WEEK 7
For personal devotion or group discussion

Jesus
a journey of discovery
WELCOME ALONG

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
TIMELINE of JESUS’ LIFE

Jesus in route to Jerusalem 29 A.D.

Bethany
The House of Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42).
Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray (Lk 11:1-13).

The Feast of Dedication

Jerusalem
I Was Blind, Now I See (Jn 9:1-41).
They Picked Up Stones To Stone Him (Jn 10:22-39).

Bethabara
Beyond the Jordan (Jn 10:40-42; 11:3-16).

Bethany
Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (Jn 11:1-46).

Ephraim
The Declaration of Caiaphas (Jn 11:47-54).

Judea
The Woman Who Was Bent Over (Mat 19:1, 2; Mk 10:1; Lk 13:10-35).
Take the Lowest Seat (Lk 14:1-24).
Count the Cost (Lk 14:25-35).
Exposes the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Lk 16:14-18).
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31).
Increase Our Faith (Lk 17:1-10).
Teaches the Pharisees About the Coming of the Kingdom (Lk 17:20-37).
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:1-14).
Marriage and Divorce (Mat 19:3-12; Mk 10:2-12).
Let the Little Children Come to Me (Mat 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17).
Rich Young Ruler (Mat 19:16-22; Mk 10:17-22; Lk 18:18-24).
Jesus’ Last Week - The Passion Week

**Sunday**
- Final departure from the temple
- Final benediction of the twelve disciples
- The benediction of the twelve disciples

**Saturday**
- Where the benediction of the twelve disciples
- The benediction of the twelve disciples
- The benediction of the twelve disciples

**Friday**
- Deceived by Peter three times
- The benediction of the twelve disciples
- The benediction of the twelve disciples
- The benediction of the twelve disciples

**Thursday**
- Jesus considered against Him
- Day of quiet at Bethany
- Final benediction scene
- His second coming
- Destruction of Jerusalem
- Final discourse on the Mount of Olives

**Wednesday**
- Final benediction scene
- His second coming
- Destruction of Jerusalem
- Final discourse on the Mount of Olives

**Tuesday**
- And cleaning of the Temple
- Withdraws the thing

**Monday**
- Weeps over Jerusalem
- Crowds shout “Hosanna”
- Triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey

**Sunday**
- The supper prepared for Him
- Arrives at Bethany (John 12:1)
Jesus had finally made it to Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, the place where He knew He was destined to die on a cross in one week’s time. Many of Jesus' followers, in spite of what He said in the story of the ten servants that we read yesterday, believed that Jesus would immediately set up His kingdom, and they gave Him a king's greeting as He entered Jerusalem. But the story was anticlimactic. His triumphal entry ended with His looking around the Temple and then leaving the city to sleep overnight in the nearby town of Bethany (Mark 11:11).

Pray: Lord, show me truth in this reading today. Help me see you and your grace in my life.


Reflect on the different way people respond to Jesus in this encounter.

What do you notice about the...

- Disciples?

- Colt’s Owner?

- Crowd?

- Religious Leaders?

Why do you think we remember this as a “triumphal entry” if it ended so quietly?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: On that day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey’s colt, one that had never been ridden before. The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to sit on, and the multitudes came out to welcome Him, laying before Him their cloaks and the branches of palm trees. The people hailed and praised Him as the “King who comes in the name of the Lord” as He rode to the temple, where He taught the people, healed them, and drove out the money-changers and merchants who had made His Father’s house a “den of robbers” (Mark 11:17).

Jesus’ purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to make public His claim to be their Messiah and King of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew tells us that the King coming on the foal of a donkey was an exact fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus rides into His capital city as a conquering King and is hailed by the people as such, in the manner of the day. The streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him, and like a king, He ascends to His palace, not a temporal palace, but the spiritual palace which is the temple, because His is a spiritual kingdom. He receives the worship and praise of the people because only He deserves it. No longer does He tell His disciples to be quiet about Him (Matthew 12:16, 16:20), but to shout His praises and worship Him openly. The spreading of cloaks was an act of homage for royalty (2 Kings 9:13). Jesus was openly declaring to the people that He was their King and the Messiah they had been waiting for.

The crowd hoped Jesus was the prophesied king who would immediately establish Israel once more...this is a huge reason for why they clamored so at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. What are your motives in following Jesus?

