

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



I SAMUEL, *Chapters 1-19*
LUKE, *Chapters 19 & 14*

MARCH 7 - APRIL 4: **LARGE PRINT**

21

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	March 7, 2021	21

SAUL'S FEAR AND IMPATIENCE

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

1 SAMUEL 13:1-15

MARCH 7, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FEAR IS THE ENEMY OF FAITHFULNESS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHEN WE ARE FEARFUL OR THINGS DO NOT GO OUR WAY, WE OFTEN TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS INSTEAD OF WAITING ON GOD AND TRUSTING HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS DID NOT LET FEAR CONTROL HIM; INSTEAD, HE FAITHFULLY WAITED ON THE LORD SO THAT WE MIGHT BE SAVED (MATT. 26:42).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In each of the following pairs, which do you fear the most: snakes or heights, closed spaces or rejection, failure or spiders, public speaking or death?
- 2 How do you typically handle your fears (i.e. give in to them, power through, pray, etc.)?
- 3 Fear can steal our good judgment. Fear can steal our dreams. Fear can rob you of relationships. In your experience, what else can fear steal?

Saul was anointed by God to lead Israel as king. At first, Saul was reluctant (1 Sam. 10:22), but at his first test, God's Spirit came on him and he faithfully led Israel (1 Sam. 11). However, just two chapters later in 1 Samuel 13, we quickly see an opposite response as fear got in the way of Saul's faithfulness. His fear led to impatience, and his impatience led to disobedience and disaster.

In last week's session, we learned the importance of fearing the Lord (1 Sam. 12). In this week's session, we'll see what happens when we fear people or things more than we fear the Lord.

- 4 We all know what it's like to be fearful. How can you tell when you've let your fear of people or things become greater than your fear of the Lord?

UNDERSTANDING

> READ 1 SAMUEL 13:1-7.

- How did Saul respond to Jonathan's victory over the Philistines (vv. 3-4)?
- Why do you think Saul took credit for Jonathan's victory (v. 4)? Aside from the possibilities of wanting to rally the troops or instill confidence among the people, what other possibilities are there for Saul's response here?
- Recall Saul's behavior when being named king in 1 Samuel 10:22. Which response do you think is probably a truer reflection of who Saul was—reluctant and insecure or eager and self-confident? Why?

Saul summoned his army to meet at Gilgal—the very place where he had been crowned king of Israel. As news of the size and power of the Philistine army spread, so did Saul's grip on the Hebrew soldiers in his charge.

- Even today, world leaders typically seek to exude confidence to encourage the people. Why didn't Saul's response to the circumstances translate to a rock-steady confidence among the people?
- Compare Saul and Jonathan's forces (v. 2) with that of the Philistine forces that had gathered at Michmash (v. 5). How did this imbalance affect the men in Saul's army (vv. 6-7)?

- What does the Israelites' response to this disparity in numbers tell you about them?
- How might Saul have led the people to fear the Lord more than they feared the Philistines in this crucial moment?

Both Saul and the Israelites were unhealthily focused on themselves. While Saul was puffed up with pride, the Israelites were petrified with self-doubt as they “hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns” (v. 6). Both Saul and the Israelites looked to themselves rather than to the Lord, who had blessed them and promised to fight for them.

- Who is someone you know who is faithful even in the face of fear? Why do you think that person responds to the circumstances of life that way?
- What is the difference between self-confidence and God-confidence? What are some steps you can take to develop the latter?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 13:8-15.

- What evidence is there in verse 8 that Saul and his men were placing their level of confidence or fear in circumstances?
- How does this help explain why God would have allowed Samuel to show up later than expected?

Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days at Gilgal, at which time he would come and give him instructions (10:8). But Saul and his troops were in trouble. The situation was so serious that Saul's troops began to desert him.

- How did Saul respond to the news that Israelite soldiers were deserting in fear? How should Saul have responded instead?

