



talks with

# JESUS

a seven mile road preaching series  
fall-winter 2009



## talks with JESUS

discovering who He is through the conversations He had

Welcome to Seven Mile Road Church. You're joining us at a pretty exciting time in the life of our community. Beginning this fall, for the first time ever, our new church will gather for weekly corporate worship services. That also means we'll kick off our first ever preaching series. We have a commitment to gathering weekly and hearing from God through His Scriptures that they might inform and transform us. So where do we begin? **JESUS**.

What better way to launch our church than to spend our first season together looking at the person and work of Jesus? If life, eternity, history, redemption all hinge upon who Jesus was and what He did, then there is no more important question for a person or community to answer than this: who is Jesus?

While all of Scripture ultimately points to Christ, the Gospels do so in a unique way. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each tell the story of Jesus, the carpenter's son turned itinerant preacher, who was crucified on a cross outside of Jerusalem and then raised to life on the third day. In the process of telling their story, the Gospel writers included many conversations that Jesus had with different people in His life. In these conversations we learn so much about how Jesus viewed Himself, what His message was, how He felt about people, and what God had sent him to accomplish. These conversations help us to discover who He is, and consequently who we are.

So for the next few months we are going to preach the conversations of Christ. We will move somewhat chronologically through Jesus' life, considering important conversations along the way. We want to see Him with fresh eyes and hear Him with fresh ears.

Jesus *is* the gospel, and as a gospel-centered church we should always be growing in our knowledge of our Savior. But just listening to a sermon series is not enough. We want to respond to what we hear with repentance, faith, and obedience. Our prayer is that in hearing Jesus' words to others we would hear them for ourselves and be transformed.

It's a huge joy to start this journey with you. May God use this series to launch us into admiring, respecting, adoring, loving, believing, serving, and worshipping Jesus.

Pastor Ajay Thomas

## PREACHING SCHEDULE

**Sept. 13 :: A Confession**  
Matthew 16:13-20

**Sept. 20 :: A Battle**  
Matthew 4:1-11

**Sept. 27 :: 150 Gallons**  
John 2:1-12

**Oct. 4 :: New Birth**  
John 3:1-15

**Oct. 11 :: At Jacob's Well**  
John 4:1-42

**Oct 18 :: Let the Children Come**  
Mark 10:13-16

**Oct. 25 :: Follow Me**  
Matthew 9:9-13

**Nov. 1 :: Who is My Neighbor?**  
Luke 10:25-37

**Nov. 8 :: Our Father Who Art in Heaven**  
Luke 11:1-12

**Nov. 15 :: Sell it All**  
Luke 18:18-30

**Nov. 22 :: Woe to You**  
Matthew 23

**Nov. 29 :: Bread & Wine**  
Luke 22:14-23

**Dec. 6 :: The Cup**  
Matthew 26:30-56

**Dec. 13 :: On Trial**  
John 18:28-19:16

**Dec. 20 :: Seven Words**  
Various

**Dec. 27 :: Missio Dei**  
Matthew 28:16-20

The purpose of this booklet is to help you to truly engage this series.

In addition to a brief primer on the four Gospels, there is a guide for each individual sermon.

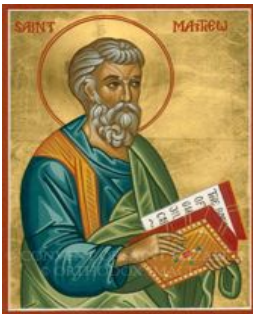
Included is an introduction to each text of Scripture that will be preached. The goal is to orient you to the conversation of Jesus that you are about to listen in on. You will find questions to get you started in understanding and applying each passage after you hear it preached. These can be used in your personal devotions. We would also strongly encourage you to consider the material in community by using this guide over meals at home or with others in our church and city. There are also some brief ideas for parents to do during family worship with your children. Finally some pages also have recommended resources for further reading and study.

If you are kept from worship, the sermons will be posted online at [www.sevenmileroadphilly.org](http://www.sevenmileroadphilly.org).

# THE GOSPELS

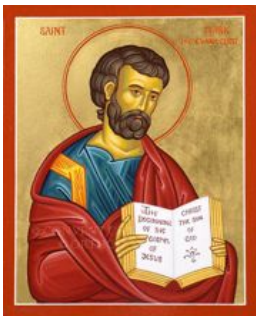
Almost everything we know about the life of Jesus comes from four books of the Bible called the Gospels. These four books, with different authors and different perspectives, convey a single message about who Jesus was, what He said, what He did, and what that means for us. The men who wrote these accounts were either close friends of Jesus, or close associates of those who were. They spent their lives giving witness to what they had seen, heard, and experienced through Jesus.