From your reflection about the differing responses to Jesus, which person or group is most like you in your relationship to Jesus? Why do you think this?

Hosanna is a praise proclamation. For what do you most often praise God?
DAY THIRTY-TWO:
Weeps for Jerusalem

“In the Bible, the opposite of Sin, with a capital 'S,' is not virtue - it’s faith: faith in a God who draws all to himself in his resurrection.”
— Robert Farrar Capon, Between Noon & Three: Romance, Law & the Outrage of Grace

From the crest of Olivet, Jesus looked upon Jerusalem. Fair and peaceful was the scene spread out before Him. It was the season of the Passover, and from all lands the children of Jacob had gathered there to celebrate the great national festival. In the midst of gardens and vineyards, and green slopes studded with pilgrims' tents, rose the terraced hills, the stately palaces, and massive bulwarks of Israel's capital. Looking at this incredible scene, Jesus doesn’t awe over the city; he weeps.

Pray: Lord, strengthen my faith that I might not be blinded toward your grace.

Read: Luke 19:41-44

In Luke the story has a very significant positioning. It falls between two other stories, both about rich people. One was a highly religious man who was not able to accept Jesus’ condition that he share his wealth with the poor before becoming a disciple. The other is about a man who supposedly was anything but religious and yet, after meeting Jesus, gives away a large proportion of his wealth to the poor. Which of these two was truly blind?

What to you is significant about the literary location of the blind beggar in Luke?

Why does the crowd “rebuke” the beggar? How does this make you feel?

What does this encounter tell you about Jesus?
Reflect: His tears were not for Himself, though He well knew full well where His feet were tending. Before Him was Gethsemane, the scene of His approaching agony. The Sheepgate also was in sight, through which for centuries the victims offered for sacrifice had been led, and which was to open for Him when He should be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Isaiah 53:7. Not far in the distance was Calvary, the place of crucifixion. Jesus stood in full awareness of what was to come. Yet, it wasn’t over his suffering that lead him to weep. The Scripture tells us that he wasn’t weeping for himself, but Jerusalem...the center core of Israel...the nation through which God chose to bless the world (Genesis 12:1-3).

Jesus wept for the doomed thousands of Jerusalem—because of the blindness of those whom He came to bless and to save. Of all the people ever gathered on this planet, none have had the unique opportunity of being called “God’s chosen” like Israel. John 1:11 reads, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”

Jesus isn’t having some rejected self-esteem problem. His tears are tears of mercy for he knows of the destruction Jerusalem faces...not only in the immediate future (40 years after Jesus, the entire city is laid waste by the Roman leader Titus) but the imminent judgment that comes to all for rejecting God’s Son.

Do you think our generation is any different from the generation of Jews in Jesus day when it comes to believing in Jesus through what God had revealed in the Scriptures? Why do you think this?

Do you have a hard time believing all that the Bible says about Jesus? What do you struggle with?

How do you think God needs to move in your life to strengthen your belief in Jesus?
DAY THIRTY-THREE:
Teaches in the Temple
“To some, the image of a pale body glimmering on a dark night whispers of defeat. What good is a God who does not control his Son’s suffering? But another sound can be heard: the shout of a God crying out to human beings, “I LOVE YOU.” Love was compressed for all history in that lonely figure on the cross, who said that he could call down angels at any moment on a rescue mission, but chose not to - because of us. At Calvary, God accepted his own unbreakable terms of justice.
Any discussion of how pain and suffering fit into God’s scheme ultimately leads back to the cross.”

— Philip Yancey

Jesus enters Jerusalem again during his final week. This time he goes to teach in the temple as other leaders did in his day. Crowds gather and listen. The religious leaders of Jesus day are already plotting to secretly seize him. On this day though, the plot isn’t to seize Jesus, but to discredit him publicly. At the heart of this scene, Jesus reminds all who are listening to him what the greatest commandment really is.

Pray: Lord, help me to honor you with


What do you think it means to love God with...

- All of your heart?

- All of your mind?

- All of your strength?

- All of your soul?

