

READ ME FIRST

Introduction to *Peacemaking with Jesus: A Global Discipleship Guide* for Leaders

NOTE: There are many ideas below; feel free to summarize these points in your own words with your group members or leaders if you are training others; they can read the details and comment or ask questions as you go along.

What is the purpose of the Guide?

- The purpose of this material is not to process a series of topics but to *help students grow in Christlikeness*. The title “Peacemaking with Jesus” implies being a peacemaker *as we live in union with Jesus* and become like him.
- One way to help students grow in Christlikeness is to regularly ask, *How would you like to grow as a disciple of Jesus after this discussion?*

How can I create a safe and transformative space?

- The Holy Spirit is the one who makes us like Jesus, so *prayer for the Spirit* to accomplish this work is important. Encourage staff and group leaders to pray regularly that group members would, by the Spirit, be rooted and grounded in Jesus’ love (Eph 3:16-19).
- Craft a space that is welcoming by offering snacks and asking interesting questions as you get started. You may think of other creative ideas!
- Each chapter comes with a thematically relevant opening question, which you can text your students in the week, or few days, before your gathering. Opening questions are designed to engage students with the topic before they arrive at the gathering so that the content has a deeper impact.
- Each group should provide *love, support and accountability*. Suggested guidelines:
 - It is critical that others feel safe to share (or not share), so explain that everything shared in the group is confidential.
 - If you tend to talk easily, hold back a bit, notice who hasn’t spoken and express a desire to know their thoughts. If you are more hesitant to speak, venture out anyway!
 - Questions are welcome and encouraged; no question is inappropriate, but *the text* will be the basis for answering questions
 - Be aware of cultural dynamics in the ways the members communicate, e.g. directly or indirectly; invite others to clarify if what they’ve said isn’t clear
 - Though cultures regard time differently, aim to end at the specified time, allowing members to leave if they need to. But, if more conversation seems needed, invite all who can or want to stay.
- A good Scripture study must be aware of *context*; the cultural context of the students and the cultural and literary context of the bible passage you are studying.
 - Contextualizing for your members means *adapting the study* to your group by replacing or explaining difficult English, simplifying complex ideas, and realizing the different learning styles (by seeing or by hearing or by doing) of your members.

Remember that the richest bible studies are those that have many different cultures and nationalities represented!

- Contextualizing the Bible means that any text you study together has a context that needs to be understood. The *cultural context* for Jesus is Palestinian—for example, Jewish, patriarchal, rural, under Roman authority, and awaiting deliverance by God. The *literary context* is the passages and settings that come before and after your text—paying attention to these aids understanding and prevents wrong *interpretations* and inappropriate *applications*. Regularly ask, “How would this text apply in your own community/country?”

What do we hope students will experience?

- *Obedience* to the Lord and experiencing him through this obedience (the Discipleship Cycle) is critical, so be sure to explain the *D-Cycle* in the first meeting; and save enough time for the debrief each week. (If D cycles are new to you, go [here](#) to get more help).
- Each study invites members to *memorize a Scripture* related to that study’s theme. Storing up God’s word in our heart (Ps 119:11) is a good practice. Not all members will do this consistently, but don’t give up; continue to model it yourself, and gently encourage others to continue trying.
- The Guide makes *service* done together a critically important part of discipleship, and the group will need help and encouragement to follow through; it is a great way to explain how D-cycles work as we respond to the Spirit by taking a risk.
- Through this Guide’s deep immersion in the story of Jesus--his responses and practices toward people--members will go and do likewise. That’s why the “Put yourself in the story” questions are so critical. Pray that Jesus or the main character of each study comes alive for people.
- Leading a study is a skill that most disciples should have, and will serve students when they return to their countries; so consider asking different students to lead the group for one week.
- *Critical thinking* is a Western concept that we believe will serve students well, under the leading of the Spirit. These studies should help develop critical thinking, which is the ability to ask questions, find truth, and be open to new insights.
- *Emotional intelligence* is another helpful concept. It is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you. The questions asking students to imagine themselves in the stories should help with this.



What help is available to lead?

- *There are facilitator's notes at the end of each study.* When you deliver (email/print) the study to or for the students, delete these notes. They are for *your* use in preparation and while you lead. Notes are not provided for each question but for specific questions where further information would be helpful.



The Peaceable Kingdom, Edward Hicks [American, 1780-1849]

Peacemaking with Jesus: A Global Discipleship Guide

Christian international students have cross-cultural experiences and global connections that give them unique understanding and opportunities to bring biblical shalom to their worlds after they leave the university. They can introduce people to Jesus and partner with others to work for justice and reconciliation of various kinds. The series is entitled "Peacemaking with Jesus" to emphasize the necessity of living in union with Jesus and growing more like him as graduates try to make peace. An understanding of and God-given vision for biblical shalom, critical thinking skills, a biblical worldview, emotional and cultural intelligence can be helpful in preparing students to be peacemakers. Participating in a support/accountability group and getting some practice in serving along with other Christians are also critical.

In hopes of developing some of these skills and qualities in students, we have put together a global discipleship guide that enables a small group of students to dig into

Scripture, culture, and practice in the context of a covenant relationship. Student groups are asked to participate in a service or justice project at least once while doing the studies. We encourage groups to consider service projects in the first discussion, but some groups may want to postpone action on this until they finish Chapter 6 on serving like Jesus. Although the studies were written with international students in mind, multinational fellowships will profit from them as well.

These studies may be done during a student's last or next to last year before graduating, with several weeks left free for the group to do a service project together during each term. The studies can and should be led by students. The inductive Bible study method is used, so students learn a Bible study skill and get experience facilitating groups. These chapters were written to highlight some of the key points on leadership and discipleship made by International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) staff from East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Africa and South Asia in three videos and one in-person visit shared with ISM staff in the US in early 2022. All have been edited to take no more than an hour and require no advance work other than doing the "Respond" step from the previous week's study.

Art and Scripture Sources:

Chapter 4: JESUS MAFA. Jesus among the teachers, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58801> [retrieved September 10, 2024]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>)

Chapter 13: Wesley, Frank, 1923-2002. Peter's Vision, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=59250> [retrieved September 10, 2024]. Original source: Estate of Frank Wesley, http://www.frankwesleyart.com/main_page.htm.

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With gratitude and praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Katie Rawson, General Editor

Chapter 1

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Opening Question: God designed us to live in full peace and to live our identity as peacemakers. Where do you see the need for peace in your relationships? In the world?

OPENING

Open with prayer for the Spirit to guide the group during the entire meeting.

Take 20 minutes to get acquainted with questions like these (choose the most appropriate for your group)

1. What food do you miss from back home?
2. Tell us a little about your cultural & family background.
3. How would you like to grow as a disciple this year?

INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE AND STUDY:

SHALOM:
*the Hebrew word that refers
to the peace and well-being that comes
from right relationship with God, self,
others and the earth.*

This guide is about peace-making with Jesus. To understand peace-making, we need to understand a word from the Old Testament: *shalom*.

Shalom is a Hebrew word that refers to the peace, prosperity and well-being that comes from the right relationship with God, self, others and the earth. The Father sent Jesus to restore the shalom that was shattered when people broke relationships with Him. Through his death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit, Jesus, our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), makes available to us peace with God and peace with those different from us (Romans 5:1-10, Ephesians 2:14-16).

One of the two winners of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 was Dr. Denis Mukwege. A Congolese gynecologist and follower of Jesus, Dr. Mukwege founded a ministry that helps women rape victims receive physical healing and restoration to society. He and his partners also work to end the use of rape as a weapon of war. Dr. Mukwege was an international student in Burundi and in France, and is a peacemaker with Jesus. We can't all win the Nobel Peace Prize, but we can all share God's shalom wherever we are.

HEAR THE WORD

Our text begins with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he gave many of his most important teachings. It appears that both Jesus' disciples and the crowds could hear the sermon. These words have commonly been called the "Beatitudes." Have one or two students read the text aloud.

Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Are there any words or phrases that you don't understand? Imagine that you are among the disciples, listening and watching Jesus. What words or ideas do you hear repeated?
2. What contrasts do you hear?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

3. *Context:* There is no English word that fully translates the Greek word for "blessed." It includes the idea of being congratulated and honored by God.

Verses 3, 6 and 10 mention the kingdom of heaven and righteousness. Understanding these two ideas will also help us understand blessedness.

The kingdom of heaven (or of God, as Mark and Luke say), is the rule or reign of God which has come near to the people in the person of Jesus.

Righteousness includes right and just relationships with God and people. We are not capable of righteousness because of our sinfulness, but we receive it as a gift of faith in Christ. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven will be righteous because of their relationship with Jesus.

Now that you have some idea of blessedness, the kingdom of heaven and righteousness, why do you think Jesus would consider all these groups of people blessed?

4. Look at verse 9. Why would peace-makers be called "children of God," do you think?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

5. Look through verses 3-8. Which of these characteristics of a disciple do you think Jesus would like to see more of in your life?

RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Doing Justice

We will eventually think about sharing God's shalom in our home countries and all over the world. But while we are going through this guide together, we want to share some shalom right where we are.

Q. What are some ways your group might be a practical blessing to your university, a specific residence hall, apartment complex, university department or even to the needy in your city?

Pray and do some research this week on what you could do. Will someone volunteer to contact officials and ministry leaders to see what possibilities there are? Come next week prepared to discuss and decide on your service project together.

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Memorize this verse in your heart language and English this week- we will share our verses next week at the beginning of the meeting.

CLOSING

Close with group prayer for each other to grow to be more like Jesus as shared about in question 5, and for direction in finding a service project(s).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has doctorates from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Fuller Theological Seminary. She is the author of *Crossing Cultures with Jesus: Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace* (InterVarsity Press). Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. YeChan Park from South Korea, an InterVarsity campus minister in Hammond, IN, commented on the study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To introduce the group to each other and enable people to bond well and become excited about going through the guide together
- To introduce the major theme of the guide-peacemaking and shalom-and the plan to do some service project together
- To help students understand the key concepts of the kingdom of heaven and righteousness and see the characteristics Jesus wants his disciples to have

Notes on the Questions

Question 2: Contrasts include: mourn- comforted, hunger and thirst- filled, persecuted-rejoice

Question 3: The definition of righteousness as a gift of faith could be difficult for Muslim background students.

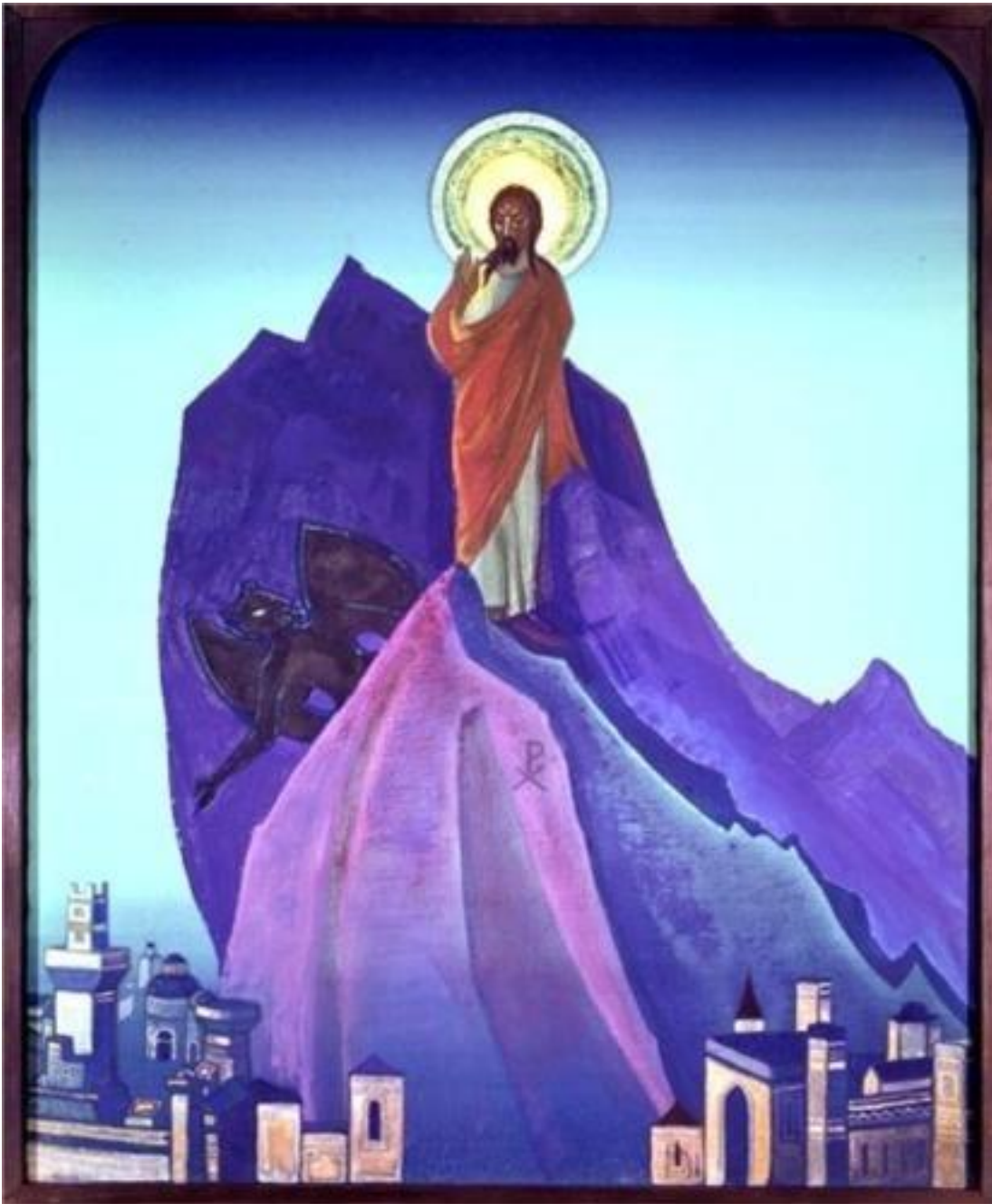
God gives honor to those who hunger and thirst for his righteousness and his kingdom.

