

Discover the Greatness of God through the Miracles of Jesus

*Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!"
Psalm 66:1-3*

Discover the
Greatness of God
through the
Miracles of Jesus
32 Studies from God's Word
for Individual or Group Meditation

Discover the Greatness of God through the Miracles of Jesus is part of a series of Bible study and devotional books from *Life Studies for Followers of Jesus*.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Note: All emphases included in scripture quotations are the author’s additions.

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

Copyright © 2024 Life Resources

ISBN PAPERBACK: 979-8-9906834-2-6

Other books from *LIFE STUDIES for Followers of Jesus*:

- *50 Life Studies from the Teachings of Jesus the Messiah*
- *Exploring the Ancient Book of Genesis*
- *Growing in Christ through the Beatitudes*
- *One Flesh—One Heart: Studies from God's Word for Engaged and Married Couples*
- *Raising Children to Walk with God: 40 Meditations in God's Word for Parents*
- *Following Jesus Together: A Guide for Christians Who Meet in Homes*

All of these books are available for free download in pdf or epub format in many languages at: ***www.learnhisways.com***

Paperback copies are available in English on ***amazon.com*** and ***Amazon.co.uk***.

Table of Contents

Bible Study Principles and Guidelines for Leaders.....	11
What is a miracle?	13
1. A Miracle at a Wedding Feast.....	15
2. Believing Without Seeing Brings Greater Faith.....	18
3. Jesus’ Teaching and Actions Reveal His Authority	21
4. A Miraculous Catch of Fish.....	24
5. Jesus’ Touch Shows Compassion	27
6. Jesus’ Word Has Authority	30
7. Jesus Has Authority to Forgive Sin	33
Why did Jesus perform so many miracles?	35
8. Jesus Desires Mercy, Not Religious Tradition	37
9. Jesus Raises a Widow’s Son to Life	39
10. Jesus Has Authority over Nature	43
11. Jesus Has Authority Over Evil Spirits	45
12. Jesus Brings Hope to the Hopeless, Part 1	48
13. Jesus Brings Hope to the Hopeless, Part 2	51
14. Where Does Jesus’ Power and Authority Come From? Part 1	54
15. Where Does Jesus’ Power and Authority Come From? Part 2.....	57
16. An Invalid Is Healed at Bethesda Pool.....	60
Why did people respond to Jesus’ miracles in such different ways?	63
17. A Miracle Lunch	66
18. Jesus Walks on Water	69
19. Jesus Honors the Faith of a Foreign Woman	72

20. Jesus Heals Deaf Ears; Loosens a Stammering Tongue	75
21. A Miracle Lunch for Gentiles and Miracle Money for Peter.....	78
22. Healing of a Blind Man Displays God's Glory	81
23. A Blind Man Gradually Receives Sight.....	84
24. Jesus Frees a Boy from Demonic Bondage.....	87
Does God do miracles today?	89
25. Two Healings on the Sabbath Anger Religious Leaders	95
26. A Grateful Man Receives a Double Blessing	98
27. Jesus Opens Blind Eyes.....	101
28. Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life, Part 1	104
29. Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life, Part 2.....	107
30. The Resurrection of Jesus	110
31. A Second Miraculous Catch of Fish	116
32. A Persecutor of the Believers Becomes an Apostle	119
Guidelines for Translators	123

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
One generation will commend your works to another;
they will tell of your mighty acts.
They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
They will tell of the power of your awesome works,
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
Psalm 145:3-6*

Bible Study Principles and Guidelines for Leaders

Learning from God's Word, the Bible, is a great privilege! We must understand, however, the type of learning that God requires. If we study God's word like a history student who is learning facts in order to pass an exam, we will miss what God wants. His teaching is not only for our heads but also for our hearts. He wants us to *know him*, and he wants to change us to be more like him, that is, he wants us to *apply* what we learn to our lives.

These studies on the miracles of Jesus are designed to help you consider carefully his words and actions and apply them. Here are three important ways to do that:

- 1) **OBSERVE THE STORY CLOSELY.** – Some questions in each study will ask you to *look closely at certain verses* to see what really happened and what really was said. Set your opinion aside at this stage and think: “What does it actually say?”
- 2) **THINK ABOUT THE MEANING.** – Every word and deed of Jesus is important. Some of the questions will ask you to *think about what Jesus was trying to teach us or show us about himself by his words or actions*. We need to understand his meaning before we obey.
- 3) **APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE** – Toward the end of the study you will see a section entitled “Application and Prayer.” Here you will find meditations and questions that make you pause and think about *how to put what you learn from this study into practice in your life* in a way that honors God. Don't rush through this section. Your world will change as you submit to learn from and follow Jesus.

GROUP LEADERS – Here are some guidelines to make these studies meaningful to every group member:

- **As the group leader, study the passage and questions for yourself before you meet with the group.** You will be better prepared to help the group members if you yourself are acquainted with the study beforehand.

- **Begin your group study with prayer and faith that God will be with you to help you understand and obey his word.**
- **The most important part of these studies is the Bible passage itself.** As a group, make sure you read the assigned passage or passages at least once.
- **Make sure group members look carefully at the verses before they give their answers.** The studies are designed to discover what Jesus actually taught and did, not to guess about what you think happened.
- **Be sure to have the group answer each question one by one.** There are sometimes 3 or 4 questions under one numbered item. Don't read the questions all at once. Give an answer to each question before going on to the next.
- **These studies are designed especially for group discussion, rather than for one person to preach or teach the whole lesson.** If the group is large, not everyone will be able to comment on every question because of limited time. However, try to give everyone in the group the opportunity to briefly share their thoughts on a few questions. Encourage all to participate and none to dominate the discussion.
- **Don't rush through these studies; allow time for people to think.** Some of them are long, and you may want to divide these and take two sessions. At the same time, try to move at a good pace and keep the group focused on the study rather than wandering off onto unrelated subjects.
- **If possible, sit in a circle so group members can see each other.** This will feel more informal than a "classroom" style, with chairs in rows and a leader doing all the teaching up at the front. A circle will help the group members feel more free to participate in the discussion.
- **As much as possible, make sure that everyone has their own copy of the lesson (either a book or epub format on their device) and a Bible.** Encourage group members to take the study home and do it again with their family or friends.

What is a miracle?

A miracle is something supernatural that occurs that could not have happened if God had not intervened to make it happen. There is one kind of miracle that surrounds us every day, though we don't often think of this as miraculous. The world we see around us, for example. The heavens and the earth only exist because in the beginning, God spoke the Word into the emptiness and they were created. Mankind exists because God formed him from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. We could say that all of life is a miracle. Perhaps when you have seen a newborn baby you have been struck by the beauty and perfection of God's design. You look at the tiny fingers and toes and you exclaim with wonder, "What a miracle!"

The truth is, God has made everything around us to draw our attention to himself. Romans 1:20 tells us that we have no excuse for not acknowledging and worshipping God because he has made his existence and greatness obvious to us through creation.

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Everything that God has given us and done for us is so that we would get a glimpse of his glorious majesty and know his goodness and his heart of love for all people. This should lead us to stand in awe of him and worship him.

But God has also frequently intervened in the lives of men and women throughout all generations in ways that we do not normally expect, in ways that defy the natural laws that he has put in place in this world. He is God and he is sovereign over everything and he can do anything he desires in order to fulfill his good purposes. As the angel told Mary when he announced that she would become pregnant with the Savior even though she was a virgin, *"Nothing is impossible with God"* (Luke 1:37). These are the kinds of things that we usually think of as miracles. These miracles often show us in very personal ways God's kindness and his great power.

We read about many miracles throughout the Old Testament: Abraham and his wife, Sarah, who is far beyond the age of childbearing, have a son (Genesis 18:10-12 & 21:1-7); the waters of the Red Sea part and move aside so that people walk through on dry ground (Exodus 14:21-22); fire comes down from heaven and consumes a sacrifice, and also the stones of the altar and the water in the surrounding trench (1 Kings 18:20-39); a leper is instantly healed (2 Kings 5:1-14); three young men are thrown into a blazing furnace, and walk out not even smelling like smoke (Daniel 3); a man is protected by an angel from hungry lions (Daniel 6:16-24) and many more.

In the New Testament, the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are full of miracles. Whole crowds of people are healed, dead people are raised to life again, food is multiplied and the laws of nature are overcome as Jesus walks on water and instantly stills storms. In the book of Acts you can read about the apostles and even ordinary followers of Jesus in the early community of believers as they performed many miracles through the power of Jesus name.

As you study the miracles of Jesus as found in the four gospels and one from the book of Acts, may you see him with fresh eyes. Along with the apostle Paul, we pray,

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And ... that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”
(Ephesians 3:17-19)

1. A Miracle at a Wedding Feast

Opening Discussion: Have you ever been in a situation where you had guests and you ran out of some item of food or drink, or something else that was important? How did you feel? What did you do?

In John, chapter 1, you can read about what Jesus did in the week before the events in this study. He was baptized by John the Baptist and he called his first disciples. This study will look at the very first miracle that he performed. It was not a miracle of healing, driving out a demon or feeding hungry people. You might be surprised to discover what he did first!

Read John 2:1-11.

1. Read again verses 1-2. Where was Jesus and who was with him?
2. What problem arose in verse 3?

What did Jesus' mother do?

3. How did Jesus respond to her according to verse 4?

What do you think he meant by this?

NOTE: In some translations, Jesus words to his mother sound almost rude. In the original language that the New Testament was written in, however, his response is respectful. He did not refuse to help with the problem, he simply said that his time had not yet come. He could be saying that the time for him to reveal publicly that he was the Messiah had not yet come.

4. Read Mary's words to the servants in verse 5. What do you think she expected him to do? (Remember that this is the first miracle that Jesus did, so she had not yet seen anything supernatural performed by him.)
5. Read verses 6-8. Describe the water jars that were standing there. (The total amount of water these six jars could hold would be somewhere between 420 and 630 liters. That's a lot of water!)

What did Jesus instruct the servants to do (verse 7)?

6. If you had been one of those servants, what would you have thought as you were filling the water jars? What would you have thought as you were carrying the “water” to the head of the feast?

NOTE Mary knew, from all of the happenings surrounding Jesus’ birth, that he was no ordinary person. An angel announced that she would be pregnant with him while she was still a virgin. There were dreams and other angels that appeared to Joseph, her betrothed husband, and then to shepherds. There were kings who came from the East and brought gifts to him. But these servants only knew him as a man, perhaps someone whose family was friends with their master’s family. Certainly, they would not have expected anything out of the ordinary to happen that night.

7. According to verses 9-10, what happened next?

What was surprising about the water turned wine (verse 10)?

If you were one of the servants, what do you think you would be thinking now?

8. There are two interesting things we can notice about the wine that Jesus made from water: first, there was not just a little—there was a great amount; and second, it was not just normal wine—it was the very best! What do these two things say to you about the character of God and his Son?
9. Read verse 11. This verse says that this miracle was a “sign,” and that Jesus displayed his glory through this sign. What was it a sign of? What did Jesus reveal about himself?
10. Look back over verses 1-11. It seems that most of the people present at the wedding, including the bridegroom and the master of the wedding were not aware of what Jesus had done. Who were probably the only people who did know?
11. What was the response of Jesus’ disciples when they saw the miracle (verse 11)?

What do you think your response would have been?

Application and Prayer: Imagine that you are one of Jesus' disciples who sees the water turned into wine at the wedding. You have heard the preaching of John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Messiah, and you either heard for yourself or from others, what John the Baptist said about Jesus (John 1:29-34). Because of John the Baptist's words, you have decided to follow this new teacher, but you still don't know very much about him. What thoughts might be going through your mind as a result of seeing this miracle?

Think about this: Throughout the Old Testament, wine is often spoken of as a symbol of joy and gladness. Jesus' first miracle took place at a joyous occasion, a wedding feast, and wine was an important part of the feast. Suddenly the wine ran out. Then Jesus, at his mother's request, stepped in and provided new wine—and not just a little, and not just average in quality! What does this tell you about the new kingdom that Jesus was bringing to earth?

Read and think about these verses:

- *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (Jesus' words to his disciples as he teaches them to abide in him. John 15:11)*
- *“Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” (John 16:24)*

When you think about what Jesus showed about himself through this miracle, how does that affect you personally?

Take some time to pray together as a group, giving thanks and praise to God for who he is and the joy that he came to bring to a world full of sadness.

2. Believing Without Seeing Brings Greater Faith

(Although this story is similar to the one in Study 6 (Matt. 8:5-13 & Luke 7:1-10), it is a different incident.)

Opening Discussion: Do you know anyone who has come to believe in Jesus because of a miracle they saw in their own life or that of someone close to them? Tell about what happened.

Read John 4:43-45.

1. Read verses 43-45 again. Jesus had just come from Jerusalem where he had gone for the feast of Passover. Now he had returned to the area of Galilee, but not to his hometown of Nazareth. In v. 44, what general statement did Jesus make about prophets?

Verse 45 says the people of this part of Galilee welcomed him. According to this verse, why did they welcome him?

Read John 4:46-54.

2. Read again verses 46-47. Who came to Jesus? What, specifically, did he ask Jesus to do?

NOTE: This man probably held an important position in the service of the ruler over that area, Herod Antipas. He could have been either a Gentile or a Jew. He must have seen or at least heard about the miracles that Jesus was doing because he made the two-day journey from Capernaum to Cana to come to him.

3. What did Jesus say in verse 48? (Because the word “you” in this sentence is plural in the original language, it seems that Jesus was saying this not only to the official, but to the people of Galilee in general.)

Look back at verse 45. What do these two verses (45&48) tell us about the attitude of the people of Galilee?

NOTE: These people know that Jesus can do miracles because they have witnessed them. They believe in what they have seen. Jesus is now going to challenge this royal official to believe something that he has not yet seen—that his son is healed and that he is healed with only

Jesus' word, spoken from a far distance. This is calling him into a deeper level of faith.

4. Read verses 49-50. What did the man ask a second time of Jesus? What was he hoping Jesus would do?

Do you see desperation in the official's plea? (Remember: his son is at the point of death!)

5. According to verse 50, what did Jesus say to the man? Did Jesus go with him?
6. Look back at what Jesus said in verse 48. When Jesus told the man to go, his son would live, did the man see any evidence of a miracle?

How were Jesus' words to him a test of his faith (verse 50)?

How did the man show that he believed Jesus' words? Think about how this man's faith was in contrast to the general lack of faith of the people of that area as seen in verses 45 & 48.

7. Read verses 51-53. As he traveled back to his home, what news did the official's servants bring to him?

How did the man know that it was Jesus' words that had brought healing to his son?

How long had it been from the time Jesus spoke the word until the official received news of the healing? (verse 52)

Think about this man, walking for hours back to his home with no assurance of any change in his son other than his faith in the word that Jesus had spoken. If you had been in his place, what do you think might have been going through your mind as you walked?

8. When the official realized that Jesus had done a great miracle, how did he respond?

How did all his household respond? (His "household" could have included all of his family, his extended family and even his household servants.)

Application and Prayer: Many people throughout the land of Israel saw Jesus do amazing miracles. Not many, however, saw who Jesus truly was. This man's faith—before he saw the miracle—opened his eyes and heart to see the glory of God as revealed through his Messiah. He believed for the healing he could not yet see, and then he believed in the healer himself, the one who could heal at a distance with only a word.

Think about the following questions:

- Do you have to see evidence in order to believe, or do you have a mature faith that trusts in Jesus' word and in his love for you?
- Do you just want the blessings Jesus can give, whether physical healing, financial provision or help with some problem, or do you truly want to know him and honor him as your Savior and Lord?

As you spend time meditating on God's Word and as you step out and obey him in all that he shows you, you will find your faith in him growing. You will come to know and honor him as Savior and Lord. Take some time now to pray that God would help you to grow to know and trust him more.

3. Jesus' Teaching and Actions Reveal His Authority

(This story is also told in Luke 4:31-41.)

Opening Discussion: In your life, when did you begin to realize that Jesus was more than an ordinary prophet or teacher? If you are not yet sure who Jesus is, are there things you have read in God's Word or other testimonies that help you see his power and authority?

Read Mark 1:21-34.

1. Read again verses 21-22. Where did Jesus go on the Sabbath, and what did he do?

Why were the people amazed at his teaching?

NOTE: Both Jesus and the other Jewish teachers would have been teaching from the Old Testament, that is, the books of the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. The other Jewish teachers taught the opinions about God's Word that they had been taught by their elders. Take a minute to discuss how Jesus' teaching would have been different.

2. Read verses 23-24. What happened as Jesus was teaching?

What did the demon in the man cry out?

How do we know it was the demon who was talking and not the man?

3. What did Jesus say to the evil spirit in verse 25? Notice the authority in Jesus' command.

What happened next in verse 26?