What do you think it means to “love your neighbor as yourself”?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: "One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. 'Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,' they said. 'Who gave you this authority?' " (Luke 20:1-2)

The question seems straightforward, but it is a thinly-veiled trick question. If Jesus answers that God is the basis of his authority they will call him a blasphemer and alert the Romans to the danger of his claims. If he denies God's authority for his actions then he will be accused of acting on his own. The keyword here is Greek *exousia*, "the right to control or command, 'authority, absolute power, warrant”

If I’m honest, I find myself wrestling with Jesus on this too. Who gives Jesus the authority to tell me or anyone else what to do? Oh yeah, he made me, sustains me and completes me. I guess that gives Jesus the authority. Much like these Pharisees though, we often struggle with God’s authority in our lives, yet, when we consider the motivation behind the greatest commandment to love God with every fiber of our being (heart, mind, soul and strength) is that God first loved us (1 John 4:19) the tension of “who is in charge?” fades away. The reaction to listen to God changes because of God’s love for us in spite of us.

How does God loving you first motivate you to follow God’s ways?

Where do you struggle with God’s authority over your life? Why?

How do you sense God wants you to respond to Him over the things you just wrote down?
DAY THIRTY-FOUR: Arrested and Tried

“The world takes us to a silver screen on which flickering images of passion and romance play, and as we watch, the world says, “This is love.” God takes us to the foot of a tree on which a naked and bloodied man hangs and says, “This is love.”

— Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye: A New Attitude Toward Relationships and Romance*

After eating his final Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus leaves to go pray. Under the incredible pressure of the agony he will face, Jesus willingly fulfills the Father’s plan and seeks strengthening through prayer. After he prays, a troupe of temple guards, guided by Judas Iscariot, the betraying disciple, arrest Jesus. From there, Jesus will be beaten, tried and found unwanted, not only by Jewish temple leaders, but by the citizenry of Israel as well.

**Pray:** Lord, thank you for all you suffered on my behalf. Help me to understand more and more what you suffered, that I may understand more and more your love for me.


**What do you think Peter was thinking that night (John 18)?**

**How do you think the guard felt after Jesus healed his wounded ear (Luke 22:50-51)?**

Mark 14:51-51 tells about a disciple who fled from the scene. Imagine you were there on Jesus’ side of things when this went down. What pressures would you feel? How would you respond?

**What questions do you still have?**
Reflect: As Jesus faces His betrayers, the jealous, pious, fraud, religious leaders, and hostile soldiers, the Passion begins! Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley into the grove of olives, while Judas, one of His most trusted Disciples, betrayed Him to the leading priests and soldiers along with the Temple guards; they all converged upon Jesus and His Disciples with weapons drawn and the intimidation of the lanterns burning.

Jesus, of course, knew this would happen and could have stopped it, but He submits to the Father on our behalf and met them with these words: whom do you seek? They replied, Jesus of Nazareth. I am He, Jesus said. As they fell backwards to the ground without even a hint of His power, Jesus asked for the others to go.

As previously foretold, not any of His are harmed. Peter, acting impulsively, drew his sword and attacked, slicing off the ear of the high priest’s servant; Jesus responded by healing it back. He then asked Peter to stand down and put his sword in its sheath, because this moment was why Jesus left heaven.

And so it begins; Jesus is arrested, bound, and taken, first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest who disrespected Jesus with the statement, “better that one die for all.” (John 11:50)

Yet, how powerful those words will be as One will indeed die for all...that all through him might know grace, forgiveness, truth, and life eternal. (Romans 5:8-17).

Jesus was betrayed by one of his own. Judas Iscariot was invested in the ministry of Jesus. Does Judas’ betrayal of Jesus with a compliment and a kiss (Matthew 26:49)? Why do you think this?

Jesus did no wrong. Yet he was accused of blaspheme before the religious leaders and treason before the Roman authorities. How do people falsely accuse and wrongly condemn Jesus today?

Have you ever been put in a place where you feel like you have betrayed, deserted or denied Jesus? How has your faith changed as a result of that encounter?
It has been an incredibly long night since his arrest. Jesus has been beaten and battered. He has been tried and punished. Yet, the religious leaders haven’t been satisfied. This rebel...this rouser...this Jesus must die. Around 9:00 a.m. Pontius Pilate presented a weary and bloody Jesus to a crowd of Jews gathered in his courtyard. The shouts of the crowd overwhelmed Pilate. “Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!” And so he did.

Pray: Lord, Jesus give me grace to embrace your death that I might find life through you.


Several people encounter Jesus on his final journey to death. What do you notice about the following people:

- Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27:32)?
- Mocking Soldiers (Luke 15:16-20)?
- Priests (Matthew 27:39-43)?
- Mary, his mother (John 19:25-27)?
- Roman Centurion (Mark 15:39)?