Question 4: We talked about shalom at the beginning, and Jesus came *as* shalom. He brought reconciliation between God and humanity by his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus poured out—and pours out—his life out for us. Therefore, we as followers who have this shalom, can live out God's love and peace with others.

Question 5: As group leader, please be the first to answer this question. Your openness should make it easier for others to share.

Chapter 2

Relationship with God, Self and Others: Identity, Integrity and Influence



Painting: Nicholas Roerich (Russian), *Temptation of Christ* [public domain]

Opening Question: How do people from your community/culture deal with temptation? Where does temptation come from?

DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Doing Justice) and consider what project the group might do together over the coming weeks) Also have them repeat the memory verse (Matthew 5:9) as they arrive.

OPENING

Last week we saw that shalom includes right relationships with God, self, others and creation. This week we focus on how relationship with God impacts our relationships with self and others. When speaking about discipleship to a group of campus ministers in 2022, an international Christian leader highlighted identity, integrity, and influence. Integrity includes honesty and having the inside of us (our thoughts and attitudes) agree with what people see on the outside of us. Identity in Christ and integrity are essential if any Christian would influence or lead others. In this text from Matthew, we see how Jesus' awareness of his identity enabled him to withstand attacks on his integrity as the enemy tempted him to gain influence in an ungodly way. Jesus himself is our role model this week.

HEAR THE WORD

The larger context of this story is the Old Testament. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve broke their close relationship with God by eating a fruit that the serpent told them would make them like God.

After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they spent forty years in the wilderness, living on special food, manna, that he provided. They grumbled repeatedly, and Moses later told them that God had used the time to test them, humble them and teach them that people don't live only by food, but by every word that comes from God. (Deuteronomy 8:2-4)

We will focus on Matthew 3:13-4:12, but Matthew 3:1-12 provides the immediate context for what follows. In these verses, John the Baptist calls people to repent and baptizes them in water after they confess their sins. He predicts that someone is coming after him who will baptize with the God the Holy Spirit.

Invite one or two volunteers to read the text aloud.

Matthew 3:13-4:12 (NIV)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down.

For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Are there any words or ideas you don't understand? Visualize the story in your mind. Who are the characters in this text, both human and non-human?
2. What does each do and say?
3. Context: When do these events happen in Jesus' life? Where do they happen?
4. Note repeated words and phrases. How does the enemy tempt or test Jesus? How does Jesus resist?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

5. Put yourself in Jesus' mind. What would his experience of hearing the Father's voice have been like?
6. The Spirit immediately led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by the enemy. Given the Old Testament context, why would the Spirit do that? How would this experience prepare Jesus to influence those who would follow him?
7. Even though the devil uses the word "If," he knows that Jesus is God's Son. In verse 6, he actually uses God's word to tempt Jesus. What is he trying to do in each temptation?
8. How is Jesus equipped (prepared) to answer the devil's temptations?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

9. The words that the Father said of Jesus at his baptism are true of every follower of Jesus before we do anything for him, as they were for Jesus.

Q. How can internalizing your identity as a well-loved child of the Father strengthen you for tests of integrity and for influencing others in godly ways?



RESPOND

Practice: Jesus clearly had memorized the verses from Deuteronomy he quoted to the enemy, and surely he was certainly meditating on his Father's word to him and several Deuteronomy texts during the forty days. Memorizing and meditating on Scripture is a powerful way for us to internalize God's truth. This week, begin or continue the practice of Scripture memory, and as you memorize the week's verse, meditate (think slowly and deeply) about it and its implications for your life.

How to Memorize:

1. Study the verse and apply it to your life. Ask God to write it on your heart as you memorize it. Neuroscience research shows that we best remember verses associated with memorable incidents.
2. Get an index card and write on it the reference, the verse and the reference again. Speak aloud the verse as you are writing it. Both the writing and the speaking will help you remember better. Place the card in a visible place where you will be reminded to review it.
3. Review your verse(s) daily, speaking it aloud and thinking about it as you speak.
4. If you are musical, make up a tune and sing the verse. If you're artistic, draw some cartoons or a picture to help you remember.
5. Find a friend in the group and text the verse back and forth with your friend during the week until you've memorized it.

Memory Verse: Matthew 3:17

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Memorize the memory verse in your heart language and English this week.

CLOSING

Close with group thanksgiving for our being well-loved children of the Father and pray that for each other to be deeply rooted and grounded in Christ's love (Ephesians 3:16-19).

For some paintings of the scene in the wilderness from all over the world, go [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Milka Hanook, a Pakistani InterVarsity campus minister in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, commented on the study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To help students grasp and begin to internalize their identities as well-loved children of the Father
- To help students recognize possible tests of integrity they might face and consider how to meet them
- To help them understand that identity in Christ and integrity are necessary for Christians wanting to influence or lead others

Notes on the Text

Question 1: If anyone wonders what Jesus meant when he said "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15), here are some thoughts. Adam's (and Eve's) original righteousness (their being right with God) was in their complete submission to God. In humbling himself to submit to baptism, Jesus was identifying himself with Adam and Eve and doing the opposite of what they did when they turned from God. He was also showing approval of John's ministry and providing a model for his followers.

Question 4: The enemy distorts God's Word and goodness; Jesus' relies on the truth and goodness of God's Word found in Deuteronomy

Question 6: Context: Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, learning to rely on God's goodness and his word even though they were suffering. So Jesus spends 40 days experiencing suffering and relying on God's goodness and Word. Hebrews tells us Jesus was tempted in every way we were, except without sin (4:15) and, amazingly, that he learned obedience from what he suffered (5:8).

Question 7: Some have seen the three temptations of Jesus in 1 Jn 2:16 – "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" which "come from the world." Since the wilderness temptation occurs before Jesus begins his public ministry, the temptations can be seen as wrong ways he could live life and do ministry. By turning stones into bread, he would use his power as Son of God to serve himself. By surviving a fall from the temple, he would attract attention, but not to his Father. By worshiping the devil, he would break relationship with his Father and obtain what was intended for him-authority over the entire world- with an ungodly shortcut. He was likely also to have been thinking of Israel's desert experience and the texts from Deuteronomy he cites when answering the devil.

Question 8: Jesus fasts, prays, is alone, and meditates on God's word. He responds to the enemy with Scripture, quoting from Deuteronomy. He has memorized God's Word. These are spiritual practices we need in our struggle with temptation as well.

Question 9: The words Jesus had just heard from the Father about being a beloved Son are core to Jesus' identity. Identity is our sense of self, of who we are in our deepest selves, the true me. In some cultures, identity comes more from family and community, in other cultures, each person is encouraged to craft their own identity. For Christians, however, identity is given by God. And as with Jesus, this identity is that we are each a daughter or son of God, who God loves, and in whom God is well pleased. The diagram shows that identity in Christ is our foundation, that integrity is built on this through character and suffering and maturity, and that influence is given to us by God when we are rooted in our identity and practicing integrity.

Chapter 3

Relationship with God: Living By the Spirit

Opening Question: How do you experience living by the Spirit?

DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Memorizing Scripture) and repeat the memory verse (Matthew 3:17) as they arrive.

OPENING

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

Last week we saw that Jesus' identity as a well-loved child of the Father enabled him to pass tests of integrity, preparing him to influence others in a God-honoring way. We saw the Spirit of God descend on him like a dove and then lead him into the desert. Because we are followers of Jesus, the Spirit lives inside us (1 Corinthians 6:19) and the way we grow in our relationship with God is to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Keeping in step with the Spirit may lead us into trials, as we see from Jesus' experience in today's text.

HEAR THE WORD

Old Testament Context: Jesus refers to two Old Testament stories in our text from Luke. The first (1 Kings 17) is about a poor widow in Sidon, which is north of Israel. It was a Gentile region and not part of the land God had promised to Israel. Elijah the Jewish prophet was sent to the widow in a time of famine and drought, and he miraculously provided for her.

Second is the story (2 Kings 5) of Naaman, another Gentile, this time from Syria, which is also north of Israel. Naaman had leprosy, and God led him to Elisha, another prophet. God miraculously cleansed Naaman through washing in the Jordan River.

Isaiah 61:1 predicts that the Messiah will be anointed, that is, filled with the Spirit. He will be a light to the Gentiles (nations), not just to the Jews. Both Jesus and his hearers in Nazareth would have known this prophecy..

Matthew starts Jesus' teachings with the Sermon on the Mount. This story about Jesus at Nazareth in Luke gives another sermon Jesus made that also introduces his purpose. It is likely that Luke didn't record every word of the sermon. In Luke, this text immediately follows the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert.

Have someone read the text aloud.

Luke 4:14-30 (NIV)

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. ¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

²³ Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

²⁴ "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah

was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Are there any unfamiliar words or phrases that need clarification?
2. After his experience in the desert, what does Jesus do in the power of the Spirit, and what is the reaction in Capernaum?
3. Now the scene turns to Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. Imagine that you are one of the town’s citizens listening to Jesus that day. You have known him all your life, and have heard that he has been healing people in Galilee. What do you see Jesus doing and saying?
4. Make a list of what Luke says the Messiah will do.
5. When Jesus says, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” he is saying, “I am the Messiah.” The people react positively at first. But Jesus knows what is in their hearts. They want to see miracles they have heard he did elsewhere. “Physician, heal yourself” in verse 23 is probably a proverb that means “Show us some proof.” No prophet is accepted in his hometown, Jesus says, and he reminds them about two prophets. What had these prophets done?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

6. What would the words Jesus read from Isaiah 61 have told Jesus’ hearers about his ministry? Does the list you made in question 4 surprise you in any way?
7. Why would the mention of prophets who were involved with Gentiles (foreigners) have angered the people at Nazareth so much?
8. Sidon and Syria are not that far away. What does Jesus want the people of Nazareth to understand?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

9. Jesus was led by the Spirit through both his time in Capernaum and in Nazareth. What does his experience in both places show us about following the Spirit? How might returning to your home community be difficult?

RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

It is not always easy to know what the Spirit is directing us to do or say, especially if that leading seems like it might bring us into trials, as in this text. Lectio Divina (spiritual reading) introduces us to a way to listen to God by listening to his Word. We will practice it now, and each of us can practice it this week.

Lectio is less about reading a Bible passage as it is about letting the passage read you. Someone will read the passage three times, slowly; and then pause for 2-3 minutes in silence to give each person time to listen and reflect. Here is the pattern:

Begin by taking three long slow breaths and welcome the presence of God. It is best to sit upright in a chair. A passage has been selected by the leader.

1. **Read.** The passage is read and hearers are asked to consider what word or phrase seems to stand out or "shimmer." 2-3 minutes of silence.
2. **Invitation.** The passage is read again, and this time the hearers listen for why that word or phrase is meaningful to them; in the 2-3 minutes of silence, each listens for the invitation that the Spirit has for them through the word or phrase.
3. **Prayer.** The passage is read a third time, and this time each person asks for help to receive and pray through what the Spirit is saying to them through the word or phrase. 2-3 minutes of silence.
4. **Quiet.** This is a time to *stop* thinking or considering and simply enjoy the Presence of God in silence for 2-3 minutes, with a thankful heart and an open soul.

Participants can then be invited to share if they want to about what God has spoken to them. When all who want to have shared, the leader prays briefly to close the time. The whole process should take less than 20 minutes.

Try this together with Psalm 51:1-12 or 63:1-8 or 131. Pray for the Spirit to meet us as we practice Lectio Divina.

CLOSING

Close with group prayer for people groups mentioned in response to question 9.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Marc Papai, Director of International Student Ministry for InterVarsity, commented on the study, as did YeChan Park from Korea, an InterVarsity campus minister in Hammond, IN.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To impress on students the necessity of listening to God in order to be led by the Spirit
- To help students understand that being led by the Spirit may bring us into trials
- To get Luke's view of what Jesus' peacemaking involved
- To see again that following the Spirit may lead to trials like those of Old Testament prophets

Notes on the Questions

If the study seems too long to do in your allotted time, focus on questions 3,4,7,8, and 9 and the Lectio prayer exercise. If you can bring in a Bible with maps or find some maps online to share, that might help people understand the references to other nations in this text.

Question 3: A Nazarene would have known Jesus from childhood, probably as a carpenter or carpenter's assistant. Women would have been friends with his sisters and men with his brothers. "Messiah" means "Anointed One" and is the Hebrew word translated into Greek as "Christ"; the Messiah was a deliverer who would restore God's reign, but many disagreed about what that looked like.

Question 4: Although Jesus read from the Hebrew, the New Testament is written in Greek. So the words given here are from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament text. This is why the words we read here don't completely match what we read in the Old Testament.