4. Read verses 27-28. What was the reaction of the people to this miracle they had just witnessed? Discuss how Jesus' actions gave even greater emphasis to the authority of his teaching.

5. Read verses 29-31. Where did Jesus and four of the disciples go next? What happened there?

6. The news of Jesus' miracles spread throughout the region. Read verses 32-34. What happened as evening came?

According to verse 34, how did Jesus respond to the crowd of needy people who were all around him?

7. Look back at what the demon cried out in verse 24. In verse 25 Jesus tells the demon to be quiet. According to verse 34, why did Jesus not let the demons speak?

What did the demons know about Jesus that the people did not yet know?

NOTE: Throughout Jesus' ministry on earth we see that he always followed the plan laid out for him by his Father. Although he cared deeply about the physical needs of the people, he knew that the most important part of the plan was to suffer and die on the cross as a sacrifice for the sin of the people. But the people thought the Messiah would come as a political leader to free them from Roman rule and bring in a time of peace and prosperity. This was what they wanted. They were not ready to receive him as a suffering servant. Therefore, it was not yet time to reveal to them fully who he was. The demonic powers, however, knew him and recognized that their kingdom was about to be overthrown.

Application and Prayer: In review, look back over this entire passage (verses 21-34). Discuss all of the ways you see Jesus bringing the power of God's kingdom to this sin-sick world (verses 22, 25-26, 31, 32 & 34).

How does this bring hope to your heart?

Just like in the first century, the authority of Jesus' teaching is still seen today when people pray in faith for the sick and demon oppressed and see them set free. Have you seen unbelievers trust in the authority of Jesus because they saw his power when the prayer of a follower of Jesus was answered?

Where do you long to see the power and authority of Jesus revealed in your life or in the lives of your family and friends? Where do you long to see his power and authority revealed in your nation? Take some time now to pray for these things.

In this same story in Luke 4:40 it says, "*...laying his hands on each one, he healed them.*" Jesus took time to touch each one who had a need. Thank him that he sees and cares about every person as an individual—including you!

Other passages where many people were healed:

Matthew 4:23-25

Matthew 8:16-17

Matthew 12:15

Matthew 14:34-36

Mark 3:7-12

Mark 6:53-56

4. A Miraculous Catch of Fish

(This miracle happened on two different occasions. This study will look at the first time, which was recorded by Luke and occurred near the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Study 31 will look at the second occurrence, which was recorded by John and happened after Jesus' resurrection and shortly before he returned to heaven.)

Opening Discussion: If you had tried something many times and been unsuccessful, and then someone told you to do it again and you would have success, how easy would it be to believe them?

Read Luke 5:1-11.

1. Read again verses 1-2. Describe the scene: Where were they? Who was there? What was happening?
2. According to verse 3, what did Jesus do? (Simon would later be called Peter.)

NOTE: If Jesus was out in a boat, his voice would carry over the water and the crowd would be able to hear him better. Also, he would not be crushed by the crowd who were all pressing in, trying to get close to him.

3. Read verse 4. What did Jesus say to Simon?
4. Read Simon's answer in verse 5. What did Simon think about Jesus' command?

Think about this: Simon had probably been fishing all of his life; Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3). What would you think if you were in Simon's place?

At night the fish would often come up near the surface of the water, whereas in the daytime they would go down deeper, near the bottom. How would this make Jesus' words even less likely to produce results?

5. Read verse 5 again. Why did Simon agree to obey, even though Jesus' command didn't seem to make sense?
6. Read verses 6-7. Describe what happened.

How many fish did they catch this time?

If you were in the boat with these fishermen, what would you be thinking now?

7. According to verse 8, how did Simon Peter respond when he saw what had taken place?

Why do you think he responded this way?

8. Others who found themselves in the presence of the Holy One had similar responses. Read the following verses and discuss how each person reacted. Why do you think they reacted the way they did?

- Isaiah 6:1-5
- Revelation 1:12-18
- Ezekiel 1:28

9. Read Luke 5:9-10. What did Jesus say to Simon? What did he mean by “catching men”?

NOTE: Throughout the book of Acts we can read of many times that this word from Jesus to Simon Peter was fulfilled. One example is found in Acts 2:37-41. After Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, thousands believed in Jesus as the Messiah and were baptized.

10. How did Peter, James and John respond to this miracle and to Jesus’ words (Luke 5:11)?
11. Discuss how this miraculous catch of fish would have been a sign to Peter and his friends of each of the following truths:
 - Jesus is no ordinary man.
 - Jesus is Lord over nature.
 - Jesus can provide for their needs.
 - Jesus is worthy to be followed and obeyed.

Application and Prayer: When Jesus told Peter, “*Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch,*” this did not seem to make sense to him. After all, they had already done that all night long with no results. Nevertheless, he obeyed, and he saw the glory and power of God revealed in Jesus. Peter and the other fishermen were ready to leave

everything they knew to follow him. After obeying in a small thing, they were ready to obey in a much bigger way with their whole lives.

Look back at the truths about Jesus that you discussed in question 11 above. How has the study of this miracle helped *you* to see these truths about who Jesus is?

Jesus calls all of his followers to “fish for men.” Will you follow him the way that Peter, James and John did (Luke 5:11), with your whole heart? Take some time now to wait quietly before the Lord. What do you think he is saying to you about being his disciple and “catching men” for him? Who can you share the good news about Jesus with so that they might also follow him? Pray together in your group about anything God is speaking to your heart.

5. Jesus' Touch Shows Compassion

(This story is also told in Matthew 8:1-4 and Luke 5:12-15.)

Opening Discussion: When you see someone who has some illness or is disabled in some way, how do you respond? What do you feel toward that person?

Read Mark 1:39-45.

1. Read v. 40 again. What was the need of the man who came to Jesus?

NOTE: “Leprosy” in the Bible refers to a variety of infectious skin diseases. Sometimes they were contagious, but always they made the affected person ritually unclean. Priests were trained to recognize if a person truly had leprosy, and if they did, that person would be required to live outside the city. Whenever they heard someone approaching they must call out, “unclean, unclean!” so that person would know to stay far away from them.

Take a minute to discuss what it would have been like to be a leper in ancient Israel.

2. Describe how the man approached Jesus in verse 40. What do you think this man was thinking and feeling as he came to Jesus.

What did the man say to Jesus? (verse 40)

3. Read verse 39 again. This man had probably heard about Jesus and some of the miracles he was performing. What do his words in verse 40 tell you about his faith in Jesus ability to heal him?
4. Look at his words again (verse 40). What was the leper not sure about?

This man was considered an outcast by society; perhaps he thought Jesus might also shun him, as everyone else did. Do you ever wonder if God really cares about you in your situation? Take a minute to discuss this.

5. Read v. 41 again. Now read it again. How did Jesus feel toward this man who was considered by others to be the in the lowest level of society?

“Compassion” is a word that is frequently used to describe how Jesus felt when he saw the suffering of people due to sin and sickness. What action did Jesus take to show that he was not rejecting the leper?

6. What did Jesus say to him in verse 41? What happened to the man when Jesus spoke those words (verse 42)?
7. Read again the note in question #1 above. Perhaps it had been years since anyone had touched this man. No one would want to become unclean himself. How was Jesus’ response to him—both his inward heart response and his outward physical response—completely different from other people’s responses?

Besides making him physically whole and clean, how do you think Jesus’ physical touch may have affected this former leper?

8. Read verses 43-44. What strict instructions did Jesus give to the man?

NOTE: The Old Testament Law required a person who was cured of leprosy to go and show himself to the priest who had the authority to declare him clean and give him permission to enter back into the city and normal life. He was then to offer a sacrifice as part of the cleansing process. (If you want to know more about this, read Leviticus, chapters 13&14.)

In his excitement, what did the healed and cleansed leper do (verse 45)? What problems did this cause Jesus?

9. Why do you think people came from everywhere to Jesus?

Application and Prayer: Jesus stopped to give attention to someone whom everyone else probably stayed far away from. He had compassion and he even touched a man who was probably dirty and covered with sores. What does this story tell you about Jesus’ attitude toward suffering people?

If Jesus was willing to reach out and touch a leper, do you believe he is ready to touch you in the areas where you need healing in your life?

As Jesus healed the multitudes, he was showing them a glimpse of God the Father—both the power of God over physical needs, and also God’s heart of deep compassion for their suffering. God cares the same for hurting people today, and he wants to use his followers to reach out and show his love to them. Are you willing to be used by him to touch others who are suffering and need his touch of compassion?

As a group, take a few minutes in silence to allow God to speak to each of your hearts. What is He saying to you through this story? Take time now to pray for each other, asking God for his healing touch wherever it is needed in your lives, whether physically, spiritually or emotionally. Pray also for God to help you open your heart to allow him to use you to touch others who are hurting. Ask him to bring to your mind anyone to whom you can reach out and show his love.

6. Jesus' Word Has Authority

(This story is also told in Luke 7:1-10. It is similar to the story in Study 2 (John 4:43-54), but it is a different incident.)

Opening Discussion: What are some things that God tells us in his Word that he will do? Do you believe he will do what he has said? Why do you think it is important that we believe what God says in his word?

Read Matt. 8:5-13.

1. Read verses 5-6 again. Who asked Jesus for help?

What was the servant's condition?

NOTE: A centurion was a Roman military officer who had 100 soldiers under his authority. Because the Romans, who were Gentiles, ruled over the Jews, the Jews generally avoided and even hated them. To enter a Gentile home would make a Jew ceremonially unclean. The centurion's servant was very possibly someone who was dearly loved and trusted by him, as if he were a family member.

2. How did Jesus reply to the centurion? (verse 7)

NOTE: This same story is told in Luke 7:1-10, but there we find some information that Matthew did not include. We can see something of this man's faith in verses 4-5 where some of the Jewish elders said this to Jesus about this centurion: *"This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."*

3. Read verses 8-9 of Matt. 8. What did the centurion then say to Jesus?

Look at verse 8. Why did the centurion tell Jesus not to come?

What attitude do you see in this man?

4. According to verse 9, what did the centurion understand about authority?

How did his understanding of authority help him to believe that Jesus can "just say the word," and it will be done?

Do you believe that God's Word has authority? Do you believe that God will do what his Word says he will do?

5. Read verse 10 again. Why was Jesus astonished?

Remember that this man was not a Jew; he was a Roman and most Romans worshiped pagan gods. Yet, Jesus commended him for great faith. It seems that the centurion recognized something about Jesus that many of Jesus' own people did not recognize. What do you think he recognized?

6. Read again verses 11-12. Why will the people coming from east and west, that is from non-Jewish nations, be included in the kingdom of heaven, while some of those who are a natural part of the kingdom (the Jews) will be thrown out? Take a few minutes to discuss how this story is an example of Jesus' acceptance of all people who come to him in faith.

7. Hebrews 11:6 says this:

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

How did the centurion please God, according to this verse?

How does Hebrews 11:6 help you to understand Jesus' words in Matt. 8:11-12?

8. What did Jesus say to the centurion in verse 13? What was the result of Jesus' word?

Application and Prayer: In Genesis 1:3 we read this: *"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."*

We also read this in Psalm 33:

"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth...Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." (Psalm 33:6&8-9)

God simply spoke the word, and the amazing universe that we live in was created. Think about what this tells us about the power of the word of God. If his word has the power to create the world out of nothing, is there anything he cannot do simply by his word? This Psalm tells us that

our response to this should be that we “fear” him, that is, that we revere him and trust in him.

The centurion believed that Jesus’ word had authority. He didn’t need Jesus to come and be physically present or to touch his servant; he believed that Jesus’ word alone was enough to heal him.

Today, we do not have Jesus physically present with us, but we do have the Holy Spirit who speaks to us and we have God’s written word. Here are some personal questions for you to think about:

- How well do I know what is written in the scriptures?
- Is reading and meditating on God’s Word a priority in my life?
- Do I believe his word has the power to change my life and the lives of others?
- What do I need to change so that I can know God’s Word better, and know and trust him more?

Take some time now as a group to pray about anything God has been speaking to you as you’ve studied this miracle story and thought about the application questions. Ask him to help you grow to have faith like the centurion, that simply believes in the power and authority of the word of God.

7. Jesus Has Authority to Forgive Sin

(This story is also told in Matthew 9:1-8 and Mark 2:1-12.)

Opening Discussion: Tell about a time you saw a miracle (something that could not have happened naturally but you believe was God moving supernaturally) in your own life or in the life of someone you know. Or tell about a miracle you have read about, other than one in the Bible. How do miracles help us to believe in Jesus' authority?

Read Luke 5:17-26.

1. Read verses 17-18 again. What was Jesus doing?

Who was present, listening to Jesus?

Name all the different areas they had come from.

NOTE: This was not just a group of local village people who had gathered to hear Jesus. Those who came from Jerusalem and parts of Judea may have walked as much as a week to be there. The Pharisees and teachers of the Law had no doubt heard about this traveling preacher and his miracles, and had come to hear him for themselves. For the most part, these religious leaders were not interested in following Jesus; they were jealous of the attention he was getting and were looking for ways to discredit him. Jesus frequently referred to them as hypocrites.

2. Read verses 18-19 again. Describe what happened as Jesus was teaching.

Notice all the trouble that this man's friends went through to bring their friend to Jesus. When they saw the crowd, they didn't get discouraged and leave. Even though it took some work, they found a way to get him to Jesus. Do you think they believed that he could be healed?

3. In verse 20, what did Jesus notice about the men who brought their friend to Jesus? (This may have also included the paralyzed man.)

What did Jesus say to the man in verse 20?

Why do you think he said this? Why did Jesus not just immediately heal the man?

4. Read verse 21 again. How did the scribes and Pharisees respond? What were they thinking to themselves?
Why did they think Jesus was speaking blasphemies?
5. Read verses 22-23 again. What questions did Jesus ask these religious leaders?
How would you answer Jesus' question?
6. Explain what happened next in verses 24-25. How did this prove that Jesus had authority to forgive sin?
7. Read verse 26. How did the people in the crowd respond to what they saw?

Application and Prayer: The paralyzed man and his friends knew that he had a problem—he could not walk. Jesus knew that the man had a more serious problem—his sin that separated him from God. Jesus had the answer to both problems! He had the power and authority to heal and also to forgive sin.

Look again at the response of the people there in the crowd in verse 26, and imagine that you are there that day. What would you be thinking about Jesus after seeing the things that you had just seen?

What would you go out and tell your family and friends?

Take some time now in your group to thank and praise Jesus for coming to earth to heal physical illnesses, but more importantly, to cleanse us of our sin. If you have never asked him to forgive your sin, will you do that now?

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1John 1:8-9)

Why did Jesus perform so many miracles?

What was the purpose of these miracles?

No one in all of history has ever done as many miracles of every kind as Jesus the Messiah. There are two main purposes for the miracles that Jesus performed during his time on earth.

- 1) The writers of the gospels frequently mention that Jesus felt compassion when he encountered lost and hurting people. When large crowds came to him, he healed all who were sick and drove demons out of all the oppressed. Jesus felt the pain of those who were suffering, and he wanted them to know that God loved them and cared about their hardships, even though he knew that many of them would not follow him. (For examples, see Mark 8:2; Matt. 14:14, Luke 7:12-13)
- 2) The second and more important purpose is found in John 20:30-31.

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written **that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**”*

Jesus cared about people who were hungry or ill, but he knew that these needs were only temporary. Their real need was for spiritual life, eternal life; they needed a Savior. Jesus of Nazareth was, in fact, the promised Messiah, the Savior that they had been waiting for who would come to save them from sin and death. **The miracles were signs that pointed the people then (and us today who read them) to the fact that God was in their midst in human form. They displayed his power, his authority and his glory.** They also gave a little window into what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like. Some day, Jesus will return to a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more sin, suffering or death. Those who believe in him will be a part of that kingdom forever.

Jesus said this about his miracles:

“...the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.” (John 5:36 (ESV), spoken to the Jewish leaders who accused him of blasphemy for making himself equal with God.)

Some people saw the miracles and believed in him; others saw, but did not believe because their hearts were hard.

“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:11-12)

8. Jesus Desires Mercy, Not Religious Tradition

(This story is also told in Mark 2:23-28 and 3:1-6)

Opening Discussion: Why do you think God instructed his people to observe the Sabbath, that is, a weekly day of rest?

Read Matt. 12:1-8.

1. Look at verses 1-2. What were the disciples doing?

How did the Pharisees react to this?

NOTE: According to the Law that God gave to Moses for the Jewish people, they were not to harvest grain on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had added many more traditions, including that you could not even pluck a handful of grain. Now they were feeling that it was their responsibility to enforce every small detail of their traditions.

