11</sup> Scripture says, “The one who **trusts in him** will never be put to shame.”

<sup>12</sup> There is no difference between those who are Jews and those who are not. The same Lord is Lord of all. He richly blesses everyone who calls on him. <sup>13</sup> Scripture says, “Everyone who **calls on the name of the Lord** will be saved.”

- Jesus, the only Son of God and who is God himself (John 1:1-3) came to die for us, sinners, because of God's great love for us. All He asks from us is that we believe what He says is true, that we completely trust Him, and that we receive Him in our hearts as Lord (John 1:12).
- Rejection of God's gift of love in Jesus is asking for God's anger. It is not God's desire to punish anyone or to send anyone to hell. Those who end up there do so because they reject God's gift of salvation.
- People always want to **do something** to earn God's love. That's not what He wants from us!!! What could anyone do that could compare or match what He has already done for us? All He wants us to do is to **believe and trust Him!**
  - Note: To believe is more than to say “I know God exists.” Even the devil believes that! (James 2:19) Believing for salvation is to agree with God that what He says is true, and to submit (surrender, yield, give in, resign) your life to His control.
- *Grace* is when God gives you what you do not deserve and cannot earn.
- He gives salvation to those who put their whole **faith in Him** – believe Him, trust what He says, obey Him.
- This is a gift from God and cannot be earned by doing anything. It does not depend on what you do –your works– it depends on your decision to trust Him.
- To declare that Jesus is Lord –”my Lord”– means to allow Him to be the owner/boss/master/ of your life – to let Him control your life.
- You have to believe what the Bible says: that He rose from the dead after three days in the tomb; that He has power over sin and death; that He is alive today and has the power to save those who trust Him. Then you will be saved (from the punishment of sin, from hell)
- When you trust Him and surrender your life to Him, God guarantees eternal life in heaven for you. (1 John 5:11-13)
- Do you **believe in** Jesus? Do you **believe** Jesus? Do you believe God raised Him from the dead? Do you trust Him enough to give Him the control over your life? Do you want to accept God's gift of salvation in Jesus?

## 35. The “I’am”s of Jesus (*New International reader’s Version, NlrV*)

### **John 6**

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus said, “**I am the bread of life.** No one who comes to me will ever go hungry. And no one who **believes** in me will ever be thirsty.”

### **John 7**

<sup>37</sup> *It was the last and most important day of the Feast. Jesus stood up and spoke in a loud voice. He said, “**Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.**”* <sup>38</sup> *Does anyone believe in me? Then, just as Scripture says, streams of living water will flow from inside him.”*

### **John 8**

<sup>12</sup> Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, “**I am the light of the world.** Those who follow me will never walk in darkness. They will have the light that leads to life.”

### **John 10**

<sup>9</sup> “**I’m like a gate.** Anyone who enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out. And he will find plenty of food.”

### **John 10**

<sup>11</sup> “**I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.”

### **John 11**

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life.** Anyone who **believes** in me will live, even if he dies. <sup>26</sup> And those who live and **believe** in me will never die. **Do you believe this?**”

### **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me.”

### **John 15**

<sup>5</sup> “**I am the vine.** You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me.”

### **What are man’s basic necessities?**

Life above all; then food and shelter. If these needs are met, then come light (no one lives in darkness willingly) and mental/spiritual light – truth and knowledge–. Then come guidance and protection. Once material needs are satisfied we have spiritual needs, in this life and after death. Jesus provides for all our needs. He is all we need! And He wants a very personal relationship with each of us.

- Jesus not only promises to supply our need for physical food; He is the only one who satisfies our spiritual hunger, permanently. He is our food and our water. You have to “eat Him” and “drink Him” – that means to experience Him in a very personal way; to let Him fill you with His presence.
- He invites us to come to Him and to receive what only He can give, freely and abundantly. Not only you will be fully satisfied but you will overflow!
  
- God is light (1 John 1:5). In light there is no fear. In light there is safety and joy. In light there is life. Jesus wants to be your light!
  
- Jesus is the gate (door) to salvation! There is no other one. You have to come through Him –and through Him only– to enjoy salvation and His abundant provision.
  
