Jesus
a journey of discovery

WEEK 3
For personal devotion or group discussion
I believe there is no greater journey one can engage in life than to know Jesus of Nazareth...the Christ...the Son of God.

Paul, a leader in the early foundations of Christianity, wrote “For me to live is Christ…” (Philippians 1:27). Nothing else was more important to Paul. “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

I agree with Paul. There is nothing in my life more incredible than knowing Jesus. The words and ways of Jesus guide and enhance every facet of my life...at home with my wife and kids, at work, and in my community.

Does that make me perfect? No. I blow it...big time. But it put me in a right relationship with Jesus...being a follower.

This guide is a journey of discovery...of knowing Jesus. My hope in putting this together is to help guide you along this journey; to guide you into a personal discovery of Jesus in ways, that perhaps, you haven't thought of before; to introduce you to a very real Jesus who had a family and friends, knew incredible affirmation and suffered painful rejection; who knew hunger and thirst; who lived and died and lives again!

Take courage and take the journey to discover Jesus: the Lamb of God who takes away sin, the son of Joseph and Mary, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lion of Judah, the Son of Man, the Son of God.

In knowing Jesus more deeply, I hope also that you come to know yourself more clearly. That as you know Him more, you more and more become like Jesus and truly discover not just a person or a moment in history, but that you truly discover life in His name.

Blessings,

Jeremy K. Bratcher
Senior Pastor
MAPPING JESUS’ LIFE

Map showing locations such as Capernaum, Bethsaida, Cana, Nazareth, and others, with geographical markers including Mediterranean, Sea of Galilee, Decapolis, Samaria, Judea, Perea, Jerusalem, and Judean Desert.
TIMELINE of JESUS’ LIFE  

part two

Jesus Visits Jerusalem for Passover April, 26 A.D.
Jesus was 30 Years of Age, A House of Merchandise (Jn 2:13-25).
Unless One is Born Again (Jn 3:1-21).
Jesus Baptizes (Jn 3:22, with 4:2).

Galilee
He Departed Again to Galilee (Mat 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14; Jn 4:1-3).

Samaria
The Woman at the Well (Jn 4:4-42).

Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee

Galilee
He Taught in Their Synagogues (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:14,15; Lk 4:14,15; Jn 4:43-45).

Nazareth
A Certain Nobleman (Jn 4:46-54)
Physician, Heal Yourself! (Mat 4:13-16; Lk 4:16-31).

Sea of Galilee
Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Mat 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11).

Galilee
And Jesus Went About All Galilee . . Teaching (Mat 4:23-25; Mk 1:35-39, Lk 4:42-44).
A Man With an Unclean Spirit (Mk 1:21-28; Lk 4:31-37).

Capernaum
Simon’s Wife’s Mother Lay Sick (Mat 8:14-17; Mk 1:29-34; Lk 4:38-41).
Then a Leper Came to Him (Mat 8:2-4; Mk 1:40-45; Lk 5:12-16).
They Brought to Him a Paralytic (Mat 9:2-8; Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:17-26).
Matthew the Tax Collector (Mat 9:9; Mk 2:13, 14; Lk 5:27, 28).
Helpful Online Tools for Personal Bible Study

**www.bible.org** Home of the NET Bible and incredible background study resources. The NET Bible is full of notes from some of the best Hebrew and Greek scholars of our day. Bible.org offers self-paced theological studies, outlines and study guides for each book of the Bible. Bible.org is key word searchable. Some of the language and presentation of the material is a bit more scholarly than other sites, but it is fairly accessible in understanding.

**www.biblestudytools.com** Great website for searching through the Bible. It offers several tools for study (as the name suggests): concordances, language tools, maps, commentaries...it even has an interlinear Bible (that is searchable and provides pronunciations and root word guides for those who desire to know more about Biblical Greek and Hebrew). This is a must link for anyone looking to study the word more. Thousands of dollars in print resources, all free for use here!