The Gospels are more than narratives. Their primary objective is not merely to present a historical textbook, or even a biography. Rather, as the Gospel of John concludes, “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” (John 20:31). The Gospel writers are not shy about who they understood Jesus to be, and invite us to come along and find out for ourselves.



## Matthew

A tax collector turned disciple of Jesus named Levi, or Matthew, is credited with the first Gospel in the New Testament. The Old Testament is referenced in Matthew more times than any other Gospel, as the book was written particularly for a Jewish audience. Matthew attempts to show the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah whom they had been waiting for. The “kingdom of heaven” is one of the major themes that run throughout the book.



## Mark

Many scholars believe that the Gospel of Mark was written first of all the Gospels. In fact, many understand that Matthew and Luke both drew from Mark in composing their accounts. John Mark, beloved of the apostle Peter, who is believed to have had a significant influence on the Gospel, wrote the book of Mark. The action packed Gospel is the most compact of the four, focusing more on the dealings of Christ than on His discourses.



## Luke

Luke, a physician and close associate of the apostle Paul, wrote the third and longest Gospel. His sequel, Acts, follows up the story of Jesus with the story of the early church. Luke writes the book to provide a cautiously examined account of the life of Jesus. Salvation is a hugely important theme to the Gospel of Luke, as well as the humanity of Jesus. Furthermore, Luke shows salvation as extending beyond Israel to his audience, the Gentiles.



## John

Transformed by Jesus from a fisherman into an apostle and pillar of the early church, John is credited with the fourth Gospel of the New Testament. The book of John is distinctly different from the other three Gospels. John spends a great deal of time recording the words of Christ, particularly pointing to Him as God and to the promise of eternal life to those who believe.

# A CONFESSION

Jesus talks with Peter

Matthew 16:13-20

September 13

## Introduction

Moral teacher. Prophet. Sinner. Saint. Peasant. Social activist. Religious leader. Rebel.

The opinions surrounding the central identity of Jesus were as varied in his day as they are in ours. The crowds in Israel were buzzing about Jesus the miracle worker. Is he Elijah? Jeremiah? John the Baptist back from the dead? Amidst the multitude of possible answers, Jesus steers the conversation away from public opinion to a personal one. "But who do *you* say that I am?"

Peter, one of the disciples, replies with a stunning, beautiful, Spirit-revealed confession of just who Jesus is. It's a powerful confession. In fact, Jesus promised to build his church upon it. As we launch Seven Mile Road Church today, we rest on the same confession Peter made then.

So the question is no less important today. Typing "Jesus" into Google will yield over 220 million hits. Countless books and songs have been written about him. Yet his question remains, who do *you* say that I am?

## Questions for Discussion

1. What were the popular opinions surrounding Jesus in the first century? What are they today?
2. Who do you say that Jesus is? Why?
3. C.S. Lewis famously wrote the following. How would you evaluate his argument?

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

4. According to Jesus, how does someone come to confess as Peter did?
5. How would your life look different if Jesus really is the Christ, the Son of the Living God as Peter confesses?
6. Discuss what it means for us to hear Jesus say, "*I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

## For Home

Talk with your children about who Jesus is. Share your story with them about how you came to confess Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of the living God. Devote yourself as parents to praying that the Father in heaven would reveal the truth to them (Matt. 16:17). Also pray with your children for people in your life and our city to come to Peter's confession.

## For Further Reading

Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus*  
Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

"But who do  
you say that I  
am?"

- Jesus

# A BATTLE

Jesus talks with Satan

Matthew 4:1-11  
September 20

## Introduction

After introducing our series last week, we're ready to dive into our first conversation. And it's a good one! We kick off with a cosmic showdown in the desert. The outcome of this battle will determine human history and human salvation. Everything lies in the balance.

After being baptized and before entering public ministry, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted. There he goes toe to toe with the tempter. Three times the enemy of God tries to get Jesus to falter and fail. But where his predecessors had failed, Jesus succeeded. Unlike Adam and Eve in the garden, or Israel in the desert, or you and I basically everywhere we've been, Jesus remains faithfully obedient to his Father's word.

Three temptations. Three responses. And the devil is sent away defeated. What a Savior!

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why was the outcome of this encounter so crucial?
  - What would it mean for human salvation if Jesus had failed?
  - How does Jesus' sinlessness qualify him to be our Savior?
2. Why is Jesus' victory over temptation good news?
  - In what ways do we share in his victory? How do we benefit from it?
  - How is Jesus the one and only true hero of the Bible?
3. What are the temptations you are battling now?
  - How does yielding to temptation ultimately reveal a failure to believe God & His word/promises?
  - How might we overcome temptation?
  - How might 1 Corinthians 10:13 be an encouragement to you?
  - How might Psalm 119:11 be instructive to you?
  - What role does the community play in your overcoming temptation?
4. Hear the words of Hebrews. How do these verses encourage you?