In his fear and impatience, Saul offered the burnt offering himself—a task Samuel should have done as high priest. This might have seemed like a good idea, but it was actually a faithless violation of God's commands. Years later, King Uzziah also usurped priestly duties and received God's judgment (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

- It's clear from Saul's behavior on day eight that his faithfulness was based on an "if . . . then." If Samuel showed up in seven days, then Saul would follow the Lord's directions. Why is an attitude of "if . . . then" often a wrong response to fear?
- What would you have felt if you were in Saul's shoes? What would you have done?

Throughout Scripture, we find the importance of waiting on the Lord. Our culture of instant gratification does not value patience. Because of this, we are often tempted to take matters into our own hands when things do not go our way. This is exactly what Saul did when faced with the prospect of going to war against a fierce army, and the results of his impatience were disastrous. Saul's example teaches us that impatience is rooted in prideful self-reliance, but patiently waiting on the Lord strengthens our faith.

- Where was Saul's focus when he went ahead with giving up burnt offerings and sacrifices on his own?

- What did Saul's fear and rash decision say about his relationship with God?
- What do pride, impatience, and disobedience say about our relationship with the Lord?

Saul's focus was not on the Lord, but on the present circumstances of his life. Instead of responding to the Israelite's desertion by patiently trusting the Lord, Saul fell prey to his own pride and offered sacrifices he was not authorized to make.

- How does Samuel's response strike you: unforgiving, unreasonable, reactionary, necessary, other?
- Do believers today hold each other accountable to patiently wait for the Lord and demonstrate humility, or are we more apt to make excuses and "live and let live"? Why?
- How did God respond to Saul's impatience (vv. 13-14)? What does this tell us about God?
- Does it seem to you that God was looking for someone who was perfect and sinless? Why did this one sin effectively ruin Saul's anointing as God's leader?
- What does God's response to Saul's impatient actions tell us about the importance of addressing and combating the impatience in our hearts?

APPLICATION

- Is there any place in your life where God is pushing you to obey Him? Are you willing to commit yourself to faithfully say “yes”?
- What fears tend to rob you of the joy of saying “yes” to the Lord?
- How would your life look differently this week if you were to fear disobedience more than any other thing?

PRAY

Thank God that He brings beautiful things out of desperate situations. Invite Him to show you where your fears get in the way of fullness in relationship to Him and to give you the courage to choose faithfulness.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	MARCH 14	21

THE LORD REJECTS SAUL AS KING

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

1 SAMUEL 15:1-35

MARCH 14, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JUDGMENT AWAITS THOSE WHO REJECT GOD'S INSTRUCTION.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE ARE OFTEN TEMPTED TO COMPROMISE AND ONLY PARTIALLY OBEY GOD.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: BECAUSE JESUS TOOK OUR JUDGMENT ON HIMSELF AT THE CROSS, GOD FORGIVES OUR SINS AND PURIFIES US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (1 JOHN 1:9).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Present the following scenarios and allow time for discussion: **1)** You receive an unexpected bonus at work. It's a gift from the company. Are you most likely to tithe 10 percent, give charitably to someone or a good cause but give less than 10 percent, or give nothing to the church or charity? **2)** You become aware of a person in a difficult situation. Are you most likely to personally help them, find someone else who can help them, or ignore them after you pray for them?

- 2 Which is easier to justify in our minds: partially disobedient actions or totally disobedient actions? Why is that?

- 3 When God seeks someone to fulfill a task or role, what qualities does He desire?

When the Lord God seeks a man or a woman for a particular task or role, He looks for someone who will obey Him. While other qualities can be spiritually valuable, they become meaningless if the person in question doesn't take God at His word and obey Him. King Saul possessed some admirable qualities for leadership, such as discernment (1 Sam. 14:19) and courage (14:36). But at key moments, Saul failed the greatest test of a spiritual leader—the commitment to obey God. Just as Saul ascended quickly to the throne, he also descended quickly because of his disobedient actions.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ 1 SAMUEL 15:1-9,13-15.