**www.biblemap.org** Created using Google maps, this site offers a satellite view of Bible lands. The map is linked to Bible references and is searchable by book and verse.

**www.biblegateway.com** This site offers a dozens of translations that are searchable by book, chapter and verse. You can even compare various translations here to see how the texts might be handled a bit differently. This site also offers several language translations.

**www.youversion.com** A great mobile Bible accessible through Blackberry, iPhone, and Android apps. There is now a windows/mac version of YouVersion available for desktop use. A great tool for anyone looking to keep the Word with them on the go!

**www.preceptaustin.org** PreceptAustin.org is an incredible website full of Bible studies, outlines, maps, Greek and Hebrew helps. I have recently added it to this list. It is absolutely worth your time to invest here during your personal Bible study.

**www.soniclight.com** SonicLight is the personal website of Dr. Tom Constable. Dr. Constable is an incredible Bible scholar with deep insight into God’s word. Working expositionally through the Scripture, Dr. Constable presents a thorough and understandable breakdown of God’s word.
Jesus left the wedding ceremony and heads to Jerusalem with his family and his disciples to celebrate the Passover feast. This is the first of three Passover celebrations the New Testament records in Jesus’ adult life. This feast celebrated God’s rescue of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Jesus enters the temple and sees corruption, manipulation, and marginalization. His passion for God’s way moves him to an extreme response to those disregarding the Lord. I wonder what drives us today? Are you, am I, impassioned about God and his way or does something else hold our hearts?

**Pray:** Lord, as we read today, fill us with passion for you.

**Read:** John 2:12-25

As you read this passage, what do you message do you get from Jesus?

What are Jesus’ priorities here?

What example do you receive from Christ in this passage?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: There is much speculation about why Jesus would become enraged at the scene in the Temple. One thing is clear—the focus was taken off God and placed on every opportunity to take advantage of others...foreigners, families, the poor...all seeking to relate with God better...are only exploited. The religious leaders of the day were grand opportunists. And then Jesus enters the scene.

The entire temple was stunned. All of the visitors, including Jesus’ disciples, and religious leaders were stunned. The Bible tells us that Jesus was zealous for God’s house (Psalm 69:9). That word zeal could describe every aspect of Jesus’ life. Zeal essentially means passionate...a deep stirring that moves one to action.

Jesus was zealous for God’s will. Leaving Heaven...taking on human form...living and dying...every miracle...every teaching...every moment of his life was fueled by passion for the Father. Even more amazing, the Father’s zeal was for his glory through his creation.

What about you? What are you zealous over? What is it that fuels your life?

**What are you passionate about?**

**How does that passion connect with God’s design?**

**How do you think God can use your life passions for his glory?**

Pray: Use today to think about your passions. Are they God focused? Pray and ask God to build passion for His way in your life.
Jesus’ display in the temple definitely sparked interest. Everyone in Jerusalem had a heightened awareness of Jesus. One of the local religious leaders needed to see more. Under the cover of night, Nicodemus goes to talk with Jesus. Jesus’ display was very public. Why go by night to see him?

**Pray:** Lord, may my desire to know and follow you be more than sparked curiosity.

**Read:** John 3:1-21

**If you could have a one-on-one conversation with Jesus, what would you talk to him about?**

**What does the passage tell us about Nicodemus?**

**What questions do you think Nicodemus had as he his encounter with Jesus?**

**What questions do you still have?**
Reflect: So many people are God-curious. Throughout the Gospels we see people “window shopping” with Jesus. They’ve heard the stories; some have witnessed the miracles first hand. His teaching is spreading by word of mouth throughout the villages. Yet, for most, they never seem to move beyond curiosity. They find Jesus to be both desirable and uncomfortable at the same time.

“Surely he didn’t mean that,” some say. Others respond, “Who does he think he is?” Yet, they still come to see. What is it about Jesus that first drew you close? What God-curiosities brought you near?