2. Read Jesus' response to the Pharisees in verses 3-8.

NOTE: David is not condemned for eating consecrated bread when he was in desperate need, nor are the priests condemned for working on the Sabbath in order to carry out their required responsibilities. These two examples that Jesus gives show that God's laws regarding how the Sabbath was to be kept were not inflexible where there was a need. What was important was honoring God from the heart.

What do you think this means: "*I desire mercy, and not sacrifice*" (verse 7)?

3. What does it mean that Jesus is "*Lord of the Sabbath*" (verse 8)?

If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (v.8), how do you think he feels about people who legalistically keep the traditions, but don't understand God's heart of compassion?

4. Mark 2:27 includes this: "*The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.*" Take a few minutes to discuss what you think Jesus meant by this.

Read Matt. 12:9-14.

5. It seems that this incident happened on the same day as the one above. According to verse 10, who did Jesus see in the synagogue?

What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus?

Why did they ask it (verse 10)?

6. Read Jesus' answer in verses 11-12. A sheep was valuable; it represented money. This poor man, however, was nothing to the Pharisees.

Mark 3:5 (ESV) adds this: "...[Jesus] looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,..." How did Jesus' answer in Matt. 12:11-12 expose the true condition of their hearts?

7. What happened next, in verse 13?

How did the Pharisees respond (v. 14)?

Jesus had just done an amazing miracle before their eyes. Why did they want to destroy him?

8. Sometimes believers think, "If only people could see a miracle, then they would believe." From this story, besides just seeing a miracle, what is necessary in order for people to believe in Jesus? (Notice again the condition of the Pharisees' hearts in Mark 3:5.)

Application & Prayer: In Matt. 12:7 Jesus says, "*I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.*" All of us can easily become legalists, carefully following our religious traditions, meeting together and singing and speaking words of worship, while not truly loving God and our neighbor. How did Jesus show that he truly cared for the man with the withered hand, even though he knew it would make the Pharisees angry?

As a group, take a few moments to wait quietly before the Lord. Which are you more concerned about: following rules and not offending anyone, or about helping hurting people? Is your heart soft (full of mercy) toward others? Are you willing to show love and kindness, even if some people don't understand and speak badly about you? Ask God now to show you any areas where you have cared more about the opinions of others than about showing mercy, love and acceptance to the needy. Pray that he would help you to follow the example of Jesus in this story. Ask for his forgiveness and for his work in you to change your heart as needed.

9. Jesus Raises a Widow's Son to Life

Opening Discussion: Read Psalm 103:13-14. Take a few minutes to discuss what these verses tell you about what God is like.

In this account of a wonderful miracle, we will see how Jesus showed these same attributes toward a grieving and helpless widow.

Read Luke 7:11-17.

1. Read again verses 11-12. Where was Jesus and who was with him (verse 11)?

What did they see happening as they came near to the gate of the town (verse 12)?

From verse 12, what do we know about the mother?

NOTE: In Israel in Jesus' time, women were almost completely dependent upon the men in their family (husband, son, father, etc) for provision and for legal and physical protection. Describe the future this widow was probably facing now that her son was dead.

Besides the crowd that came to the town with Jesus, who else, according to verse 12, was there to witness this miracle? Describe what you think this scene might have been like.

2. Read verse 13. How did Jesus feel when he saw this woman?

What does this tell you about Jesus' heart attitude toward those who are suffering?

3. What did Jesus say to the woman?

If you had been there that day, before you saw the miracle that he would do, what would you have thought when you heard Jesus tell her that?

In telling the woman not to weep, Jesus was not making light of her sorrow. Instead, he knew that he was about to turn her sorrow into joy!

4. What did Jesus do next (verse 14)?

NOTE: This would be a very surprising thing for Jesus to do. According to Old Testament Law, to touch a funeral bier (the plank the body was lying on) would make a person unclean. However, Jesus, the sinless and

holy Son of God, cannot be made unclean. Throughout Jesus' ministry on earth we see him touching those that society considered unclean. But Jesus was not affected by them; rather, they were made clean by his touch.

5. Read verses 14-15 again. What did Jesus say?

What happened in response to Jesus' words?

Think about what happened in Genesis 1 when God spoke. (See Gen. 1:3, for example.) Do you believe that God's word is powerful? Take a few minutes to discuss how you see God's power revealed both in creation and now in this incident.

6. Read verses 16-17. What was the first response of the people who were watching?
7. What was their second response, according to verse 16?

Why do you think they were afraid?

NOTE: There was no doubt in these peoples' minds that they had seen the power of God revealed. Who but God alone could give life back to a dead person? However, they didn't realize yet that God in human form was actually among them. They were probably remembering the account in 1 Kings 17:17-24 where the prophet Elijah prayed and a widow's son was brought back to life. If you want to read that story now, you will notice some important differences in how Elijah brought the young man back to life, and how Jesus raised the widow's son in Nain. What are some of those differences?

What do they help us to understand about the difference between a prophet of God and One who is God Himself?

8. Look back at Luke 7:11-12. What were the two crowds that witnessed the miracle that day in Nain?

Look at verses 16-17. How did the people respond? What did they do?

Application and Prayer: Suppose that you were in the crowd that day at Nain and you saw this amazing miracle that Jesus did. How would this help you understand who this man standing before you in a physical body really was?

Take a minute to read and think about John 14:6. How would this miracle help you believe that Jesus truly is “the life”?

Hebrews 13:8 tells us that, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” Think about Jesus’ attitude toward this helpless widow. Do you believe that he has the same heart of compassion toward you today? Do you believe that he sees and cares about your suffering, and the suffering of those you know and love?

Take some time now to pray, thanking and praising God for who he is, and also carrying your needs and burdens to him because he cares for you.

*You answer us with awesome deeds
of righteousness, O God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,
who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,
who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.
Those living far away fear your wonders;
where morning dawns and evening fades
you call forth songs of joy.*

Psalm 65:5-8

10. Jesus Has Authority over Nature

(This story is also told in Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25.)

Opening Discussion: Think about a time when you were very afraid. What did you do?

Read Mark 4:35-41.

1. Look again at verses 35-37. Describe the situation: Who was in the boat? What happened?

How serious was the situation?

2. Read verse 38. What was Jesus doing? How do you think he could do this in the middle of a storm?

NOTE: Jesus had been teaching to very large crowds and also healing many people. No doubt he was exhausted. Some people think that when Jesus was on earth he was not fully human, but we see here that Jesus had a physical body that became tired, just like any other person.

3. Read verse 38 again. What did the disciples say to Jesus?

What do you think they must have been thinking?

4. Read verse 39. What did Jesus do? What happened when he spoke?

What does this show about Jesus' authority?

5. John 1:3 says this about Jesus: *"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."*

Discuss how Jesus' display of authority over nature might help his disciples to believe in him as the creator God.

6. Read again verse 40. Take a few minutes to think about and discuss the two questions Jesus asked the disciples in this verse.

How are fear and faith in God opposites?

7. When the disciples saw how the storm responded to Jesus, how did they react?

What did they say to each other?

At first, the disciples were terrified because of the storm. After the sea was calm, they were terrified by the miracle they had seen Jesus perform. Why do you think they were so afraid now?

NOTE: The disciples were slowly having their eyes opened to who Jesus was. They had seen his authority over sickness and over demonic powers as they had traveled with him from village to village in Galilee. Now they have seen him actually speak with authority to winds and waves and they obeyed instantly! Put yourself in their situation of being an eye-witness to this dramatic miracle. By traveling with Jesus, they were more and more beginning to realize that he was no ordinary prophet. They were beginning to tremble in awe at the power of God and they asked each other: “Who is this?”

8. If the disciples had truly known who was in the boat with them, would they have been afraid of the storm? Explain your answer.

Application and Prayer: Take a few minutes to share with each other about “storms” that you are facing in your life at this time. Do you believe that Jesus is with you in the midst of your difficulties?

Psalms 139:7-10 says this:

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

Jesus said this:

“...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
(From Matt. 28:18&20)

How do these verses encourage and comfort you?

Take some time to pray for yourselves and for each other. Ask God to help you where your faith is weak. Thank him that he is always with you in whatever hardships you face in life. Pray together about specific “storms” that anyone in your group is presently facing.

11. Jesus Has Authority Over Evil Spirits

(This Story is also told in Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39. Matthew tells of 2 demon-possessed men; Mark and Luke tell of only one, but this does not mean that there was not a second man who was also healed. The stories are very similar, and therefore, it is thought to be the same incident.)

Opening Discussion: Have you ever woken up from a very bad dream or felt an evil presence in the room? Did you call out the name of Jesus? Tell about your experience or tell about a similar experience that you have heard or read about.

Read Mark 5:1-20.

1. Read verses 1-2 again. Jesus had gone across the lake to an area where Gentiles lived. Who came to meet him as he got out of the boat?
2. Read verses 3-5 again. Describe the man who came to meet Jesus. How were the unclean spirits (demons) tormenting him? Discuss what his life must have been like.
3. According to verses 3-4, was anyone able to subdue him?

Do we, in our own strength, have the power to overcome forces of evil?

4. Read verses 6-8. When the man saw Jesus (from a distance) what did he do? (Verse 6)

What did he say to Jesus?

Think about this: This man was a Gentile, he was not in his right mind and he lived alone among the tombs. How would he have known who Jesus was when even Jesus' disciples were not yet sure who he was?

5. Look at verse 7 again. Who was speaking to Jesus—the man, or the demons inside the man?

Why do you think they were so afraid?

6. Some people think that Jesus and Satan have equal power. The truth is that Jesus is the Son of God, one with God himself; Satan and his

demons are fallen angels. They are beings created by God who rebelled against God. The scriptures teach us that their day of final judgement is coming. (See Revelation 20:10.)

Do you think these demons believed that their power was equal to Jesus' power? Explain your answer.

7. Read verses 9-13 again. According to verse 9, how many demons were there?

NOTE: A Roman legion could be as many as 6000 soldiers. While the number of demons may not have been that many, it does say there were many. There were at least enough demons in this one man to make 2000 pigs run into the sea!

Look again at verses 7, 10, and 12. What is the attitude of the demons toward Jesus in these verses?

What happened to the evil spirits and the pigs in verse 13?

8. Read verses 14-17. Look again at verse 15. How had the demon-possessed man changed? (Luke 8:27 says that the man had not worn clothes or lived in a house for a long time.)
9. When the people of the surrounding area came and saw the man, what was their response? (verse 15)

Why do you think they were afraid?

Here are some things to consider:

- The people have seen a power that they can't explain at work in a man's life.
- The people have lost 2000 pigs! That probably represented the income that several, perhaps many families had to live on.
- The people may be wondering what else this stranger will do.

When they heard what had happened (verse 16), what did they say to Jesus (verse 17)?

10. Read verses 18-20. What did the man, now cleansed and whole, want to do?

What did Jesus tell him to do instead? What did the man do?

11. No doubt everyone in the area knew what he had been before. State briefly, in your own words, what this man's testimony would be. What would he be telling the people he met?

What was the response of the people to his testimony (v. 20)?

12. What does this story help you see about Jesus' authority?

Application and Prayer: Some people do not believe that Satan exists; others think of him as a funny-looking cartoon character. Neither of these is true. The Bible teaches that Satan is real, he is evil and hates God and he wants to destroy all human beings because God loves them. He is powerful, he is evil and he is crafty. But Jesus, in his death on the cross, overcame all the power of Satan and his demons. Therefore, even though Satan is our enemy, we do not ever need to be afraid of him.

Do you believe that Jesus has all power and authority over all evil forces in this world? Thank him now that through his suffering on the cross, he took back from Satan the power that he had over us because of our sin. Pray in the name of Jesus and in his authority about any fears or unbelief that you may have. Praise Jesus that *HE* is Lord over all!

Proverbs 18:10 says, *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."*

12. Jesus Brings Hope to the Hopeless, Part 1

NOTE: This study includes 2 miracles. It is divided into 2 parts so that it can easily be done in 2 sessions.

(This story is also told in Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 8:40-56.)

Opening Discussion: Tell about a time when you had done everything you knew to do, and all hope was gone. What did you do? Tell about what happened. Or tell about someone you have heard about or read about who prayed and trusted God in a hopeless situation.

This story tells of two hopeless situations. Let's look at the passage below to see how everything changed when Jesus came.

Read Mark 5:21-34.

1. Read verses 21-24 again. Describe what was happening in these verses. (Jairus's situation will be discussed in the next study).
2. Read verses 25-29. Describe the hopeless situation of the woman in verses 25-26.

Look at verse 27. What do you think she must have heard about Jesus?

What did she do?

3. How do her thoughts in verse 28 show that she had faith?

What happened in verse 29?

4. Read verses 30-32. Jesus and his disciples were moving through a crowd who were all pressing against one another. Probably many people touched him or his garments. Why did Jesus ask who touched him (verse 30)?

What was the difference in this woman's touch and the touch of all the other people? (Look again at what she said to herself in verse 28.)

5. Read verses 33-34. How did the woman come to Jesus? Why do you think she was trembling with fear?

What did she tell him?

6. Discuss this question: Why would it be good for this woman to publicly acknowledge what she had done and the healing she had received? (Think about the impact of her testimony on the crowd that day, and also think about how her story is an encouragement to you, hundreds of years later.)

What did Jesus say to her (verse 34)?

7. Think about this: This woman had a bleeding illness for 12 years. According to Jewish law, that would make her and anyone who touched her ceremonially unclean. She would not have been able to enter the temple, and in many ways, would have been an outcast. What did Jesus call her in verse 34? How do you think she felt when she heard this?
8. Look again at his words to her in verse 34. How do his words indicate both physical and spiritual wholeness?

Discuss how her life changed as a result of this encounter with Jesus. What emotions do you think she might have been feeling?

9. What do you think was happening in the crowd as they heard her testimony and then heard what Jesus said to her? Remember that the people still did not know who Jesus really was.

Application and Prayer: Read again Mark 5:25-28. Notice the boldness of this woman who came to touch Jesus' garment. Imagine her situation. She has gone from doctor to doctor over many years, and now her money is gone and she is only getting worse. From a human standpoint, her situation is hopeless. She is weary. Then she hears about Jesus and faith rises up in her heart. There is a large crowd pressing around Jesus, but she does not allow this to discourage her. Imagine her determination as she pushes her way through the crowd, stretching out her hand until she is able to touch the hem of his robe. Immediately, she feels his power in her body, and she knows she has been healed.

Are you or someone you know facing a situation that seems to be hopeless? Perhaps like this woman you have spent much money and tried everything you know to find a solution to your problem.

Matthew 7:7-14 (ESV) says this:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Take a few minutes to meditate on these verses. How did the woman in this study show that she believed in the truths in these verses?

What do these verses speak to you?

Your heavenly Father wants you to come to him with confidence that you will receive from him all that you need. Pray together, asking Jesus to give you the boldness and faith of this unnamed woman. As she overcame any fear of the crowd and pressed through to Jesus, ask him to help you to overcome your doubts and fears. Then as a group, bring your requests to Jesus, trusting that he cares for you and those you love.

13. Jesus Brings Hope to the Hopeless, Part 2

(This story is also told in Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 8:40-56.)

Opening Discussion: Why is hope so important in our lives? If someone we know loses hope, what can we do to help restore hope to them again?

Think about the woman with the bleeding illness in Part 1 of this study. How did she find hope for her hopeless situation?

This study looks at the story of Jairus's daughter, which was interrupted by the miracle in the previous study.

Read Mark 5:21-24.

1. Describe what was happening in verses 21-22.

Who was Jairus?

2. How did Jairus approach Jesus (v.22)? What did he say to him (v.23)?

What do you think he was feeling? (Luke 8:42 says that this was his only daughter.)

Do you think he had faith? Explain your answer.

3. How did Jesus respond (verse 24)?

(Here we will skip over verses 25-34 which tell about the healing of the woman (Part 1)).

Now Read Mark 5: 35-43.

4. In verse 35, what message came to Jairus? How do you think he must have felt when he heard this news?

Notice the words of the messenger. Do you think he has any hope for Jairus's daughter now?

5. Take a few minutes to discuss some of the emotions you might be feeling if you had been in his situation and Jesus was interrupted by someone else as he was coming to heal your daughter?

6. What did Jesus reply in verse 36?

No doubt Jairus's heart was filled with fear and grief at this news that had just come about his daughter. Do you think it would have

been easy for Jairus to believe? He had had faith that Jesus could heal her, but now his daughter is dead! What could he believe now?

7. Read verses 37-40. Describe the scene at Jairus's house.

What do you think it would have been like for Jairus to arrive at his house and hear the hopeless, grief-stricken cries of the mourners?

8. What did Jesus say to the mourners? How did they respond to him?

What must Jairus have thought when he heard what Jesus said?