- How clear were God's instructions to Saul through Samuel?

Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12). His descendants were the first people to attack the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt (Ex. 17:8), even before the receiving of the Ten Commandments. God had determined at the time to "blot out the memory of Amalek under heaven" (v. 14; see also Num. 24:20). He decided this was the appropriate time to make good on His word to Moses, and King Saul was the appropriate instrument to use.

- What did King Saul do right in these verses? What did he do wrong?
- Why do you think Saul felt justified, even faithful to God, in what he did?

After King Saul received the instructions to destroy the Amalekites, he gathered his troops (apparently without delay or hesitation) and set about his task (vv. 4-6). The region "from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is next to Egypt" represents a very sizeable geographic area. It was much more extensive than merely an attack on a single city and likely took days, if not weeks, to accomplish. Even so, the campaign was successful as Saul and his army "completely destroyed all the rest of the people with the sword"—all except Agag, their king . . . and the best animals . . . "and the best of everything else." But other than that, he had pretty much done what he'd been told. And the goods that remained had been spared "in order to offer a sacrifice to the LORD." Sounds pretty noble, doesn't it? Because of his fear of the people (v. 24), Saul surrendered what God wanted for what the people wanted.

- What makes settling for partial obedience so tempting? In what ways could a believer exclude the "best" from his or her obedience to God?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 15:10-12,16-21.

- Why did the Lord regret He made Saul king?
- In your estimation, does it seem like God is overreacting here? What's the big deal if Saul didn't completely destroy the Amalekites and everything they had?
- What lessons should we draw from Saul's example and God's and Samuel's reactions?

Israel was God's people, not Saul's. It was important for Saul to listen and obey all of God's instructions. Saul did not do this. He spared Agag and the best of everything else. Destroying all the worthless and unwanted things was no great sacrifice, no act of trust. Saul was God's chosen leader, but Saul's pattern of disobedience showed he was not the man God needed and required him to be.

- When Samuel initially confronted Saul about his disobedience, what was Saul's perspective (vv. 20-21)? What does this tell you about Saul's heart?
- What makes confronting someone about his or her disobedience a challenge? What risks are involved when confronting someone? What risks are involved when we don't confront someone?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 15:22-35.

- How would you state the principle of verse 22 in your own words? What relevance is there in this principle to our day and culture? Explain.

Samuel was quite clear with Saul—there is no sacrifice we can offer God that outweighs or substitutes our obedience to Him. We have no skill, ability, or resource that God needs. Why, then, would we ever think that offering Him that which He doesn't need could in any way make up for withholding from Him that which He wants—our obedience?

- How does accepting partial obedience or religious practice as a substitute for full obedience show disrespect for God?
- Once Saul acknowledged his sin, what reason did he give (v. 24)?
- What was the consequence for Saul's actions (vv. 26-29)?

In response to Samuel's confrontation, Saul confessed his sin twice (vv. 24,30), but we have no evidence that he repented of the sin. The remainder of the biblical account of Saul shows him either being ineffective or attempting to kill David, his God-anointed successor. Had he repented, the Bible is clear that God offers forgiveness and cleansing (Isa. 1:18; Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9).

- What are some common consequences believers face today for only giving partial obedience to God?

Good intentions never cancel out disobedience. And the good intentions with which we excuse disobedience are often fraudulent. We disobey because of something we want, and then we try to salve our consciences with some religious act, such as giving something to the church. God is not fooled. His judgment is certain, even if delayed. The only preparation for divine judgment is to believe and obey Jesus Christ and His gospel.

APPLICATION

- What are some common situations or circumstances in which believers are tempted to compromise and only partially obey God?
- Why do many believers tend to think it's not a big deal to cut some corners in obedience to God? In your own words, why is it a big deal?
- What are some ways you can choose to fully obey God? How can this group help you in that?