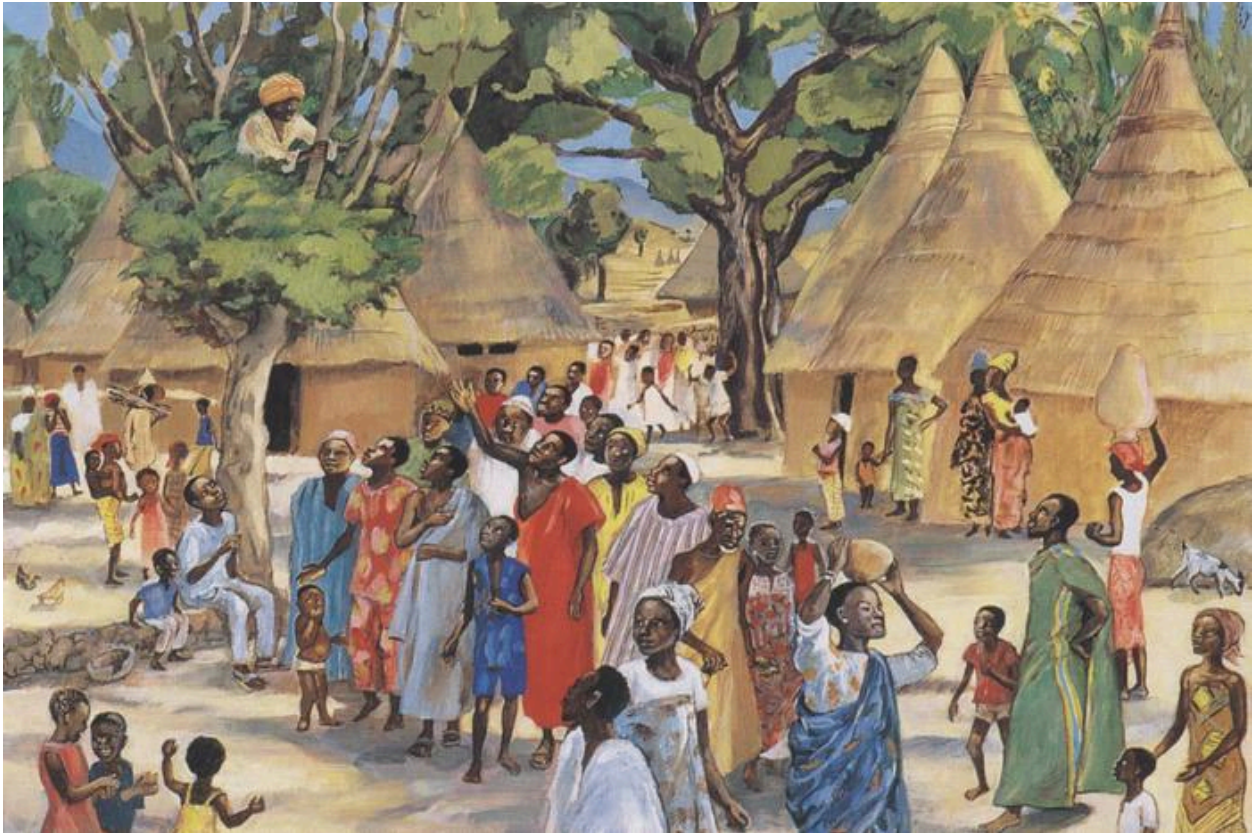
Question 6: You may remind your group of Chapter 1 when we studied the Beatitudes. How did the qualities that Jesus highlighted there, compare to what he says in Luke 4 about his ministry? It may surprise some people that Jesus focuses in both places so much on the poor, the meek, the lost, the imprisoned, the forgotten, and the blind.

Question 7: Isaiah 61 was a special chapter to Jews who read in it the vindication of Israel, that is, Gentile nations would be defeated and Israel restored to her former glory and peace. But Jesus turns this on its head by implying that God's favor was for non-Jews as well as for them.

Question 8: We are to see that people are set free both spiritually—when we share Jesus with them—and that physical needs are met. We must share God's grace and favor with those who are ethnically different from us, including traditionally hated groups.

Chapter 4

Relationship with God: Whole Life Discipleship



Painting: Jesus Mafa (Cameroon), *Zacchaeus Welcomes Jesus*

Opening Question: Which areas of your life do you desire to invite Jesus to tend, grow, and cultivate?

DEBRIEF and OPENING

Share your memory verse (Luke 4:18-19) together. If folks have forgotten, remind them of grace and also of following through. Be gentle and firm!

How was last week's "Respond" step—practicing Lectio Divina?

Last week we saw that relationship with God involves living by the Spirit. This week, we see how living by the Spirit affects every aspect of how we live—not just our structured times of worship and fellowship, but also our work lives and free time. Our work, rest,

and play all fit into the larger picture of God's Kingdom. Every area of life is sacred. This means following Jesus in every aspect of life, that is, whole-life discipleship.

The Gospel of Luke records the story of a man whose meeting with Jesus resulted in a complete and amazing change in how he viewed life and how he did his work.

HEAR THE WORD

Context: Luke 19 tells the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Though Jewish, Zacchaeus was a social outcast. Tax collectors were seen as betrayers of their own people because they chose to work for the Romans who occupied Israel as part of the Roman Empire. Tax collectors would often take extra profit for their own financial benefit. Jesus developed a reputation of spending time with tax collectors which Zacchaeus likely knew about.

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Check to see that everyone understands the words in the passage and then have the group read the text aloud as the characters in the passage.

Then, let people read the text quietly to themselves. What questions does the text raise with the group?

2. Imagine that you are Zaccheus. Why do you climb the tree, and how do you feel when Jesus calls your name and invites himself to your house?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

3. The text probably doesn't tell the entire conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus. It likely took place over a meal and gave Zacchaeus a chance to get to know Jesus. What was it about Jesus's words and actions that made Zacchaeus respond the way he did in verse 8?
4. Zacchaeus, by responding to Jesus' love and grace with a change of heart and behavior, has come into a relationship with Jesus that makes him an insider with God. Jesus' calling is to seek and save lost people like Zacchaeus by restoring them to their dignity not only as sons of Abraham but also as brothers and sisters of Jesus. Imagine that you are Zacchaeus. How would you have felt when Jesus said these words?
5. How did Zacchaeus' meeting with Jesus change his thoughts and actions about his work and his entire life?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

6. Zaccheus' issue was fear and greed. He used his accounting ability to oppress people rather than serve them. After his acceptance by Jesus, he turned and offered himself to God, even though it cost him.
 - a. What is your issue that needs offering to Jesus?
 - b. What sacrifices might you have to make in following Jesus in your work, now or later?
 - c. What cultural values of your own community/country will challenge you?

RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Observing the Sabbath

Observing the Sabbath is an aspect of whole-life discipleship. It is an act of worship, trust, and surrender to the God who loves us. Just as Zacchaeus gladly welcomed Jesus into his home for a time set apart for fellowship, practicing Sabbath gives us an opportunity to welcome Jesus into our lives to rest in his presence.

Keeping the Sabbath doesn't have to last all day on Sunday or even be on Sunday. It can be as simple as taking a walk outside, reflecting God's creative spirit through painting or another art form, enjoying the company of a friend or family member, or taking special time to pray, read the Bible or other devotional books. Rest from work is central.

Q. What is one way that you can observe the Sabbath this week and when can you do it?

Share prayer requests for keeping the Sabbath and other needs and spend time praying for one another.

Memory Verse: Luke 19:9-10

Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Memorize it in your heart language and English this week.

CLOSING

Pray for one another as you have been impacted by today's study. Give God thanks for the gift of Sabbath.

Art Information: JESUS MAFA. Jesus among the teachers, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58801> [retrieved September 10, 2024]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Growing up as a professor's daughter, Diane Tyndall Nelsen had many opportunities to travel internationally. Through these experiences, she gained a love for making cross-cultural friendships. She currently serves among international graduate students through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and as International Student Ministry Assistant Director for Training. Her interactions with graduate students led her to explore the concept of whole-life discipleship. Diane holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Studio Art from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Divinity. Diane is passionate about seeing people come to reframe their lives in view of God's Story—His grand narrative of Scripture. Milka Hanook, a campus minister from Pakistan who works in Cleveland, Ohio, commented on the study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To help participants realize that all of life is sacred—not just structured times of worship, Bible reading, small group, and church.
- To help participants identify how salvation—a relationship with Jesus—affects their work.
- To help participants think deeply about how Jesus' values either challenge or affirm the work values of their cultures.
- To help participants understand that the repentance that leads to salvation will necessarily result in behavior change.
- To help participants incorporate a practice of Sabbath into their lives.

Notes on the Questions

Question 4: Jesus must have expressed love, compassion, and grace toward Zacchaeus. The salvation Jesus declares is something all Jews (sons of Abraham) desired. Zacchaeus has also been saved from the consequences of his sin. The "Son of Man" is a term Jesus used for himself.

Question 5: We've learned that shalom involves restoration. Not just restoration of the material, but also the ideas and attitudes of the heart. Justice falls into this category. God's perspective of shalom-seeking justice is restorative, not retributive. As living sacrifices, followers of Jesus are called to engage with matters of injustice. Just as William Wilberforce righted the communal wrong of the slave trade in England, Zacchaeus helped to right the personal wrong of his unjust taxation. We may be called to seek justice in other areas, but often, like Wilberforce and Zacchaeus, following this call may include personal and radical sacrifice. Some university students have felt led to support calls for higher pay for the people who serve them on campus: janitors and cafeteria workers for example. Others may be aware of unjust situations in their home countries which they can work to change.

Question 6: If he was giving half his possessions to the poor (there was no requirement to do this, only, according to Exodus 22:1, to pay back four times what was stolen, which Zaccheus did too), it means that his attitude toward possessions and how he wants to live has changed. Generosity can be expressed in many ways, not just with money, but with time and talents and openness to hurting people.

Chapter 5

Relationship with God and Others: Being Good Stewards

Opening Question: What have you been given that you could use to love your neighbor or community or the world?

DEBRIEF and OPENING

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Observing the Sabbath) and repeat the memory verse (Luke 19:9-10) as they arrive.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

Last week we saw that relationship with God involves our entire lives. This week we continue that thinking by considering those gifts God has given us: talents, education, resources, and how we can glorify God with them in all situations.

HEAR THE WORD

Context: In the Bible a parable is a short story told to illuminate a relevant truth. The larger context of our passage is all the kingdom parables. In the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43), Jesus teaches that the people of the evil one (the weeds) will be mixed in with the people of the kingdom until the very end, when those who reject God's love will be thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The immediate context of our passage is Matthew 24, where Jesus taught his disciples about his second coming as King. Jesus said the time of his return was unknown, but his disciples must be doing their duty when he came. Matthew 25 opens with the phrase "the kingdom of heaven (a respectful way of saying kingdom of God for Matthew's Jewish readers) will be like..."

Jesus then told a parable about ten virgins awaiting a bridegroom, and followed it with our text, another parable.

Matthew 25: 14-30 (NIV)

¹⁴ "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²² "The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²⁴ "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

²⁸ "'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Check to see that everyone understands the words in the passage and then have the group read the parable aloud, taking different roles:
 - Jesus
 - The servant who received five bags of gold
 - The servant who received two bags of gold
 - The servant who received one bag of gold

Then, let people read the text quietly to themselves.

Q. What questions do you have about the text?

2. Though the text doesn't ask us to, imagine yourself as one of the characters.

Q. What is about that character that draws you?

If you can't relate to any, imagine yourself as the two bags servant.

Q. How do you feel as the Master hands out the bags of gold to each of you?

3. How do you feel when the landowner speaks to you in verses 21 or 23 and gives you more to do ("take charge of many things")?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. Why do you think the master uses the exact same words of praise for the servants who earned five more and two more bags of gold?
5. What does the fact that the faithful servants are given much more responsibility teach? How does this shed light on verses 28-29?
6. What do the third servant's words in verses 24-25 suggest about his relationship with the master? Considering how the master treated the other two servants, how well did the third servant know the master? How might this explain the harsh punishment he receives (verse 30)?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

7. The English word talent comes from the Greek in this passage. We usually think of talents as natural abilities, but there are many things God has entrusted to us: natural abilities, spiritual gifts, education, and resources of various kinds. What has God entrusted to you that you can use to glorify Him?
8. How and in what different areas can you use those gifts now? After you graduate? When you go home (if you intend to)?

RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Generosity

This week prayerfully look for ways, large and small, to use your gifts to honor God, and see how many you can find (treasure hunt)! Ask the Lord to show you opportunities for now and give you a vision of how and where you can use your gifts after you graduate. Write down the current opportunities and dreams for the future that the Holy Spirit gives you.

Memory Verse: Matthew 25:21(NIV)

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

Memorize the memory verse in your heart language and English this week.

CLOSING

Close in prayer to hear well from the Lord about ways to use your gifts now and later, for group member needs, and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the

IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Diane Tyndall, an IVCF-USA campus minister in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, commented on this chapter.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- Help students to realize that their gifts and talents are part of whole life discipleship
- Help them see that faithfulness now can open doors to greater opportunity to honor God
- Help them envision how God can use them in various arenas of society now and later

Notes on the Questions

Question 5: If we long to serve Jesus and are faithful, he will entrust us with more of his shalom work, bringing flourishing to our communities and to the world. The promise is *abundance*, and *come and share your Master's happiness*. These are great gifts Jesus gives us, because Jesus loves to be generous with what he has.

Question 6: The master repeats the servant's words as a question. He doesn't agree that this is his character. The servant seems not to have known the master well. When we consider that a similar fate was given to the people of the evil one in the parable of the weeds (see context), it makes sense to think that this servant was one of those people of the evil one.

Chapter 6

Relationship with Others: Serving Like Jesus

Opening Question: What is attractive about serving like Jesus? What makes it challenging to serve like Jesus?

DEBRIEF and OPENING

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Generosity in gifts and talents) and repeat the memory verse (Matthew 25:21) as they arrive.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to guide the group during the study.

Last week we saw that relationship with God involves using the talents and resources he has given us for his glory. This week we begin thinking about relationship with others. Jesus calls us to be servants in our relationships with others.

HEAR THE WORD

Context: The Old Testament context of this passage includes the four Servant Songs in Isaiah that describe the coming Messiah (42:1-7, 49:1-7, 50:4-9 and 52:13-53:12). Isaiah 53:4-6 states that the Messiah will suffer for the infirmities (weaknesses), sorrows, iniquities and transgressions (different words for sins) of people who have gone astray like sheep. Isaiah 53:5 says that the punishment the Servant took brought us peace, that is, as we have learned, is the wonderful reality of shalom.

The immediate context in Mark is that Jesus has already twice predicted that he would suffer, die and be raised to life in Jerusalem (8:31-32 and 9:30-32) and taught the disciples about greatness and servanthood in chapter 9:33-37.

Have a volunteer read the passage aloud.

Mark 10:32-45 (NIV)

³² They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³ "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests

and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Check to see that everyone understands the words in the passage. Then, let people read the text quietly to themselves.

What questions do you have about the text?

2. Jesus is going ahead of them all. What are the disciples and those who follow thinking and feeling?
3. The other ten disciples react with anger when they hear what James and John have asked. What contrast does Jesus make, and what word picture does he use as he responds to the ten disciples?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. Why do you think the disciples are astonished and those who followed are afraid? What about Jesus' attitude may be influencing them?
5. How does Jesus' model of being the servant of all compare and contrast to models of leadership or influence in your community?
6. The disciples would have understood Jesus' words about "giving his life a ransom for many" as saying that his death would free people from their slavery to weakness (infirmity), sorrow and sin. How is his death for others connected to servanthood?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

7. Jesus gave us an example of supreme service.. What are some practical ways, even small ones, that you can serve others now? After you graduate? What opportunities for service might there be for your group?
8. For later reflection: According Isaiah 53:4-6, Jesus is the Suffering Servant who died to give us shalom and ransom us from sin, weakness and sorrow. What is your response to these gifts that he died to give us? If you would like to receive them for the first time or more deeply, you can do so with a simple prayer. You can also ask a mature Christian friend or your staff worker to pray with you.

