

DESOLATE PLACES

unit 22 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus came to preach the good news to the world—the news that salvation was for everyone. Unlike the false gods of ancient cultures, Jesus walked among us. He showed people compassion and reached out to touch the untouchable. Because of God’s great love for us, He sent Jesus to heal us from sin.

RADICAL COMPASSION

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Mark 1; Luke 4-5

JESUS CAME TO BRING GOOD NEWS

MARK 1:35-38

35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

JESUS IS WILLING TO COME CLOSE TO US

MARK 1:39-45

39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. 40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." 42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." 45 But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

MAIN POINT.

Jesus meets us with compassion and willingly restores us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful: There is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

DISCUSSION

JESUS CAME TO BRING GOOD NEWS

MARK 1:35-38

- Jesus retreated to spend time alone in prayer. Why do we need time to be alone with the Lord?
- What message did Jesus come to preach (v. 38)? Why wasn't it always accepted?
- What should motivate us to share the good news with people? What holds us back?

JESUS IS WILLING TO COME CLOSE TO US

MARK 1:39-45

- How did the man with leprosy approach Jesus? What do Jesus's actions show us about His heart?
- Why wasn't Jesus made unclean when He touched the man with leprosy?
- Jesus instructed the man to follow the law to be made ritually clean. How should we respond to Jesus after He heals our sin?



WHAT ARE PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN SHOW CHRISTLIKE COMPASSION TO THOSE AROUND YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe you've felt this way at school, with your family, or even at church. Feeling like you don't belong is a painful experience when you desire to fit somewhere. Sometimes, we allow our shame to isolate us. When we mess up, we fear what others will think of us, so we keep them from getting too close. We fear being rejected if we show someone our brokenness. If you long to be seen, loved, and accepted—if you want someone to see past your mess and see the hurting person underneath—know this: Jesus sees you right where you are and loves you deeply. No one is too dirty or too far gone for His grace. He longs to show you compassion, just like He did for so many sick and struggling people in the Gospels. Maybe you need to hear this: You don't have to clean yourself up to come to Jesus; you can bring Him your brokenness and know that He has done all the necessary work to save you. He desires to make you clean and whole—all you have to do is surrender to Him.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 6:5-8

Have you ever just needed to be alone? Maybe you were with a group of people for several hours or days and needed some time to be still and quiet, time to think. In this week's lesson, Jesus slipped away from the massive crowds following Him to be alone with the Father. Not only did He model the importance of prayer, but Jesus taught His followers how to pray. The parameters are surprisingly easy: Don't pray with the motivation of people seeing you and thinking you are super holy, and don't pray a lot of fancy words, thinking they'll be more persuasive to God. Jesus also added that God knows what we need before we ask. So, why pray? Prayer is important because you are inviting God into the situation, trusting Him with it, and building your relationship with Him. The good news is that God knows what you need, and He doesn't want to withhold good things from you (Matt. 7:11). Sometimes the good thing we receive is godly character that develops through perseverance (Rom. 5:3-4).

Start today by praying a simple prayer of surrender to God, inviting Him into every part of your life. Begin the prayer with praise to God because He is the Holy One, the Creator of the universe, and worthy of your praise. Then, tell Him about the details of your life, and ask Him to meet you there and to work on your behalf. You can surrender control to Him because He is on your side and will fight for you. End your prayer with thanksgiving for God's goodness and grace in your life. The God of the universe wants to meet with you in prayer! He isn't afraid of the hard, messy parts of your life. Take advantage of the opportunity to fight the darkness with the only One whose light is everlasting.

- **DEFINE PRAYER IN YOUR OWN WORDS. WHY DOES GOD WANT YOU TO PRAY TO HIM?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU PRAY? DOES PRAYER COME EASY FOR YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR DESIRING TO MEET THROUGH PRAYER. HELP ME TO GET MORE COMFORTABLE IN THIS CONVERSATION WITH YOU.



DAY TWO

PSALM 63:1-8

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, when suddenly the conversation died, and you were left in the awkward silence? What is your first response in a moment like this? Because of the awkwardness of silence, most people avoid it at all costs. Some people leave because they don't know how to move past the awkwardness of the moment. The truth is that our world does not value sitting in silence. In a world full of potential viral moments and instant fame, we may feel that sitting in silence is a waste of time. Will you try it today? Right now, take thirty seconds to sit and be still.

What happened in your mind after ten seconds? Try this again tomorrow and the day after that. This simple practice will help you develop a spiritual discipline of sitting still with the Lord. When you learn to drown out the noise and distractions around you, you'll connect with the words David wrote in Psalm 63. Your soul will crave time alone with God in stillness and prayer. When you do not feed it the things of the world, you make room for the Holy Spirit to speak and be heard. This stirring of the Holy Spirit will satisfy every desire that you have and inform every decision that you make, which leads to a deeper dependence on God and an authentic relationship with Him. Don't allow the world to tell you that silence or stillness is awkward and that you're missing out if you clear your calendar for an hour every day. The truth is that you can't afford not to spend time with God.