Nicodemus came to Jesus by the cover of night. He was curious, but not confident. He wanted to see, but not commit. The dark of night protected his public image, but Jesus revealed his private heart. Nicodemus was looking for something more. A respected religious and community leader in the ancient world, Nicodemus came to Jesus looking for something more than his current life offered. Jesus challenged Nicodemus to take his eyes off of himself for a moment...to see that our lives are not one-dimensional. Jesus revealed the truth to Nicodemus.

Anytime we come to Jesus, openly or in secret, he reveals the truth of Heaven. We need to respond rightly for that truth to take root in our lives.

At the end of that secret meeting, Nicodemus leaves...but not the same. Something changed that night. Perhaps his curiosity got the best of him or perhaps the truth of God through Jesus took root. Read John 7:45-52 and John 19:38-42 to see how his story continues.

What first drew you to Jesus? Does that draw still impact your faith today?

Are you more disenchanted with following Jesus today or more committed to following him? Why did you choose the response you did?

How has your relationship with Jesus revealed God’s Kingdom to you?

Pray: Write down all of the things that draw you to look more deeply at Jesus. What curiosities do you still have? How have these things strengthened your faith?
Jesus leaves Jerusalem to head back to Galilee with his disciples. After a brief encounter with John the baptizer, the journey north continues. Jesus takes an interesting route on the way home. He travels through Samaria to the town of Sychar, where he stops for a brief rest and a drink of water in the late afternoon. Today’s focus picks up the conversation around the well.

**Pray:** Lord, give me grace to drink from the well of living water. Teach me today from your word that I might follow you.

**Read:** John 4:1-42

Look back at verses 1-10. Who initiates the conversation? Why do you think this is an important detail?

What does the woman first say to Jesus?

What is his response?

Look back at verses 11-18. What does Jesus ask this woman to do when she asks for the water?

How does she respond.

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: This passage reveals so much about Jesus.

In simple terms we see his humanity...he was thirsty and hungry. The infinite creator of the universe had assumed a finite form, taking on humanity as his own.

We see Jesus’ compassion...in no way should a Jew interact with a Samaritan. There was profound racial hatred between the two people groups. Contact was forbidden according to Jewish custom. Secondly, Jesus interacts with a woman. A man would never do this in the ancient world. Women in the ancient world were objects more so than persons. Yet, here is Jesus interacting with a Samaritan woman extending grace to her.

Jesus reveals something deeper about himself here too. He says that his “food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34). Jesus could have died sacrificially at any time, thus accomplishing the redemptive will of God for humanity. That is, at any moment of Jesus’ life, the sin sacrifice of the cross could’ve occurred. The will of God was set to be accomplished. Jesus said something else though. He came to “finish his work.” In John 17:14, Jesus prays, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

What a statement! I hope that when my life wanes, I can pray with clear conscience, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” Completing that work centers on being confident in who God is and having a faithful certainty of doing what God desires in my life. Everyone who calls themselves “Christian” has the same invitation. Since I’m still breathing here, I have work to do...and so do you.

Write out a time when you felt like you were doing God’s work.

Is this work still going on or completed?

How does God’s invitation to you to participate in His work impact you?

If God could use you for anything, what would you like to do?

Pray: Make your answer to the last question a focus of prayer today.
After the temple encounter, news about Jesus spread all over the countryside. The gossip over the temple challenge perked some ears. The authority of his teaching impressed many. The whispers of the miracles and healings gained louder voices as more people encountered Jesus.

Some were excited. Others were put off. The Bible tells us that even demonic presence in the land recognized that Jesus was on the scene! (Luke 4:41)

The court of public opinion was now in session. Everyone wanted to catch a glimpse of Jesus and experience him first hand.

Pray: Lord, your fame spread throughout the ancient world because of your truth and your work in your Son. Help me to know your fame and increase your name in my life and my world.


Have you ever met someone famous? Where did they get their fame? How did you know of them?