RESPOND

Practice: Service

This week prayerfully look for opportunities where you can serve others. Even something as small as pausing to listen to a friend who needs to talk can be of service. Ask the Lord to give you a vision of how and where you can serve others after you graduate and write that down to share next week.

Memory Verse: Mark 10:45 (NIV)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Memorize the memory verse in your heart language and English this week.

CLOSING

Close in prayer to hear well from the Lord about ways to serve now and later, for group member needs, and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Joan Krebs, a volunteer who serves InterVarsity-USA's International Student Ministry, commented on this chapter.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To give students a vision of Jesus, the Suffering Servant
- To enable them to grasp more deeply the cost and the implications of Jesus' death for us
- To help them see the great contrast between Jesus' view of greatness and that of our cultures
- To challenge them to servant, even sacrificial, living like that of Jesus

Notes on the Questions

Question 3: The contrast is between the rulers of the Gentiles and how Jesus intends his disciples should live (note: some Jewish rulers exercised authority in the same way the Gentiles did). James and John want to sit on Jesus right and left when he comes into glory. Jesus responds with "Can you drink the cup I drink?" is an expression that means "share my destiny." Specifically, drinking this cup was a cup of suffering—in this case, suffering was being alone and separated from God and others. You don't need to address this unless someone asks what it means.

The word picture is that of a ransom, recalling the picture described in Isaiah 53. A ransom is the price one paid for the release of oneself or someone else from bondage (or slavery). Jesus is proclaiming that his death is that ransom for us. He is the King who is a servant, the Master who suffers on our behalf.

Question 4: Jesus knows what will happen in Jerusalem. Perhaps both groups see his expression of resoluteness and feel some fear and foreboding about the (uncertain) future, and what it will mean for them.

Question 6: This is a deep mystery but a powerful truth. Jesus' death is the ultimate, highest act of love, giving up his own life so that others may have true life. The One who is Master of all becomes the Servant of all. In doing this, he shows what true leadership is.

Question 7: This question may bring some of the same answers as last week's on using gifts. But consider having the group brainstorm ways, even small ones, the group could serve others together.

Question 8: For any who don't know Jesus personally, this reflection allows them a chance to receive his gift for the first time. Others will respond in praise and thanksgiving. Staff might want to pray with others, asking the Lord to help them receive this freedom more deeply.

Chapter 7

Relationship with Others: How Can We Share Jesus?

Opening Question: What comes to your mind when you think about sharing the story of Jesus with others?

DEBRIEF and OPENING

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Service to others with our gifts) and repeat the memory verse (Mark 10:45) as they arrive. Ask about what they wrote down as opportunities or dreams for how and where they can use their gifts after they graduate.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

HEAR THE WORD

Last week we began our series on relationships with others by looking at Jesus who came not to be served but to serve and give his life so that we could be set free from sin and its results. This week we will consider how we can share this good news about Jesus with others.

Context: Jesus gave us several images of how the Kingdom of God brings change. One of his favorite images was farming. In this chapter, we will see what farming can teach us about sharing Jesus with others. The author of this chapter learned these lessons through her own experiences sharing the Lord with her parents.

As we saw in Chapter 5, a biblical parable is a short story told to illuminate a relevant truth. In Mark 4, Jesus told three parables explaining what the kingdom of God is like: the parable of the sower, the parable of the growing seed (our text), and the parable of the mustard seed. The parable of the sower identifies the seed as the word.

Mark 4:26-29 (NIV)

²⁶ He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Context: 1 Corinthians is one of the letters from the early Christian preacher Paul to the church of Corinth. In this letter, Paul addressed many issues that the Corinthian church was facing. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul teaches the church that it is foolish to glorify men and religious leaders, for all of them are equal servants in God's ministry. Paul had founded the church, but Apollos later taught there. The Corinthians were dividing themselves based on loyalty to human beings, even going so far as saying "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" (1 Corinthians 1:12).

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (NIV)

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? ⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. According to Mark 4:26-29, what is the process of growing seeds like? Once the seed sprouts, what stages are there?
2. Look at 1 Corinthians 3. Who is Paul and who is Apollos? What did each do for the Corinthians? What did God do?
3. What are the similarities between these two passages?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. What do farmers do in farming? Who is truly making seeds grow? What do you think it means to spiritually "water" a field or plant?

5. What can the picture of sowing, watering and reaping teach us about sharing Jesus? What kind of character does a farmer need?

APPLY (What does the passage mean for me and my community?)

6. What can we learn from Jesus' frequent choice of story-telling (parables) to plant the seed of the word?
7. If you have not yet shared the gospel with your family or friends, what has kept you from doing so? How does knowing that God works slowly and it's not necessary to share everything at once encourage you to begin a planting process?
8. Prayerfully choose two family members or close friends who don't know Jesus personally. How can you prepare the soil of their hearts? What would be appropriate ways to plant seeds?
9. For reflection: How does this seed-planting and cultivating way of sharing Jesus compare with common ways of sharing the gospel or any good news in the country you live in now? In your home country?

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (NIV)

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Write the verse in English and your heart language on an index card.

RESPOND

Practice: Praying for non-Christian family or friends

Research has shown that people who become followers of Jesus typically go through 5 stages or thresholds. What are these 5 thresholds? [5 Thresholds - Overview | twentyonehundred productions](#) or contextualized for ISM [Journeying toward Jesus](#); Although these videos depict the thresholds or stages as linear, they can be more

circular with people moving back and forth between them. But there are stages, and developing trust is very important

Prayerfully choose two family members or friends and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your friends or families are in their faith journeys.

Once you think you have identified the stages your friends are in, pray for them and ask God to show you how you can assist them on the journey to the next stage.

CLOSING

Close in prayer for group member needs, for people to hear well from God about sharing Jesus, for any obstacles to planting seeds to be overcome, and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Callie C. came to the United States from an Asian country as an international student. Through a local InterVarsity International Christian Fellowship chapter, she became a Christian. Her understanding of the lives of international students gave her a strong desire to see many more of them experience Jesus' love and guidance. In 2017, she became a campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and planted an international student chapter at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Callie learned these lessons about sharing with family and friends as she shared Jesus with her parents. She and her husband, who is also an immigrant, have 3 children. Milka Hanook, a campus minister from Pakistan working in Cleveland, Ohio, commented on this study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Chapter

Help students understand the following truths:

- Realize Jesus has called us to share the Gospel even though he knew it would not be easy.
- Sharing the gospel is done by following God's leading. Trusting that God is at work, we are invited to participate in his plan. Focus on God's guidance and know that it is not us who changes hearts but the Holy Spirit.
- Be patient with others, love them with the kind of love you have received from God, with no judgment or pushiness, but trusting in God's guidance and timing.
- Help members to know that the gospel is alive, and our lives as believers are meant to live it out not just speak it out.

Notes on the Questions:

Question 1: There is mystery in the growth of a seed, but stages can be discerned before the seed is ready to harvest: soil preparation, sowing the seed, waiting, seeing the stalk, then the head, then the grain. It is a process!

Question 3: In both cases there is the sowing of seed, the varying quality of soil that the seed falls on, and the fact that God is the one who causes growth.

Question 4: There is mystery; we don't know for sure what makes the seeds pop up. God causes the growth; the farmer creates the right conditions. "Watering" can include demonstrating our faith, praying for the person or sharing more details about Jesus and how he has changed our lives.

Question 5. Farmers need patience and a willingness to work hard and to take risks. They do not give up easily, and the more they farm, the more they understand how to cooperate with the soil, the seed, irrigation, and so on.

Question 6: Stories invite interest and further seeking without telling people what to do. Jesus used them both to discover who was truly seeking (this chapter) and to indirectly invite the teachers of the Law to more deeply understand God's love (Luke 15). Some international students have used storytelling to share Jesus with others, including family. Storytelling is culturally appropriate for many cultures.

Question 8: Help group members to identify barriers in their lives that stop them from sharing Jesus with others, such as fear of rejection, not believing in God's power to change hearts, or fear of losing a friendship. Knowing that the work is God's should

take the pressure off us. All we do is pray, listen to God for his planting and watering instructions and continue praying.

Chapter 8

Relationship with Family & Close Friends: Forgiveness

Opening Question: When you think of forgiveness, what emotions come to your mind?

DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Praying for non-Christian family or friends) and repeat the memory verse (1 Corinthians 3:6-7) as they arrive.

OPENING

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

Context: Our first few studies focused on relationship with God and then we turned to relationship with others. Last week we focused on how to sensitively yet boldly share Jesus and his love with others. This week we consider our closest relationships, those with family members and friends. It is in those relationships that we are most likely to be hurt and need to forgive, which is what we see in the story of Joseph.

Sold as a slave into a foreign country by his half brothers at seventeen, Joseph may have been deeply impacted by their treatment. He may have fought to forget his brothers and what happened. Later he experienced false accusation and imprisonment and more bad treatment when a friend forgot about him.

Our stories may not be as painful as Joseph's, or they may be more painful. However, we live in a fallen world where every aspect of humanity, including relationships, is impacted by sin and brokenness.

HEAR THE WORD

Context: Joseph's story

Of twelve sons, Joseph was his father's favorite, and his father made that clear to the family. This favoritism may have stemmed from the fact that his mother (Rachel) was loved by his father, unlike the mothers of his brothers (Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah). To

make matters worse, Joseph told his family about two dreams he had that portrayed his brothers and parents bowing down to him. Watch a short video about it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHzduqGyyt8>

Genesis 39: Joseph was bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's (the Egyptian king's) officials. When Potiphar saw that the Lord was blessing all of Joseph's work, he entrusted everything to Joseph. Potiphar's wife tried to lure Joseph into a sexual affair. When he refused repeatedly, she falsely accused him of trying to rape her and he was imprisoned. Again, the Lord gave him favor, so that the prison overseer put him in charge of all the prisoners.

Genesis 40: Two prisoners assigned to Joseph, the wine taster and baker for Pharaoh, each had a dream no one could interpret except for Joseph. Just as the dreams predicted, the wine taster was restored to his position while the baker was executed. However, the wine taster forgot all about Joseph...

Genesis 41: ...until two years later, when Pharaoh had two dreams no one could interpret. Joseph was then invited to interpret these dreams: Egypt would have seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of famine. Joseph not only interpreted the dreams but recommended a plan. Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be in charge of the plan—to oversee a storage process during the harvest years in preparation for the famine years. During the famine, people from all over Egypt and around the world came to Joseph to buy food.

Genesis 42-44: Joseph's family also came to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. He tested them multiple times to see if they had changed.

Genesis 45-50:14: When Joseph could no longer hold back the truth from them, he revealed his identity to them, leading to a tearful reunion. He reassured them that God had sent him ahead to save lives. He invited his father's entire family to live in Egypt. Later, Jacob died in Egypt.

Genesis 50:15-21 (NIV)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

OBSERVE (What does the text say?)

1. Take turns reading the summaries of chapters 39-50:14 above. Are there any unfamiliar words? What stands out to you and what questions do you have?
2. Read Genesis 50:15-21 aloud, with different people playing and identifying with a character or group (Joseph, Joseph's brothers, narrator). If you were one of Joseph's brothers, how would you have felt? What might be going through your mind?

INTERPRET (What does the text mean?)

3. What does the early part of Joseph's story (Gen 39-50) reveal about human nature? How do people's sins impact themselves and others around them?
4. What does Joseph's life demonstrate about God? How might Joseph's words in Genesis 50:20 have helped to bring healing to family brokenness?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

[Note: As you consider what to share in the group, aim to honor the people you share about as well as the people in your group. Watch out for the temptation to expose someone out of resentment.]

5. What aspects of Joseph's family story are especially meaningful to you as you consider your relationships with family and friends? What impact might your family patterns have had on you?
6. In Matthew 18: 21-35, Jesus told a story that shows that our ability to forgive is related to our awareness of God's forgiveness of us and our sense of his grace

(God's goodness to us despite our sin or indifference) and unconditional love.
How is grace viewed in the culture you grew up in?

RESPOND: Steps Of Forgiveness

1. Ask God, "Where do I need forgiveness?" For only yourself, write down some ways you've hurt or sinned against family members or friends. Share those sins with the Lord (not others) and pause to allow the Holy Spirit to assure you of God's grace and forgiveness.
2. Ask God, "Who do I need to forgive?" Write the first name(s) that come to mind. Choose one person (or group) to reflect on. Identify the ways you've been sinned against and the wounds you experienced. Facing the reality of what happened may feel shameful, scary, and even overwhelming. Press into your pain with Jesus.

[Note: "Facing reality" does not mean forcing ourselves to deal with something we're not ready to face. For some, especially those who've been through trauma or abuse, it may be critical to share the pain with your staff member, a mature Christian friend or a professional counselor rather than thinking it through by yourself.]

3. Ask God how He sees this person(s). Pray to remember good things about this person and ask for gratitude for him or her.
4. *Important Note on what forgiveness is not: First, it's not making excuses for someone or minimizing what has happened; when we do so, we deny everyone involved the opportunity of a reconciled and truthful relationship. Second, it is not the same as reconciliation, which requires two willing people. Forgiveness can be done on our own, even if the other person is unwilling to seek forgiveness and reconciliation or admit how they have hurt us. Third, it doesn't mean we trust automatically; while Jesus calls us to forgive as many times as needed, it takes time to rebuild trust. We may need to take steps to prevent the same hurts from being repeated until we have seen needed change in the other person. Forgiveness is mainly a choice not to repay or punish someone for the harm they've caused us and to not hold on to resentment toward them, which only hurts us. The ability to forgive is a gift God gives to help set us free.
5. A possible but not necessary step: Write a letter to this person(s). The letter is likely just for you. Ask God how he'd like you to address this hurt or conflict. Depending on your cultural background, it may or may not be appropriate, honoring, or effective to address the person who has hurt you directly. You may need to look for indirect ways

of handling the situation. God may give you a sense of peace and resolution without directly communicating with someone.