PRAY

Thank God for His love, forgiveness, and patience, though we often think we can improve on His plan or placate Him with sacrifices rather than obedience. Ask Him to teach you to follow Him in full obedience.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	March 21	21

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

MARCH 21, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD DESIRES PEOPLE WHO SEEK TO FOLLOW HIM WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE OFTEN FALL INTO THE TRAP OF THINKING THAT GOD CHOOSES PEOPLE FOR HIS SERVICE BASED ON THEIR STRENGTH, INTELLIGENCE, AND ABILITIES.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: "HE DIDN'T HAVE AN IMPRESSIVE FORM OR MAJESTY THAT WE SHOULD LOOK AT HIM, NO APPEARANCE THAT WE SHOULD DESIRE HIM." –ISAIAH 53:2

INTRODUCTION

- 1 When you meet a person, what qualities make a good first impression? What qualities make a bad first impression?
- 2 Have you ever been wrong about a first impression? Have you met someone whose good or bad first impression ended up not being at all how you knew them going forward?
- 3 Why are we often impressed by other people's surface qualities, like looks, social status, and power? Why is this unhealthy?

Research indicates that there is a correlation between a person's height and the salary he or she earns. This is particularly true in occupations where the perception of others is crucial, such as sales and management. It is also documented that height is seen as a social asset and perceived as indicative of a person's competence. Of course, no research suggests that taller people actually fulfill these perceptions. It is merely indicative of the way we often judge people based on external traits.

Today, we'll be looking at God's qualifications for a leader, which are quite different from our human qualifications.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ 1 SAMUEL 16:1-3.

- What was Samuel mourning at the start of this passage?
- Why and when did God reject Saul? Read 1 Samuel 13:8-14 and 15:10-11 to aid in your discussion.

By the time we get to 1 Samuel 16, it is not clear how many years had passed since Saul was anointed as king. It was a fairly extensive period, and it may have been decades. This is important because we can see that a major change had come about in Saul's life in the intervening years. When first told that he would become king, he protested that he was unworthy (9:21). When his supporters wanted to kill some men who had opposed the choice of Saul as king, he spared his opponents (11:12-13). But years of ruling had turned Saul into a different man. He became so entrenched in his position that Samuel feared that Saul would kill him in order to hold on to his throne (16:2).

Our story begins in a politically tense situation. The once humble Saul is now determined to hold on to power, and he knows that Samuel no longer supports him (1 Sam. 15:28). God has commissioned Samuel to anoint a new king. Samuel, being as fallible as any other man, needs God's guidance in making his choice of whom to anoint.

- What does this conversation between Samuel and God teach you about their relationship?
- God is sovereign. He has power and authority over everything and everyone in the world, and we can trust Him even as we express to Him our fears about the roles and responsibilities He gives us. In what aspect of your life do you most need that reminder right now?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 16:4-10.

Samuel showed up unexpectedly at the town of Bethlehem. This alarmed the townspeople, who felt that his arrival could only mean something bad. Prophets so often brought bad news with them—messages of doom and judgment—and people preferred not to see them at all. When Elijah turned up at the court of Ahab, he received the greeting, “Is that you, you destroyer of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17).

- In what ways does pursuing the call of God upon one's life bring isolation from others? What are the risks and rewards of such a pursuit?
- How might the people's response to Samuel have contributed to him initially thinking (or hoping) Eliab was the Lord's anointed? What was the irony here (see 10:23-24)?

Eliab evidently had the physical features of a star actor or athlete, looking every bit the part of a potential king. As Jesse's oldest son stood before him, Samuel must have compared him with the tall and impressive Saul (1 Sam. 10:23-24). Our culture also evaluates people by their appearance, social status, and other superficial traits. Nevertheless, people do not see what God sees.

