

F O L L O W





Copyright © 2024 The City Bible Center Church, dba Bible Center Church, Charleston, WV

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, apart from educational exceptions allowed by law or by written agreement with the copyright owner.

For permissions requests, write to the Director of Communications at the address below.

Bible Center Church
100 Bible Center Dr.
Charleston, WV 25309
BibleCenterChurch.com

PREFACE

Jesus said, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fish for people.*” These simple words, spoken to a few ordinary people caught up in the day to day of their own lives, would ultimately launch a movement that would revolutionize the way humans interact with God. Step by step, as these original disciples followed after Jesus, they were changed, molded, and sent to carry the mission of Christ to this world. In the same way, Jesus now asks us to follow Him—in the **way** that He loves, standing on the **truth** that He demonstrated—so that we, too, may experience the **life** that He promises.

As we launch *A Year of Transformation*, we open our hands and our hearts to what God may have for us, both individually and collectively, as we step forward into the next page of His story for Bible Center.

Mark 1:16-20; John 14:1-7

VISION SUNDAY

Interact With the Text

- Underline what we learn about Jesus.**
- Circle Jesus' plan.**

The Gospel of Mark:

¹⁶As He passed alongside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷"Follow Me," Jesus told them, "and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

¹⁹Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat putting their nets in order. ²⁰Immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him.

The Gospel of John:

¹"Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. ⁴You know the way to where I am going."

⁵"Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

⁷If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus selects very ordinary people to change the world. How does Jesus describe the process He will take them through on this journey (Mark 1:17)?
2. What would have happened if they did not put down their nets?
3. What are the metaphorical nets that we hold onto now instead of fully following Jesus?
4. What kind of changes are they going to experience?
5. Jesus calls them to follow Him. In John 14:6, He gives a powerful description of Himself. What sticks out to you about this description?

The theme for the year is: ***A Year of Transformation***. The theme is deeply connected to Jesus' call to His first disciples. Jesus makes us fishers of people. It is the work of Jesus that transforms us. In this journey, the disciples were called to put down their nets and follow. One day in the future, Jesus calls them to pick up their cross and help make disciples of all nations. Each of us is called to take steps of growth along this journey.

This year at Bible Center, you will hear us say over and over:

We GROW!

Take your next step...

We grow by incorporating value-based* HABITS into our lives. Our **Next Steps Team** is ready each Sunday morning to help you process and take your next step of spiritual growth.

Have a Group
Attend Regularly
Be in the Bible
Invest Faithfully
Talk to God
Share Your Faith

***Our Values**

- Valuing the Past, Shaping the Future
- The Gospel is Central
- We Gather
- Humble Learners
- Generosity is Normal
- God Can
- We Love Our Neighbors
- #ForCountryRoads

For more info, go to BibleCenterChurch.com/about/values.

A LOVE SENT TO US

Interact With the Text

- Underline every time Jesus says "believe."**
- Circle every description of Jesus.**

¹There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him."

³Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴"How can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

⁵Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. ⁸The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹"How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus.

¹⁰"Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?" Jesus replied. ¹¹"Truly I tell you, we speak what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven—the Son of Man.

¹⁴"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, ¹⁵so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. ¹⁸Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was Nicodemus? Why do you think he visited Jesus at night?
2. Jesus teaches this teacher of Israel about the **centrality of the Gospel**. What does it mean to be born again? What role does the Spirit play?
3. What do we learn about the Father's plan and His love in this passage?
4. How do we "lift up" Jesus in our personal lives?
5. According to the text, what must one do to be saved? Have you been saved?

A LOVE SURPRISING IN SCOPE

God's love and His message of salvation are available to everyone. Our past failures and our present circumstances don't get in the way of the access to God which we receive through Jesus. He loves those who are considered unlovable and those who think they can make it on their own. It's the great leveling of humanity; we are all reached by God's love to us through Jesus.

Interact With the Text

Underline everything you learn about Matthew.

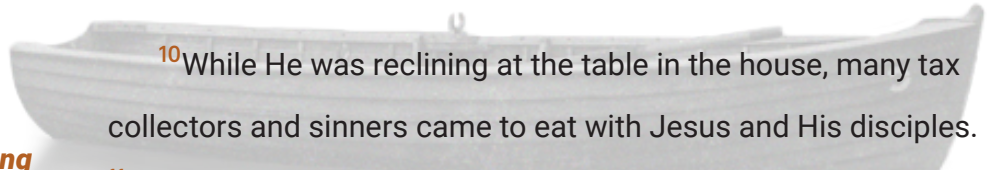
Circle the descriptions of those hanging out with Jesus.