6. Forgiveness is a journey. As needed, repeat some of these steps at a later time. If your wounds are deep, expect a process rather than a one-time healing. Growth and forgiveness can be like a spiral—God may take us to the same area of hurt over and over but often at a deeper place. Notice how your feelings toward the person(s) change(s) over time.

Memory Verse: Genesis 55:20 (NIV)

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Memorize it in your heart language and English this week.

CLOSING

Sin and forgiveness are not easy issues in life. Said another way, they are spiritually deep, and the devil and his ilk will fight fiercely against our practicing forgiveness and being forgiven. Pray as a group for the courage and commitment it takes to acknowledge sin and seek forgiveness, and to forgive freely when we have been sinned against.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At age nine, Eva Liu Glick emigrated from Hong Kong to a town in the US where there were few Asians—a life-changing, challenging, and beautiful experience that God has used for his glory. Learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, navigating family immigration dynamics, being in a cross-cultural marriage and being a mom are some of the ways God has shaped her for international student ministry. She hopes to set foot in as many places and experience as many different cultures as possible in her lifetime. She became a campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in 1997 and began working with international students in 2002. YeChan Park, a campus minister from South Korea ministering in Hammond, IN, commented on this chapter.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

To help participants...

- Recognize how our fallen nature leads to broken relationships that require forgiveness to be restored.
- Remember that all of us need to repent and receive God's grace for our own sins in relationships.
- Grow in awareness of God's healing work in our brokenness.
- Walk through practical steps of forgiveness.
- Embrace deep forgiveness as an ongoing journey.

Notes On The Questions

Question 1: If you feel that reading all the summaries will take too long, use the second video to continue the story through verse 41. Jesus is mentioned at the end of both videos, but Joseph clearly foreshadows Jesus, so it may be good for students to hear this.

 [Joseph Explains Dreams | Elementary | The Gospel Project](#)

Question 3: You might ask your group to define sin as they understand it using these chapters as examples, since sin is apparent. Without a biblical understanding of sin, forgiveness cannot be rightly practiced. Sin clouds our relationship with God, does injury to ourselves and others, and has a harmful effect on our community.

Question 4: God does not prevent us from sinning, but his purposes are not stopped by sin either. He knows what happens to Joseph and the family, but brings the opportunity for forgiveness and healing.

Question 6: You could ask your group members, "How deeply have you experienced that grace? If you have not yet known this grace, talking and praying with your staff member or a Christian friend might open up a path to it."

Notes on the Respond Step

1. Recognizing our own sin and how much God has forgiven us will aid our forgiveness of others.
2. Gratitude aids in forgiveness.

3. Student leaders, be sure to obtain the help of your staff worker, or other qualified helper if you are asked to help someone who has been deeply wounded and you are unsure of how to help. Perhaps you can suggest to the student that the two of you meet together with this person. Staff members may need to get help with this as well.

Chapter 9

Relationship with Others: Men and Women

DEBRIEF

Have group members repeat the memory verse (Genesis 55:20) from last time, and as they arrive, have them share how they did with last week's "Respond" step concerning forgiveness.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group.

HEAR THE WORD (All Citations from the NIV)

Context: Adam and Eve lived in perfect shalom, together with God. "God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). Their marriage, as described in Genesis 2:24, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" is a beautiful picture of shalom as it incorporates the love God has for both unity and diversity. But they disobeyed God, first Eve, then Adam. The results were devastating, including to their relationship with one another. To Eve God said: "Your desire [Hebrew has the connotation of "desire to control"] will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16).

Relational challenges between women and men started then and are still around today.

But Galatians 3:26-28 tells us, women and men have alike been accepted and reconciled in Christ:

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

At the time of Jesus' ministry, women were often treated as second-class citizens. Jesus' actions were revolutionary: he honored women in many ways. In the gospels we see examples of how he taught them spiritual truths (Lk 10:39), welcomed them to follow and provide for him financially (Lk 8:1-3). He appeared first to a woman after he rose from the dead (Jn 20:14-16). There are many other examples. These encounters

were counter-cultural, demonstrating the shalom between genders that the Kingdom of God brings.

One powerful example of how Jesus brings redemption and shalom in painful circumstances is found in John 8. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees want to trap Jesus. So they bring to him a woman caught in adultery and make her stand before the group. What an embarrassment! But where is the man who committed adultery with her? As is often the case even today, the man escapes. In many cultures the rules for women are much stricter than for men. But God says in Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.”

John 7:53-8:11 (NIV)

⁵³ Then they all went home, ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Get three volunteers to take the parts of the narrator, Jesus and the Pharisees reading the story aloud. What stands out to you, and what questions do you have?

2. Imagine that you are the woman standing before Jesus. How do you feel at different points in the story, including at the end? Or imagine that you are the man who committed adultery with this woman. She has been taken for stoning and you are free. How do you feel?
3. Now put yourself in the mind of one of the Pharisees. How do you react when Jesus says, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her"?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. Why do you think Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground?
5. Why do you think that the Pharisees and teachers of the law leave, the older ones first? How do you think they felt?
6. Why does Jesus tell the woman to go and leave her life of sin? What do you think Jesus would have said to the man who committed adultery with this woman?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

7. The place of women and men is often viewed differently in different cultures. How are they viewed in the culture you grew up in? In the culture you are living in now? How comfortable would Jesus feel with these views?

RESPOND

Practice: Advocating for Others (and women in particular)

How can you handle in a Christlike way experiences of being ignored, excluded or abused, taking into account both justice and forgiveness? These are very sensitive issues which may need a long time for processing and healing so it might be wise to seek help from a trained Christian counselor.

Read through the following questions and choose the one to three that trigger you the most and work on it/them this week. Write out your thoughts on the chosen questions.

1. Describe any times you have observed or experienced abuse. Can you think of ways we can fight against abuse?
2. The use of certain gifts have often been restricted by the church from being practiced by women. How do you think women should use their gifts in the Body of Christ, the church?
3. Are men allowed to be vulnerable or are men always supposed to be strong? How can men use their power in godly ways?
4. How can men and women work together to bring more shalom between men and women in their own circles and/or in the larger society around them?
5. What are your personal pitfalls in gender relations? What habits of yours might need changing?
6. What kinds of attitudes and actions are needed by both men and women to enable women to use their gifts more freely in the Kingdom?
7. How/when should you challenge cultural norms and when should you wait and ask God to show you a gradual way to implement change while still honoring old traditions?
8. Where do you need to ask for or extend forgiveness in gender interactions you have had?

Forgiveness for past woundings in this area is important (see chapter 8 of this Guide) and takes a lot of time and often, willingness to face pain and distress. One idea is to write a letter to the person(s) who hurt you. This letter might never be sent, depending on your situation and cultural background. But consider sharing it with a trusted friend.

Memory Verse: Galatians 3: 26-28 (NIV)

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Memorize them in your heart language and in English this week.

CLOSING

Ask the group, "How may we pray for you as you try to live as a woman or man in a Christlike way and use your gifts to serve the Kingdom?" Share prayer requests for each other and spend time praying for one another to be able to put into practice this week's lesson and for the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Francina de Pater was an international student in Costa Rica and was also involved in her local group of IFES Netherlands, experiences that shaped her and led her into ministry. She served for 14 years in a ministry reaching out to people in prostitution. In 2012 she became the national director of International Student Ministry in IFES Netherlands. In 2017 she became the ISM coordinator for IFES Europe and in 2022 Associate Regional Secretary for IFES Europe and Global Catalyst for the Lausanne ISM network. She is a trained coach and counselor and is since 2009 owner of Precious Coaching & Training which offers life coaching, specialized in trauma, burnout, stress and pastoral care. Francina is married to Arie; they have three children and they live in the cheese city of Gouda in The Netherlands.

DIG DEEPER

For biblical material supporting equal partnership between women and men in Christian ministry (only available to InterVarsity staff or official volunteers):

<https://aboutwomen.intervarsity.org/apologetics-theology/bible-study-women-men-equal-partnership>

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To help participants understand how the Fall in the Garden of Eden brings specific challenges to both men and women
- To help participants understand the impact of the kingship of Jesus in freeing us from this curse; to realize how specific challenges play out in the cultures we are each from and what redemptive change is needed.
- To help participants see where they might have to *ask* forgiveness or *extend* forgiveness, and how forgiveness can be part of a healing process which might require the help of others
- To help participants gain vision for men and women using their gifts together to advance God's Kingdom

Special Note to Facilitators: This topic could potentially bring up issues such as homosexuality, feminism, or transgenderism which students from many cultures will have strong feelings about. If students ask about these issues, bring them back to the passage being discussed, saying something like, "That is a good question. Where do you see it being addressed in this passage?" If the asker cannot connect the question to the passage, you could say, "Let's focus on what this passage is telling us." After the group is over, text the friend and offer to get together to discuss his/her question more personally.

Notes On The Questions

The NIV (and most other English translations) note that this passage is not in the earliest manuscripts of the book of John. As the NIV Study Bible notes, "This story probably did not belong originally to the Gospel of John. It is absent from almost all the early manuscripts, and those that include it sometimes place it elsewhere (e.g., after Lk 21:38). But the story may well be an authentic tradition about Jesus." You don't need to bring this up unless someone asks about it.

Question 2: This is an honor-shame culture. Clearly the woman felt shame. The man probably also feels his own shame (at being caught? or being unfaithful to a wife and to God?) and perhaps is afraid that the woman will die. But some group members may see it differently, and that can raise a good discussion.

Question 4: If you imagine this scene, the woman, probably half dressed and experiencing great shame among all these men, would be the focal point. When Jesus stoops down (and doesn't seem to look at the woman until all but she have departed),

he draws attention away from her shame, already refusing to condemn her before he says anything.

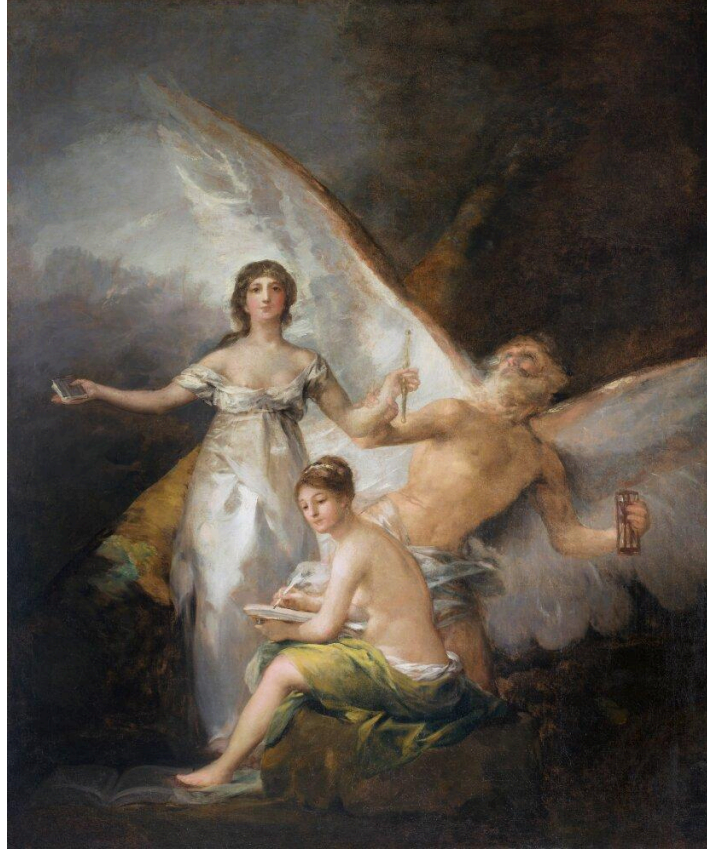
Question 5: In honor-shame cultures, the older are generally the wiser. They know themselves and their hearts and they are honest enough to admit the consequences... they are not without sin and therefore can't throw a stone. The younger ones are less self-aware, but drop their rocks too. But sadly, none turn to the Savior who could save them from their sin and shame, but rather walk away. Jesus must grieve over them.

Question 6: Turning from sin is critical for the ongoing healing of the woman. Had the man been present, undoubtedly Jesus would have also invited him to confession of sin, forgiven him, and told him, "Go and sin no more."

Question 7: Help each other to reflect on his/her own culture and identify and clarify possible blind spots. Compare situations to how Jesus lived and try to imagine how He would have reacted to that.

Chapter 10

Renewing of the Mind: The Importance of Truth and History



PAINTING: Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828), *Truth, Time and History* [public domain]

Opening Question: It was common for early 19th century artists like de Goya to use allegories in art. This particular painting shows figures representing Truth, Time, and History. What point do you think he is making? Why are history and truth important?

DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Advocating for others and women in particular) and repeat the memory verse (Gal 3:26-28) as they arrive.

OPEN

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study. Pray for deep awareness of God's love for us and our nations and ethnicities, for Spirit-given trust, and the grace to hear and speak truth in love. This is a challenging study.

HEAR THE WORD

Context: Words are incredibly important to the people of God. After all, God chooses words as his primary way to reveal himself to us. This shows just how influential (for good or evil) words are.

We will look at two passages today that talk about words and their use and misuse. Words are important because they are intended to carry truth. But our passages today show that lies—untrue words—are lethal; but words of God are powerful because they are true.

Psalm 12 (NIV)

¹ Help, Lord, for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.

² Everyone lies to their neighbor;
they flatter with their lips
but harbor deception in their hearts.

³ May the Lord silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue—

⁴ those who say,
“By our tongues we will prevail;
our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?”

⁵ “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise,” says the Lord.

“I will protect them from those who malign them.”

⁶ And the words of the Lord are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.
⁷ You, Lord, will keep the needy safe
and will protect us forever from the wicked,
⁸ who freely strut about
when what is vile is honored by the human race.