- How many of Jesse's sons did Samuel examine as the potential king? Why do you think God didn't tell Samuel ahead of time which son would be anointed king?
- What does verse 7 suggest about the qualities God counts as most important for His servants? What would you consider qualities of the heart that are necessary for serving God?

Appearances are only hints at the true character, intelligence, grace, and virtue of a person. They can be misleading. God sees directly into the heart. He has no need to use the outside as an indicator of what may be on the inside, because the inside is fully exposed to Him.

- What dangers lie in assuming that certain individuals are suited for leadership based on appearance or a generalization?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 16:11-13.

- What characteristic would seem to hinder David from being anointed as king (v. 11)?
- What did David's faithfulness in watching the sheep say about his character? How did this prepare him for the future (see 1 Sam. 17:34-37; Ps. 23)?

Tending sheep helped prepare David to rule Israel. "Shepherd" would become a symbolic job description for king. God intended for the king to care for the people with the same compassion that a shepherd gives to his flock. Furthermore, David's encounters with predators developed skills that later became useful in combat.

- What was the real secret of David's power that enabled him to accomplish God's work (v. 13)?

Immediately after Samuel anointed David and the Spirit came upon him, the Spirit abandoned Saul (see 1 Sam. 16:14). Later, however, Saul prophesied again by the power of the Spirit (19:23). David, after his sin involving Bathsheba, was fearful that God would take away His Spirit (Ps. 51:11). Thus, it appears that the Spirit could come and go in the lives of kings.

In the New Testament, the Spirit dwells within believers primarily for their sanctification (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 5:22). Even the gifts of the Spirit are primarily for the edification of the church, and they were given to all rather than to a select few (1 Cor. 12:8-13). Paul indicated that believers can grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), but he does not say that the Spirit might abandon us.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is it for a leader to be sensitive and responsive to the Holy Spirit? Would you consider their willingness to follow Him as a requirement for being an effective leader? Explain.
- David was not the king the people expected. How was Jesus also an unexpected king?

Samuel anointed David in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:4). Not only would Bethlehem be important for God's people in Samuel's day but also in days to come. The prophet Micah would point to Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Promised Messiah. Centuries later, that prophecy was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Anointed One (John 1:41) who is our perfect King (Matt. 2:1-6).

If we work hard enough, we might one day achieve the sort of character modeled by David. And in doing that, we could be known as someone after God's heart. The perfect character of Christ, though, cannot be achieved—only received. Because Jesus lived a life of perfect character and died as a perfect sacrifice, we can have, in the eyes of God, the exact character of Christ. Then when God looks on the heart, He doesn't see some half-formed virtues; He sees Jesus.

APPLICATION

- What are some signs a person is spending more time on external or superficial attributes than on applying the gospel to inner character?
- What are some steps we can take to spend more time on growing an inner character of godliness than we do on being appealing to others?
- What are some practical ways we can encourage one another to move beyond the surface and shallow to pursue the depth of the character of Christ?
- How can we encourage our pastors as they seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the church?

PRAY

Thank God for the perfect King, Jesus. Thank Him for the leaders He has given His Church and ask His Spirit to lead them even now. Pray that you would pursue godly character and would point others toward Christ as David's life did.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
	MARCH 28	21

PALM SUNDAY

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

LUKE 19:28-44

MARCH 28, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: THIS PASSAGE FROM LUKE 19 IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY. AT THIS TIME IN HIS MINISTRY, JESUS ENTERED THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, WHICH MEANT THE CROSS WAS NEAR.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: FROM THIS SCENE IN JESUS' MINISTRY, WE ARE REMINDED THAT JESUS IS THE ETERNAL KING, THE PROMISED MESSIAH, WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: CHRIST IS THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB THAT TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD. JUST AS CHRIST RODE HUMBLY INTO JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY, CHRIST CAME HUMBLY TO LIVE AMONG HIS OWN CREATION.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Who do you think is the most well-known person to ever come out of our community? What would it be like if that person showed up in the community one day?
- 2 How does Jesus compare in power, fame, and prestige to any celebrity or hero we could think of today? By worldly standards and expectations, how should His grand entrance into Jerusalem have compared as a result?