*For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.* (Heb. 2:18)

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb. 4:15-16)

"Be gone,  
Satan!"

- Jesus

## For Home

Talk with your children about Adam & Eve's failure in temptation in the garden. Talk with them about Israel's failure to trust God in the desert. Talk about our failures in the face of temptation. Celebrate Jesus as the One who has defeated the devil when none of us could. Praise Jesus for being our sinless Savior.

## For Further Reading

Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*  
David Powlinson, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*  
Timothy Lane & Paul Tripp, *How People Change*

# 150 GALLONS

Jesus talks with Mary

John 2:1-12  
September 27

## Introduction

You remember Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh? He was the sad looking donkey with the gloomy face, drooped head, and depressing voice. You'd rather sit through traffic on Roosevelt Blvd. than hang out with Eeyore. For a lot us, the idea of following Jesus is no different. Jesus is associated with words like boring, dull, dry, and dreary.

Yet the people in Jesus' day accused him of being at too many parties, not too few. In fact, the first place we see Jesus take his disciples is to attend a wedding celebration. That's right; they show up at a party. Moreover, it's here that Jesus performed His first miracle – turning water into wine. Instead of ending the party, Jesus actually performs a miracle to keep it going. Jesus' life and ministry was marked by joy and a conversation with his mother Mary reveals that he hadn't come to steal our joy but to give us joy unspeakable, even at great cost to himself.

## Questions for Discussion

1. The miracles of Jesus revealed something about who he was and what he had come to do and were to lead to faith (John 14:11). What did the miracle of turning water into wine reveal about Jesus?
2. What would it take for Jesus to celebrate the great wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 17:6-9)?
  - How was the cross in view in John 2:1-11?
3. How do you currently view alcohol?
  - Can a person drink alcohol sinfully? Can a person drink to the glory of God?
  - Can a person abstain from alcohol sinfully? Can a person abstain from alcohol to the glory of God?
  - How does the Gospel shape/support or challenge/correct your use or disuse of alcohol?
4. What is joy? How is true, abundant joy found in Jesus?
  - How have you personally experienced the joy of Jesus?
5. How might you dialogue with someone who thinks that following Jesus means giving up joy?

*“My hour has not yet come.”*

- Jesus

## For Home

Imagine with your children being at a wedding reception. What would it be like if the host ran out of food and drink? Talk about how Jesus faced this at the Wedding in Cana and saved the day. Talk about the great wedding celebration of Jesus that is to come. Thank Jesus together for giving his life that you might have joy now and forevermore.

## For Further Reading

John Piper, *Desiring God*

Sam Storms, *Pleasures Evermore*

# NEW BIRTH

Jesus talks with Nicodemus

John 3:1-15  
October 4

## Introduction

Everything about Nicodemus' first birth was perfect. He was born into a good Jewish home. He devoted himself to keeping all the religious laws. If that wasn't enough, he grows up and becomes a Rabbi, a teacher of Israel. Like his fellow Pharisees, Nicodemus dotted every "i" and crossed every "t" when it came to the law. Moral. Decent. Upright. Religious. If anybody is in with God, it's this guy right?

No.

The teacher of Israel approaches Jesus at night and their conversation reveals that rather than having a front row seat in God's kingdom, he's actually in danger of not even getting in. Nicodemus needed to start again...like a new start...like a new birth...like being born again. Jesus teaches this teacher that God's kingdom is seen not by those who gain it through pious performance, but have a new heart and a new birth through faith in him.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to be "born again?"
2. How does Paul teaching our need for new life in Christ (Eph. 2:4-5) relate to Jesus teaching that we need new birth (John 3:3)?
  - Why do we need to be born again or *regenerated* by God?
  - A baby does not cause his conception to happen. Nor does a dead man cause his resurrection to new life. It must come from without not within. How are we likewise dependant upon God for regeneration?
  - What does God do in our new birth? What do we do in our new birth?
3. Why do you think Nicodemus had such a hard time understanding the idea of being born again? What hang-ups do you share with Nicodemus?
4. How is the Gospel an offense to religion? How is religion an offense to the Gospel?
5. How can we help others to be born again?

*"Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Talk with your children about what they were like when they were just babies. Tell the funny stories and describe how much you loved them. Talk about how even as we are born physically, we need to be born spiritually. When we become Christians, we are born a second time so that we are both physically and spiritually alive to God. We go from not having hearts that love Jesus to having new hearts that love him. Explain how you long to celebrate their second birth even as you rejoiced over their first one. As parents, ask the Lord who is rich in mercy and love (Eph 2:4) to extend grace to your children that they too might be born again. Pray as family for those in your life and our city who need new life and new birth in Christ.