John 8:31-36, 44 (NIV)

³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³³ They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

³⁴ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Let everyone read through the text quietly, and then have volunteers read Psalm 12 and the John 8 selections aloud. What questions and thoughts come to mind for you? Answer each other's questions.
2. Contrast the words of people with the words of God in Psalm 12. How do they differ?
3. What contrasts are made in the John verses?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. According to these passages, what do people use their words for? What does God/Jesus use words for? What outcome does each intend?
5. What is the connection between truth and freedom, and between lies and slavery?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

6. In the history of your country or community, how have truth or lies impacted you, your family, or your society?

Consider the following example of how truth-telling can affect a society.

Have a volunteer to read this:

Knowledge of history is crucial for our discipleship and work for the Kingdom. Western nations have historically had immense power over many cultures and societies, sometimes for great good, sometimes for great harm. Telling the truth about this history is vital, because past actions will affect present relationships. While hospitals and schools and linguistic work done by the Western Christian Church have had positive effects on nonWestern nations, there are sadly so many other actions that were devastating. As peacemakers, Christians must face this squarely, regardless of their nationalities

Christian actions such as the Crusades against Muslims of the Middle Ages are a good example. Missionaries entering China on gunboats in the 19th century is another. Enslavement and genocide supported or tolerated by the church are other terrible realities. In societies where the past and history are highly valued, the memory of such actions can impact our relationships today.

What can we do? Telling the truth about our community's past is a start. A positive example of how learning the truth about history brought shalom is [South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (this 2 minute video gives us a taste of what happened). After viewing this, how do you think truth is important to reconciliation?

RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Decentering social media

Have a volunteer read this:

Social media fills our lives. Young adults average over 8 hours per day on screens. (techjury.net). It is inevitable that values and priorities from social media will shape those who use it. As followers of Jesus, we should ask ourselves how much screen time is healthy and if we need to decenter (not eliminate) it from our lives. And we need to address all forms of media with thoughtfulness and critical thinking.

Respond Step: Prayerfully consider how much time you spend on social media and where you get your sources of news. Ask the Lord if you need to make some changes.

Suggested Guidelines for Choosing Reliable Media Sources:

1. Do the media sources verify news they report or tell you they haven't been able to independently verify that news?
2. If they inadvertently give untrue or distorted facts, do they correct this as soon as possible?
3. Do media sources clearly separate news and opinion segments of programs and invite articulate representatives of various opinions to present during opinion segments? When interviewing everyday people, do they seek out people with differing views?
4. Where do media sources get their funding, and what are the perspectives of those providing funding? This information may give some idea of the biases they have.
5. How extensive is their global reporting on a wide variety of topics?

Group Discussion: What questions and thoughts come to mind for you after reading these guidelines? Answer each other's questions.

Why would it be important to have reliable news about your homeland, even if you don't plan to return immediately? Share with each other sources of news in your heart language and how reliable they are.

Memory Verse: John 8:31

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Write the verse in English and your heart language here.

CLOSING

Close with prayer for members' Respond step, the needs of group members, and of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Katie has doctorates in French literature and intercultural studies. InterVarsity USA National International Student Ministry Director Marc Papai, who has training in theology and intercultural studies, shaped this chapter. InterVarsity-USA graduate campus minister Diane Tyndall, who has training in theology and discipleship, and InterVarsity-USA Volunteer Servant Joan Krebs, who has biblical and theological training and Cleveland, OH InterVarsity campus minister Milka Hanook, who is originally from Pakistan, also commented.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of this Study

Lead participants to:

- Contrast the ways and words of the world with those of Scripture, and understand how truth is crucial to effective discipleship
- Commit to knowing, living and speaking the truth in love
- Connect historical truth with shalom, and lies with destruction and slavery
- Help participants consider the impact news and social media have on them and other students and respond prayerfully

Note: Solicit extra prayer support for this discussion as it is different from previous ones.

Notes on the Questions

Watch the truth and reconciliation video ahead of time and have it ready to go on your laptop or whatever device you are using when your group meets.

Question 1: If students' questions won't help meet the objectives of the study, ask "How can knowing the truth about ourselves and about Jesus the Truth who reveals God's love to us set us free from sin and its results? How can awareness of how we have been sinned against or how we sin against ourselves open us up to receive shalom from our loving God?"

Question 2: Contrasts include on the one hand flattery, deception, boasting, prevailing over others and God, and denying the lordship of God, and on the other, care for the poor, protection, flawless (true) words, pure words, precious words. One leads to breakdown and oppression, the other to life and shalom

Question 3: Contrasts here include truth and lies, slavery and freedom, sonship and hired help, the devil and Jesus.

Question 4: People use their words to dominate others, to oppress others, to flatter others, to get their own way and live without reference to God. God in Jesus uses words to bring freedom, life, sonship (adoption) and shalom. In Jn 8:34 Jesus explains that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Sin includes both doing those things which hurt God and others, and being: missing the mark of God's purity. Jesus came to set us free from sin and its results in our lives, and he uses truth to do so.

Question 5: Freedom comes not from doing what we want to do when we want to do it, but when we live according to the truth. People lie to get what they think they want - power, honor, happiness, avoidance of shame, promotions, etc. But these always eventually lead not to freedom but to slavery. Truth is crucial to the life of a true follower of Jesus.

Notes on the Respond Section

Getting to the social media piece in the Respond section is important.

As far as good media sources go, many find the BBC to be very good for global news in English. Students can watch or listen on many public television and radio channels or online. Although they may not agree with the way the BBC characterizes their nations, they can at least find news about their nations in English easily this way.

If a student plans on returning home, keeping up with news back home is critical. If not, students will still want to know what is influencing their nations so they can pray for the nations and interact well with relatives back home.

Chapter 11

Relationship with Society: Living Justly

Opening Question: “Many people don’t like the words ‘sin’ and ‘repent’, yet John the Baptist uses them. Luke 3:18 says that these words come alongside the Good News—how might you understand these words so that they become good news?”

DEBRIEF

Have group members repeat the memory verse and share how they did in prayerfully paying attention to their use of social media as they arrive. Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

HEAR THE WORD

Old Testament context:

- Isaiah 40 pictures the Messiah coming in a kind of second exodus with Elijah preceding the coming of the Messiah.
- The Holy Spirit often fell on people in the Old Testament, but didn’t continually live inside people.

Immediate context:

- In Luke 1: 67-79, John’s father, Zechariah, prophesied that John would be called “Prophet of the Most High” and go before the Lord “to prepare the way for him”(NIV).
- Luke names the Roman rulers whom Jewish people ruled under and in cooperation with, and religious leaders, the former and current high priests. Given Luke’s information, this was probably around 25-26 AD. There was great expectation that the Messiah would come at that time.
- In the past, water baptism had only been required for Gentiles desiring to fully convert to Judaism. John required baptism for Jews as well, to show their sincerity about repentance.
- At harvest time in Palestine, wheat would be separated from the useless matter collected when growing it and burned—a picture of life without God. This is a kind of baptism through fire.

Luke 3:1-20 (NIV)

¹It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. ² Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. ³ Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. ⁴ Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,

“He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming!

Clear the road for him!

⁵The valleys will be filled,

and the mountains and hills made level.

The curves will be straightened,

and the rough places made smooth.

⁶ And then all people will see

the salvation sent from God.”

⁷ When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, “You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? ⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. ⁹ Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ The crowds asked, “What should we do?”

¹¹ John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.”

¹² Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, “Teacher, what should we do?”

¹³ He replied, “Collect no more taxes than the government requires.”

¹⁴ “What should we do?” asked some soldiers.

John replied, “Don’t extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered their questions by saying, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” ¹⁸ John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Let people read the text quietly to themselves, circling any words or ideas they don’t understand. Explain that in verses 16-17, John is talking about Jesus.

What questions do you have about words or ideas in the text?

Have different students read it aloud, taking the parts of the narrator, John, the crowds, tax collectors and soldiers.

2. Where and when does this occur?
3. Look for repeated and contrasting words and ideas, including those in the quote from Isaiah and the rest of the passage. To what or whom do the words seem to point?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

4. Have group members choose one of the characters—the religious leaders, common people, tax collectors, soldiers, and John—and imagine how they might feel. Here are questions for each group to answer:
 - a. We know from the Matthew version of the story that it is the Pharisees and Sadducees, religious teachers, whom John calls a brood or bunch of snakes. They are depending on their descent from Abraham’s children for salvation. John says that even stones could be sons of Abraham, but that doesn’t save them.

Why would John speak to them so harshly? How might you feel if you are a religious teacher who is sincerely repenting?

- b. If you had two shirts, you were considered rich enough to give one away. How would you, a common person, have felt when John commanded this?
- c. Tax collectors took more than was due them and kept it for themselves..If you had been one of these tax collectors, how might you have felt, listening to John?
- d. Soldiers took more money than was needed from the people, sometimes threatening violence. If you had been one of the soldiers, how might you have felt as you heard John's words?
- e. Verse 15: Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. In verse 16 John said that he was unworthy to untie the sandals of the one coming after him, one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Untying sandals was considered work that slaves did. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit fell on people but did not live inside them. When Jesus gave the Spirit, the Spirit would live inside disciples. What does John think and feel about Jesus? How did John's message about Jesus and the Holy Spirit prepare the way for Jesus's message of Good News?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

- 5. The common people who had two shirts were told to give one away. How might that teaching apply to us today? Where do you see differences in income on your campus or in the city where you live now? Or in your home country? What is being done or could be done to change the situation, both short term and long term?

Memory Verse: Luke 3:16

John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Write it in English and your heart language here:

RESPOND

Practice: Think through your answers to Question 6 and spend some time listening to the Lord as a group.

After your listening prayer time, decide what next steps your group wants to pursue and get volunteers to research possibilities. Close in prayer for this Respond step, the needs of group members, and for all situations where injustice prevails.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Joan Krebs, ISM Volunteer with training in Bible and Theology, and Diane Tyndall, a Grad and Faculty campus minister with training in discipleship and theology commented on this study.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To help students grasp that John's message about repentance points us to Jesus' good news of salvation and gift of the Holy Spirit
- To help students grasp God's desire that for his disciples to live just lives with concern for equity and honesty
- To help students grasp God's desire for just societies where those with power do not misuse it for their own gain and consider what responsibility they might have to change these situations

Notes on the Questions

Opening Question: Sin includes both heart attitudes and actions that separate us from God and others. Repentance is turning from self to God, which opens us to receive the good news of Jesus.

Question 2: It occurs on both sides of the Jordan River at a time where there was expectation of the promised Messiah (v. 15), with hope that he would free them from unfair and sometimes cruel Roman rule.

Question 3: Repeated: God, Lord, salvation from God, repent, turn from sins, warning; contrast: baptize with water/ baptize with Holy Spirit.

Question 4: Remind students to assume that the questioners were sincere. Give people some time to think about their answers. Think about your own so that you can be the first to answer and help others open up, if needed.

Question 5: John makes it clear that his role is to prepare people to see their need for Jesus. His message about repentance and the two kinds of baptism is good news because the Holy Spirit will bring salvation and the ability to obey.

Question 6: Again, think through some answers to this question so that, if needed, your answers can spark ideas in others in the group. Here are some possibilities:

Your group or individuals from your group could volunteer in a food pantry on campus or in the city or help with harvesting a community garden where food goes to those who have no good grocery stores nearby. Or you could give extra clothing to a thrift shop that employs low income workers. More permanent solutions include supporting university employees such as cafeteria workers and maintenance people who are seeking incomes that allow them to live nearby instead of traveling a long way to work.

Climate change often disproportionately impacts the poor, so efforts to care for the environment are options as well.

Notes on the Respond Section

Make sure you take time (5 minutes is fine) to listen to the Lord together and take time to make sure everyone who has something to share does so.

Chapter 12

Relationship with Society: Combating Racism



PAINTING: Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch, 1853-1890), *The Good Samaritan* [public domain]

Opening Question: As you look at this image and reflect on the biblical story of The Good Samaritan, how do the people in this image display a response to racism?

DEBRIEF

Have group members repeat the memory verse and share how they did with last week's "Respond" step as they arrive. Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

Our previous studies have focused on relationships with others in personal contexts. Now we move to relationships on a larger scale: relationships with society.

HEAR THE WORD

Jesus, born a Jewish man, was well aware of the cultural brokenness of his time. His ministry crossed all cultural boundaries and expectations: he fellowshipped with women, the poor, Gentiles (non-Jews), tax collectors, and the wealthy. Most of his interactions had some cultural-religious-political impact.

Today's Scripture will focus on one interaction Jesus had with a Jewish religious teacher that brought the teacher's racism to the surface and challenged his understanding of what is needed to enter into the eternal life of God's Kingdom.

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

- Expert in the law: someone who studies the Jewish law (the Pentateuch or first 5 books of the Bible)
- History between Israelites (Jews) and Samaritans
 - Ethnic - Gentiles were exiled to the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 722 BC. Samaritans descended from Jews who intermarried with Gentiles at that time.
 - Religious - often viewed as syncretistic or idolatrous - religious tension that historically led to violence.
 - There was deep hatred and ethnic tension between Jews and Samaritans. For Jews, to be called 'Samaritan' was a derogatory/insulting term.
- Parable: A story that has a deeper spiritual meaning
 - In Rabbinic tradition, in this parable, one would expect a "pious Israelite" to perform a pious duty that a priest and Levite had failed to perform" (Keener, IVP Bible Background Commentary NT 2nd edition, 208).
 - Therefore, the expectation for Jewish listeners at the time is that a pious Israelite would be the hero of the story: instead Jesus makes a hated Samaritan the hero!

- The road from Jerusalem to Jericho
 - A 27 km-long arduous journey (900 vertical meters): from higher to lower
 - Jerusalem = location of the temple, Jericho = where many priests lived
 - Robbers were common on this road and targeted people traveling alone. (Keener, IVP Bible Background Commentary NT 2nd edition, 207)
- Priest: A Levite who has descended from Aaron and serves and teaches in the temple
 - Leviticus 21:1-3 - priests should not touch a corpse or would become ritually unclean.
- Levite: An Israelite from the priestly tribe of Levi: would also become unclean
- Two denarii: two full days' wages

Luke 10:25-37: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (NIV)

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out

two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Have one person read verses 25-29 and another verses 30-37.
2. Now read the passage silently. What stands out to you? What questions do you have?
3. Who are the characters? What is the purpose of the expert's questioning of Jesus, according to verse 25?
4. List the actions that each person takes in response to the man on the road. What similarities or differences do you see?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

5. Imagine that you are the priest or Levite. How do you feel when you see the body? Why do you think the priest and Levite did not stop to check on the man who was attacked?
6. Imagine that you are the Samaritan. How do you feel when you see the man on the road? What does it cost the Samaritan to care for the man? What does the Samaritan risk?
7. The expert in the Law asks questions that reveal a shortcoming in his understanding of what it means to follow God. The expert may view "loving your neighbor" as a task to check off, motivated by gain and not compassion that reflects the heart of God. In telling the parable, what is Jesus teaching about what it means to be a follower of God?