9. Describe what happened in verses 41-43. What was the reaction of the people in the room?

How did Jairus's family's hopeless situation change in one moment?

10. Think about and discuss this: If Jesus even has authority over death, do you think there can be any situation you will face in life that is truly hopeless to him?

Application and Prayer: Let's look back at what is happening with Jairus in this incident. He is a father who has a daughter he dearly loves, and she is near death. He has one hope—that Jesus, the miracle-worker, would come and lay his hands on her so that she might be healed. He has probably heard of many who have been healed in this way. He has hope. Then there is a delay, and his daughter dies. Grief grips his heart; now it is too late.

But it is never too late for Jesus! He speaks words of hope to Jairus: "*Do not fear; only believe.*" Jairus doesn't know what this means, but he will watch to see what Jesus will do. He continues to go with Jesus to his home. Then he hears the wailing of the mourners and sees the tear-stained face of his wife. This is reality—his daughter is dead. But Jesus is with him! Now he will see the glory of God in a way that he could not have imagined. His daughter is raised to life again!

Romans 15:13 says,

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Our God is a God of hope. No situation is beyond his power to work for our good and his glory. Do you believe this? Our faith, our trust in who he is, will keep us from sinking into hopelessness.

Where do you need to have your hope renewed? Read again the verse above from Romans 15, and take a few minutes to meditate on it. The God who brought Jairus's daughter back to life—is He your God?

Take time as a group to praise and thank God for who he is and allow your hearts to be renewed in hope. Pray for specific needs or things that may be discouraging in your lives.

Is there someone you know who is in a hopeless situation with whom you could share this story so they might be encouraged?

14. Where Does Jesus' Power and Authority Come From? Part 1

Jesus' Power Over Demons Amazes the Crowds

NOTE: This study is divided into two parts. It is recommended that it be done in two separate sessions.

Opening Discussion: In Matt. 28:18 Jesus said, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*" Take a few minutes to discuss what this means. What does it mean for you, personally, as a follower of Jesus?

In this study we will look at two similar miracles and how they were a sign to the people of who Jesus was.

Read Matthew 9:32-34; then read Matthew 12: 22-30.

1. In each of these accounts, what was the man's physical problem (Matt. 9:32 & 12:22)

With both of the men, what was the spiritual root that was causing the physical problem?

2. What did Jesus do for these men?

What immediately happened to the man in Matt. 9:33?

What happened to the man in Matt. 12:22?

3. How did the crowds respond in 9:33? What did they say?

NOTE: Demon oppression was common in Israel during Jesus' time. It's possible that people had seen others before Jesus exorcising demons, sometimes through the use of magic. They may have even seen the oppressed person get some temporary relief, but of course this would not be true deliverance because Satan wants to keep people in bondage. Only the power of God could truly set them free.

In Matt. 12:27 (which we will look at below), it seems that some of the disciples of the Pharisees (Jesus called them "sons" of the Pharisees) also practiced casting out of demons. However, we have no record of this anywhere else in the scriptures, nor is there any record of anyone being delivered from demons in the Old Testament.

What do you think was the difference in what the people may have heard or seen before with others who attempted to cast out demons and what they witnessed now with Jesus? (Matt. 9:33). (See also Luke 4:36.)

4. Look at Matt. 12:23. These people were also amazed. What question did they ask?

When the Jews spoke of the “Son of David,” they meant the promised Messiah, the Savior prophesied throughout the Old Testament. Do you think it would be reasonable for them to think this, based on what they had just seen?

5. Read the response of the Pharisees in 9:34. The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus’ power and authority and the large crowds that followed him. What did they say to try to discredit the miracle Jesus had just done?
6. In Matt. 12:24, the Pharisees gave the same response to this second miracle. (Beelzebul was another name for Satan.) Read Jesus’ response to them in 12:25-26.

In your own words, explain what Jesus said in verses 25-26. How did he show them that it was not possible for him to use Satan’s power to cast out demons?

7. What question did Jesus ask in 12:27? If they were successful in overcoming the power of Satan in people, could they be using the power of Satan?
8. Read verse 28. What did Jesus help the people to see? If he was not using Satan’s power to cast out demons, where must his power have come from?
9. How did his authority over evil spirits show where he had come from and who he was?

NOTE: One of the prophecies about the Messiah, the Savior that God would send, is found in Isaiah 35:5-6:

“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”

This was written by Isaiah more than 700 years before Jesus was born! Isaiah also said this:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;” (Isa. 61:1, ESV)

The Jews of Jesus’ day would probably have heard the book of Isaiah read in the synagogue many times. These could have been some of the prophecies that came to their mind when they saw the miracles that Jesus performed.

Application and Prayer: In these two healings that we have read, we see that the cause of the infirmity in both men was oppression by Satan. Read John 10:10. Read it again and take a few minutes to meditate quietly on this verse. How is the work of Satan described? How is the work of Jesus described?

How do you see the work of Satan and then the work of Jesus in the lives of each of these two men?

We are all sinners who have rebelled against God and his good plan for us. Isaiah 53:6 says, *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way;”* In spite of this, God has chosen to give us abundant life. How did he do it? The rest of this verse tells us how: *“and the LORD has laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.”*

Take some time in your group now to think about this quietly. Then pray together, thanking God for Jesus, who sets us free from the power of Satan and gives us abundant life.

We will look more closely at this in Part 2 (Study 15).

15. Where Does Jesus' Power and Authority Come From? Part 2

Jesus' Power Over Demons Amazes the Crowds

Opening Discussion: In Part 1 (Study 14) we read about two different situations where Jesus broke the power of Satan and set men free from muteness and blindness. What was the response of the people who saw these miracles?

What was the response of the Pharisees?

Read again Matthew 9:32-34, then read Matthew 12:22-30.

1. Read Matt. 12:25-28 again. Why did Jesus say it was not possible that he was using Satan's power to cast out demons?

If he was not using Satan's power, what did he say that meant (verse 28)?

2. Now read 12:29 again.

NOTE: When Jesus spoke of a "strong man's house," he was referring to the world, which Satan has a degree of authority over because mankind, in his sinful rebellion against God, has given it to him. In the very beginning, however, God gave a prophecy about One who would come and take back that authority. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command to them, God spoke this to the serpent (Satan):

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

Jesus was that offspring of the woman. His death on the cross was Satan striking his heel; his resurrection from the dead crushed Satan's head. Striking the heel is painful; crushing the head is fatal. (If you have never read about creation and the fall of mankind into sin, take some time on your own to read Genesis, chapters 1-3.)

3. In Matt. 12:29, Jesus gives a picture of overcoming Satan, comparing it to binding a strong man who is guarding a house.

How did Jesus bind Satan (the "strong man")? (See the verses below.)

- *Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (Jesus, speaking of his approaching death, John 12:31)*
 - *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8)*
 - *He (God) disarmed the rulers and authorities (Satan and all demonic forces) and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Jesus, through his death and resurrection). (Col. 2:15, ESV (parentheses added))*
 - *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Jesus' last words to his disciples before he ascended back to heaven. Matt. 28:18)*
4. During the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, he was continually "plundering" Satan's house, that is, undoing the evil in the world caused by sin. Discuss how Jesus plundered Satan's house in each of the scriptures below.
- *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Jesus, speaking about himself, Luke 4:18-19, ESV)*
 - *(After Jesus had cast many demons out of a man living among the tombs) Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind... (Luke 8:35, ESV)*
 - *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matt. 8:16-17)*
 - *But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor; and if I have*

cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:8-10)

5. Read Matt. 12:25-29 again, and then read verse 30. In light of what Jesus said in verses 25-29, explain what he means in verse 30.
6. Read James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15. According to these verses, is it possible to be a follower of Jesus, and at the same time be living according to the ways of the world, that is, the ways of Satan? In a war, is it possible to be on two opposing sides at the same time? Discuss these questions.

Application and Prayer: As we have looked at these two miracles we have seen that Satan was the cause of the infirmity of both men. Although he is not directly the cause of every bad thing in this world, Satan is always ready to use these things to bring discouragement and doubt to our minds. He wants to weaken and destroy our faith in God and his goodness and faithfulness.

Read Matt. 12:28 again. Jesus had power over Satan because he was and is, God. And he shares that authority with his followers. When we are born again of God’s Spirit, he gives us his name and the authority of his Word to defeat Satan when he comes to attack us. The scripture verses below will help you to understand this better.

Read again Col. 2:15 and Matt. 28:18 (See question 3 above.). Take time to pray as a group, thanking Jesus for overcoming all power and authority of Satan through his death on the cross and his resurrection. Pray that God would teach you to stand in the name of Jesus against all the attacks of the enemy against you and those you love. It would be good, also, to memorize these 2 verses and meditate on them often.

Other verses to help you stand against Satan’s attacks:

- Ephesians 6:10-18
- James 4:6-10
- 1 Peter 5:8-11
- 2 Cor. 10:3-5

16. An Invalid Is Healed at Bethesda Pool

Opening Discussion: Do you think sometimes people may find their identity in their illness or problems, so that they don't really want anything to change? How might this keep them from experiencing the joy and freedom that God desires to give them?

Read John 5:1-18.

1. Read again verses 1-3. Where is Jesus? Describe the scene.

NOTE: Verse 4 says this:

“...for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had.” (John 5:4, ESV, footnote)

In many versions of the scripture this is a footnote. This is because that information is included in some later manuscripts of John's gospel, but not in the earliest ones. It was probably added to explain why so many people came to the pool. When you read verse 3 (many invalids were lying there at the pool) and verse 7 (the man's complaint that he has no one to help him into the water) it seems clear that the people believed that something really happened at that pool to make people well, whether or not it actually happened.

2. Read verses 5-6. How long had this man been an invalid?

What question did Jesus ask him?

Doesn't this seem like an unnecessary question to ask a man who has been sick for many years? Think about some of the things that you talked about in the opening discussion. Are there perhaps reasons why this man might not want to get well?

3. Read verse 7. How did the man answer Jesus? Did he directly answer Jesus' question?

What did this man see as the only possibility for healing? Why did his situation seem to be hopeless?

NOTE: In many of the miracles in the gospels, the person comes to Jesus asking for his help and refers to him as “Son of David” or “Lord”

or “Teacher”. It seems that often the people had heard about Jesus and the miraculous deeds he was doing. In the account of this miracle, it is Jesus who approaches the invalid and asks if he wants to be well. In answering, this man simply calls him “sir.” It seems likely that he has not heard of Jesus’ reputation as a miracle worker.

4. Read verses 8-9. What did Jesus say to the man, and what happened in verse 9?

How did this man’s hopeless situation change in a moment?

5. Read verses 10-13. What did the Jewish religious leaders say to the man who was healed?

NOTE: There was nothing in the Law that God gave his people that said they could not carry a bed on the Sabbath. Rather, this was one of hundreds of rules developed by religious leaders over the years that spelled out the specifics of what a person could or could not do on the Sabbath. These rules did not reflect God’s purpose for the Sabbath, but instead had become a great burden to the people.

How did the man respond in verse 11? Think about this: If someone has authority over illness, could they not also have authority over man-made rules for the Sabbath?

Why did the man not know who had healed him (verse 13)?

6. Read verse 14. When Jesus found the man in the temple, what warning did he give him?

What could be worse than the physical condition of an invalid?

The writer of this gospel, John, does not tell us if this man ever turned from sin and followed Jesus. There is nothing written here that shows that he was interested in knowing who Jesus was or in giving glory to him. If he received physical healing, but did not then believe in the healer, what would be the final consequence for this man?

7. Read verses 15-18. Why were the Jewish leaders persecuting Jesus (verse 16)?

How did Jesus respond (verse 17)?

What were two reasons the Jews wanted to kill Jesus (verse 18)?

Application and Prayer: The invalid in this passage of scripture received a wonderful gift from God that day as he lay at the pool, waiting as he did every day, for something that seemed impossible. For 38 long years he had to wait on someone else to move him from place to place. Now, in an instant, he was made physically whole! What a happy day for him!

But what about his spiritual condition? Read again Jesus' words to him in verse 14. This man has picked up his mat and left behind his life of physical helplessness, but is he ready to leave behind his life of sin and believe in Jesus for eternal life?

Think about your own life. Is Jesus asking you the same question he asked the invalid in verse 6? You may not have the physical problems of the man in this story, but what is your spiritual condition? Have you left behind your life of sin to follow Jesus with a whole heart? Perhaps you are following Jesus, but you are still carrying wounds from the past, or holding on to unforgiveness or a sinful habit. Take time now to wait quietly before the Lord, asking him to speak to you about anything he wants to do in your life. As a group, pray for one another.

Below is a suggestion for a personal application that you may want to do later on your own:

Read slowly through this entire story once again (verses 1-18). Think about what your answer is to Jesus' question in verse 6. Will you bring your hurts and struggles to Jesus? Will you do what he tells you to do in order to let go of the past and be made whole? Take some time to pray about this and believe that God is able to bring change and freedom to your life.

A book that can help you find freedom and healing from the past is *Growing in Christ through the Beatitudes*. This book of 31 daily devotional readings can be downloaded to your phone or device for free from this website: www.learnhisways.com. Click on the flag for your language.

Why did people respond to Jesus' miracles in such different ways?

Sometimes we think that if our friends or relatives who don't believe in Jesus could just see a miracle in his name, they would believe. However, as we read the stories of Jesus' miracles throughout the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), we see that people responded to him in different ways. They all saw the same things, and no one argued that nothing supernatural had happened. But not everyone believed in him, not everyone rejoiced and not everyone gave glory to God.

There were those like the Pharisees and other religious leaders among the Jews who were angry when they saw Jesus do miracles. They enjoyed positions of authority over the Jewish people and now these people who had looked up to them were turning away and following this miracle-worker. Rather than being happy that someone was healed or delivered, rather than seeing it as a sign that Jesus was from God, they were jealous and wanted only to destroy him. Their hearts were hard and they didn't want to believe that this could be God's promised Messiah. (See John 11:45-48 & 53. This took place after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.)

Then there were others in the crowds who were happy and excited when they saw Jesus' miracles. Those among the 5000 who ate the bread and fish that Jesus multiplied were ready to make him their king so they could have free food every day (John 6:14-15). These people were happy to receive the blessings, whether healing, deliverance or miraculous provision, but they didn't want to walk the hard road of discipleship. They were among those who waved palm branches and shouted praises as Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem (Mark 11:7-10) and a few days later, shouted for him to be crucified (Mark 15:12-15).

Many of those who were in the crowds that followed Jesus and heard him teach would have been in this category. Their hearts were set on themselves and their comfort, and not on seeking first the kingdom of God.

Finally, there were those who saw the miracles of Jesus as signs that he was the Messiah sent from God and they gladly received and followed him, even when his teachings were hard to accept. Their hearts were soft, humble and receptive. (See John 6:66-69.) These people were few in number compared to the many who saw or received his miracles.

People today are much the same. Some look for natural ways to explain away miracles. Others acknowledge God's supernatural works, but they are not interested in knowing him. They are delighted to receive a miracle for themselves or someone they love, but will they take up their cross and follow this Savior? Some will not, no matter how great a miracle they may see. But those whose hearts are soft and humble will gladly bow before Jesus as Lord and follow him.

*I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.*

*I will meditate on all your works
and consider all your mighty deeds.*

Your ways, O God, are holy.

What god is so great as our God?

*You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.*

Psalms 77:11-14

17. A Miracle Lunch

(This story is also told in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44 and Luke 9:10-17, with a few different details added by each writer.)

Opening Discussion: Have you ever been in a situation where you were very hungry and you had no food and no money or there was nothing to buy? Describe what that was like.

Read John 6:1-15.

1. Read again verses 1-4. Jesus and his disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee by boat. A great crowd of people followed him, walking around by land. According to verse 2, why did they follow him?
2. Each of the other three gospels add details that John does not include. Read Matt. 14:13-14 (Jesus had just heard about the death of John the Baptist); Mark 6:30-34; and Luke 9:10-11. Look especially at the verses in Mark.

Think about how you feel when you plan time for yourself and something interrupts that plan: guests arrive, a child needs you, plans get changed, etc. Discuss Jesus' response both to the needs of the disciples (Mark 6:31) and to the needs of the crowd (Mark 6:34).

3. Read John 6:5-7. What question did Jesus ask Philip?

Why did he ask him that (verse 6)?

What was Philip's answer (verse 7)?

How was this a test? How did Jesus' question help his disciples to see how impossible the situation was in the natural?

4. Read Andrew's response in verses 8-9. What question does Andrew ask (verse 9)?

Do you think he has any idea what Jesus can do with 5 loaves and 2 fish?

5. According to verse 10, how many men were there?

In those days, only men were counted. Think about the women and children who would have also been in the crowd that day. How many people do you think may have been there?

6. Describe what Jesus did next in verse 11.

How much did each person get?