## For Further Reading

John Piper, *Finally Alive* (free online book at [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org))

# AT JACOB'S WELL

Jesus talks with a Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-42  
October 11

## Introduction

She always made her way down to the well after all the other women had left. She couldn't bear to see their stares or hear their whispers. She knew what they were thinking. So she went when no one would be there.

Except on this day.

On this day she found a tired Jewish man sitting besides Jacob's well. He asked her for a drink and so the conversation began. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" she replied. And yet despite all the barriers between them – cultural, racial, religious, moral – the Jewish man kept talking with her. He spoke to her like no one ever had. He seemed to know all about her dark past and yet instead of casting her away, invited her to discover who he truly was. By the end of their conversation, the woman runs back to her town to tell everyone she knows about him. "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

Today we consider the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well. Her call to us would be the same; "Come, see a man..."

*"Whoever drinks  
of the water that I  
will give him will  
never be thirsty  
again."*

- Jesus

## Questions for Discussion

1. Describe the Samaritan woman. Do you identify with her in any way? How?
2. Our sin makes us guilty, but it also makes us shameful and ashamed. How does the Gospel address our shame? How does Jesus restore us to a place of honor?
3. What do you admire about Jesus in this conversation? What are some things you notice about the way he interacts with the woman?
  - How can we let these truths shape Seven Mile Road?
4. Who in our culture would identify with the Samaritan woman? Who do you/we need to cross barriers (cultural, racial, religious, etc) to connect with so that we can meet them at their point of need?
  - What keeps you from doing it? What truths might free you to do it?
5. What is beautiful about the woman's response to Jesus?
6. What does it tell you about God that He would use the Samaritan woman for the whole town to come to know Jesus? How does that encourage you?

## For Home

Ask your children about a time when they were embarrassed or ashamed. Ask them how they felt. Teach your children the story of Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well. Talk about this woman with a sinful past and how she felt great shame. Talk about how Jesus graciously approached her with love, restoring her honor. Explain how Jesus does this for us through the Gospel, removing our sin and shame. As a family, think about a way that you can love and connect with someone the way Jesus did.

## For Further Reading

Roland Muller, *Honor & Shame*

# LET THE CHILDREN COME

Jesus talks with His disciples

Mark 10:13-16

October 18

## Introduction

The demands of ministry on Jesus were intense. It seemed like every person in Israel wanted some time with the miracle-worker-prophet-teacher from Nazareth. Rabbis approached him with questions. Rich rulers fell before him. Authorities investigated him. With all these important appointments, the disciples figured Jesus had little time to deal with babies in diapers. And so when some eager parents brought their little children to be blessed by Jesus, the disciples figured the best thing to do was to chase them away. Jesus had no time for kids.

They were wrong. In fact, Jesus is infuriated by their response. Rather than dismissing them, Jesus receives the children. He takes them into his arms and blesses them. He even uses the moment to illustrate an important truth; that those who receive the kingdom of God would have to do so like a little child.

As followers of Jesus, our desire is for his rule and reign and blessing to cover all of life. That includes our children. When God blesses us with the gift of children, our deep impulse is to bring them before him that they too might know his grace and blessing. Today, as a church, we bring some of our little ones before Jesus that he might bless them as he did that day.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why are children such a fitting picture of the kind of people who will enter the kingdom of God? What is it about them?
2. If you were to describe the person “fit” for acceptance by God, what would that profile look like?
  - In the following passage, Mark 10:17-31, we read the story of the rich young man. Why does he appear to the disciples like the ideal candidate (Mk. 10:26)?
  - How are children (Mk. 10:13-16) such a contrast to the “qualifications” of the rich ruler?
  - Why do you think Mark chose to put these two narratives together, one following the other, in his gospel?
3. In your life with God, where are you more “adult-like” (independent) than “child-like” (dependant)? Why do you think this is?
4. What is your reaction to Jesus’ reception of the little children? How does this shape your view of children?
5. What are some practical ways that you can love and bless children like Jesus does?

*“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”*

- Jesus

## For Home

Richly celebrate Jesus’ love for your children. Tell your children the story of how Jesus received the children, took them into his arms, and blessed them. Express to your children that Jesus loves them deeply. Talk also about how children are dependant upon their parents. Ask the different ways in which they are dependant upon you – for food, shelter, protection, etc. Talk about how God as our Father requires that we also recognize our dependence upon Him and come helpless and humbly like little children. Take some time to pray together for the other parents and children of our church and city.