- **WHAT DO YOU DO IN SILENT MOMENTS? WHAT NEXT STEP CAN YOU TAKE TO DEVELOP THIS SKILL?**
- **DO YOU DESIRE A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? IF SO, THEN WHAT CHANGES DO YOU NEED TO MAKE?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR SATISFYING MY DEEPEST
DESIRES. PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR FEEDING MY
DESIRES WITH ANYTHING OR ANYONE OTHER THAN
YOUR PRESENCE.**



DAY THREE

1 KINGS 19:11-14

We live in a world that constantly seeks aesthetic moments and over-the-top elements to gain more likes and views on social media. This perspective teaches that only the biggest and brightest moments are the best moments. Simple or average days are often forgotten. Rest days seem forbidden in a culture that says to post new content every day. When we live this way, we miss out on God's quiet whispers; closeness with Him is replaced with distance.

The events that happened right before today's passage were wild. Elijah, a prophet, went toe-to-toe with worshipers of the false god, Baal. God showed up by sending fire down from heaven to destroy Baal's altar, proving the Lord was the one true God. This spectacular event didn't turn the people's hearts toward God, and Elijah was discouraged. In fact, the king's wife wanted him dead, so he ran for his life and hid inside of a cave. In today's passage, God called Elijah out of the cave to meet with Him. The ground shook, the wind blew, and fire appeared, but God wasn't in any of those elements, like we'd probably expect. Instead, God spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper. What does this moment tell you about God and the relationship He desires with His children? When we face a battle with the darkness of the world, God can and will show up to fight our battles with whatever force necessary. When He wants to speak with His children, He often seeks them through soft, quiet moments. Knowing this should change the way you look for Him to meet with you. Have you been quiet and still enough so that you can hear His voice? Or do you fill the silence with reels and ask God to speak over the noise?

- **HOW HAS GOD SPOKEN TO YOU IN THE PAST? DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH CREATING SPACE FOR SILENCE? WHY?**
- **WHAT ARE THE DISTRACTIONS YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO CLEAR BUT HAVEN'T? WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM MAKING ROOM AND SILENCING NOISE?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR THE QUIET MOMENTS. HELP ME TO HEAR YOUR WHISPER OVER THE NOISE. HELP ME TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT CLEARING THE NOISE.



DAY FOUR

PSALM 62:5-8

Have you ever had a conversation with a person you hardly knew? There's a good chance that the conversation wasn't a very fruitful one with deep trust, right? Friendship between two people grows as time goes on. You experience life together, have deeper conversations, and make deeper connections. The end result? You build trust because you both realize you can count on one another.

In this psalm, David proclaimed his absolute trust in God as his salvation, refuge, and strength to carry him through every season of life. David was able to make this proclamation because he experienced God's goodness in the darkest moments and in the best moments of his life. When he was lonely, overlooked, victorious, and pursued by enemies, David continued to be a man after God's own heart. When David was deep in sin, he experienced God's grace, mercy, and love for him. These experiences strengthened David's relationship with God. The same relationship and level of trust are available to you.

When you find yourself alone in the cafeteria, when other students are mean to you, when you ace the test, or when you drift into worldly behaviors, you can experience a deeper relationship with God if you seek Him—when you keep your mind and heart fixed on Him in every situation. David depended on God like a strong rock (v. 7), or a strong foundation on which he could stand. Try memorizing this verse! When you feel the pull of the world stealing your affection from God, you can quickly remind yourself that God is faithful, kind, and powerful. As you continue to look to God, you will trust Him more and more because His very character is to be faithful (2 Tim. 2:13).

- **HOW STRONG IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TODAY?**
- **HOW HAVE GOOD AND BAD SEASONS HELPED YOU TRUST GOD MORE?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE MY REFUGE AND STRENGTH. THANK YOU FOR BEING MY HEAVENLY FATHER.





DAY FIVE

MARK 6:30-32

You may need to hear this bold truth: If you are too busy to have time with God, then you are too busy. Stings a little, doesn't it? But it's true for all of us. Even with the best intentions of filling our time with service in our local church or group, we so easily forget the most important thing: a personal relationship with God. Sure, we know the things of this world distract us. But even good things can become distractions. You can serve on your student ministry team, attend a different Bible study every night of the week, and volunteer at the local homeless shelter once a month and still miss what God has for you. We read in today's passage that Jesus told the disciples to get away and rest with Him because their work for the kingdom was consuming their time. Our culture often teaches us to hustle and that slowing down is for the weak. But Jesus commanded rest because He knows we have limits and that we get tired. He is sufficient to refill us. Rest with Jesus is a precious gift. God's Word calls this type of rest *Sabbath*. Mark 2:27 says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This means that you do not need to earn your rest; Jesus has done the work and accomplished your freedom to rest.

Need some practical ways to rest with Jesus? Wake up a little early to spend time in the Word before you get into the world. Commit to one Bible study per week so that you can build solid community and have time in your schedule for extracurriculars and rest. Dedicate daily time to put away your phone and electronics, and reconnect with your family at home. Make room for rest, even when the world tells you to keep pushing. Rest is the way of Jesus, and you honor Him when you follow His example.

- **WHAT IS CURRENTLY FILLING YOUR SCHEDULE?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN INCORPORATE SABBATH INTO YOUR WEEKLY RHYTHM?**

PRAY

**THANK YOU, GOD, FOR THE GIFT OF REST. HELP ME
TO REST IN YOUR STRENGTH TODAY INSTEAD OF
STRIVING TO DO MORE.**