- A shepherd leads and cares for his sheep. A good shepherd is willing to give his own life for his sheep. That’s what Jesus has done for us! He willingly surrendered His own life to save us!
- Jesus is life! Only He has power over death! Only He can give us life even after we die! If you really trust Him and believe in Him –believe Him– you will have life for ever. Death will not be the end but a beautiful beginning with Him in heaven!
  
- You want to know the way to heaven? Jesus is the way! You want to know the truth? Jesus is the truth! You want to have life? Jesus is the life! There is no other way to the Father – to heaven – but through Him.
  
- We have to be “attached” to Him –have a personal, permanent, living relationship with Him– to give the fruit He wants from us. Otherwise you cannot do anything.

## 36. Healing of a crippled man *(New International reader's Version, NlrV)*

### Acts 3

<sup>1</sup> One day Peter and John were going up to the temple. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. It was the time for prayer. <sup>2</sup> A man unable to walk was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful. He had been that way since he was born. Every day someone put him near the gate. There he would beg from people going into the temple courtyards.

<sup>3</sup> He saw that Peter and John were about to enter. So he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter looked straight at him, and so did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup> So the man watched them closely. He expected to get something from them.

<sup>6</sup> Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk." <sup>7</sup> Then Peter took him by the right hand and helped him up. At once the man's feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> He jumped to his feet and began to walk. He went with Peter and John into the temple courtyards. He walked and jumped and praised God. <sup>9</sup> All the people saw him walking and praising God. <sup>10</sup> They recognized him as the same man who used to sit and beg at the temple gate called Beautiful. They were filled with wonder. They were amazed at what had happened to him.

<sup>11</sup> The beggar was holding on to Peter and John. All the people were amazed. They came running to them at Solomon's Porch. <sup>12</sup> When Peter saw this, he said, "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us? We haven't made this man walk by our own power or godliness. <sup>13</sup> The God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has done this. He has brought glory to Jesus, who serves him. But you handed Jesus over to be killed. Pilate had decided to let him go. But you spoke against Jesus when he was in Pilate's court. <sup>14</sup> You spoke against the Holy and Blameless One. You asked for a murderer to be set free instead. <sup>15</sup> You killed the one who gives life. But God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. <sup>16</sup> This man whom you see and know was made strong because of faith in Jesus' name. Faith in Jesus has healed him completely. You can see it with your own eyes.

<sup>17</sup> "My friends, I know you didn't realize what you were doing. Neither did your leaders. <sup>18</sup> But God had given a promise through all the prophets. And this is how he has made his promise come true. He said that his Christ would suffer. <sup>19</sup> So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away. The time will come when the Lord will make everything new.

- Through faith in Jesus' name a man who was born crippled was completely healed in front of the whole town.
- He walked and jumped and praised God!
- Everyone recognized who he was. They knew he was crippled from birth. They knew it was a miracle.
  
- People thought that Peter and John had performed a miracle – that they had the power in and of themselves to heal people.
- However, Peter quickly explained that it was not so. The power came from Jesus, the man they had crucified but whom God had raised from the dead.
- It was through faith in Jesus' name that the man was healed.
  - Though Jesus has granted some Christians the gift of healing, in reality it is always God himself who does the healing. All the power comes from Him. As Christians, we are only a channel for the power of God to be manifested. It is God's power, it is God's will, and to Him only belongs the credit and the glory.
- Peter then makes an invitation:
  - Turn away from your sins = repent = acknowledge that you have not lived a life pleasing to God because you have not been obedient to Him and His Word.  
  
However, this is only the first step. If you have truly repented of your sins, you need to...
  - Turn to God = come to God, surrender to Him, first, to receive His forgiveness and, second, to begin a new life according to His will, a life that is pleasing to Him

## Acts 4

<sup>10</sup> Then listen to this, you and all the people of Israel! You nailed Jesus Christ of Nazareth to the cross. But God raised him from the dead. It is through Jesus' name that this man stands healed in front of you. <sup>11</sup> Scripture says that Jesus is "the stone you builders did not accept. But it has become the most important stone of all." <sup>12</sup> You can't [cannot] be saved by believing in anyone else. God has given us no other name under heaven that will save us."

- Repenting is good but without turning back to God it does no good. It is only half the story.

For example: Imagine that you have seriously offended your father and have broken all contact with him for a long time. Then one day you come back to your senses and realize that what you have done is very wrong. You are sincerely sorry for what you did to your father and you cry until you have no more tears. It has been so long since you left home that you do not believe your father would ever want to see you and much less forgive you. So you do not come back to your father to ask for his forgiveness.