## For Further Reading

Tim Kimmel, *Grace-Based Parenting*

Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*

Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity* (for parents with teens)

Audio & video resources for free ([http://www.theresurgence.com/shepherding\\_a\\_childs\\_heart\\_conference](http://www.theresurgence.com/shepherding_a_childs_heart_conference))

# FOLLOW ME

Jesus talks with a Tax-Collector

Matthew 9:9-13

October 25

## Introduction

Jesus has a mission. He has to save the world from their sin and extend God's salvation to humanity. Check. He has to entrust this mission to some men that they might continue his work. Check. He will call these men to be his disciples, to learn from him, and to be his representatives on the earth. Check. It's obvious then that he needs to select some good men. Check. Check. So he heads straight to a tax collector's booth and finds a sinful liar and cheat to make him a disciple. Wait...what?

One might question Jesus' selection in choosing his disciples. Their pedigree is not exactly what you would expect. Matthew is a prime example. He's one of the "sinners" on the Pharisee's hit list. They couldn't imagine even sitting down with such men, let alone befriending them. Yet, Jesus walks by this man in his place of business (a shady business to be sure) and says to him, "Follow me." And you know what? Matthew does.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What did it mean to be a disciple of Jesus back then? What does it mean today?
2. What is your reaction to Jesus calling a man like Matthew to be one of his disciples? What does this tell you about Jesus?
2. What do you think it is about Jesus that caused "tax collectors and sinners" to surround him and even follow him?
  - Can you relate to the Pharisees reaction (Matt. 9:11)?
  - How can we as a community look more like Jesus than the Pharisees in relating to people?
3. Matthew, the tax collector turned disciple, is the author of the first Gospel in our Bibles. How does that affect you?
  - Do you believe that God could use someone like you for His work? Why or why not?

*"Follow me."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Ask your children to imagine they had an important mission to complete. What kind of people would they choose to partner with them? Or if they were on a sports team, what kind of people would they want playing with them? We would choose the smartest, brightest, fastest, and strongest. Now talk about who Jesus chose to be his disciples. Fisherman. Tax Collectors. The disciples were unschooled, untrained, common men (Acts 4:13). Talk about what a disciple is and how great God is to call ordinary, sinful people like us to follow Him and even to serve him as His disciples.

## For Further Reading

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Jonathan Dodson, *Fight Clubs* (free online book at <http://theresurgence.com/fightclubs/>)

# WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Jesus talks with a Lawyer

Luke 10:25-37

November 1

## Introduction

A self-righteous expert on the law approaches Jesus to give him a pop quiz on God's law. Jesus responds by turning the tables so that the one with the questions becomes the one being questioned. As they discuss God's law, the lawyer rattles off the two great commandments with ease, namely, to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. However, wanting to justify himself, the lawyer pushes Jesus further, asking him to define 'neighbor.' Exactly who is it that God requires us to love? Who qualifies as a neighbor?

Jesus answers with a parable. He tells a story of a man on a journey who is attacked and robbed along the way. Three men pass the wounded traveler. Yet only one stops to show compassion. But here's the twist. Jesus changes directions and shifts the focus. The question is no longer who is my neighbor, but rather what kind of neighbor are *you*?

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why did the lawyer come to Jesus? What was the heart behind his questions?
2. What does the passage teach us about loving our neighbor as ourselves?
3. Who is your neighbor? Who are you in a position to extend mercy to?
4. How is Jesus a good neighbor to us?
5. What kind of neighbor are you? How might the gospel address this?
6. How can we extend compassion and mercy as a community?

*"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor?"*

- Jesus

## For Home

Tell the story of the Good Samaritan. Perhaps act it out with your children. Talk with your children about how Jesus extended compassion and mercy to us through the Gospel. He has healed our brokenness, binded our wounds, and clothed our nakedness. Talk about how God calls us to reflect Him in the world by doing the same. Decide as a family how you can begin or continue to show mercy to those in the margins.

## For Further Reading

Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*

Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*

# OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN

Jesus talks with His Followers

Luke 11:1-12  
November 8

## Introduction

If you want to learn to shoot a jump shot, you ask Michael Jordan. If you want to learn to cook, you ask Gordon Ramsey or Rachael Ray. If you want to learn to build something, you call Bob Villa (or Winson).

If you want to learn to pray, you ask Jesus.

That's what the disciples did. Being around Jesus all the time, they couldn't help but notice his prayer life. It seemed like Jesus was always praying. Jesus would wake up early before everyone else to meet with His Father. He would take trips to the mountainside for solitude and prayer. Jesus prayed with people and by himself. He prayed at different times and in different places. Jesus prayed.