How do you respond to the sacrifice Jesus made?

What questions do you still have?

When Jesus died the temple curtain was torn in half (Luke 26:44-45). This temple curtain separated everyone in the temple from the inner places, or the Holy of Holies...the place where God met the priests and accepted the sacrifices and offerings of the people. When that temple curtain was torn, Jesus offered to all who believe in Jesus free passage to be with God!

Through Jesus there would no longer be anything that separated God and man. The ultimate sacrifice, a sacrifice that only God himself could make, was given.

And here we are, nearly 2,000 years later...sacrifice provided and offering accepted through Jesus...and each of us must still respond to Jesus. How do you respond to Jesus? Are you a mocker in the crowd? An angry thief? A penitent seeker?

Why should anyone care that Jesus died?

What does the death of Jesus mean to you?

Choose one of the Gospel accounts and read it through again. Take note of details you might have missed before. After reading, take time to pray, thanking God for Jesus, the perfect sacrifice.
DAY THIRTY-SIX:
Risen Savior

“Jesus’s resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.”
— N. T. Wright,
*Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*

Being led down a winding road up to the place called “The Skull”, Jesus is laid battered on two giant wood beams placed to shape the Greek letter tau or “t”. He is then nailed to these wood beams through each hand and through his feet. He would hang on public display between two thieves. Every moment was in trust and obedience even to his final breath, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” And he breathed his last. He would be taken down and only partially prepared for burial as the Sabbath was only moments away. The tomb was closed. Was this the end?

**Pray:** Lord, Jesus give me confidence to live in light of your resurrection.

**Read:** Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-35; John 20:1-18
1st Corinthians 15:4-58

**Why do you think people doubt the resurrection?**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-14. The resurrection is the anchor of the Christian faith. How does Jesus, the risen Savior, anchor your faith?

The resurrection is also the key to true hope. How does the truth of the resurrection offer hope to those who follow Christ?

**What questions do you still have?**
Reflect: John Piper, an American pastor and author reflected on the resurrection of Jesus. He penned a list of ten unique matters that are direct results of Jesus’ resurrection in the life of the Christian:

1) A savior who can never die again. "For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again." Romans 6:9

2) Repentance. "The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel." Acts 5:31

3) New birth. "By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3

4) Forgiveness of sin. "If Christ has not been raised, your hope is futile and you are still in your sins." 1 Corinthians 15:17

5) The Holy Spirit. "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear." Acts 2:32-33

6) No condemnation for the elect. "Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God." Romans 8:34

7) The Lord’s personal fellowship and protection. "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Matthew 28:20

8) Proof of coming judgment. "God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:31

9) Salvation from the future wrath of God. "We wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 5:10

10) Our own resurrection from the dead. "We know that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." 2 Corinthians 4:14; Romans 6:4; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:20

Which of the above is the most significant to you?

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?
After the resurrection, Jesus remained with his followers forty days. On his last day, he called them together and gave them final instructions: Go into the world...commit to the Kingdom of God...teach others what I taught you...know that I’m with you always.

That sending mission belongs to every follower of Jesus to this day.

**Pray:** Lord, Jesus give me grace to embrace your death that I might find life through you.


Have you ever felt like God “called” you or “sent” you to do something for him? What was it? How did the experience go?

Do you feel like your life is lived out as one “sent by the king”? Why or why not?

What questions do you still have?
Reflect: After the Jesus ascended, ordinary people were used by God in extraordinary ways. However, most of Jesus’ followers throughout history have been used by God in ordinary ways. Yet, the mission of the Kingdom has been carried out in quiet, consistent lives.

We often think of the pastors or missionaries that are doing work for God. Yet, the commission to engage the world with the words and ways of Jesus falls on the shoulders of everyone who says yes to Jesus. Not one person is excused from living life on Kingdom mission.

We make the excuses quite regularly... too busy... not good enough... don’t know enough about the Bible... not enough money... you name it the excuse, they’ve all been used.

Charles H. Spurgeon, a British preacher and writer, once remarked, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter.”

What do you think about Spurgeon’s remarks?

Often, we fail to realize the significance of our lives as everyday Kingdom citizens. Where in your regular life might God use you in the life of someone else to help them see the truth about Jesus Christ?

As we conclude this focus on the life of Jesus, take time to pray for insight, courage and faithfulness to living your place in God’s mission.
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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