7. In verse 12, what did Jesus tell them to do after everyone had eaten and was full?
8. According to verse 13, how much did they gather up of the leftover pieces?

Discuss all the ways that this must have been an amazing miracle to the people who ate the bread and fish that day. (Think about the remote place where they were; the small amount of food that Jesus had to begin with; how much each person ate; and how much was left over.)

9. Read verse 14. In this verse, this miracle is called a “sign.” What did the people think this sign meant?
10. In verse 15, what did the people want to do with Jesus? Why do you think they wanted to do this?

How did Jesus respond? Why did he respond this way?

Application and Prayer: In one way, the people were right: Jesus was the one the prophets spoke of who would come. But he was not coming as a conquering king to bring them an easier life; he was coming as a suffering servant. He would give them bread, but not the bread they expected or wanted. When the people came looking for Jesus later, read what he said to them in John 6:25-27.

Through this miracle, Jesus showed the people that providing physical food for them was no problem for him. But he wanted them to hunger for the true food. Take a few minutes to discuss what you think is meant by “*the food that endures to eternal life*” (verse 27) that Jesus says we should work for.

Read also John 6:28-29. Think about your own life. Is your main focus in life food that perishes, or are you working for eternal food?

In verse 29, what does Jesus say is the “*work of God*”? How do you want to grow in doing this “*work of God*”?

Take a few moments for quiet meditation on these questions. Then pray about anything God's Spirit speaks to your heart about this.

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

18. Jesus Walks on Water

(Shorter versions of this story are found in Mark 6:45-53 and John 6:16-21.)

Opening Discussion: Have you ever tried to go against some natural law? For example, as a child, did you ever try to defy the law of gravity by jumping off of something high, hoping you could fly? Or perhaps you jumped into deep water thinking you wouldn't sink? Tell about your experience, or tell about something impossible you have always wished you could do.

Why do you think it is important that natural laws always hold true unless God supernaturally intervenes (gravity, for example)?

Read Matthew 14:22-33.

1. Read verses 22-23 again. Jesus had just fed 5,000 men (plus women and children) with 5 small loaves of bread and 2 fish. The events of this study take place immediately following that miracle.

Describe Jesus' actions in verse 22.

Jesus was fully human and he must have been tired after dealing with crowds of thousands of people until late in the evening—teaching them, healing their sick, feeding them. What did Jesus do at this time to find renewal and strength (verse 23)?

2. According to verse 24, what was happening with the disciples during this time?
3. Read verses 25-27. The fourth watch of the night would have been between 3:00 and 6:00a.m. What did Jesus do (verse 25)? (Remember, the sea was not calm.)

How did the disciples react (verse 26)?

Imagine that you are in the boat with the disciples. For many hours now you have been fighting against the waves, trying to get safely to land. Suddenly you see someone coming toward you walking on top of the water! What do you think your reaction would be? Why would you react that way?

How did Jesus encourage the terrified disciples (verse 27)?

4. Read verses 28-29. What did Peter say to Jesus?

Why do you think he said this? What do you think he might have been thinking?

What happened next in verse 29?

As the storm continued to rage about them and they watched Jesus and Peter, what do you think the other disciples in the boat must have been thinking?

5. Read what happened next in verses 30-31. Why did Peter begin to sink (verse 30)?

What did Jesus do (verse 31)? What did Jesus say to Peter?

6. Take a few minutes to discuss Peter's actions. How did he show courage?

Why did he lose courage?

7. Think about your own life. How are you like Peter when you face "storms" (difficulties or impossible situations) in your life?

What do you think Jesus would say to you in those times?

8. Read verses 32-33. As Jesus and Peter got into the boat, what happened immediately? (John 6:21 adds this "... *immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.*")

How did the disciples respond in verse 33?

9. Name all of the miraculous things that you see happening in this story. (See Matt. 14:25, 29&32 and also John 6:21.)

How would all of these things help the disciples to know who Jesus was?

What do these things help you to understand about who Jesus is?

Application and Prayer: Read John 1:1-3. What do these verses tell you about the role of Jesus (the Word) in creation? Think about how God has created the universe with certain unchanging natural laws: the law of gravity; laws that govern day and night, the sun, moon and stars; laws that govern motion and energy. All of these are important in keeping the universe functioning in an orderly and predictable way so

that life on earth is possible. Yet, who is ruling supremely over all of this?

Read the following verses:

Psalm 89:9: "You rule the raging sea; when its waves surge, You still them."

Psalm 95:4-5: "In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land."

1 Chronicles 29:11: "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all."

Colossians 1:16: "For by him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him."

Think about this: Everything in all of the natural creation must obey the voice of the Lord! As the disciples did in Matt. 14:33, take some time now to worship him.

If you, like Peter, find that you have little faith when you face the storms of life, ask God to help you to trust him, and not to give in to fear. He is not only all-powerful, but he also loves and cares for you. As you look to him, he will reach out his hand to lift you up, just as he did for Peter.

19. Jesus Honors the Faith of a Foreign Woman

(This story is also told in Mark 7:24-30.)

Opening Discussion: Have you ever felt like your faith was being tested? Share with the group about your experience or that of someone you know or have read about whose faith was tested.

Read Matthew 15:21-28.

1. Read verses 21-22. Where did Jesus go?

NOTE: God's plan, as revealed throughout the Old Testament, was to bring salvation first to the Jewish people, who would then carry the Good News to all the nations of the world. This is what we will see happening in the book of Acts, but it is not that time yet. Jesus' ministry during his time on earth was mainly to the Jews.

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile areas outside the borders of Israel. Jesus had just been healing large crowds of people throughout the Jewish region of Galilee; perhaps he went to these Gentile areas because he was wanting to pull away from the crowds for a bit of rest. Mark 7:24 tells us that he wanted to keep his presence there a secret.

2. Who came to Jesus (verse 22)?

NOTE: This Canaanite woman (not a Jew, but rather a citizen of a pagan society) acknowledged Jesus as "Son of David," that is, the Messiah whom the Jews had long been waiting for. It seems that the news about Jesus' teaching and miracles had traveled beyond the borders of Israel. Somehow, this Gentile woman had heard about him and believed what the Jewish religious leaders did not believe.

3. What did the woman ask for from Jesus (verse 22)?
4. Read verses 23-24. How did Jesus respond (verse 23)?

How did the disciples respond (verse 23)?

What did Jesus then say (verse 24)? Why do you think he said this?

5. Look at verse 25. Did this woman give up and leave?

6. Read Jesus' conversation with the woman in verses 26-27. In this same story in Mark 7:27 Jesus adds: *"First let the children eat all they want."*

NOTE: We know that Jesus cares for every person, regardless of nationality. John 3:16 tells us that

*"...God so loved **the world** that he gave his only Son, that **whoever** believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (ESV)

When we first read this story, it seems that Jesus didn't care about this foreign woman and was reluctant to meet her need. He seems to be saying that she as a Gentile has no right to receive anything from him. Take a few minutes to discuss what you think is happening in Jesus' conversation with her. How did his initial rebuff bring out in her a faith that would not be refused?

(The word Jesus used for "dogs" meant "little pet dogs," not dirty street animals.)

7. Now read Jesus response in verse 28. How did this woman show that she had great faith?

How was her faith rewarded?

8. Here are some things that we notice about the Canaanite woman in this story:
- She acknowledged Jesus as the Jewish Messiah—the one sent from God.
 - She asked for mercy. This shows that she knew she did not deserve his kindness.
 - She continued to ask, showing that she had faith that he was able to heal her daughter.
 - She was bold in persisting to at least get a crumb of the goodness that was being poured out on the Jews at this time.
 - Jesus commended her great faith and she received the only miracle that Jesus did in that region.

Application and Prayer: When you first read this story, it may seem that Jesus' response to this woman's request was heartless, even mean. But this was a test! Jesus knew what he would do and he also knew what was in her heart. He knew that her faith would grow if she was challenged to persist.

This woman was a Gentile, yet somehow, she believed that the God of Israel was good and powerful, and she wanted a share in that goodness. If she couldn't sit at the table with the children (the Jews), she would take the crumbs that fell and even that would be enough to satisfy her need. That is great faith!

Think about this: If Jesus had just spoken a word and healed her daughter when the woman first came to him, would she have had opportunity to express the faith that was in her heart? Was her faith at the beginning, when she first came to Jesus, as great as it was at the end, when her daughter was healed? Think also about how she must have been encouraged, how it must have lifted her spirits and filled her with joy to hear his words of commendation: *"Woman, you have great faith!"*

When God tests your faith by not giving an immediate answer, do you believe it's possible that he has something beautiful and good for you? James 1:3&4 tells us that the testing of our faith produces perseverance, and that perseverance makes us mature and complete. Do you want that more than you want a quick and simple answer to your requests?

Share with the group how you want to grow in confident trust in the goodness of God.

Take some time now to confess to God areas of unbelief in your life. Pray for one another to grow in the ways that you have shared about.

20. Jesus Heals Deaf Ears; Loosens a Stammering Tongue

Opening Discussion: What do you think it would be like not to be able to hear the voices of others? How much do our relationships with others depend on our ability to hear?

Read Mark 7:31-37.

NOTE: Jesus has just returned from the region of Tyre, where he healed a Gentile woman's daughter of demon possession (Study 19). Now he comes to an area known as the Decapolis (meaning "ten cities"), which is also populated largely by Gentiles. Matthew 15:29-31 tells us that large crowds came to Jesus and he healed many people at this time. Mark has chosen to tell us about one specific healing.

1. Read verses 31-32. What were the two problems of the man who was brought to Jesus (verse 32)?

Think about the limitations that this man had. How important would it be for him to have others who cared about him bring him to Jesus?

2. What did the men say to Jesus (verse 32)?

Since these men were probably part of the crowd of people whom Jesus had been healing, they may have already seen many miracles. Do you think they had faith?

3. Read verses 33-34. How did Jesus' actions in verse 33 show that he saw this man as an individual and not just part of a crowd?

4. Describe Jesus' actions in these two verses.

These actions seem strange to us, but Jesus sometimes used unusual means to perform miracles. This may have had some meaning to the deaf man and maybe also to those who were watching, that is not understood by us today. Do you think Jesus' actions may have helped in some way to prepare the deaf man for the miraculous healing he was about to receive?

5. Why do you think Jesus may have sighed in verse 34?

What did Jesus say?

6. Look at verse 35. As soon as Jesus spoke the words, what two things happened to the man?

We don't know how long this man had been deaf, but possibly it had been since childhood or perhaps he was born that way. This could be the reason he was unable to speak plainly. He had been living in a world of silence, isolated from other people. Imagine yourself in this man's place. What might you be thinking and feeling as you hear and speak for the first time?

If you were this man, what do you think might be the first words you would say?

7. Read verses 36-37. In verse 33 we saw that Jesus took the man away from the crowd and did this healing privately. Now what command did he give to those who were present?

In spite of this command, what did the people do (verse 36)?

How did they respond in verse 37?

NOTE: As Jesus was teaching and healing throughout the area of Galilee and nearby Gentile areas, the crowds that followed him were growing larger and larger. People were asking whether he could be the Savior spoken of by the prophets. (Compare the words of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 35:4-6 with Mark 7:37.) But they thought that the Savior would come as a great military hero to deliver them from the tyranny of the Roman government.

8. Jesus knew that as the word spread about his wonderful miracles, the people would try to make him a political leader. But this was not their greatest need. What was the greatest need of the Jewish people and of all mankind everywhere?

How was God's plan to meet that need different from what many people were hoping for?

Application and Prayer: The man in this passage of scripture had a physical need to have his ears opened to hear and his tongue loosened to speak. Think about your own spiritual ears. How well do you hear God's Spirit speaking to you? When you read his Word, do you grow in spiritual understanding?

And what about your tongue? Do you speak freely of God's goodness and of the message of the gospel to others, especially to those who have not heard?

Just as Jesus touched and healed the ears and tongue of this man, ask him now to touch your spiritual ears to hear him better. Part of "hearing" Jesus' words also involves obeying with a willing heart. As you do this, you will grow in your ability to hear him better and to tell others of his power and grace.

21. A Miracle Lunch for Gentiles and Miracle Money for Peter

(This study includes two miracles. The first story is also told in Mark 8:1-10. This is a different event from that in Study 17.)

Opening Discussion: Can you tell about a time that God provided for a physical need in an unexpected way, either in your own life or in the life of someone you know or have read about?

Introduction: This event and the one in Study 20 both took place in the area of the Decapolis, which was a largely Gentile area. This miracle probably happened at the same time as that healing miracle.

Read Matthew 15:29-39.

1. Read again verses 29-31. How did Jesus show that he had compassion for these foreigners (non-Jewish people)?
2. How did the people respond (verse 31)?

NOTE: Because many of the people in this crowd were not Jewish, they probably worshiped a variety of pagan gods. Think about all that these people were seeing happen right there before their eyes and among family members and people they would have known. How would these miracles have helped them to see Israel's God as different from their gods?

3. Read verse 32. What was Jesus concerned about?
4. Look at verse 33. What problems did the disciples see?

In Study 17 we saw that Jesus multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish to feed more than 5000 people. That miracle took place before this one we are now studying. Since Jesus' disciples had already seen that miracle, what do you think should have been their response to Jesus' concern that the people were hungry?

5. Read verses 34-36. How much food did the disciples have?

Describe what Jesus and the disciples did next (verses 35-36).

6. According to verse 37, what was the end result?

How many ate (verse 38)?

NOTE: This was now the second time that Jesus miraculously provided for a basic physical need of a large number of people in an impossible situation. The place was desolate; there was nothing available to buy in such an area, even if they did have money to pay for enough food for that many. However, this was not a problem for Jesus, the creator of all things!

Matthew also tells us about another time that God miraculously provided something that was needed.

Read Matthew 17:24-27.

7. What question did the collectors of the Temple tax ask Peter (verse 24)?
8. Read verses 25-26. What do you think Jesus was saying to Peter in these verses? The tax was for the Temple. Think about whose house the Temple was and who Jesus was.
9. Read verse 27. Why did Jesus say they should pay the tax?

What did he tell Peter to do in order to obtain the money to pay the tax?
10. Imagine that you were in Peter's place. Would you do what Jesus told you to do?

NOTE: Peter was a fisherman before he became a follower of Jesus, but he probably never found money in any of the fish he caught! Nevertheless, just as we read in Study 4 how he cast out the net because Jesus told him to even though they had fished all night and caught nothing, he now obeyed Jesus' instructions and found exactly what was needed! How important is our obedience, even when God tells us to do something that doesn't seem to make sense?

11. What do you think Peter might have been thinking when he saw the coin in the fish's mouth?

Application and Prayer: Throughout all of history there have been stories of God's miraculous provision for people in desperate need, whether it was for money or food, or for something else. Like the coin in the fish's mouth, sometimes God has provided in unusual ways. Do you believe that God sees and cares about the needs of all people?

Share in your group about needs that you know of in your community and in your country. What other needs do you know of around the world? Think about the millions of refugees throughout the world, and also about people in countries ravaged by war or earthquakes or famine. Do you sometimes, like the disciples in Matt. 15:33, feel overwhelmed and helpless when you hear about needs around the world?

Seven loaves of bread and a few small fish would not feed many people. But when the disciples brought these to Jesus, a crowd of many thousand people was fed! *“They all ate and were satisfied”* (v. 37). And there was even more left over than they had to begin with!

What do you have that you can bring to Jesus? Don’t just think about money or possessions, but think also about your time and abilities. It may not seem like very much, but ask him to increase your faith that he can multiply it like the loaves and fish. Take some time as a group to pray for specific needs you know of in your community and around the world. Ask God to show you what you can do to be a part of the answer to your prayers.

22. Healing of a Blind Man Displays God's Glory

A Blind Man Sees; Religious Leaders Become Blind

Opening Discussion: Discuss some ways that people today try to explain the miraculous apart from God. (Think about creation, for example.)

Read all of John 9.

1. Read verses 1-2. What question did the disciples ask Jesus?

Do you think it is a common assumption among many people today that any kind of illness or disability is always a result of sin? Briefly discuss this question.

2. Read Jesus answer in verses 3-5. According to Jesus, why was this man born blind? (Notice that Jesus did not say that this is always the reason why people suffer.)

Do you think that this might be the reason why some people suffer various illnesses or hardships today?

Jesus then began to speak about his work. God the Father, who had sent Jesus into the world, had specific works for him to do that would display the power and glory of God. Do you believe that God has work for you to do for his glory during your time on earth?

3. Read verses 6-7. What did Jesus do? What did the man do? How did the man show that he had faith—or at least hope—that something good would happen to him?
4. Read the conversation with the man's neighbors in verses 8-12. Notice their confusion as they looked for some natural explanation for what had happened. What was the obvious explanation that these people were blind to?
5. Read verses 13-17. The neighbors then took the man to the only source they knew of for answers—their experts, the Pharisees, who were the religious leaders of their day.