So no wonder the disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray." And he did. Listen in as Jesus teaches his followers about prayer.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What is prayer?
2. How is your prayer life in this season? What keeps you from prayer? What is most difficult to you about prayer?
3. What do you learn from Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11?
4. Jesus teaches that we can approach God in prayer like children with a Father. How has Jesus made this relationship possible?
5. What do we mean when we say, "In prayer, we come to the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit."
6. How can Seven Mile Road become a place and people of prayer?

*"When you pray,  
say..."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Talk with your children about the relationship between parents and children. If a child asks his dad for bread, would dad ever give them a stone? Or if the child asked for fish, would dad ever give them a snake? No way! Dads love their children and want to provide for them and bless them. Jesus says we can approach God like a good Dad. He is our Father and we His children. Allow this understanding to be a foundation for the prayer life of your home. Ask your children what they would like to talk to God about and spend time praying to your Father as a family

## For Further Reading

Arthur G. Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*  
Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does it Make Any Difference?*

# SELL IT ALL

Jesus talks with a Rich Young Ruler

Luke 18:18-30  
November 15

## Introduction

He's rich. He's young. He's a ruler. He's perfect. You could hardly imagine a better recruit to join Jesus' ministry team. To top it all off, he's even religious. He has spent his whole life obeying God's commandments. The disciples drool at the prospect of adding this powerful, wealthy, young man to their team.

Then why does the conversation end with sadness?

The man walks away sad for in calling him to follow, Jesus demanded that he give up everything. *Everything*. Jesus calls the rich man to sell it all for the sake of the poor and follow him – a cost he is unwilling to bear. Likewise, Jesus is saddened too. The young man had traded life in Christ and treasure in heaven for trinkets on earth. The call to follow Jesus is no less costly today. If only we could see the treasure that is Christ and follow him.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think the rich young man left sad? What do you think saddened Jesus?

2. What is your reaction to Jesus saying *"How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."*

3. Are you rich? How do you think vs. 24-25 applies to you?

- Is there something in your life right now that Jesus is asking you to give up in order to follow him?
- Is there an area of your life that you would have difficulty giving up if Jesus asked you to? What is it?
- In light of this, how are you encouraged by verse 26-27?

4. How would you define sacrifice?

- What are some sacrifices you have made in life?
- What motivated you to make such sacrifices? What motivates the Christian to sacrifice?
- Read Philippians 2:5-8. What did Jesus sacrifice for you? How does this truth affect you?

*"Sell all that you have...and come, follow me"*

- Jesus

## For Home

Talk with your children about the word *sacrifice*. Teach how we sacrifice or give up something of great cost for something of even greater value. Give examples from your life of something you sacrificed to ultimately gain something better. Share examples where the cost was certainly worth it. Talk about how following Jesus requires sacrifice and while it will be painful; we gain an even greater treasure – Jesus!

# WOE TO YOU

Jesus talks with the Pharisees

Matthew 23  
November 22

## Introduction

“Don’t go there. Don’t touch this. Don’t do that.” The Pharisees were first century kings of following the rules and calling others to do the same. Actually, they didn’t just follow the rules; they invented them. Their whole lives revolved around religion, commandments, and obedience. You would think that Jesus and the Pharisees would be best of friends.

They weren’t. In fact, they looked more like enemies than friends. As you read through the Gospels, you can’t help but notice that Jesus and these religious leaders were always at each other’s throats. Jesus saw these men for who they were – men who knew the law but failed to love God. He was wise to their charade, their pious pretenses, and exposed it whenever he could. *Hypocrites, blind guides, fools, serpents, whitewashed tombs* – these were just some of the terms Jesus used to address the Pharisees. His tone is fierce. Jesus cuts into these moral leaders longing for them to abandon their self-righteousness and come to him in repentance and faith.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What is your reaction to Jesus’ relationship with the Pharisees throughout the Gospels?
2. What is the difference between religion/morality and the gospel?
3. How does religion view behavior? How does religion view heart motivation?
4. How does the gospel view behavior? How does the gospel view heart motivation?
5. How would you define legalism?
  - What has been your experience with legalism? How does the gospel confront and challenge you?
  - How does a legalist view spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, etc)? What is a right way to view spiritual disciplines? Does your view need to be adjusted?
  - How does legalism make much of you and make little of the Cross?
6. Evaluate the following sentence about the heart of the Gospel:

*You are far more sinful than you ever believed; but you are also far more loved than you ever dared to imagine.*

*“Woe to you,  
scribes and  
Pharisees,  
hypocrites!”*

- Jesus

## For Home

Imagine if you could read peoples’ minds and know their thoughts. Teach your children how God actually does know this. He knows everything about us, inside and out. Talk with your children about the difference between external obedience and doing things from the heart. Teach them that God is not only concerned with what we do, but why we do it. Ask the Lord as a family to move your hearts to love and obey him sincerely. Also remind them of your love for them – that it does not hinge on their performance. You love them unconditionally. Talk about how God loves us in an even greater way through the Gospel. Celebrate together that you do not have to earn God’s love, but have it through Jesus.