8. Considering the cultural brokenness between Jews and Samaritans at the time, what is significant about Jesus highlighting the Samaritan as the hero of the parable?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

9. There were strong racial and religious barriers between Jews and Samaritans. Where do you see racism in your host country? In your home country? Have you been the target of hidden or clear racism? How can you and your group respond to what you see and experience around you?

Memory Verse: Leviticus 19:18 (NIV)

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Jewish people would understand this as referring only to fellow Jews, but Lev. 19:33-34 extends the command:

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Write the verse in English and your heart language on an index card.

RESPOND

Practice: Spend time in personal reflection and write some thoughts in your journal to answer these questions:

- Put yourself in the mind of the expert in the law. He answers Jesus' last question correctly but can't acknowledge that the true neighbor was a Samaritan. Why would have this been so hard for him? Ask the Spirit to bring to the surface any hidden prejudices inside *you* and show you how you need to grow.
- Who are individuals or people groups with whom you spend most of your time? With whom are you most comfortable? Are there individuals or people groups you tend to avoid? What people groups did you and/or your family grow up fearing or distrusting?
- After the next study on inter-ethnic reconciliation, you will be challenged to reach out to a group you have been avoiding. Start praying about this now.

CLOSING

Close in group prayer for the practice step, other group needs and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Lancaster is a second-generation South Asian American and third-culture kid. She has lived in various parts of California, Singapore, Boston, and most recently, outside of Chicago. As a student at the University of California San Diego, Caroline fell in love with Jesus and learned about God's heart for justice. After working in marketing and design for a few years, she became a campus minister with InterVarsity at Boston University. She currently serves as a National Multiethnic Resource Specialist and is passionate about equipping staff and students to pursue reconciliation and justice on campus. She is a certified Cultural Intelligence Trainer and participated in Rev. Dr. Brenda-Salter McNeil's Reconciliation Leaders Cohort. She is married to a wonderful, white-Armenian husband and is mother of a son.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- Help students internalize Jesus' value of loving people of every ethnicity and diverse group
- To enable students to begin or continue surfacing their own hidden prejudices, as the Holy Spirit directs them
- To help students consider racism as a societal issue and look for ways they see it on and off campus
- To enable them to consider how they can continue this work in their next context

Notes on the Questions

Question 3: The expert wants to "test" Jesus, perhaps to show the crowd the superiority of those who have studied the law for years.

Question 5: Touching a dead body would have made them unclean. They probably didn't want to risk this. They may have felt some guilt at not checking to see if the man were alive, but also fear of being defiled.

Question 6: The text tells us the Samaritan took pity, but he may have felt fear for different reasons from the first two. What does it cost the Samaritan to care for the man? What does the Samaritan risk?

- Time, money, resources, cleanliness, change of plans, his own safety
- Additionally: PERCEPTION - the Samaritan is on a road where robbers are common. What might the assumption and perception be, seeing a Samaritan crouched over an injured body? The Samaritan risked being perceived as the perpetrator, rather than the hero (which could have put his own life in danger).

Question 7: What is Jesus teaching about what it means to be a follower of God?

- Following Jesus is just not about gaining eternal life, but reflecting the heart of God in word and deed. Loving radically, compassionately, and generously and pursuing healing and reconciliation across enemy lines help bring the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Question 8: Considering the cultural brokenness between Jews and Samaritans at the time, what is significant about Jesus highlighting the Samaritan as the hero of the parable?

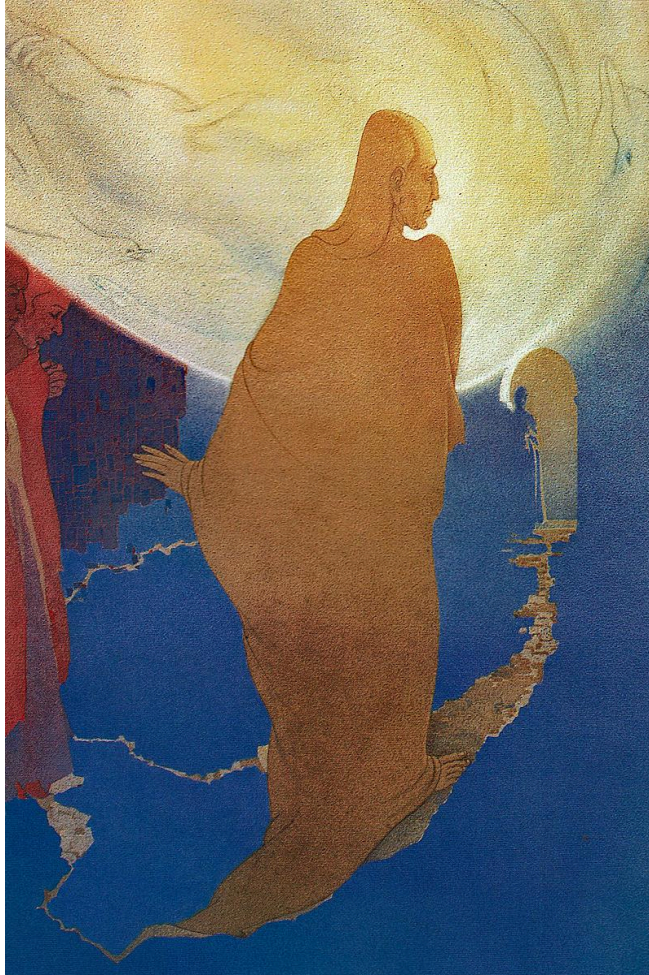
- From cultural context notes: Jesus reframes an “insulting” name as something to aspire to.
- Jesus does not ignore the ethnic tension between Jews and Samaritans. The story not only instills value and worth into people that have been deemed the “enemy,” but Jesus addresses the expert’s biases. Unlike the assumptions of the religious elite, people of all nations are welcome in the Kingdom of God and will be worshiping him in heaven (Rev. 7:9).

Question 9: If students have been the target of racism, helping them deal with issues of forgiveness as outlined in the last two chapters is crucial. If they feel unsafe, discuss how they can protect themselves. Could other group members help? Does the university have escort services?

Group members could also educate themselves about anything their university is doing to fight racism on campus.

Chapter 13

Relationship with Society: Inter-ethnic Reconciliation



PAINTING: Frank Wesley (Indian, 1923-2002), *Peter's Vision*

Opening Question: Where is God inviting you to build bridges across cultural, ethnic, or ideological divides?

DEBRIEF

Have group members repeat the memory verse and share how they did with asking the Lord to show them hidden prejudices and list groups with whom they feel uncomfortable as they arrive. Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

HEAR THE WORD

The larger context of this story is the history of the Jewish people living among non-Jewish or “Gentile” nations.

In New Testament times, Israel (Palestine) had been ruled by different Gentile empires for almost 600 years; first the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Greeks, and now the Romans.

In 63 B.C., Rome took rule of Palestine. The Roman occupation is described as follows: “When the Roman army occupied a land, it was accompanied by thousands of civilians (wives, children, doctors, merchants, etc.). The army lived off the occupied country, pilfering its natural resources, enslaving members of its population, raping women and generally terrorizing the populace.”¹

Pontius Pilate became governor in 26 AD; he repeatedly clashed with the Jews. In the Bible, it is reported that on one occasion, he killed Jews in Galilee and mixed their blood with blood of the sacrifices (Luke 13:1).

Many Jews never associated with Gentiles because they thought Gentiles were religiously unclean. They looked down on the Gentiles as people who were outside of God’s salvation and blessings promised in the Old Testament. They looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come and deliver them from Gentile rule.

Even though Peter was committed to spreading Jesus’ Good News to his own people, Israel, after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, his understanding about what Good News was and who it is for was still very limited. God expanded his horizon in a very unexpected way, however, by guiding him to people with whom he would never have been willing to associate with before. God had directed a Gentile seeker named Cornelius to send a message to Peter.

At the beginning of this chapter, we learn that Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea, was a devout God-fearer. (To fear is to have reverence for, as we know from many Old Testament references to the fear of the Lord.) Non-Jews (Gentiles) who had contact with Jews sometimes became God-fearers, studying the Scriptures and worshiping God without actually converting to Judaism. When Cornelius sends messengers to Peter, they, God-fearers themselves, explain to Peter that Cornelius is a God-fearer. So when Peter shares, he can refer to prophets, knowing these God-fearers have read the prophets.

¹ W. J. Heard, “REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 688.

Acts 10: 1-47(NIV)

¹ At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

⁹ About noon the following day as they [the messengers from Cornelius] were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

²² The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told

him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.”²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along.²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.²⁶ But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.²⁸ He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

³⁰ Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross,⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

[In verses 44-48 the Holy Spirit fell on everyone in Cornelius' household, and Peter, seeing this, had them baptized.]

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Check to see that everyone understands the words in the passage and have several people read it aloud, taking the parts of the narrator, Peter and Cornelius. Then, let people read the text quietly to themselves.

What questions do you have about the text?

2. In what two locations does this story happen? What did Peter see and hear in his vision?
3. What was his first response and the reason for it? (v. 11-16)
4. How often did the vision occur? How did Peter change after he heard the voice?
5. What happened at Cornelius' home?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

6. What did Peter learn from his experience with Cornelius and his household)?
7. Both Cornelius and Peter received messages from God. What contrasts do you see between how he and Peter responded? What similarities?
8. Put yourself in Peter's mind. Why do you think it took three times for him to realize what God was saying to him?

APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

9. Think again of the people with whom you feel uncomfortable whom you listed as a part of last week's Respond step. How do you think God thinks of and feels about this group?

Now fill in the blank (v.15) with an appropriate word which represents your case.

“Do not call () impure that God has made clean.”

RESPOND

This week find someone on your campus who is from a different culture that is unfamiliar to you or even considered as an “enemy” back home—look at the list you made in the last RESPOND step for ideas. Invite them for a meal or coffee and have a time to get to know each other. Pray before and after you meet.

Make the invitation low-key and casual: “I’ve seen you on campus a lot and just wanted to get to know you a bit,” rather than something serious, like “I wanted to have a reconciliation talk with you.” Meeting in a public place like a cafeteria, coffee shop, or restaurant would help with keeping the occasion neutral. If you are considering meeting someone who is the opposite gender from you, make sure that it is not inappropriate. This would be very unusual for Islamic background people, for example.

When you meet, start by sharing about things you have in common (what you study, what made you want to study at this school, etc.). You don’t have to talk about the differences and difficulties between your home cultures / ethnicities. If you do, try to ask honest questions and listen to their stories with an understanding heart rather than making hasty conclusions to support preconceived opinions. We recommend “sandwiching” difficult topics with more casual topics, such as hobbies, majors, or favorite places in town.

If you can’t find anyone, do some short research about one of your neighboring countries. Choose a country that you really don’t know or don’t like. What is the relationship between two countries? Especially, how is history taught differently in each country? How might these worldview differences make sharing God’s Kingdom shalom more difficult?

Memory Verse: Acts 10:34-35 (NIV)

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

Write these verses in your heart language here:

Memorize them in your heart language and English this week.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yasuyuki (Yasu) Kamata was an international student in Chicago, United States where he started to attend church and came to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. After completing his MA degree in social sciences, he pursued his MDiv at North Park Theological Seminary. During that time, he also served on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, ministering to international students. After graduation, Yasu returned to Japan and has served with Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai (KGK), serving international students studying in Japan and facilitating partnerships with other IFES movements in East Asia. In collaboration with his Korean counterpart Hwakyong, he has facilitated multiple study tours to help fellowship grow among Korean and Japanese Christian students. Yasu lives in Tokyo with his wife and two daughters. He is currently regional team leader for the Kanto (Tokyo) region of the KGK.

Hwakyong Rahat Namkung was a campus minister with InterVarsity Fellowship/Korea. She is a graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, IL and has partnered with Yasu to facilitate tours enhancing fellowship among Korean and Japanese Christian students.

Art Information: Wesley, Frank, 1923-2002. Peter's Vision, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.
<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=59250> [retrieved September 10, 2024].
Original source: Estate of Frank Wesley, http://www.frankwesleyart.com/main_page.htm.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- For students to grasp God's desire to bring reconciliation amongst peoples that are in conflict with one another.
- For them to take initial steps in building relationships and understanding people who are distant from them either historically, politically, or culturally.

Notes on the Questions

Question 2: The large sheet contained all kinds of animals, including those that were considered to be "unclean." For a list of "unclean" animals and what Jews were supposed to do with them, refer to Leviticus 11:2-47. Bring in a Bible with a map or find an online map to help people see the locations involved in the text.

Question 6: The coming of the Spirit upon the Gentiles indicated God's acceptance of them as genuine followers of Christ.

Question 8: Cultural beliefs are at the worldview level, normally unquestioned. Prejudices can be, too!

Chapter 14

Relationship with Society: Suffering Persecution and Isolation

Opening Question: How has God entered into your times of suffering?

DEBRIEF

Have group members repeat the memory verse and share how they did with last week's Respond step. Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

Editor's Note: The author of this chapter left her family in order to follow Jesus freely. God later reunited her with her family. She originally wanted to write about Joseph (Genesis 37-45) because of the family forgiveness she experienced, but learning that there was already a chapter on forgiveness, chose Romans 8.

Other individuals sometimes prayerfully choose a different path, postponing baptism in hopes of maintaining relationships and sharing Jesus with family. One Japanese believer postponed baptism until God provided a Christian fiancé, showing her parents God's power to provide and making them more open to her decision. Still others choose to be secret believers and use their positions of influence for Jesus, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (John 3:1-2 and 19:38-42).