Look at verses 14 and 16. Why did the Pharisees conclude that Jesus could not have come from God?

NOTE: As on other occasions where the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, he was not breaking the Law that God gave to Moses. However, he did not keep all of the extra traditions added to the Law by the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus understood the true purpose of the Sabbath.

6. In verse 16, what were the two sides in the division among the Jewish leaders regarding the man's healing?

What did the man who had been healed say about who Jesus was?

7. Read verses 18-23. The Jews next went to the man's parents for an explanation. (Here "Jews" means the religious leaders, or the Pharisees.) How did his parents answer in verses 20-21?

According to verses 22-23, why did they answer the way they did? How did the fear of man keep them from confessing what was obvious?

8. Read the Pharisees' second conversation with the man who had been healed (verses 24-34). How did the Pharisees show that they were spiritually blind? (Notice especially verses 24 & 29. Also, notice verse 26. They kept asking the same question, looking for some explanation other than the real one.)

How did the man who was formerly blind show that he had spiritual insight? (Notice especially verses 25 & 30-33.)

9. Look at verses 28 & 34. When the Pharisees could not argue with the man's logic, nor deny that a miracle had taken place, what did they do?

Do you think that people today sometimes do something similar when they don't want to acknowledge the truth?

Why do you think people sometimes don't want to admit that God has done something supernatural?

10. Read verses 35-41. The Pharisees cast this man out of the temple, but how did Jesus invite him into his kingdom (verses 35-38)?

What did this man find that was far more valuable than acceptance by the religious leaders?

11. How did Jesus' words in verse 39 apply to the man who was healed?

How did they apply to the Pharisees?

12. According to verse 41, why were the Pharisees guilty? What were they refusing to see?

Application and Prayer: The Pharisees were well educated in God's Law and in the prophecies of the Old Testament. They should have been among the first to recognize that Jesus was fulfilling these prophecies. But they did not. Jesus' miracles should have been a clear sign of who he was, but they refused to see it.

Read Romans 1:18-21. These verses tell us that we choose foolishness and darkness (spiritual blindness) when we refuse to believe what God has clearly revealed to us. The blind man's parents and neighbors chose spiritual blindness because of the fear of man; they didn't want to be rejected by the religious leaders of the day, or excluded from the Temple.

All of us have areas of spiritual blindness in our lives. Ask yourself this question:

"Does the fear of man (the fear of what other people might think or say or do) sometimes keep me from acknowledging to myself or to others what is clearly true about Jesus and about God?"

Think about how this could hinder your growth in knowing God. Are you willing to follow him, regardless of the cost? Take time to pray now, asking him to show you areas of spiritual blindness in your life and to help you overcome the fear of man.

*Then [Jesus] said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."
(Luke 9:23)*

23. A Blind Man Gradually Receives Sight

Opening Discussion: Have there been times in your life when God answered a prayer gradually, that is, little by little or step by step, not giving you everything you asked for all at once? What do you think might be some reasons why God sometimes answers our prayers in this way?

Read Mark 8:22-26.

1. Look at verse 22. Who did some people bring to Jesus, and what did they want Jesus to do?
2. Read verse 23 again. Where did Jesus take the man?

There is no explanation of why Jesus did this. It may have been to get away from a crowd of people who were full of unbelief and would not believe, even if they saw a miracle. Discuss how unbelief affects our ability to see who Jesus is and to receive what he wants to give us.

3. Jesus then did something that to us seems strange. What did he do (verse 23)?

What did Jesus ask the man?

NOTE: In all of the other miracles of Jesus that we read about, it is obvious that a miracle has immediately taken place. There is no need to ask a question. The fact that Jesus asked him if he could see anything seems to show that Jesus knew that the healing was not yet complete.

4. How did the blind man respond (verse 24)?

What do you think he might have been thinking as he saw, even though unclearly, for the first time perhaps in a long time? (He must have had sight earlier in his life to have known what a tree looked like.)

5. Read verse 25. Describe what happened next. How was the man seeing now?
6. Most of the people that Jesus encountered were not physically blind, but they were all spiritually blind to who Jesus really was. Even Jesus' disciples did not yet understand who Jesus was and what his

purpose was for coming to earth. How might this gradual restoration of physical sight to the blind man have been a picture of what was happening spiritually among Jesus' followers.

7. Can you think of some reasons Jesus may have told the man not to go into the village, but rather to go home (verse 26)?
8. Read back through verses 22-26 again. Name all of the unusual things that you see in this brief account of a miracle.

NOTE: Jesus never did anything randomly, that is, without a purpose. We also know that his power is not limited; he healed many people with a word or a single touch. For some reason which Jesus did not explain, he chose to heal this man away from the crowd by spitting on his eyes and then touching them—not once—but twice. This man was probably excited to be able to see at least a little, after the first touch. But Jesus didn't leave him with a partial healing. He reached out and touched the man again.

9. In your life, have you needed a second—or a third or fourth or hundredth—touch to begin to see Jesus clearly? Discuss in your group how you have seen this in your lives.

Prayer and Application: For Jesus, opening physically blind eyes could happen in a moment. Opening spiritual eyes, however, takes a lifetime as we are continually growing in our understanding of who Jesus is and who we are in him. Take a few minutes to think quietly about your understanding of who Jesus is. What do you see clearly, and what are you still not sure about?

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus to have the eyes of their hearts opened:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17-19)

Discuss as a group the things you see in these verses that Paul wants the believers to see with spiritual eyes. Do you want these things for yourself? Take a few minutes as individuals to silently pray that God would do in your life all that Paul is praying for in these verses. Then pray the things in these verses for those in your group.

Pray also that those you know who do not yet know who Jesus is would have their spiritual eyes opened.

24. Jesus Frees a Boy from Demonic Bondage

Opening Discussion: Have you ever prayed for someone to be healed? Or have you been present where others were praying for someone to be healed? Tell about your experience.

This story is told in Matthew and also in Mark. In this study we will look at both accounts.

Read Matthew 17:14-21.

1. Describe the condition of the man's son (verse 15). What did the father do to try to get his son healed (verse 16)?

Was the son healed? Why was he not healed?

2. Look at verse 17. What did Jesus call the people of that generation?

Why do you think he called them that?

3. What did Jesus do in verse 18? What happened to the boy?

4. In verse 19, the disciples privately asked Jesus why they couldn't cast out the demon. What was Jesus answer in verse 20?

How much faith did Jesus say was needed to move mountains?

Jesus also spoke about mustard seeds in Matt. 13:31-32. Read these verses. Although the mustard seed is very tiny, the life within it has the potential to grow a big plant. Now look at Matt. 17:20 alongside of Matt. 13:31-32. What do you think Jesus was saying about faith when he compared it to a mustard seed?

NOTE: Jesus' disciples had already seen people healed through them (Luke 9:1-2 & 6; Luke 10:1 & 8-9 & 17). It seems possible that when Jesus sent them out early in his ministry, everyone they prayed for was healed or delivered from demons (Luke 10:17). But this time was different.

5. Now look at Matt.17:21. (This verse may be written as a footnote.) What did Jesus say is needed in some situations?

Now read this same story in Mark 9:17-29. Mark's account includes a conversation between Jesus and the father of the boy.

6. Read again verses 20-24. What was the father's request in verse 22? Do you think he had a lot of faith?
7. Now read Jesus' response in verse 23. How is Jesus' statement here similar to his words to the disciples in Matthew 17:20? (Look back at that verse.)
8. What did the father immediately say (Mark 9:24)? How do you think Jesus' words in verse 23 helped him go from doubt to belief?
9. Read verse 24 again and notice how the father humbly admitted his need for help.

Did Jesus rebuke the man for his doubts, or did he honor his faith, even though it was weak? (See verses 25-27.) Explain your thoughts.

10. Have you ever had times in your life when you wanted to believe but you struggled with doubts?

What can we learn from Jesus' conversation with the father?

11. Read again Mark 9:28-29, including the footnote to verse 29. Compare this with Matthew 17:21 (the footnote). What did Jesus say is sometimes necessary before a person is delivered?

Application and Prayer: What can we learn about healing from these passages? Take some time to discuss the following questions:

- How is healing (in this case, deliverance from a demonic spirit) linked to faith (Mark 9:23)? (See also Hebrews 11:6.)
- How much faith is necessary to see God do the impossible through us (Matt. 17:20)?
- Why is it important that we persevere in prayer and even fasting, if we don't see an immediate answer (Matt. 17:21 (footnote))?
- What should we do if we have doubts (Mark 9:24)?

Take time today, and often in your group, to pray in faith for the deliverance and healing of those you know who have needs. If you have doubts, or if you don't see answers right away, review the two passages in this study again (Matt. 17:14-21 and Mark 9:17-29). Pray the prayer of the father in Mark 9:24. It could also be helpful to set aside time for fasting and seeking God for deeper insight and for the power of his Holy Spirit.

Does God do miracles today?

Will God do miracles today, and will he do them for anyone?

Sometimes we wonder, did miracles only happen through Jesus and the first apostles? Can anyone pray and ask God for a miracle, and will he do it? What does God's Word say about this?

Jesus told his followers,

"Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:22-24, ESV)

As we read through the New Testament we see miracles being performed through many of Jesus' followers. The book of Acts tells of miracles God did through the apostles and also through ordinary believers who were not apostles. One example is when a group of believers who were gathered in a home prayed, and Peter was miraculously released from prison (Acts 12:1-17, especially verse 5). James 5:14-15 encourages prayer for the sick so that they may be healed. 1 Cor. 12:7-11 includes healing and working of miracles in the list of various spiritual gifts that are given to God's people *"for the common good"* (verse 7). And 1 Cor. 14:1 encourages us to *"eagerly desire spiritual gifts."*

Jesus also told his disciples this:

"...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14, ESV).

Who does Jesus say will do the works that he does, and even *greater works*? *"Whoever believes in [him]!"* God wants *us*—all believers—to have faith and ask him for big things! James 5:16 tells us, *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* Our prayers have great power to change people and situations.

If we are encouraged to ask for anything, why do we not see more miracles today?

Sometimes we don't see miracles because we don't ask God for them. (See James 4:2 & Matt. 7:7-8.) Other times we ask, but we don't really believe that he will do them. (See Matt. 21:22.) However, there are times when believers have great faith and they ask God for miraculous healing or help of some kind, and yet they don't see the answer. Maybe this has happened to you. Maybe it has left you wondering, "Did God really hear my prayer? Do I not have enough faith?" It may have left you wondering if God even exists, or if he does, does he care about you?

There are many mysteries about prayer, faith, and miracles that our loving Father alone holds the answer to. However, there are some verses in God's Word that can help us to get understanding. James 4:2-3 tells us that sometimes we don't receive what we ask for because we ask with selfish motives. Other times it is because God is allowing trials and difficulties into our lives in order to test our faith. James 1:2-3 says,

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

God wants us to be mature and complete. Our spiritual health and well-being is of greater value than our physical well-being because it has hope of eternal reward. Peter, speaking about trials, says that these prove that our faith is genuine.

"These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1Peter 1:7).

If we pray in faith and don't receive an answer, or receive a "no" answer, what should we do?

Sometimes when we ask and we don't receive an answer to our prayers we give up quickly. There are many exhortations in the Psalms

to hope in the Lord and to wait for him to act. Psalm 37:7 says, *“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.”* Although we may not understand all that God is doing in the waiting, often he is building in us a greater level of trust in his goodness and faithfulness. Will we, like the Gentile woman in Study 19 (Matthew 15:21-28), continue to ask God and to seek for the answer we need if it doesn’t come quickly? In Luke 18:1, Jesus told a parable to help the people see that they *“should always pray and not give up.”* At the end of the parable Jesus asks this question: *“When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on the earth”* (Luke 18:8)? Faith that perseveres through trials, faith that keeps on praying for something, that keeps on believing and asking in hope for what is not yet seen, is very precious and brings great glory to God.

Will we trust him when we don’t see the answer, or when we, like the apostle Paul, get an answer that we don’t want? In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul, the great apostle who had seen many miracles, tells about asking God three times to take away something (we don’t know what it was) that was causing him great distress. He called it a *“thorn in the flesh.”* God did not take it away, but instead promised Paul sufficient grace to deal with it. Paul was content with that answer—he even delighted in his suffering—because his weakness allowed for God’s strength to be seen in a greater way. If you don’t see an answer or you receive a “no” answer as Paul did to your repeated, earnest prayers for God to change your circumstances, will you trust him to provide the grace and strength that you need? Will you rejoice that God is receiving greater glory through your hardship?

When we suffer trials we can also be encouraged that God has promised great reward to those who continue to trust him through hard times. James says,

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

Should we pray for miracles?

In all of the trials and troubles of our lives, should we pray for God’s supernatural help for ourselves and others? Around the world,

believers in Jesus have amazing testimonies of miraculous answers to their prayers. God is our Father, and it brings him joy when we ask him for our needs or for the needs of others. He delights to show us his power and glory in supernatural ways in response to our prayers. But it is also a beautiful testimony of God's grace and faithfulness when we see how believers who are suffering illness or poverty or persecution, put their trust in him. They give honor and praise to him even when they don't see a miraculous answer to their prayers.

Hebrews 11:32-40 says this:

³²And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. ³⁷They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—" ³⁸the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.³⁹These were all commended for their faith...

Verses 32-35a give many examples of men and women of God who saw miraculous deliverance. Then in verses 35b-37 there is a change. These people did not see deliverance. These suffered, even to the point of death. All of these—both those who saw miraculous deliverance and those who did not—were commended for their faith.

May God help us all to grow in faith; faith that boldly asks God for miracles, and faith that trusts in his goodness and love, whether or not we receive the answer we hoped for.

Here are some more verses that exhort us to have faith to ask God for miracles:

- Matthew 17:20. (Jesus' reply when the disciples asked why they could not cast out a demon.)
- John 15:7. (If we abide in him, we can ask Jesus for anything.)
- Acts 3:16. (The disciples explain how a lame man was healed.)
- Acts 4:29-30. (Jesus' disciples pray for boldness, signs and wonders after suffering for the gospel.)

Here are examples from the book of Acts of miracles performed in Jesus' name by his followers:

- Acts 3:1-11
- Acts 5:12-16
- Acts 8:4-8 (Many miracles were performed through Philip, who was not one of the apostles.)
- Acts 9:32-35 & 36-43. (Two miracles performed through Peter)
- Acts 14:8-10
- Acts 20:7-12
- Acts 28:1-10

*Oh, the depth of the riches
of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?
Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?
For from him and through him
and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.
*Romans 11:33-36**

25. Two Healings on the Sabbath Anger Religious Leaders

Opening Discussion: Have you ever broken a bone, or had some kind of injury that made it difficult to do many ordinary tasks? Or maybe someone close to you has had that experience. Take a few minutes to discuss what it would be like to have to live with those limitations for many years.

Read Luke 13:10-17.

1. Read verse 10 again. Where was Jesus, what was he doing, and what day was it?
2. Describe the woman in verse 11 who was also in the synagogue. What was the cause of her disability? How long had she had this problem?

NOTE: In this incident, the woman's physical disability had a spiritual cause. However, we cannot assume from this that all physical problems have spiritual roots; there are many different reasons why a person may have a disability or illness. (See John 9:1-3.)

3. Read verses 12-13 again. When Jesus saw the woman, what did he do?

What did he say to her (verse 12)?

4. In verse 13, what happened when Jesus touched her?

How did she respond?

Think about and discuss what it must have felt like for this woman to suddenly be free after 18 long years of oppression by the enemy. Imagine her joy! Imagine how her life has suddenly changed!

5. Look at verse 14. In contrast to the woman's joy, what was the attitude of the synagogue ruler? Why was he upset?

What did the synagogue ruler say to the people?

Do you see any sign of compassion for hurting people? What was he most concerned about?

6. Look back at verse 12. From this verse, it does not seem that the woman came to the synagogue seeking healing; Jesus was the one who called to her. Although the ruler was speaking to the people, who do you think his rebuke was really directed to?

NOTE: This synagogue ruler was implying that healing was work and therefore, must not be done on the Sabbath. In fact, there was nothing in the Jewish Law given by God that said healing could not be done on the Sabbath. Think about this: if a miracle has been done, then God must have done it! But the Pharisees did not want to think about that. They were looking for a way to accuse Jesus of breaking the law. They were angry with Jesus because he had previously spoken some hard words against them, exposing their hypocrisy.

7. Read again verses 15-17. What did Jesus call the religious leaders?

In what way were they being hypocrites? Compare the way they treated their animals with their lack of concern for people who were suffering.