What you do not know is that the whole time you've been away your father has been longing to see you again. He has cried and prayed for you the entire time since you left. He has forgiven you in his heart; he just longs for the day when he can hold you in his arms again and show you how much he still loves you. But you will never know because you have not come back to him.

You will live a miserable life without receiving your father's forgiveness and love, not because it was not given but only because you did not come back to him to receive it.

- So it is with God. You have to repent and then turn to God to receive His forgiveness and love. You have to submit yourself to Him, and He will guide you in a new life, a life that begins here and will go into eternity with Him in Heaven.
  - You can do this in private, by yourself. You can sit or kneel in your room and pray to God, using your own words. Tell Him you are sorry for not being obedient to Him, for living a life your way not His. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins. Tell Him you want to live for Him in the way He likes. Ask Him to come into your heart and to take control of your life, to be your Lord and Master.
  - When you receive Jesus in your heart...
    - He will forgive all your sins (1 John 1:8-9).
    - you will have eternal life in Heaven (1 John 5:11-13)
    - you will become a new creature – you will be born again spiritually (2 Corinthians 5:17);
    - you will be given the right to become a child of God (John 1:12);
    - you will have peace with God (Romans 5:1);
    - you will not fear any punishment or condemnation (Romans 8:1);
    - He will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)
- Apart from Jesus, there is no other way to be saved, to receive God's pardon, to go to Heaven. He is the one and only Savior God has provided for us. He is our only hope, the only way to Heaven (John 14:6).
- Do not delay! Come back to God through Jesus and let Him forgive you and show you how much He longs to love on you and bless you.

## 37. God makes no distinctions *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

*This lesson is short and it is to serve as a kind of review of what we have talked about Jesus in previous lessons. Be prepared with a list of open-ended questions relating to the stories/lessons we have studied so far. Focus your questions on JESUS and what He has done for us, what He offers us, and the trustworthiness of His Word. We want them to talk so we can find out what they have really understood so far and what are their doubts or what's causing them confusion. You can address their concerns in future lessons.*

### Acts 10

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak. "I now realize how true it is that God treats everyone the same," he said. <sup>35</sup> "He accepts people from every nation. He accepts all who have respect for him and do what is right.

<sup>36</sup> "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel. It is the good news of peace through Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened all through Judea. It started in Galilee after John preached about baptism. <sup>38</sup> You know how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Jesus went around doing good. He healed all who were under the devil's power. God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> "We are witnesses of everything he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by nailing him to a cross. <sup>40</sup> But on the third day God raised him from the dead. God allowed Jesus to be seen. <sup>41</sup> But he wasn't seen by all the people. He was seen only by us. We are witnesses whom God had already chosen. We ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

<sup>42</sup> "He commanded us to preach to the people. He told us to give witness that he is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets give witness about him. They say that all who believe in him have their sins forgiven through his name."

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### Acts 4

<sup>12</sup> You can't be saved by believing in anyone else. God has given us no other name under heaven that will save us.

- Before God we are all the same, and He requires the same from each of us. God desires people who love and fear Him and who seek to do what pleases Him. He is willing and ready to accept all those who come to Him through Jesus.
- "You know..." – we have already read the testimonies of those who walked, talked and learned from Jesus. We have heard Jesus' own testimony. He is Lord (master, owner, Creator, etc) of all. He was full of the Holy Spirit. God was with Him. He brings us peace with God. What are you going to do about what you know?
- There were thousands of witnesses of everything He did, and even of His crucifixion. But God raised Him from the dead and He was seen alive after He rose from the dead; and they ate and drank with Him.
- Jesus commanded that His story be told to everyone and that everyone know that He alone is judge of the living and the dead.
- And the most important thing is this: if you believe in Him and trust your life to Him your sins will be forgiven through His name. Guaranteed!
  
- Salvation (from eternal death and the punishment of sin) can be obtained through no one else but Jesus. You have to **believe in Him** and **believe Him**.

## 38. What does God want you to do? Believe! *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### John 6

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, "What does God want from us? What works does he want us to do?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "God's work is to believe in the One he has sent."