⁹As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me," and he got up and followed Him.

¹⁰While He was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and His disciples.

¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹²Now when He heard this, He said, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus summarize His mission? How does He accomplish His mission in the way He chooses to spend His time?
2. Why did the Pharisees question Jesus' company? Should we expect those who do not know Jesus to live like Jesus?
3. At one time, all of us were "the sinners, the tax collectors, and the sick." How can we better use our time to love those who need to meet Jesus? Do we learn anything from Matthew's actions?
4. Our lives are an extension of Jesus' ministry. We are called to love our neighbors through our actions and our words. Our neighbors include anyone and everyone in our lives and communities (Luke 10:30-37). Is it a good thing or a bad thing if someone questions the company you keep?
5. How can we live more like Jesus (and Matthew) and less like the Pharisees? Are there any people in your life that you should invite over for dinner?

A LOVE SACRIFICIAL IN EXPRESSION

Interact With the Text

- Underline everything written about Judas.**
- Put a box around the "new command."**

²¹When Jesus had said this, He was troubled in His spirit and testified, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me."

²²The disciples started looking at one another—uncertain which one He was speaking about. ²³One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was He was talking about. ²⁵So he leaned back

against Jesus and asked Him, "Lord, who is it?"

²⁶Jesus replied, "He's the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it." When He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. ²⁷After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. So Jesus told him, "What you're doing, do quickly."

²⁸None of those reclining at the table knew why He said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival," or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night.

³¹When he had left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³²If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

³⁴"I give you a new command: Love [agape] one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

There are several Greek words in the New Testament which translate as “love” in English. Jesus is the ultimate example of *agape* love. *Agape* is the Greek word for love which emphasizes the willingness to self-sacrifice for the good of another. In this passage, *agape* becomes the new Christian standard.

1. What do we learn about Judas?

2. Who will receive glory? How?

3. Jesus gives a “new command.” Previously, we were called to love one another as we love ourselves. But now we are called to love one another **as Jesus loved** us. In what way is this a new command? How have the expectations changed?

4. Jesus gives this command after being betrayed by one of His disciples. Jesus would have felt the pain and disappointment of this betrayal. In a few hours, all of His disciples would flee and abandon Him (Matthew 25:56). Even in those moments, Jesus prepares to lay down His life.

We should love others, **not** based upon how they treat us, but **based upon how Jesus** has loved us. How does Jesus demonstrate **agape** love even in these moments of betrayal?

5. Jesus’ love and example should create incredible joy, thankfulness, and **generosity** in the Christian. In response, our lives should look like **agape** in motion (13:34-35). How can you **invest faithfully** to love others more like Jesus does?

A LESSON IN LIFE AND POWER

Interact With the Text

- Underline the things that are true of Christ.*
- Put brackets around the actions of Jesus.*

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was happening throughout eternity before creation?
2. How does this passage prove the deity of Christ?
3. If you were to get into a discussion with particular cults that use the Bible to argue against the deity of Christ, they would inappropriately insist on inserting an “a” (i.e. “and the Word was a God”). This article is not found in the Greek text and should not be implied. It is only added with bias and an intent to attack the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Yet “all things were created through Him” which indicates that Jesus is not a created being, but rather the eternal and all-powerful Creator of **all** things!
4. Every atom, every galaxy, and every person was created by Jesus, which means Jesus is not a created being—He is God!

Jesus is the center of everything, we sit at His feet as **humble learners**. How should our lives reflect His value, authority, and preeminence?

5. What does “the darkness” mean in this passage?
6. How does this passage motivate us to **be in the Bible**? What are ways we can increase the daily priority of the Word in your life?