Read Luke 14:1-6.

8. Here we read a similar incident to the one above. Jesus knew that the Pharisees were watching him, looking for some excuse to put him to death, but he was not intimidated by them. Here again we see that Jesus silenced the religious leaders.

Do you think there may have been anger in Jesus' words in Luke 13:15-16 & 14:5?

Do you think there are times when it is right to be angry about something? Can you give an example of some injustice we see in the world today that it is right for us to be angry about?

9. Read Luke 13:17. How did Jesus' rebuke affect those who were against him?

How did the people respond to all that Jesus was doing?

10. Read back through these two passages (Luke 13:10-17 & 14:1-6). Take a few minutes to discuss what these miracles reveal about Jesus.

What do they reveal about the religious leaders?

What does the first one reveal about the common people who saw the miracle?

Application and Prayer: Look back at the questions in number 9 above and think about your own attitudes.

- Like Jesus, do you feel compassion for people you see around you who are suffering in some way? Do you look for ways to show kindness and encouragement whenever possible, or do you walk by, perhaps even feeling a little superior because you don't have their problem?
- Do you take time to pray for people you know who are suffering? Do you believe that God may want to use YOU to show them his compassion and even his power to heal?
- Like the Pharisees, do you criticize when things aren't done the way you think they should be?
- Like the woman who was healed and the people who saw the miracle, do you rejoice and give glory to God when he does a beautiful work in someone's life?

Take a few minutes to wait quietly before the Lord and ask him to show you any ways he wants to change your heart. Think about how you want to grow in having Jesus' heart of compassion toward all people, especially those who suffer. Take time in your group now to pray about anything God's Spirit is speaking to you.

Then pray for people you know who are ill or suffering in some way. Do this often, both as individuals, and when you meet together as a group.

26. A Grateful Man Receives a Double Blessing

Opening Discussion: How important do you think it is to be grateful when you receive a blessing? What do you think gratitude shows about the condition of a person's heart? Discuss your thoughts.

Read Luke 17:11-19.

1. Look at verse 11 again. Where was Jesus?

NOTE: Galilee, along with Judea, was part of the Jewish nation of Israel. Samaria, which was between Judea and Galilee, was considered a foreign country. Jews who lived there had intermarried with pagan peoples, and for centuries they had worshiped pagan gods. Jews looked down on Samaritans because they were a mixed race and because they did not worship the one true God. Generally, these two peoples hated each other.

2. Read verses 12-13 again. Who met Jesus? What did they say?

What do you think they were hoping that Jesus would do for them?

Why did they stand at a distance and call out?

3. What did Jesus say to them in verse 14?

NOTE: "Leprosy" in the Bible refers to a variety of skin diseases. Sometimes they were contagious, but always they made the affected person ritually unclean. Priests were trained to recognize if a person truly had leprosy, and if they did, that person would not be allowed to participate in Temple worship and they would be required to live outside the city. Whenever they heard someone approaching they must call out, "unclean! unclean!" so that no one would come near to them. Anyone who touched them would also be unclean. If the disease got better, that person could go to the priest, and if he pronounced that person clean, they could then move back into the community and be a normal part of society.

4. What did the men do in response to Jesus' words (verse 14)?

They had not yet seen any physical change in their bodies when they left Jesus to go to the priest. How was their obedience a sign that they had faith, or at least, hope?

5. What is the role of faith and obedience if we want to receive something from God?
6. What happened as the ten men went to see the priest (verse 14)? Think about what an exciting day this must have been for all of these men who had lived as outcasts outside of the community, perhaps for years.
7. Read verses 15-16. What did one of the ten former lepers do when he saw that he had been healed?

Imagine him shouting praises and thanks as he ran back to Jesus and fell on his face at Jesus' feet. What do these actions show about this man's heart? Discuss how he displayed each of these attitudes: excitement, gratitude, joy, humility and submission, love, worship

8. What surprising fact do we learn about this one man in verse 16? (Look back at the note in question #1 above.)
9. Read verses 17-18. What 3 questions did Jesus ask in these verses?
What do you think He was thinking and feeling as he asked these questions? Why was he surprised?
10. What did Jesus say to the man in verse 19?

Besides physical healing, what did this man receive from Jesus (verse 19)? (The original language (Greek) says, "*Your faith has saved you,*")

Which of the two blessings he received would be more valuable?

Application and Prayer: All of the men in this incident received physical healing. God, in his great mercy and grace did not take that away from them because of their lack of gratitude. But nine of them did not receive spiritual cleansing as well. It seems their hearts were focused on themselves and their need and desire. Only the one man's faith resulted in spiritual healing as well as physical.

How often we are like the nine! We want God's good gifts, but we don't want him. Our focus is on the gift, rather than the giver. When we receive a blessing from God, we take it as if we somehow deserve it and go on our way, living our self-centered lives. When we do this, we, too,

miss out on the spiritual wholeness that we need even more than the physical.

Romans 5:8 says, “*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Take a few minutes to think about the greatest gift that God has given to all of us. What is your response? Will you fall at his feet and worship him, like the one leper who was cleansed? As a group, take some time now to thank God and to worship Jesus for his indescribable gift.

27. Jesus Opens Blind Eyes

(This story is also told in Matthew 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43, although the blind man is not named in those accounts, and Matthew says there were two blind men. There is also a similar but different story of Jesus healing two blind men in Matt. 9:27-31. This study will look at both of these miraculous healings. Blindness was common in Israel in Jesus' time and he probably healed many people of blindness.)

Opening Discussion: Have you ever been praying desperately for something and had people discourage you? Or maybe Satan was whispering in your ear that you shouldn't pray for that. What did you do? If that hasn't happened to you, discuss what you would do in that situation.

Read Mark 10:46-52.

1. Read again verse 46. In your own words, describe what is happening in this verse.

Who was Bartimaeus? Describe what you think his life might have been like as a blind beggar in ancient Israel.

2. Read verses 47-48. Bartimaeus was blind, so he could not see for himself what was happening, but he heard the sound of a crowd. When he heard that it was Jesus who was passing by, what did he do?

How did his cry for mercy show both humility and faith?

NOTE: Jesus was from Nazareth and the man generally known to be his father was Joseph. So, why was Bartimaeus calling him "Son of David"? God had promised about a thousand years before that a Messiah would come from King David's offspring. To call Jesus the "Son of David," was to recognize him as the promised Messiah. No doubt Bartimaeus had heard about the miracles that Jesus was performing and therefore, believed him to be the promised one.

3. How did Bartimaeus show boldness when the people rebuked him (v. 48)?
4. Read again verse 49. How did Jesus respond to Bartimaeus's perseverance?

How does this verse encourage you to bring your needs to Jesus, the Messiah?

5. Describe the blind man's response in verse 50.

6. What question did Jesus ask in verse 51?

Why do you think he asked that? Isn't it obvious what this man needs?

7. How did Bartimaeus answer?

Do you think there are times when it is important to tell God specifically what we want him to do for us? Why do you think it might be important?

8. Read verse 52. What did Jesus say to the blind man? What happened when Jesus said this?

How did Bartimaeus show that he had faith to be healed before he was healed?

9. What did Bartimaeus do after he was healed?

Luke 18:43 says he *"followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God."* What do you think Bartimaeus was feeling in his heart toward Jesus as a result of this miracle?

Put yourself in his place. What would you be feeling?

10. How did this miracle affect the crowd of people who saw it?

Read Matthew 9:27-31. (This is the account of a similar miracle.)

11. What question did Jesus ask the blind men in verse 28, and what was their answer?

What did Jesus say to them in verse 29? How is this similar to what Jesus said to Bartimaeus in Mark 10:52?

Application and Prayer: Read all of Mark 10:46-52 one more time. In this story, we see humility, faith and perseverance in the way Bartimaeus called to Jesus. In Jesus response we see compassion and care for someone the world sees as "nobody." And in the end, God received the glory!

As a group, take a few minutes to wait quietly before the Lord and think about the following:

- As Jesus did with Bartimaeus in Mark 10:49, do you believe he is calling you to come to him with your need?
- If Jesus asked you the same question he asked Bartimaeus (“*What do you want me to do for you?*”), what would your answer be? Is there something you are desperate for God to do for you?
- If Jesus were to ask you the same question that he asked the two blind men (“*Do you believe that I am able to do this?*”) what would your answer be?

In the attitude of this poor, blind beggar who would not be silenced, and in the faith of the two blind men who believed that God was able to heal, in your group bring your requests to God. Trust him, that he cares about you and your needs.

28. Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life, Part 1

Opening Discussion: Tell about a time when you or someone you know prayed for something but did not receive the answer that you had hoped for. How did you (or they) respond?

Background: It is drawing near to the time of the Passover when Jesus will offer himself up for the sin of the world. Many of the Jewish leaders have already turned against Him and are looking for a way to kill him. This event—raising Lazarus from the dead—is the final and strongest sign of Jesus’ deity. For some of the Jews, this amazing miracle will convince them to believe in Him as the promised Messiah. For many among the Jewish leaders, however, it will push them to destroy him, thus fulfilling God’s plan from the beginning of time to give his Son to redeem fallen mankind.

Read John 11:1-16.

1. Read again verses 1-6. What do you see in these verses that tells you that Mary, Martha and Lazarus had a close relationship with Jesus?

2. What message did the sisters send to Jesus (verse 3)?

What did Jesus say when he heard this (verse 4)?

3. Read verse 6. In spite of having received an urgent message from Mary and Martha, what did Jesus do?

What do you think these sisters must have been thinking as the days passed and their brother’s illness grew worse, and Jesus did not come?

What do we often think when we pray about a need for healing or something else, and we don’t quickly see an answer?

4. Read verses 7-10. Why were Jesus’ disciples concerned about him going to Judea again (verse 8)?
5. Look at Jesus’ answer in verses 9-10. What do you think he meant by “walks in the day” and “walks in the night”?

Think about this: In John 8:12 Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will*

have the light of life.” How do you think “*walking in the day*” might mean the same as following Jesus?

In John 8:28-29, Jesus said this:

“...I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

According to these verses, how did Jesus always “*walk in the day*”?

6. Read John 11:11-16. What did Jesus say about Lazarus in verse 11?

How did the disciples misunderstand him (verses 12-13)?

Read Jesus’ explanation in verse 14. Notice that Jesus did not receive a message about Lazarus, but he knew all things. He knew what had happened to Lazarus, and surely he also knew how his sisters and friends were grieving. In later verses we will see how their sorrow affected him.

7. Look again at verse 15. Why did Jesus say he was glad that he wasn’t there? Go back and read verse 4 again. Take a few minutes to discuss these two verses. Jesus did not go quickly to heal Lazarus, and now he was dead.

What did Jesus want his disciples to believe (verse 15)?

How would the Son of God be glorified (verse 4)?

8. Read verse 16 again. How did Thomas declare his commitment to Jesus?

Application and Prayer: Read John 11:9-10 again. Jesus spoke to his disciples about the person who walks in the day and not in the night so that they don’t stumble. Read again John 8:12 & 28-29. (See question 5.) Think about Jesus’ words and actions in this study. Here we see Jesus carefully following the leading of his Father, first in not going to Judea when Lazarus was ill, and then later in going to Judea, even though he knew it would mean suffering and death. He knew that nothing outside of the will of God could happen to him as long as he listened to and obeyed his Father. And he knew that in coming late to Lazarus, he would do something much more magnificent than healing a sick man.

Think about your own life. Are you “*walking in the day*” so that you don’t stumble? Are you listening to God’s voice to you by taking time for prayer and reading and meditating on his word every day? Are you obeying the things that he shows you?

Take some time now to discuss how you want to grow in following Jesus more closely every day, both in your individual lives and as a group. Then pray together about these things.

29. Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life, Part 2

Opening Discussion: Take a few minutes to review what happened in Part 1 of this study. Tell what you remember, then read John 11:1-16. Why did Jesus not go immediately to Mary and Martha when they sent word for him to come? How was Jesus “*walking in the day*” in this situation, as he did in all his works?

Read John 11:17-46.

1. Read verses 17-19 again. When Jesus arrived, how long had Lazarus been dead (verse 17)?

Who was there with Mary and Martha, according to verse 19?

2. Read verses 20-22. In these verses, how did Martha express faith?
3. Read the rest of the conversation between Martha and Jesus in verses 23-27. What did Jesus say in response to Martha in verse 23?

What does Martha think he means (verse 24)?

4. Read again verses 25-26. What did Jesus mean when he said, “*I AM the resurrection and the life*” (emphasis added)?
5. Go back and read again what Martha said in verses 21-22. Martha believed that Jesus could ask God for anything and he would do it. Now look at what Jesus was asking her to believe in verses 25-26. How was this different from what she previously believed?

6. According to these verses, how do we obtain resurrection and life?

How did Martha respond in verse 27?

7. Read verses 28-37. Look at verse 32. How did Mary express her faith in Jesus’ power?
8. When Jesus saw the grief of those around him, how did this affect him (verses 33-35)?

Think about this: Jesus already knew that soon Lazarus would live again and their sorrow would be turned to joy. Nevertheless, he wept with the family and friends. Why do you think he did this?

How do you think Jesus feels about the pain and sorrows in your life?

9. Read verses 38-44. What did Martha say when Jesus told the people to take the stone away?

Some people say that the resurrections in the Bible did not really happen, that the person was not really dead, but only unconscious. Why could this not be true of Lazarus?

10. Imagine that you are Mary or Martha or one of those who have come to comfort them, and you are watching as the stone is rolled away. You hear Jesus pray and then call out to the dead man. Then, before your eyes you see the man who, just moments before was beginning to decay, walk out of the tomb! What are you feeling and thinking at this time as you watch?
11. Read verse 42. What response did Jesus want to see in the people through this miracle?
12. Look back at John 11:4, then at verse 40. What would they see if they believed?

How did they see this?

What does this miracle show you about who Jesus is?

13. Read verses 45-53. What were the two ways that people responded? (See especially verses 45, 46-47 & 53.)

NOTE: This astonishing miracle was the final sign of his divinity that Jesus did before his crucifixion and then the miracle of his own resurrection. Even the Pharisees and religious leaders who hated Jesus could not deny that it happened. After all, many in Jerusalem knew Lazarus and knew that he had died, and now here he was, walking among them! They now began their plan to put Jesus to death, in this way, carrying out God's plan of salvation for the world.

Application and Prayer: In John 11:25-26, Jesus said this to Martha:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

How would you personally answer Jesus' question in verse 26?

If your answer was like Martha's in verse 27, then take a few minutes to think quietly about this question: What difference does believing verses 25-26 make in how you live your life?

Now take a few minutes to think quietly about this question: What difference does believing those verses make in how you think about death—both your own death and the death of those you love who also believe in Jesus?

As a group, discuss your thoughts about the two questions above.

John 5:24-25 says this:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."

Take some time as a group to thank God for the promise of eternal life that is yours through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

If you are not yet sure about who Jesus is, read through the story of this miracle again when you are alone. What is keeping you from believing that Jesus is truly who he claimed to be in verses 25-26 and who Martha confessed him to be in verse 27? Pray and ask God to reveal the truth to you.

30. The Resurrection of Jesus

The Miracle That Changed Everything for All Time

(The story of Jesus' resurrection is also found in Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; and John 20:1-29.)

Opening Discussion: When you are going through a very difficult time, is it easy for you to remember and believe the promises of God to you? Why do you think this is sometimes hard for us?

Introduction: A short time after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Jewish leaders, out of jealousy and the fear of losing their important positions, began to carry out their plan to destroy him. Although it was the Jewish religious leaders who called for his death, and the Roman authorities who condemned and crucified him, Jesus' death was the plan of God from before the beginning of time. (See Rev. 13:8.) Jesus would die in our place, as the sacrifice for our sin.

The prophet Isaiah spoke this to the nation of Israel about 700 years before Jesus was born (speaking of the Messiah):

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa 53:5-6)

If you have never read about Jesus' crucifixion, it will help you to understand the significance of the resurrection if you read about his crucifixion before doing the study below. You can find this in all four gospels: Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19.

(In the book *50 Life Studies* you will find four lessons on this topic that could be helpful—Studies 4, 5, 6, & 7. You can download this book for free from the internet at: www.learnhisways.com.)

NOTE: The events of this study take place on the third day after Jesus' death—Sunday morning, very early. Let's read about the amazing events that happened.

Read Luke 24:1-12.

NOTE: Jesus death occurred on the day before the Sabbath, and his body had to be buried before sundown. Therefore, there was no time to prepare it according to the usual custom (Luke 23:54-56). Because of this, the women came early on the day after the Sabbath (Sunday) to finish anointing his body with spices. As they went, they did not expect to find anything unusual at the tomb.