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, "What miraculous sign will you give us? What will you do so we can see it and believe you?" <sup>31</sup> Long ago our people ate the manna in the desert. It is written in Scripture, 'The Lord gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, "What I'm about to tell you is true. It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven. It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> The bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven. He gives life to the world."

<sup>34</sup> "Sir," they said, "give us this bread from now on."

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever go hungry. And no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty."

<sup>36</sup> "But it is just as I told you. You have seen me, and you still do not believe. <sup>37</sup> Everyone the Father gives me will come to me. I will never send away anyone who comes to me."

<sup>38</sup> "I have not come down from heaven to do what I want to do. I have come to do what the One who sent me wants me to do. <sup>39</sup> The One who sent me doesn't want me to lose anyone he has given me. He wants me to raise them up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> My Father wants all who look to the Son and believe in him to have eternal life. I will raise them up on the last day."

- This is the question in many people's minds: "What does God want from me? What do I have to DO?" We would like a check list. We want to DO something to earn God's approval. We focus on WORKS. We have a hard time believing that anyone – much less God – would give something for nothing. But there is nothing you can ever do that could compare to what God has already done for you through Jesus Christ.
- All God wants from you is that you BELIEVE in JESUS, and that you BELIEVE JESUS. That means that you believe everything He says and trust Him completely with your life; that you recognize who He is and allow Him to be the master, owner, LORD of your life. That's all God wants from you! He has done everything needed to save you, and now all you have to do is to trust Him.
- Jesus had already performed so many miracles but they still want one more sign. We are just the same. We still question God; we still ask Him to prove His own existence to us; we still ask Him to prove that He really loves us. We refuse to believe what He has already shown us and proven to us on the cross at Calvary.
- They wanted a miracle like the one God did when He fed the Israelites in the desert with manna for 40 years. Jesus explains to them that He is better than the bread the Israelites received in the desert. That bread could sustain their lives for a brief period of time but Jesus is the true bread from heaven who gives life forever. He satisfies and sustains forever. If you have Jesus in your life you will have eternal life and will not need anything else to save you or sustain you.
- They still did not believe. Do you believe Jesus? He promises not to reject anyone who comes to Him.
- Jesus came to do God's (the Father's) will. His desire is to save all those who believe in His Son Jesus. God's desire is to give a life that never ends to all those who trust in Jesus. If you trust Him, your body may die but your soul is secure with Him. And then one day He will give you a new body on resurrection day so that we may live with Him forever. (John 11: 25-26; 1 Thess. 4:14-17)
- You can have your spiritual hunger satisfied only in Jesus. You can have your spiritual thirst satisfied only by Jesus. You can have forgiveness of sins and a life that never ends only by trusting your life to Jesus. What will you do about Jesus? Would you let Him save you and direct your life? Or are you going to keep on trying –always trying– to earn your own salvation?

## 39. The story of the lost son *(New International reader's Version, NlRV)*

### Luke 15

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons.

<sup>12</sup> The younger son spoke to his father. He said, 'Father, give me my share of the family property.' So the father divided his property between his two sons.

<sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had. Then he left for a country far away. There he wasted his money on wild living. <sup>14</sup> He spent everything he had.

"Then the whole country ran low on food. So the son didn't have what he needed. <sup>15</sup> He went to work for someone who lived in that country, who sent him to the fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The son wanted to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "Then he began to think clearly again. He said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food! But here I am dying from hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers." <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let's have a big dinner and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.'

"So they began to celebrate."

- This is a parable (a story to help us understand what God wants) Jesus taught as an illustration of our condition before God, and about God's love and willingness to forgive those who repent and come back to Him.
- The son's asking his father for his inheritance was almost like telling his father, "I wish you were dead" (you receive an inheritance after someone dies). He wanted the money and freedom from his father's control to live his life his own way and under his own rules.
  - That is exactly the condition of someone who rejects God's ways to live his life as he pleases, not taking into account God's will; someone who wants God's blessings but without any responsibility or accountability to Him. That is what the Bible calls sin.
- Pigs were anathema (abomination) to Jewish people. This man ended up working for people who were not even Jews, taking care of an animal that was detestable to them, and he even wanted to eat the pigs food!
- He finally realized how low he had fallen. He repented of his sin against God and his father and realized that he now had no right before his father. He was willing to work for his father as a servant.
- The most important thing is not that he repented but that he actually went back to his father to confess his sin and to ask for forgiveness.
  - Sometimes people say they are sorry about offending someone – especially God – but they never take the step of coming back to ask for forgiveness, and thus never receive it. God offers to forgive the sins of anyone who **repents and turns back to Him.**  
(Acts 3:19:  
NlRV: "*So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away.*")  
NIV: "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord*")
- The father ran to meet his son! This is unexpected; normally a father who has been offended, hurt and rejected by his son like this one had, would probably receive his son very coldly and angrily. That shows how much this man loved his son.
  - This is an illustration of God's immense love toward us. He is eagerly waiting for us to repent and turn back to Him; He is eagerly desiring to forgive us and receive us with a love we cannot even understand. But we have to take the first step.
- There is a party in heaven when someone repents and turns back to God! He commands it!