## Further Reading

Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*  
Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*  
Timothy J. Keller, *The Prodigal God*

# BREAD & WINE

Jesus talks with the Twelve

Luke 22:14-23  
November 29

## Introduction

For centuries, Jewish families gathered to celebrate the Passover. On a special night of the year, they shared a meal remembering how the Lord had delivered them from bondage and captivity in Egypt. God freed them from slavery. God's judgment passed over them. God graciously saved them.

Centuries later, Jesus sat down with his disciples to eat one last meal before his death. The disciples could have never imagined that the supper they would share would become the most important one of their lives. Jesus gives bread and wine even as He would give His body and blood to establish a New Covenant.

Today, Christians gather to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection. We share a meal remembering how Jesus has delivered us from bondage and captivity in sin. Jesus freed us from our slavery. God's judgment has fallen on Jesus and passed over us. God has graciously saved us.

## Questions for Discussion

1. How is Communion a fulfillment of the Passover meal (Exodus 12)?
2. What does Communion mean to you? Why do you take Communion? What brings you to Jesus' table? What keeps you from it? How does the Gospel shape/support or challenge/correct your practice?
3. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-32, Paul teaches on the early church's practice of Communion. What do you learn from this passage?
4. Who can participate in this meal?

*"Do this in  
remembrance  
of me."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Make the most of dinnertime. Eat together as a family. Take time to share what happened during the day. Talk with your children about the importance of meals among God's people. The people of Israel often ate together. The church is often eating together (Acts 2:42, 46). In fact, heaven is likened to a big feast where we eat and drink and celebrate together. Establish meals as an important time to come together and to remember God as a family. Teach about the special meal that Jesus instituted for us to remember His death, celebrate His resurrection, and anticipate His return.

# THE CUP

Jesus talks with His Father

Matthew 26:30-56

December 6

## Introduction

Fearless. Authoritative. Composed.

Those are probably some of the words you would use to describe Jesus as you scan his life across the pages of the Gospels. He went toe to toe with the tempter and didn't flinch. He challenged the establishment and stared down religious leaders exposing their hypocrisy. He defended the defenseless.

No wonder then we are so startled by what we see as Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane. He appears distressed and troubled. Anguish and sorrow have gripped his heart. He appears crushed, sweating drops of blood. Within hours, Peter would deny him. Judas would betray him. The disciples would abandon him. The crowds would mock him. The Jews would try him. The Romans would crucify him.

And the Father would abandon Him.

This is the cup that Jesus would have to drink. It's a potent drink filled with humanity's sin and God's wrath. Jesus stares into this cup in the Garden and says, *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why was Jesus' suffering in the Garden so intense? Do you think his thoughts were focused on the coming physical torture of the cross or something more?
2. Have you been acquainted with suffering in your life? Have you ever felt abandoned?
  - What is unique about Christ's loneliness and abandonment?
3. Meditate on Isaiah 53. How does it affect you to hear that Jesus was, *"despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"*?
  - Is Jesus' familiarity with suffering a comfort to you? Why or why not?
  - What difference might Jesus' suffering make in your own seasons of suffering?
4. In his suffering, Jesus asks his disciples to remain and be with him. What does this reveal about Jesus?
  - What role does the community play in our suffering?
  - How might you practically *remain and keep watch* with those who are suffering?
  - How would you go about using the gospel to encourage someone who is suffering without seeming flippant or callous to their suffering?

*"My soul is very sorrowful, even to death."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Imagine with your family how painful it would be if you were separated from one another. How horrible would that be for you? For your children? Tell your children the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Talk with them about his suffering. Consider as a family the great love of Christ and his willingness to experience separation from God so that we might never be separated from Him. Pray together for people you know who are suffering and talk about how you might remain and keep watch with them as a family.

## Further Reading

Dan McCartney, *Why Does it have to Hurt?*

John Piper & Justin Taylor, *Suffering & The Sovereignty of God*

Joni Earekson Tada, *When God Weeps: Why Our Suffering Matters to the Almighty*

# ON TRIAL

Jesus talks with Pilate

John 18:28-19:16

December 13

## Introduction

As Jesus emerges from the garden, he's no longer trembling and troubled, but composed and calm. He is unjustly arrested and brought to trial trumped up on false charges. His accusers move quickly, acting under the cover of night. They have concocted a case filled with lies and empty accusations. Yet Jesus does not resist. He does not protest. He does not defend himself, for it for this hour that he has born.