Based on what you read, what was Jesus’ response to his increasing popularity?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: Once again our passage begins with people trying to identify Jesus. They simply haven’t the categories. This time it is those in His own hometown of Nazareth and His family. Five questions of unbelief are expressed by those who hear Jesus teach. These were astonished by his teaching because He didn’t act like this when He lived there before. They think it is all new stuff and wonder what sort of act He is putting on. Whether Joseph was living or dead, it was still an insult to identify one as the son of his mother. This seems to be a subtle reference to Jesus’ alleged illegitimacy.

Imagine, here was the eternal Son of God right before their eyes performing miracles and teaching authoritatively. He wanted to be there; He wanted to teach these friends and family that were so dear to Him; He wanted to perform miracles for His loved ones. Yet because of their unbelief—and perhaps their scoffing—He chooses to go elsewhere with His message and miracles. These people who should have welcomed Him with open arms are the very ones who miss the opportunity of a lifetime. How sad.

Those who were closest to Jesus likewise had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and sadly their lack of faith likewise prevented many of them from experiencing the eternal Son of God in the way He wanted them to. And with that...Jesus went out to the villages. Itinerantly traveling among people who were looking and longing for something more...God to come close.

Jesus’ fame has spread throughout the world. I read this passage feeling as though it might describe 21st Century America and how we see Jesus today. Why do you think people have such a hard time grasping who Jesus is?

Where do you struggle with unbelief (believing all of the Bible, miracles today, power of the Holy Spirit, etc.)?

Do you think these belief struggles keep you from seeing God work in your life? Why or why not?

Pray: Make these issues of unbelief a prayer today that Christ’s Spirit would affirm your own, increasing your faith to believe and follow.
DAY FIFTEEN: Costly Following

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

As Jesus’ fame spread, many gathered around him. In the midst of large crowds the Bible records Jesus’ most profound teachings (Sermon on the Mount) and his greatest miracles (feeding the crowds of 5,000 and 4,000; raising the dead girl and raising Lazarus from the tomb).

Yet it is in three simple encounters along the way that Jesus lays out the cost of following him.

**Pray:** Lord, just as you called others to follow you, help me to have the courage to follow you as well.

**Read:** Luke 9:57-62

Which instance of these three encounters do you most relate to? Why?

Has there ever been a time in your encounters with Jesus that the cost of following him became too great? What did you do?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect:  *No home. No familial connection. No turning back.* Have you ever considered the cost of following Jesus?

“Jesus of Nazareth always comes asking disciples to follow him—-not merely "accept him," not merely "believe in him," not merely "worship him," but to follow him: one either follows Christ, or one does not. There is no compartmentalization of the faith, no realm, no sphere, no business, no politic in which the lordship of Christ will be excluded. We either make him Lord of all lords, or we deny him as Lord of any.”

— Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World*

There is so much to Jesus. Some are compelled to follow Him...others question Him...and still others reject Jesus.

As you’ve finished the third installment of *Jesus: A Journey of Discovery*, where are you? Spend time today using the space below to reflect on your own journey with Jesus. **Where your life is today, how do you sense God leading you to respond to Jesus?**
MAGNOLIA BAPTIST CHURCH SEEKS TO EMBODY A:

**Gospel-centered** (I Cor. 15:1-4)

**Family-redeeming** (Acts 16:25-34)

**City-focused** (Jeremiah 29:7)

**Church Community** (I Thess. 2:5-8)

We value Gospel Proclamation believing that the 66 books of the Old & New Testament are our highest authority of God’s self-disclosure and as it is faithfully explained, explored and expressed, the Holy Spirit will elicit a response.

We value Gospel Community believing that people were created to explore the Gospel together with honest, vulnerable dialogue about difficult things pursuing depth in friendships to facilitate growth.

We value Gospel Mission believing that the Gospel compels us to learn from, interact with, and generously give back to our culture in the way we live our lives.

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