## 40. Showing gratitude *(New International reader's Version, Nlrv)*

### **Luke 17**

#### **The healing of the ten lepers**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, **ten men** met him. They had a **skin disease**. They were standing close by. <sup>13</sup> And they called out in a **loud voice**, “Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus saw them and said, “Go. Show yourselves to the priests.” **While they were on the way**, they were healed.

<sup>15</sup> When **one of them** saw that he was healed, **he came back. He praised God** in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He **threw himself at Jesus’ feet** and **thanked him**. The man was a Samaritan.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, “**Weren’t all ten healed?** Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> **Didn’t anyone else return and give praise to God** except this outsider?”

<sup>19</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

- (Samaritans and Jews were enemies. Jews treated Samaritans as if less than human.)
- The skin disease here is believed to be a type of leprosy.
- Since they were lepers, they were not allowed to come close to other people. They really had to shout over the crowd to get Jesus’ attention.
- Many times Jesus broke the law and actually touched a leper to heal him. In this case Jesus does not even come close to them. Instead, He sends them to go to the temple to show themselves to the priests. (Only the priests could certify that a person had leprosy and only they could declare a person healed of that condition.)
- Jesus was testing their faith and obedience. They were healed because they believed Jesus had the power to heal them in whatever way He wanted. They had faith in Jesus, and He healed them when they obeyed what He had told them to do.
- If they had doubted or disobeyed His command they would have not been healed. Many times we do not receive a blessing God wants to give us just because we do not trust what He says and do not obey what He commands. We need to learn to trust Him in His Word—the Bible—and to obey what He has already told us.
- One of them recognized the miracle done by Jesus and praised God for it. He was the only one who came back to thank Jesus; he worshiped Jesus.
- Are you sincerely thankful for the good things God allows in your life? Do you show Him your gratitude by praising Him with your whole heart? Do you truly worship Him and thank Him as this man did? Or do you do like the other nine and keep going your way without even acknowledging what God has done for you?
- God is desiring to work out miracles in our lives if we only trust and obey Him. And He also expects and commands our gratitude for His many blessings—and this not only once a year but daily! (*Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18*)

## 41. Jesus: The Creator becomes man (New International reader's Version, Nlrv)

### John 1

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, the Word was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through him. Nothing that has been made was made without him.

### Colossians 1

<sup>15</sup> Christ is the exact likeness of God, who can't be seen. He is first, and he is over all of creation. <sup>16</sup> All things were created by him. He created everything in heaven and on earth. He created everything that can be seen and everything that can't be seen. He created kings, powers, rulers and authorities. Everything was created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> Before anything was created, he was already there. He holds everything together.

### John 1

<sup>14</sup> The Word became a human being. He made his home with us. We have seen his glory. It is the glory of the one and only Son.

He came from the Father. And he was full of grace and truth.

<sup>10</sup> The Word was in the world that was made through him. But the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own. But his own people did not accept him.

<sup>12</sup> Some people did accept him. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God.

<sup>13</sup> To be a child of God has nothing to do with human parents. Children of God are not born because of human choice or because a husband wants them to be born. They are born because of what God does.

- “*In the beginning...*” refers back to the creation account beginning in Genesis 1:1.
- The One called the “Word” already existed when God began the Creation.
- The Word *was with* God – they are two separate persons
- The Word *is* God – they are one and the same being!
- The Word was there present with God when everything created came to be.
- The Word was the actual creating agent – Everything was made through Him and by Him.
  