1. Read again verses 1-3. (Verse 10 tells us who some of the women were.)

According to verse 2, what did they discover when they arrived at the tomb?

According to verse 3, what did they expect to find that was not there?

2. Look at verse 4. You can imagine their confusion at seeing the empty tomb. What do you think they might have been saying to each other?

What happened as they were trying to understand what they were seeing?

3. Read verses 5-7. How did the women respond (verse 5)?

What question did the angels ask them (verse 5)? Did the women know they were looking for a living person?

Why did the angels say that Jesus was not in the tomb (verse 6)? Before it happened, what had Jesus told his followers would happen (verse 7)?

4. All of the gospels tell us that Jesus told his disciples on more than one occasion that he would die and rise again. Why do you think they might not have remembered?

5. Read verses 8-12. When the women remembered what Jesus had told them, what did they do (verses 8-9)?

Look at verse 11 again. What did the apostles think when they heard the women's report? Why do you think they didn't believe the women?

NOTE: In Israel at this time, the testimony of a woman was not considered to be credible. But God honored women by giving them the privilege of being the first to carry the news of the resurrection—the most important news in all of history!

6. What did Peter do in verse 12, when he heard the women's report?

What did he see? Do you think this may have helped him to believe that maybe Jesus really had risen? (John 20:6-7 tells us

"...[Peter] saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself."(ESV))

NOTE: In those days, if someone was going to rob a grave, they would have taken the cloths because they had some value. They would have left the body, which did not have value. Even if someone had stolen Jesus' body to try to deceive people into thinking he had risen, they would not have taken off the graveclothes, and certainly they would not have taken time to fold the facecloth.

Read John 20:19-20.

7. Where were Jesus' disciples on the third day after his crucifixion? If Jesus' followers had remembered his words, and if they had believed him, what do you think they might have done differently on that day?
8. How did Jesus prove to the disciples that it was really him (verse 20)?

What do you think this moment must have been like for the disciples?

9. Acts 1:3 says this about Jesus:

"After his suffering, he showed himself to [the apostles] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."

According to this verse, how did Jesus confirm to his followers that he was really alive?

10. Was Jesus resurrection just an amazing miracle that happened two thousand years ago that is inspiring to read about, or does it have meaning for us today? Read each of the scriptures below and discuss what each one tells you about the meaning of Christ's resurrection for your life.

- According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (1Peter 1:3-4, ESV)
- And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.(Rom. 8:11)
- He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (Rom. 4:25)
- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Application and Prayer: All of Jesus' miracles are amazing. Through them, we see his goodness and compassion, his power and authority, and we are inspired to love and worship him. But in the end, the only miracle that really matters is the miracle of Jesus' resurrection. All of the other miracles were temporary. All those who were healed eventually died. The food that was multiplied ran out, and even those whom Jesus raised from the dead at some later time, died. But Jesus' resurrection was forever! He rose to live again in a new, eternal body that would never die again and he promised that all who believe in him could have that same experience.

Take a few minutes to silently read through the scriptures in question 10 above once again and think about each one. Do you believe that God loved *you* so much that he gave his one and only Son that *you* might not perish but have eternal life? Have *you* been born again to a living hope? Does the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwell in *you*?

The most miraculous thing about Jesus' death and resurrection is that he did it *for us*—for rebels who have gone our own way.

*“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
(Isaiah 53:6).*

God put all of our sin on his Son, Jesus Christ. Then he raised him up to life again and will also raise up with Jesus all who believe in him.

Read again John 11:25-26. If you have not believed in him before, will you put your faith in him now as your Savior?

Together, take time now to thank God for the amazing miracle of his love for you that sent Jesus to earth to live, to die, and to rise again so that you could be with him now and forever.

*When the perishable
has been clothed with the imperishable,
and the mortal with immortality,
then the saying that is written will come true:
“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”
“Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”
The sting of death is sin,
and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God!
He gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Cor. 15:54-57*

31. A Second Miraculous Catch of Fish

In this study we will look at the second time that Peter and others of Jesus' disciples experienced a miraculous catch of fish. The first time occurred at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and is presented in Study 4.

Opening Discussion: Read Luke 5:1-11 and take a few minutes to discuss what you remember from Study 4 (A Miraculous Catch of Fish). What did God speak to you, personally, through that passage?

Introduction: The events in this passage take place after Jesus' death and resurrection. It is the last recorded miracle that Jesus performed before returning to the Father.

Read John 21:1-14.

1. Read again verses 1-3. (The Sea of Tiberias is the same as the Sea of Galilee. The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of Jesus' closest disciples.) Describe what was happening in these verses.
2. Look back at Luke 5:9-11, which we looked at in Study 4. What did Jesus say to Simon (Peter) in verse 10?

What did Simon, James and John do in verse 11?

3. Now look again at John 21:3. Why would Jesus' closest followers return to fishing after having left that behind to follow him everywhere for three years?

NOTE: It seems that for a brief time after Jesus' resurrection his disciples were uncertain what they should be doing. For three years they had been with Jesus constantly, but after his death and resurrection that was no longer true. Jesus, in his now resurrected body, made appearances over a span of 40 days, both to the disciples and to many others, but he no longer walked daily with them. Without his leadership, they were lost. And so they returned to what was familiar. You can read in the book of Acts how this all changed after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

4. Look at John 21:3. Describe the situation that was the same as in the last account in Luke 5:5.
5. Read verses 4-5. Were the disciples expecting to see Jesus that morning?

What did Jesus ask them in verse 5?

6. What did he then tell them to do (verse 6)?

Describe what happened when they did what he told them to do?

7. What do you think these disciples must have been thinking when they saw this miracle for the second time? How might this have reminded them of how Jesus had called them three years before to follow him (Luke 5:10-11)? (Look back at the note above in question 3.)
8. Read verses 7-8. What did Peter do when he realized that it was Jesus?

Why do you think he responded in this way?

Compare Peter's response in Luke 5:8, with his response here. Why do you think he responded differently this time? Share your thoughts before reading the note below.

NOTE: When the first miracle of the fish happened, Peter did not yet know who Jesus was. He saw in the miracle evidence that Jesus was from God, and he felt his own sinfulness. But now he has been with Jesus for three years. He has seen his compassion for the helpless and hopeless; he has heard him speak forgiveness to those deeply lost in sin, like the prostitutes; he has heard him teach on loving one another and seen him display that love through his own actions. Now Peter could not wait for the slow boat dragging the fish to take him to the shore. It seems he was eagerly wanting to be with Jesus and was confident of Jesus' love and acceptance of him.

9. Now read John 21:15-25. What question did Jesus ask Simon Peter three times?

Why do you think Jesus asked him the same question three times? (Think about how many times Peter denied that he knew Jesus (John 18:15-18 & 25-27)).

10. Each time Peter answered Jesus question in verses 15-17, what did Jesus then tell him to do?

How do you think this would have given Peter confidence that Jesus still wanted him to follow and serve him? Do you think this would have been an encouragement to Peter?

11. Read again verses 18-19. What did Jesus say about how Peter would glorify him in the end?

What were Jesus' final words to Peter in verse 19?

12. How do you think you would have felt if you had been in Peter's place? Humbled? Honored? Afraid? Loved? Joyful? Perhaps all of these?

Application and Prayer: Before Jesus was arrested, Peter had boldly declared that he would be faithful to Jesus even if all the others denied him, even if it meant death for him. Then he failed miserably when he denied three times that he knew Jesus. Peter was humbled as he saw his own weakness.

It's easy for us to make bold declarations of our commitment to follow Jesus, whatever the cost. But when we are tested, we see how weak and undependable we really are. All of us have failed our Lord through disobedience, or by not taking advantage of opportunities to speak about him and what he has done in our lives. Peter's encounter with Jesus should be a great encouragement to us. In his great mercy, Jesus called Peter once again to follow him. And when we fail, he says the same to us: "Come, take up your cross once again and follow me!"

Take time now to wait before the Lord, asking him to show you any specific ways that you have denied him. If there are things God is speaking to your heart, bring them to him and receive his forgiveness. Thank God for his great compassion and look to him for the grace and strength to live for him each day.

32. A Persecutor of the Believers Becomes an Apostle

The Miracle of a Changed Life

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17, ESV)

(This story is told in three places in the book of Acts: chapter 9:1-22; chapter 22:1-16; and chapter 26:9-18. This study will go back and forth, looking at all three.)

Opening Discussion: If you have received God’s free gift of salvation and become a follower of Jesus, take a few minutes to share with the group how Jesus has changed your life since you came to him.

Introduction: Healing a sick body or raising a dead person back to life again are both wonderful and amazing miracles. But perhaps the greatest miracle of all is when the soul of a person who is spiritually dead in sin is born again to eternal life and filled with the Spirit of God. From the moment that happens, that person begins to live a new life and to be transformed from a life of selfishness and sin into the image of Jesus. This is a miracle, not only for this life, but for all eternity!

Throughout the New Testament we read the stories of many people who believed the good news about Jesus and left their life of sin to follow him. The one we read the most about whose story is told in the book of Acts, is Saul of Tarsus, later known as the Apostle Paul. This study will look at his miraculous conversion and how it forever changed him.

Read Acts 7:57–8:3. (This tells of the stoning of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, by Jewish leaders.)

1. Look again at Acts 8:1. What happened immediately following the death of Stephen?
2. What do we learn about Saul from Acts 7:57 and 8:1&3? (See also Acts 22:20.)

Read Acts 9:1-22.

3. Read verses 1&2 again. What was Saul’s attitude toward followers of Jesus?

Where was he going and what was he wanting to do, according to these verses?

From what we learn of Saul in these verses, do you think anyone would ever expect him to become a follower of Jesus?

4. Read Acts 9:3-6 again. Describe what happened to Saul as he came near to Damascus.

Who spoke to him? What did he say?

Did Saul know who it was at first (verse 5)?

5. Describe Saul's condition in verse 8. Before this time he had been a strong leader. Imagine how helpless he must feel now.

NOTE: Before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his eyes were open to the physical world around him, but closed to spiritual truth. Now his physical eyes were blind, but his spiritual eyes were being opened!

6. What did Saul do when he reached Damascus (verse 9)?

What do you think he might have been thinking about during those three days?

7. Read Acts 26:9-11. Name all the ways that Saul persecuted the followers of Jesus.
8. Notice how zealous he was for what he believed was right. Take a few minutes to discuss what it must have been like for Saul to suddenly discover that everything he had zealously given his life to was wrong. Yet he thought he was pleasing God!

Have you known anyone who has had a similar experience?

9. Read again Acts 9:10-19. Who was Ananias? (See also Acts 22:12)

What did God tell him to do (Acts 9:10-12)?

10. According to Acts 9:13-14, how did Ananias respond to the Lord?

NOTE Damascus was about 220 kilometers from Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Saul's reputation was known among the believers of Damascus. It seems they had heard in advance what his purpose was in coming there.

How would you have answered the Lord if he had spoken to you what he said to Ananias?

11. Look at Acts 9:17-19. What did Ananias do? What happened to Saul and what did he do next?
12. Read Acts 26:16-18. When Paul tells the story of his conversion in these verses he gives more details of what Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus. What did Jesus say he was calling Saul to do?
13. Read Acts 9:19-22. What did Saul do immediately after he was baptized?

How did this show that he was truly a new creation in Christ?

Application and Prayer: Read the verse at the top of this study (2 Cor. 5:17). Whenever a person puts their faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, all their sin is washed away and they are born again to new life. Think about what you have just studied about the life of Saul. How does his life help you to believe that God is able to take anyone, regardless of who they have been or what they have done, and make them a new person? (See also 1 Tim. 1:15-16.)

If you have not yet received this free gift of new life from God, would you like to receive it now? If so, pray now with your group, asking God to forgive your sin and make you new, just as he did for Saul.

If you are already a follower of Jesus, think about what Saul did immediately after he received God's gift of salvation (Acts 9:20-22). Who can you share this good news with? Take some time now to thank God for what he has done in your life, and pray for those you want to talk with about it. Then go out and do that this week!

Here are some other verses you can read that will help you to see how Saul's life changed after he met Jesus:

2 Cor. 11:22-29

Philippians 3:3-11

2 Cor 4:7-12

Galatians 2:20

Galatians 4:14

2 Tim. 4:6-8

*“Now Jesus did many other signs
in the presence of the disciples,
which are not written in this book;
but these are written that you may believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that by believing you may have life
in his name. John20:30-31*

If you wish to translate this book...

Guidelines for Translators

You will note that these studies have been written in simple English. It is our hope that speakers of many different languages will find them easy to translate into their own language. **It is not necessary to ask permission before translating them**, however, if you do translate them, we would like to know about it. It may be possible for us to include your translation on our website in the future (www.learnhisways.com).

We also ask that you follow a few guidelines in translating. These will help to keep the studies as close as possible to the Scriptures and to the original design of the writer of the study. The suggestions for what words to use are especially important if these studies are to be used with those who are not yet believers or new believers. If you have questions as you translate, please feel free to contact us through the website.

Guidelines:

- 1. Translate into your language from the English version, which is the original, not from a translation in another language.**

If you are fluent in another language that this book has been translated into you may use that translation for reference to clarify something. But we ask that you always stay close to the English and use that as your source in translating.

- 2. Use actual words from the Bible for direct quotes.**

Anytime there is anything in quotes, if it is taken from the Bible, please go to the Bible in your own language and copy directly what is there. Do not translate from the English quote. Also, as you are translating a study, keep the Bible in your language open to the passage being studied, and try to use the same terms that are used in that passage as much as possible. For example, if you were translating from John 15 on abiding in Jesus, you would use the same words as the Bible in your language for “abiding” and for “bearing much fruit.”

- 3. Give careful thought to which version of the Bible you use for direct quotes.**

If there is more than one translation in your language, choose one that is accurate (not a paraphrase), but at the same time, is easy for young believers to read and understand. Some people who use this book will not have previous knowledge of the Bible or Bible vocabulary. Please do not use a version that was translated many years ago and uses language that people today do not commonly use or understand. You will need to give credit in your language for the translation that you use on page 2 of your translation. (See page iv of this book for an example.)

4. Words to use for “Bible,” “Christian,” and “Christ.”

If you are translating into a language with a Christian heritage, obviously you should use the words your readers will be familiar with. In general, please try to choose words for these terms that are familiar and easily understood for their true meaning.

If the language you are translating into is predominantly spoken by non-Christians, give careful thought to the use of these words, because they often can be translated in different ways. Some people still think about religious wars when they hear these words, and they associate them with their enemies.

For the word “Bible,” you may decide to use words from your language for “Holy Book,” “The Word,” “God’s Word,” or “Old or New Testament.” In many Muslim countries, “Injil” is a good word to use for “New Testament.”

“Christ” is the word that is often used in Western nations because it is the word that was used in Greek. “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” If you are translating into a Muslim language, you probably should not use “Christ” but rather use the word in your language for “Messiah,” or “Anointed One.”

For “Christian,” use words from your language for “follower of Jesus the Messiah,” “follower of Jesus,” or “believer”-- or whatever words are most commonly used and accepted by Christian believers in your country.

5. Use simple language.

We have tried to use simple sentences in the English to make these Bible studies easy to understand for anyone, including those who have no knowledge of the Bible and those who have

limited education. We want them to be a help to ALL people—not just those who already know a lot. Many studies have been used successfully with those who are not yet believers, as well as with very mature believers.

Please keep this in mind in translating. Some languages commonly use very complex and formal language in writing. We would ask that these studies be translated into language that sounds just the way people talk in normal, everyday life. They have been written for group discussion, therefore, it is important that everyone understand the questions and comments. The goal is to help people understand the Bible, not to make them confused.

6. Have someone check the translation.

To make these studies as accurate as possible in your native language, have a native speaker who is also fluent in English do the first translation from the English. Then, have a native English speaker who is also fluent in your language or a native speaker of your language who is fluent in English, check the translation. In the final step, the original translator and the English checker should discuss any questions in the translation and come to an agreement on the best wording.

Remember... As you go through the translation process, if there is anything in the studies that is unclear, feel free to contact us through our website or by email. (See page 127.) God bless you as you translate. We trust the Lord will use these studies to strengthen the Body of Christ in many different language groups around the world.

Visit the Life Resources website at:

www.learnhisways.com

Here you can download this and other Bible study and devotional books in many languages for FREE in both pdf and epub format.

You can also contact the creators of these books through this website, or by writing to:

learnhisways@gmail.com

If this book has been helpful to you, why not pass it on to a friend? Or better yet, sit down with them and do the Bible studies together!

You can also start a small group Bible study using any of the books from the above website. Everyone in the group can download the epub format of many of the books to their phone or other device. All of the Bible verses not included in the text are linked for easy access. And all of the books are available for FREE. Check out the website above.

Some of the English books on this website are available in paperback from Amazon.