By the very nature of Jesus' triumphal entry, choosing to arrive on a humble donkey, rather than a powerful warhorse, Jesus fulfilled prophecies, but even more importantly, He revealed the nature of His mission. He came to save—not by usurping power or bringing with Him a military coup, but by surrendering power and embracing His own death. Jesus' unmatched power triumphed through weakness, and ours will do the same when we take up our cross and follow Him. As we humble ourselves, repent, and admit our need for a Savior, we embrace the humility needed to identify with Christ, share in His sufferings and follow Him with our very lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He often warned people not to tell others about the miracles they saw Him perform. Those who were impacted by His miracles made claims about who Jesus was, which put pressure on the religious leaders in and around Jerusalem to persecute and ultimately kill Him. As a result, by instructing others to tell no one what they had seen, Jesus was prolonging His ministry on earth because He still had things to do before fulfilling the Father's will. However, on the day He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, all was out in the open—there was nothing left to hide.

> READ LUKE 19:28-35.

- Each of the four Gospels includes this story of the Triumphal Entry, which helps us understand its significance in Jesus' earthly ministry. Read the parallel accounts in Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; and John 12:12-19. What additional information do you learn about this event from the other Gospels?
- What stands out to you from this familiar event in the Gospels? Did you pick up on anything you hadn't noticed before?
- The most familiar detail of this story is that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey. What statement did Jesus make by doing this?
- What did it reveal about His love? About His nature and purpose on earth?

Approaching Jerusalem, Jesus passed through two small villages east of the Holy City on the Mount of Olives. He sent two of His disciples on a mission: "Find a donkey that has never been ridden before and bring it to me. If you face questions, just say, 'The Lord needs it.'" Jesus acted in a regal manner, but He commandeered a lowly animal.

- Take a minute to read Zechariah 9:9. In what way did Jesus fulfill this Old Testament prophecy in today's passage?

Events occurred just as Jesus described. So the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus, threw their robes on it as a saddle, and sat Jesus on it. Zechariah 9:9 used poetic parallelism to describe the Messianic King riding on a donkey to bring salvation to His people. His coming would break all instruments of war and bring peace to the city of peace.

> READ LUKE 19:36-40.

- How did this entry compare with those of conquering military heroes?
- How did these military heroes achieve their victories? How would Jesus achieve His?
- What did the people indicate about their own view of and response to Jesus by laying down their coats and waving palms or branches along His path?
- What does the crowd affirm about Jesus in verse 38?
- What can we do in our own lives to “prepare the way for the Lord” (Is. 40:3)?

The disciples spread their robes on the street, signifying a royal procession. The crowd of disciples, indicating a group beyond the Twelve, joined the procession, praising God for all the miraculous signs Jesus had given—signs that Luke had been describing throughout his entire Gospel. They praised Jesus as King, citing Psalm 118:26. Finally, Jesus’ glory was openly recognized. He was more than the baby born in Nazareth or a Galilean rabbi. He was more than a miracle worker. He was a royal figure entering the royal city down the royal road. He came as God’s representative, God’s chosen king, and He showed that the hopes of Israel were being fulfilled.

- How did the Pharisees’ response contrast with the response of the crowd (v. 39)? What was so ironic about this?
- What is significant about Jesus’ response to the Pharisees?

This was too much for the Pharisees. They came to crucify Jesus, not to praise Him. They asked Jesus to silence the blasphemous disciples. Jesus, however, pointed out that this was the moment God ordained for Him to receive praise. If human voices had remained silent, nature itself would have shouted His praise. The Pharisees did not understand the nature of the very God they spent so much time talking about. In this parable, they were evil servants. But the King had come. They saw only a false teacher on a donkey. But for those who truly see the King, praise is the instinctive response.