- The passage in Colossians is very explicit, declaring that Jesus Christ himself is the exact likeness of God – the same nature, essence, being.
- All things were created by Jesus. Everything on heaven and on earth was made *by* Him and *for* Him.
- In case there were any doubts, we are told once again that Jesus was already there – He existed – before the universe, the world and human beings were created. And they were all created by Him.
  
- The Creator of the world, the One who made the first man out of the dust of the earth, took the form of one of the creatures He had created. He left His glory and majesty and took the form of a man – He humbled himself and made himself like nothing. This is Jesus!
  
- The Word – Jesus – came to the world He had created in the form of a man, but His own people – those who had said they were His followers – did not even recognize Him or accept Him.
- However, anyone who **accepts Him** and **believes in Him** receives the **right** to become a **child of God!**
  - This is a right given only by God, and made possible only by the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15). It changes the **relationship** of the person to God – from being just one of His creatures to being part of God's family. It gives the person new rights and a new and direct access to God himself, without fear of rejection or condemnation. This new **relationship** is made possible only through **faith in Jesus Christ**: “You are all children of God **by believing in Christ Jesus**” (Galatians 3:26).
- Have you accepted (received) Jesus in your heart? He will change your life from now and through eternity!

## 42. The rich young ruler (New International reader's Version, Nlrv)

### Matthew 19

<sup>16</sup> A man came up to Jesus. He asked, "Teacher, **what good thing must I do** to receive eternal life?"

<sup>17</sup> "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "**There is only One who is good.** If you want to enter the kingdom, obey the commandments."

<sup>18</sup> "Which ones?" the man asked.

Jesus said, "Do not commit murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false witness. <sup>19</sup> Honor your father and mother.'—(*Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20*) And 'love your neighbor as you love yourself.'" —(*Leviticus 19:18*)

<sup>20</sup> "I have obeyed all those commandments," the young man said. "**What else do I need to do?**"

<sup>21</sup> Jesus answered, "If you want to be **perfect**, go and sell everything you have. Give the money to those who are poor. You will **have treasure in heaven**. Then come and **follow me.**"

<sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this, he went away sad. **He was very rich.**

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "What I'm about to tell you is true. It is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is hard for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. But it is even harder for the rich to enter God's kingdom."

<sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were really amazed. They asked, "**Then who can be saved?**"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man, that is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.**"

<sup>27</sup> Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What reward will be given to us?"

<sup>28</sup> "What I'm about to tell you is true," Jesus said to them. "When all things are made new, the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne. Then you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones. You will judge the 12 tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup> Everyone who has left houses or families or fields **because of me** will receive 100 times as much. They will also receive eternal life.

### Matthew 10

<sup>37</sup> "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> And anyone who does not pick up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

<sup>39</sup> If anyone finds his life, he will lose it. If anyone loses his life because of me, he will find it.

- In Jewish teaching rich people were considered to be in good standing with God because they had been blessed with material wealth. If anyone could go to heaven – have eternal life– it would be a rich person.
  - God does bless some people with material goods but having wealth is not a sign of good standing with God. (The Bible commands us not to put away riches on earth but in heaven (Mat. 6:19-20).
- Even though he probably thought God was pleased with him because of his riches, this young man **knew** something was missing. That's why he asks Jesus what good thing he must **do**. He was trying to earn his way into heaven by doing good works.
- Jesus first asks about the commandments dealing with human relationships. The man said he had obeyed those. **But** he still asks what else he must **do**.
  - Some people try to live a "good life" following rules and commandments to earn eternal life but deep down in their hearts they **know** that something is missing. God made us for a relationship with Him. When that relationship does not exist we can try to fill the void with religion but it does not work nor does it satisfy.
- Jesus went straight to the root of the man's problem. He told the man to give up everything he owned and to follow HIM – to enter in a relationship with Him.
- The man wanted to have eternal life –to go to heaven– but he did not want it bad enough to give up his possessions. He had made an **idol** out of his wealth.
  - An **idol** is anything or anyone you love more than God; anything or anyone you give the first place or priority in your life; anything in your life that takes the place that belongs only to God. (*Deut. 20:3-6*)
- It is difficult for rich people to enter into heaven not because they are rich but because they put the material in first place and God in a second place in their lives.
  - Even people who are not rich can do the same. They make idols of what they have or of the people they love. That's the reason for Jesus' warning in Matthew 10:37-39. God must take first place in our lives – or He is not our God.
- The disciples asked: who can be saved? They thought: if rich people are not saved then no one will be saved.
- Jesus explains that salvation is not possible through human means – you cannot work to earn it. Salvation is something only God can give (Ephesians 2:8-9).
  - We cannot save ourselves (Romans 5:6) but God in Jesus has done everything that can be done for our salvation. There is nothing else to add to it. The question is, are you going to accept what He has done and follow Jesus? Only through a personal relationship with Jesus can you receive eternal life and salvation. And the rewards in heaven are beyond our wildest dreams!