A LESSON IN LAW AND GRACE

Interact With the Text

- Circle everything about grace.**
- Box everything about the law.**

¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified concerning Him and exclaimed, “This was the One of whom I said, ‘The One coming after me ranks ahead of me, because He existed before me.’”) ¹⁶Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from His fullness, ¹⁷for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The One and only Son, who is Himself God and is at the Father’s side—He has revealed Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Earlier in this chapter, John emphasized the deity of Christ. What is his emphasis at the beginning of this section? Why must Jesus be both?
2. Jesus is “full of grace and truth.” Jesus—in His nature, in His relationships, in His interactions, and in every area of His life—provides the perfect balance of grace and truth.

Give some examples of how Jesus displays truth and grace in His interactions and conversations (like Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the Pharisees, etc.).
3. Can you think of any examples (conversations or situations) of imbalanced grace and truth? How does an imbalance fall short of reflecting Jesus and the Gospel?
4. Often, individuals and churches will lean more toward truth or more toward grace. How does a church maintain a fullness of grace **and** truth?
5. The way **we love our neighbors** is often seen in the grace and truth we offer through our words and actions. What are some ways we can do a better job living out and expressing grace and truth with those in our lives who are not yet Christians?

A LIFE FREE OF WORRY

Interact With the Text

- Circle every time it says "Don't worry."**
- Underline the reasons as to why we don't need to worry.**

²⁵"Therefore I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? ²⁷Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don't labor or spin thread. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. ³⁰If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? ³¹So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. ³⁴Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus commands us three times not to worry. In verses 26 and 28, we are commanded to “consider” and “observe.” Summarize the reason we shouldn’t worry based upon verses 25-30.

2. The second time we are commanded to not worry (v. 31), it is connected to what we seek. How do the motivations of our hearts contribute to or detract from our worry?

3. How do we know if we are seeking first the kingdom of God?

4. God promises that “these things will be provided for you” (v. 33). It is critical that we believe **God can**—that is **God can** see our needs, meet our needs, and provide for the longings of our hearts.

How do we incorporate **talking to God** with seeking first His kingdom? How does prayer move us from fear to faith?

5. When we recognize God as our provider, **generosity is normal**. We move from aggressive self-provision to humble dependence, we move from the fear of tomorrow to faithfulness today. Based upon what Jesus has taught us in this passage, what are your next steps (perspectives, actions, prayers...) to reduce your worry and anxiety in life?

A LIFE FILLED WITH PRESENCE

Interact With the Text

- Underline what you learn about the Shepherd.***
- Bracket what you learn about the sheep.***
- Put parentheses around everything you learn about the relationship between the Father and Son.***

¹“Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t know the voice of strangers.” ⁶Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what He was telling them.

⁷Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. ¹³This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd. I know My own, and My own know Me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one Shepherd. ¹⁷This is why the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the relationship between the Shepherd and the sheep?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the Father and the Son?
3. Jesus knows His sheep by name and also seeks out the sheep yet to be found. At Bible Center, we express Jesus' heart with our value of **honoring the past and shaping the future**. What are some ways that we can honor the past and the sheep who are already in the flock?
4. What are some ways a shepherd protects the existing flock?
5. How do we shape the future and seek out sheep yet to be found (consider Sunday mornings,

A LIFE FOUND IN LOSS

Interact With the Text

**Underline any lessons
Jesus teaches the
disciples.**

**Circle anything
required to Follow
Jesus.**

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵“But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then He gave the disciples orders to tell no one that He was the Messiah.

²¹From then on Jesus began to point out to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. ²²Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, “Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!”

²³Jesus turned and told Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it. ²⁶For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will reward each according to what he has done.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who do people say Jesus is today?
2. Why did Jesus speak to Peter with such force (v. 23)?
3. In the beginning, Jesus said "Follow Me." He returns to this call. To follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves and take up our crosses. Practically, what are some things Jesus is asking us to set down and what are some things He is asking us to pick up?
4. What is the benefit of gaining everything this world has to offer?
5. The world gives us temporary rewards, but Jesus will return with eternal rewards. As individuals and as a church, we seek to maximize God's glory and eternal rewards. To do so, we will have to set aside all of our self-centered desires to follow Jesus and His desires.

#ForCountryRoads is our final value at Bible Center. West Virginia is a beautiful and unique place. There is a rich tradition of family and faith. But over recent decades, churches have declined and many have closed.

What would it take to see Jesus' Church revitalized across the state? What role can Bible Center and your group play in this effort?





BIBLE CENTER | CHURCH[®]

Making disciples of Jesus