His case is finally brought before Pilate, the Roman Governor. On the surface, it appears that Pilate stands in power and Jesus powerless. Yet the conversation reveals Jesus' true identity; that of a king. Ultimately it is Jesus who displays courage and Pilate who plays the coward. The outcome of the trial is sealed even before it begins. The King is to be crucified.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Who was ultimately in control when it came to the crucifixion and the details surrounding it? Why?

2. How does Jesus display courage? How does Pilate display cowardice?

Why is this ironic?

- Where did Jesus' courage come from?
- How can you gain courage?

3. As we approach Christmas, discuss Jesus' statement in Jn. 18:37.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, *for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*"

*"You are right in saying that I am a King."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Talk with your children about the idea of being a king. What words come to mind when you think of a king? (Power, throne, kingdom, riches, etc.) Now explain that Jesus is King of kings and his kingdom is not of this world. Tell the story of Jesus on trial and how Pilate failed to see who Jesus truly was. Jesus didn't look like a King. Talk about how Jesus showed courage even in the face of death. Celebrate our King who came to die for us and bring us into his kingdom.

# SEVEN WORDS

Jesus talks from the Cross

Various  
December 20

## Introduction

Jesus, the eternal God, without beginning and without end, enters human history as a baby with one goal in mind: the Cross. The shadow of the Cross looms over his whole life, even the manger in Bethlehem. It was for this that he had come. In his final hours, hanging from a Cross, bearing humanity's sin and God's wrath, Jesus speaks.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Today you will be with me in Paradise.

Woman, behold, your son! Behold, your mother!

Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

I thirst.

It is finished.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!

He prays for forgiveness for his murderers. He pardons a criminal. He cares for his mother. He cries out in agony to his God. He expresses his suffering. He announces his victory. He entrusts himself to his Father. Today we meditate on Jesus' conversation from the Cross and discover still who he is through the words he spoke.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Do any of the seven sayings especially connect with you? Why?
2. Who do you most identify with at the crucifixion? Why?
3. What do we learn about Jesus from his final words? How does this affect you?
4. What is the gospel?

*"It is finished."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Each day this week, review one of Jesus sayings from the Cross. This may be a great conversation to have during dinner each night this week. Teach your children what Jesus said. Allow them to ask questions as to why Jesus said what he did. Ask them to reflect on his words and what they teach us about who he is. By beginning today (Sunday), you will get to "It is finished" by Christmas day. Talk about why that phrase is so significant as we celebrate Christmas. As a family, celebrate the Savior's birth and his victorious completion of his mission.

## Further Reading

Charles Spurgeon, *The Power of the Cross of Christ*

C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life*

Mark Driscoll, *Death by Love*

John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*

## Introduction

So here's how Matthew's Gospel and our sermon series ends. The Resurrected, triumphant, sin-defeating, Satan-conquering, death-overcoming, sinner-saving, victorious Lord Jesus stands with his disciples on a mountain in Galilee. He's standing right in front of them and yet some can hardly believe it's really him and that he's really alive. He gathers the eleven for one last conversation.

"Go therefore and make disciples." Jesus sends his disciples on mission to the world even as the Father had sent him. They are to continue his work so that people from every culture and country on earth might come to know salvation in him. They are to baptize in the name of the triune God. They are to teach them to walk in obedience to the Lord. And they are to do all this with the assurance that Jesus will be with them till the end.

Today, Seven Mile Road Church has been swept up into this same mission. We get to participate in making disciples by making Jesus known here and to the ends of the earth.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What do we mean when we say that God is the first missionary? What is the mission of God? How does the Church participate?
2. Before commissioning his disciples, Jesus declares that all authority has been given to him. After commissioning them, he declares that he will be with them till the end. How do these two declarations change how you think about participating in mission? How might your life look different if you believed these two promises?
3. What is the Great Commission (vs. 19-20)? How is it more than just telling people about Jesus?
4. What would Seven Mile Road look like if we were bent on bringing Jesus and his gospel to our city & culture? What would your life look like if you were doing the same?
5. Can you be a Christian and not be on mission? Why or why not?
6. What do we mean when we describe our church as *missional*? How are you willing to be a part of a missional church?

*"Go therefore  
and make  
disciples of all  
nations."*

- Jesus

## For Home

Ask your children what they do when they receive great news. What's their first impulse? To tell someone! Maybe they tell a sibling, a friend, a grandparent – but their desire is to share this good news with others. Talk about how the gospel is good news. Retell what Jesus has done through his death and resurrection. Now, explain that if we really get that, our impulse will be to share this good news with others. Teach your children that Jesus calls us to be his representatives on earth so that through us, others might come to know and follow him too.

## Further Reading

Mark Driscoll, *Radical Reformation*

Michael Green, *Evangelism through the Local Church*

John C. Miller, *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless*

John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*

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