

Week Twelve reading: Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 – 21

SUMMARY OF THE LESSONS IN FOLLOWING JESUS

Week 1: the purpose of the four writers

Week 2: Jesus' power revealed in miracles

Week 3: the social groups that interacted with Jesus

Week 4: some of the lessons learned from the miracles

Week 5: the stages of discipleship

Week 6: the word pictures that describe Jesus

Week 7: The purpose of the parables

Week 8: the contrast of Jesus' message and the religious norm

Week 9: the presentation of the Messiah

Week 10: the requirements of servant leadership

Week 11: Jesus' purpose was the cross

Week 12: His completion...our commission

We approached this study with the theme of "We study Him to know Him, and by knowing Him, learn how to better live for Him." And the verse that rose up frequently out of our weeks of study was Luke 9:23, *Then He said to them all, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.* This theme verse and theme phrase sum up our responsibility of following Jesus through the Gospels.

Reflecting on the past eleven weeks, how have you been challenged to better live for Christ? _____

HIS COMPLETION: THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

While every Christian understands the need to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, do we really pursue further understanding and belief in His resurrection? The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10, *My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..."*

What is our responsibility for knowing Jesus?

1. **Initiate** a relationship with Jesus, believing on Him as the Son of God
2. **Cultivate** a relationship with Jesus, through prayer and reading of His word
3. **Pursue** a relationship with Jesus, through obedience to His commands and steps of faith as He guides you

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What should we know about the power of His resurrection?

1. Jesus gives us the power to **have sins forgiven** – *He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Romans 4:25*
2. Jesus gives us the power to **conquer sin** – *you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth. Ephesians 4:24*
3. Jesus gives us the power to **be God's agent** to share His message – *therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20*
4. Jesus gives us the power to be **conformed to His likeness** – *we all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*
5. Jesus gives us the power to **overcome the devil** and his kingdom – *since the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to obey Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5*

Jesus completed His purpose with His death and resurrection. That purpose was to redeem humanity and provide that same power to those who believe in Him and choose to cultivate and pursue a relationship with Him.

In what area this week do you need to cultivate and pursue Jesus to know Him more? _____

OUR COMMISSION: FOLLOWING JESUS

Throughout His ministry, Jesus was calling His disciples to action: love God, love others, deny yourself, follow Him, among others. Matthew leaves us with this final call to action: Go...make disciples...baptize them...teach them. This is the bottom line of how we deny ourselves, take up His cross and follow Him. God expects His disciples to take His message to the lost.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

1. We have a **divine mandate** – GO. This verb, go, is better translated "as you go" which implies that wherever you go, you are to follow this command. Every moment we live, we are preaching through our actions and through our words. We are either pointing people to Jesus; or, we are pointing them away from Him. We are either saying, "He is my Lord and Savior and you need to know Him too"; or, we are saying, "My relationship with Jesus really doesn't make a difference in my life."
2. We have a **divine message** – TO OBSERVE EVERYTHING I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. Our message is not a message about our church or our denomination. It is not about our preacher or about our standards of dress and music. It is not about our style of worship. All of those might be important, but none of them can save a lost, hell-bound soul. Our message is a simple message. It is a message of hope to the hurting; of life to the dead; of peace to the tormented. Our message is called The Gospel and *"it is the power of God unto salvation,*

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to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). It is a message that every person in the world needs to hear. It is a message that is universal in its application. It is a message that has the potential to change every life and every eternity that falls under its power, John 1:11-12. There is no other message that God will use to draw the sinner to Himself and there is no other message He will use to save lost souls!

3. We have a **divine mission** – MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS. He is telling us very clearly that our mission is to every person in the world. And that our mission field is the entire world. He may call someone to leave this country and reach a certain people group. Of course, He may just ask us to send our money to support those whom He has called to reach those in other parts of the world. While He may never call you to go to a foreign land to tell the story of salvation, He expects you to tell it where you live. He expects us to reach out to all people without regard to their ethnic heritage, their race, their past, their lifestyle, their economic standing, etc. If they are sinners, they are candidates to hear the message of the cross. If they are lost, they need a Savior. If they do not know Him, they need to and we have been authorized and commanded to reach them!
4. We have a **divine mentor** – REMEMBER, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS. We are promised **His presence**. When you are sharing the Gospel with that friend, that family member, that total stranger, the Lord Himself is right there with you. He will help you, enable you, embolden you and use you. We are also promised **His power** according to Acts 1:8, *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Our great commission can be daunting and intimidating at times. When have you pushed yourself out of your comfort zone and shared His gospel in an unlikely situation? _____

Did you recognize the power of the Holy Spirit during your witness? _____

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM A DISCIPLE

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:32, *"but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."* Peter lived that out and God preserved His testimony for perpetuity in 1 Peter 5:5-11: *...and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you. Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little. The dominion belongs to Him forever. Amen.*

We can be strengthened in our faith, knowing that Jesus gives us the power of the resurrection...He gives us the fellowship of shared suffering...and He gives us the presence of the Holy Spirit. For those reasons plus His many promises, it is not too much for Him to ask us to deny ourselves by forgetting ourselves, losing sight of ourselves and losing sight of our own interests for the sake of becoming a disciple of Christ. And we will never regret the eternal value of what we gained for all that we left behind.

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APPLICATION FROM WEEK TWELVE

What lessons from Jesus' ministry have impacted your walk with Him? _____

How do you plan to better serve Him because of what you have learned about Him? _____

Thank you, Father, for this opportunity to study Your Son! We invite You to continue working in our lives to follow Him more closely and to love Him even more. We pray that our lives bring You glory and honor for all of our days!