> READ LUKE 19:41-44.

- What stands out to you from Jesus' disposition and comments in verses 41-44?
- What reason (or reasons) did Jesus have to weep over this city and its inhabitants?

Luke had begun the Jerusalem story (19:28), but he had not yet let Jesus reach Jerusalem. The recognition and praise of the Messiah came from disciples outside the city, not from the religious crowds or religious power brokers within it. Jesus knew that the city of Jerusalem and its power structure—both Jewish and Roman—would reject Him. They would take Him to the cross. So He wept, not for His immediate fate, but for the stubborn, sinful blindness of the city. The city God loves had no love for Him.

- What do these verses remind us about Jesus' mission? What about God's character?
- Why should Jesus' words here motivate us to share the gospel?

Jesus came with peace from heaven. God had visited His people as He had promised. The Messiah had come to seek and to save the lost, but many people Jesus encountered along the way refused to recognize they were lost. They refused to see God's glory in Jesus, or to give God glory for sending Jesus. Their beloved temple and all the glorious architecture of Jerusalem would fall—not one stone attached to another, no hope for rebuilding and renewal.

These verses serve as a reminder to us that a time will come when it will be too late to turn to God in repentance, and God's judgment will be final. We don't know when that day will come, which means that sharing the gospel should be at the forefront of our minds every single day.

APPLICATION

- Jesus' love was the motivation for His entry into Jerusalem and everything that awaited Him there. What should that love motivate us to do when it comes to publicly acknowledging Jesus—both individually and corporately at First Woodway? How will this define the way we love other people?
- Unlike the people of Jerusalem who missed their chance to believe in Jesus, we still have the opportunity to do so. Have you fully surrendered your life to Him?
- If so, do you live in a way that makes this evident to those around you? What are some of the things that hinder you from trusting Jesus on a day-to-day basis?

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God for making Jesus known to us. Give your group members the opportunity to voice their own prayers of praise to God for who He is and what He has done for us.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Easter Sunday</i>
	April 4	21

EASTER

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

LUKE 24:13-35

APRIL 4, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS DREW NEAR TO HIS DISCIPLES AND REVEALED HIS IDENTITY TO THEM.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS DRAWS NEAR AND INVITES US TO EXPERIENCE HIS LORDSHIP.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS OPENED THESE TWO DISCIPLES' EYES AND SHOWED THEM, FROM THE SCRIPTURES, WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HE CAME TO ACCOMPLISH.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Name one thing in day-to-day life that utterly confuses you (for example: how the Internet works, how to figure out what's wrong with your car, how to master a certain recipe, or why your kids refuse to listen).
- 2 Now think about Christianity. What questions or doubts have you heard people express about Jesus or His resurrection? From where do these questions most often come?

Any number of things in life can be a source of confusion for us, and these things either leave us frustrated with a desire to quit, to doubt, to be curious, or to learn more. Christianity raises many questions in people's minds, and it is not uncommon to have conversations with people who are confused about who Jesus is. Jesus' encounter with the two men on the road to Emmaus helps us see that when we study Scripture, we learn who Jesus is. However, we don't go to the Scriptures to know more about Jesus, but to know Jesus Himself.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ LUKE 24:13-24.

It's astounding that on the very morning of the resurrection, Jesus intentionally sought out two men on the road as they walked to Emmaus. The fact that the two men were arguing indicates there was no agreement about what had occurred. Even Peter, who had run to the tomb and had seen that it was empty, remained skeptical (Luke 24:15). Jesus listened, asked questions, and engaged them in conversation as they walked together.

- As the disciples walked to Emmaus, they "talked and discussed" the events of the past few days (v. 15). What do you suppose they were talking about?

- These disciples said they were “hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel” (v. 21). What do you think they meant by this?
- What caused them to doubt? Why would it have been difficult for followers of Jesus to grasp His true mission?