## 43. Who is Jesus to you? (New International reader's Version, NlRV)

### Mark 8

#### Peter Says That Jesus Is the Christ

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

<sup>28</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Still others say one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "**Who do you say I am?**"

Peter answered, "**You are the Christ.**"

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

#### Jesus Tells About His Coming Death

<sup>31</sup> Jesus then began to teach his disciples. He taught them that the Son of Man must suffer many things. He taught them that the elders would not accept him. The chief priests and the teachers of the law would not accept him either. He must be killed and after three days rise again.

<sup>32</sup> He spoke clearly about this.

Peter took Jesus to one side and began to scold him.

<sup>33</sup> Jesus turned and looked at his disciples. He scolded Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You are not thinking about the things of God. Instead, you are thinking about human things."

<sup>34</sup> Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples. He said, "If anyone wants to come after me, he must **say no to himself**. He must **pick up his cross** and **follow me**."

<sup>35</sup> If he wants to save his life, he will lose it. But if he loses his life **for me and for the good news**, he will save it.

<sup>36</sup> What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses his soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone trade for his soul?

<sup>38</sup> "Suppose you are ashamed of me and my words among these adulterous and sinful people. Then the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The disciples had been with Jesus for a long time now. They had all the information and knowledge they could need. Now they had to decide what that meant to them, how what they knew about Jesus was going to affect their lives.

- Knowledge of others' beliefs about Jesus is not enough. We have to decide for ourselves who Jesus is to us. We cannot stay "on the fence". We have to make up our minds, and then **act on our belief**.
- Christ = Messiah = "the anointed One". By this Peter, as the spokesperson for the group, was confessing that they believed Jesus was the One promised by God who was going to bring deliverance to His people.
- *The only problem was that they thought the Messiah (Christ) from God would be a military leader who would lead the Israelites in a war against their enemies (Romans) and who would bring a period of peace and prosperity like what they had in times of king David. They had not yet understood that the Messiah had to suffer and die for the sins of His people (Isaiah 53).*
- That's why Peter reacts with horror when Jesus tells them about His coming suffering and death. Peter allowed his emotions and his lack of understanding of the prophecies to cloud his judgment, and he ended up doing the work of Satan – opposing God's will.
- *Peter was not Satan nor was he possessed by Satan but he was used as an instrument of Satan to tempt Jesus, even though he seemed to be protecting Jesus. When we allow our feelings and limited understanding to blind us, we can speak or act against God's Word and against His will, effectively doing the work of Satan.*
- Jesus issued the "rules" – how things work for those who sincerely believe He is the Christ:
  - **say no to yourself** = seek God's will and not your own. Submit to Him completely – it is no longer your desires but His, not your dreams but His, not your plans but His. *Make Him LORD of your life.*
  - **take up your cross** = completely live under the authority of Jesus, even if doing it so brings you pain, suffering, humiliation or even death. *Some think having to suffer under an abusive husband or to have a serious illness is a "cross to bear" but Jesus was referring to suffering for the cause of the gospel.*
  - **follow Him** – seek to live as He lived, to honor Him in everything we say or do, to be obedient to His Word regardless of the consequences for us.
- Trying to "save" your physical/material life by avoiding association with Christ will cause you to lose your eternal life. But "losing" your life for the sake of Christ will give you eternal life as a reward.
- Jesus does not like "undercover" Christians! If you truly believe He is the Son of God, you must make up your mind and live your life in a way that honors Him and demonstrates to the world that you belong to Him.

*You have all the information you need about Jesus to make a decision. Who is Jesus to you? Head knowledge is not enough. You must get to know Him personally, experientially. What are you going to do with what you know? Are you going to submit to Him or do you prefer to "live your life" without Him? Are you going to follow Him or are you going to deny Him in your life?*