The two travelers acknowledged Jesus as a prophet. His disciples, however, expected more. Like other Jews of the day, they wanted a Messiah who would exert authority in the political realm. The death of Jesus appeared to vanquish that hope for them and caused them to doubt. At this point, the disciples still misunderstood Jesus’ purpose. They knew about Jesus, but had missed crucial pieces of Jesus’ identity. Jesus offered freedom for people enslaved by sin. This deliverance trumped any temporary military victory, but the disciples had yet to fully grasp this.

- Verse 15 says, “Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them.” What does this tell us about the pursuing heart of Christ and His longing to reveal Himself to us?
- In what ways did Jesus engage the two men on their walk?
- Why do some people find it hard to accept Jesus’ resurrection as fact? Should these people at least be willing to consider it a possibility? Explain.

These disciples heard the report of an empty tomb, but they struggled to understand what that meant, especially without a body. The tomb without Jesus’ body only left these disciples feeling more confused. Like many people today, the disciples were confused and disappointed because they didn’t have all the facts; they had an incomplete grasp of Jesus’ mission.

- What did Cleopas ask Jesus in verse 18? What does his question tell us about the atmosphere in Jerusalem?
- As the men began to describe their understanding of the events that had taken place, what did they say they had hoped for in verse 21?
- Did the men grasp what had taken place? Explain.

The way the men described Jesus showed they lacked understanding of Christ's real identity and what had transpired in the previous day's events. While they referred to Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, and that He was a prophet and miracle worker, there was no mention that He was the Son of God. There was also no mention of the unjust nature of Jesus' betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. Clearly, the disciples had not grasped Jesus' identity, nor had they understood the reason and necessity of His death.

> READ LUKE 24:25-27.

- Why did Jesus rebuke the two men?
- How did Jesus open their eyes to His mission?

To help these men understand who He is and why He came, Jesus used Scripture beginning with Moses and the Prophets to paint a more complete picture of His redemptive purposes. Presumably, He recalled sections from the Old Testament that supported His premise. Luke does not indicate which specific passages Jesus used. Jesus drew these two disciples back to the Bible's message about the Messiah. After citing references, Jesus interpreted for them the things concerning Himself. He used the Old Testament to remind them that glory follows

suffering. The whole of the Old Testament points to God's working out His salvation purpose that culminated with Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

- What difference does it make if we recognize that many Old Testament verses refer to the ministry and mission of Jesus the Messiah?

We do not need to speculate about matters that have been clearly answered in Scripture. The Bible answers many of the questions people have about Jesus, His identity, and His mission, and the Bible helps us know Jesus more intimately.

> READ LUKE 24:30-35.

- What feelings did the disciples experience while Jesus explained the Scriptures (v. 32)?
- Have you experienced a time when your eyes were opened to the truth of who Jesus is and you were freed from doubt? If so, what brought you to that point? How has your life been different since then?

God is calling us to move beyond knowing facts about Jesus to a place of believing and trusting Him as Savior and Lord. God still uses the proclamation and study of His Word to bring clarity to Jesus' identity.

The men's encounter with Jesus and understanding of His identity transformed their slow hearts into hearts that were ablaze for Him. That's the difference between religion and having an intimate relationship with the Lord. As a result of encounter with Jesus, the men went immediately and returned to Jerusalem to tell the 11 apostles who they had seen and what they had been told.

APPLICATION

- How have you overcome confusion and doubt in your own walk with Christ?
- This group should be a place where we can safely express our doubts and find guidance and confidence. Do you feel like it is? What are some adjustments we can make to move in that direction?
- Who do you know that is wrestling with Jesus and maybe even some doubts right now? How could you show them Jesus as He is in the Scriptures?

PRAY

Praise God for showing Himself to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. Thank Him that we can turn to Him when we have doubts and find hope and comfort.