If you are faced with such choices, seek the counsel of older Christians, especially those in your home country, if possible, and prayerfully ask the Lord to guide you.

Regardless, Geeta Mondol's experience of God's presence during her time of isolation will encourage you. Many Christians face isolation at some point in their lives, if not because of their faith, because of illness or other circumstances. God can use this isolation to grow us.

HEAR THE WORD

Old Testament Context:

In Genesis 3: 17-19, God placed the ground under a curse.

Creation is compared to a person in many places, for example Ps. 96: 11-13 and Isa. 55:12.

Psalm 44:22: "Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered" (NIV) is one of many verses that teach that God's people may have to suffer for no fault of their own.

Immediate Context:

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul devotes chapter 8 to the living out of the Christian life through walking in the Spirit (1-17) and enduring suffering with the knowledge that there is glory in the future (18-30). Then comes the triumphant climax of the chapter, verses 31-39.

Romans 8:12-39 New Living Translation (NLT)

¹²Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

²⁰Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²²For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. ²⁴We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. ²⁵But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

²⁶And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. ²⁸And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn[b] among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. ³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶ (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Read the verses slowly, thinking about each verse. Circle any words or ideas that you don't understand and underline the words that speak to you the most. Share those verses with the group. Answer each others' questions. Then have someone read the passage aloud.
2. Verses 15-16 state that believers are able to call God "Abba," the same term of endearment Jesus used in Mark 14:36 and that Paul says we use because we are adopted by the Father. What does being able to call God Abba do for us, according to these verses?
3. According to verses 20-23, why is creation groaning and why do believers groan? Who else is also groaning (verses 23 and 26) and how does this groaning help us pray? (This groaning is not the speaking of other languages as at Pentecost but something deeper and wordless). What are believers hoping for (verse 23)?
4. What are some of the difficulties that the passage says believers may face?

INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?) and APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

5. The verb translated here as “chosen” in verse 29 is more literally “predestined.” But this verse is talking about predestination to become like Jesus, not for salvation. What does it mean to you to be chosen by God to become like Jesus? Ask the Lord to show you one area in your life where he wants to help you become more like Jesus.
6. How could the difficulties Paul lists (and other troubles) contribute to making us more like Jesus as Paul says they will in verse 29?
7. Look at verse 31. What does Jesus’ death for us show about God’s love for us?
8. Look at verses 32-33. What does Jesus’ death for us show about God’s love for us? Have you ever felt separated, alone and that no one cares for you? What are those feelings like? How does it make you feel that Jesus is at God’s right hand (a place of honor) praying for you and all his people...that not one thing in the whole universe can separate you from the love of God (verses 35-39)? When and where have you experienced this for yourself?

Memory Verse: Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Write the verses in your heart language here:

RESPOND

Practice: Beginning this week, through the last week of this series, and possibly until the end of the school term, do the following:

Form a small (2-5 members with 3 being the ideal) support group to pray for one another in your challenges to live as a believer in a difficult world, whether it be persecution in the workplace or back home or isolation caused by illness or work schedules, God still intends for us to fellowship together and keep the fire of the Spirit

burning in us. Meet by phone or your favorite app for 20-45 minutes weekly. If you are about to graduate, continue with this group until you are able to locate fellow believers and find a similar group wherever God leads you.

Spend a moment in silent listening to the Lord about who in your group you could meet with. Close in prayer for group member needs, the formation of support groups and the needs of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geeta Mondol was born and raised in a Hindu family. She came to know Jesus Christ as her Savior when she was in college. She did her Bachelors degree in History (Hons) from Delhi University and later completed a Bachelors in Religious Education from Reformed Bible College (now Kuyper College) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After marriage she became involved with the Union of Evangelical Students of India, the Indian member of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, with her husband. After having two children, one of whom had autism, she got involved in the field of autism. This raised questions within her about the biblical response to those with disabilities. So she started the Ashish Foundation for the Differently Abled, which runs programs for both children and adults with autism. Her passion continues to be working with those from other faiths who are grappling with difficult situations, as well as training people on the impact of worldview on disabilities. She now has a good relationship with her parents and siblings. Several campus ministers from InterVarsity-USA, some with theological and discipleship training and others with experience with South Asian students, commented on this chapter.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- Students will understand and experience more deeply their position as adopted children who can address God intimately
- They will rejoice that God is with us in times of persecution, isolation and suffering
- They will see how God can use those times to make us more like Jesus.
- Students will form a group to support them in difficult times

Notes on the Questions

Question 2: We are groaning and so is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is interceding for us, representing us to the Father, and the Father knows what we need. So, in our groaning we can rest because the Father now knows what we need.

Question 3: Being able to call God "Abba" gives us great intimacy with the Father and reminds us of the spiritual inheritance he has given us.

Question 6: Jesus experienced some of these difficulties: persecution, suffering, death. When the Holy Spirit inside us helps us to respond to troubles with faith and praise, we are drawn closer to Jesus and become more like Him.

Question 8: Facilitator, prayerfully ask the Lord to bring to your mind a situation where the Lord's presence and strength were helpful to you and be ready to share it if group members hesitate. That will encourage them and also give them time to think about what they might want to share.

Chapter 15

Relationship with Society: Facilitating Lasting Change

DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step and repeat the memory verse as they arrive.

Open with prayer for the Spirit to illuminate the group during the study.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Because of Israel's continual disobedience, God disciplined Israel by allowing the Babylonians to force much of the Jewish population into exile and slavery. God's temple was destroyed. Nearly 80 years after the 70-year exile ended, Jerusalem's city wall was broken down and its gates had been destroyed by fire. This meant that Jerusalem's citizens were vulnerable to attack. The city was in a situation of shame, and *shalom* needed to be restored.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king of Persia at this time. *A cupbearer was a high ranking officer whose duty it was to serve drinks to royalty. Because of potential plots to poison the king or his family, this person had to be completely trustworthy.*

When he received news of Israel's shame, Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. As he prayed, God put it on his heart to restore Jerusalem's city walls and gates. He took great risk to ask King Artaxexe for a leave of absence to restore the city and for timber for the gates of the wall from the king's forest. The king said yes (chapters 1-2).

Nehemiah could have been seen as an outsider by the local people, so he needed to build trust with them. Once he got God's vision for the work by riding around the walls alone (2:12-16) he shared that vision with the local people and rulers who were most impacted by the state of the wall.

¹⁷ So I said to them, "You see the trouble that we're in: Jerusalem is in ruins, and its gates are destroyed by fire! Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we won't continue to be in disgrace." ¹⁸ I told them that my God had taken care of me, and also told them what the king had said to me. "Let's start rebuilding!" they said, and they eagerly began the work.

Many responded eagerly. The rest of the book describes many of their successes and trials.. As competing rulers made it more difficult for them to build, they recruited their

families to help, worked even harder, and had to act as soldiers. In the end, they were successful (Chapter 7). They restored not only the wall, but also the people's dignity, their spiritual walk with God (Chapters 8-10), and the purity of the temple (Chapter 13).

In this, our final study, we will learn from Nehemiah's values and his process of inviting partners into God's work.

HEAR THE WORD

Listen to this recording of Nehemiah 3 in the NIV: (5:04 minutes).

<https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/mclean/niv/Neh.3>

Nehemiah Chapter 3 (CEB):

¹ Then Eliashib the high priest set to work with his fellow priests and built the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, then dedicated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred and as far as the Tower of Hananel.

² The people of Jericho built next to them, and Zaccur, Imri's son, built next to them. ³ The children of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. ⁴ Next to them Meremoth, Uriah's son and Hakkoz's grandson, made repairs. Meshullam, Berechiah's son and Meshezabel's grandson, made repairs next to them, and Zadok, Baana's son, made repairs next to them. ⁵ Next to them the people from Tekoa made repairs, but their officials wouldn't help with the work of their supervisors.

⁶ Joiada, Paseah's son, and Meshullam, Besodeiah's son, repaired the Mishneh Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. ⁷ Next to them repairs were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and the people of Gibeon and of Mizpah, who were ruled by the governor of the province Beyond the River.

⁸ Uzziel, Harhaiah's son, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs next to them; and Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs next to him. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹ Next to them Rephaiah, Hur's son, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. ¹⁰ Next to them Jedaiah, Harumaph's son, made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush, Hashabneiah's son, made repairs next to him.

¹¹ Malchijah, Harim's son, and Hasshub, Pahath-moab's son, repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² Next to them Shallum, Hallohesh's son, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, along with his daughters. ¹³ Hanun and the people

of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate; they built it and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. They also repaired fifteen hundred feet of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate.

¹⁴ Malchiah, Rechab's son, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set up its doors, bolts, and bars.

¹⁵ And Shallum, Col-hozeh's son, ruler of the Mizpah district, repaired the Spring Gate. He rebuilt and covered it, and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. He also built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from David's City.

¹⁶ After him, Nehemiah, Azbuk's son, ruler of half the Beth-zur district, repaired from the point opposite David's tombs as far as the artificial pool and the Warriors' House. ¹⁷ After him, the Levites made repairs: Rehum, Bani's son, and next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. ¹⁸ After him, their relatives made repairs: Binnui, Henadad's son, ruler of half the district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer, Jeshua's son, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the Angle. ²⁰ After him, Baruch, Zabbai's son, thoroughly repaired another section from the Angle to the door of the house of the high priest Eliashib. ²¹ After him, Meremoth, Uriah's son and Hakkoz's grandson, repaired another section from the door to the back of Eliashib's house.

²² After him, the priests from the surrounding area made repairs. ²³ After them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them, Azariah, Maaseiah's son and Ananiah's grandson, repaired beside his house. ²⁴ After him, Binnui, Henadad's son, repaired another section from the house of Azariah to the Angle and to the corner. ²⁵ Palal, Uzai's son, repaired from the point opposite the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him, Pedaiah, Parosh's son, ²⁶ and the temple servants living on Ophel made repairs up to the point opposite the Water Gate to the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷ After them, the people of Tekoa repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ From the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each one opposite his own house. ²⁹ After them, Zadok, Immer's son, made repairs opposite his own house. After him, Shemaiah, Shecaniah's son, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs. ³⁰ After him, Hananiah, Shelemiah's son, and Hanun, Zalaph's sixth son, repaired another section. After them, Meshullam, Berechiah's son, made repairs opposite his own room. ³¹ After him, Malchiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Parade Gate, and as far as the upper room at

the corner. ³² And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Read quietly and prayerfully through the text after listening to the audio. Share with others in the group the questions that come to your mind. Answer each others' questions from the text and the context.
2. What different kinds of people did Nehemiah recruit (vocation, status in society, gender, place of birth)?
3. Consult a map of Israel during the time of Nehemiah and identify from where the workers came.

INTERPRET and APPLY (What does the passage mean to the original readers and what does it mean for me/us?)

4. Why do you think Nehemiah considered it important to include the names, vocations, locations, and family status of his co-laborers in such detail? How would you describe his strategy for rebuilding the wall?
5. What do you learn about the kind of disciple God uses from this story? What characteristic(s) of Nehemiah would you like to see more of in your life?
6. What do you learn from this story about how outsiders can facilitate change to advance the shalom of the Kingdom in situations where they are not insiders?

Take a couple of minutes to pray about and jot down thoughts, as we consider the next question:

7. What situation that needs change, right here and now, or after graduating, is God putting on your heart? What is a first step you can take to begin the change process? Who might partner with you to bring this change about?

RESPOND

Practice: Inviting Partners

Share with the group what you wrote in response to Questions 6 and 7.

As we saw from this study, change comes when people partner together. This week, prayerfully share vision for the work God has put on your heart with a potential partner. Tell what you have been learning about God's desire for shalom and about Nehemiah's experience and ask him or her to pray about joining you.

Whether your vision is for something in your host or home country, you can begin by praying regularly together and asking God for a plan, as Nehemiah did. If the person you ask says "Yes," set a time to pray, even if it's just over the phone or by video call.

If you are returning home but don't know a Christian insider with whom you could partner, ask the Lord to give you a group of people to pray with you about finding a partner back home. This could be someone in the group or at your church.

If you are remaining for the next term, consider seeking partners to continue one of the RESPOND steps started or suggested earlier or volunteering to help facilitate the next group of students who go through the guide.

Memory Verse: Nehemiah 2:17-18 (NIV)

"So I said to them, 'You see the trouble that we're in: Jerusalem is in ruins, and its gates are destroyed by fire! Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we won't continue to be in disgrace.' I told them that my God had taken care of me, and also told them what the king had said to me. 'Let's start rebuilding!' they said, and they eagerly began the work."

Memorize this verse in English and in your heart language now.

CLOSING

Close in prayer for each other about growing in a certain area to imitate Nehemiah, about gaining a vision for change and recruiting partners who are insiders for this work.

Your group may also want to celebrate finishing the series with food, worship and sharing what God has done in your lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chloe Papke was first exposed to people from around the globe while attending Oberlin Conservatory which, at the time, the student body was nearly 30% international. Now, she is an avid traveler and lover of cultural differences and has close friends on every continent. She came to faith as a student in InterVarsity and has worked with IVCF ever since. Many of her favorite experiences have been developing

international leaders in mostly American fellowships and helping American students to become more globally-minded. Chloe has directed numerous Urban Projects, an Abolitionist Plunge, and several Global Urban Treks to Egypt where she has developed the leadership of a number of Egyptian students. Chloe is currently InterVarsity's International Student Ministry Associate Director for Strategic Projects and holds a Master's of Arts degree in Theology and Islamic Studies from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Fuller Seminary. She particularly enjoys her chaplain work with a local Muslim Student Association and writing about peacemaking between people of different religious faiths. When she is not working, she loves road biking and spending time with her daughter.

Facilitator's Notes

Objectives of the Study

- To learn how we as outsiders can facilitate among people who are insiders through Nehemiah's story.
- To see how God can use our obedience to bring about change that increases shalom.
- To observe characteristics of a disciple in Nehemiah that aid in change and internalize a desire for God to produce those characteristics in us.

Notes on the Questions

Introduction: Summarize this material briefly emphasizing Nehemiah's prayerfulness and, reading aloud the verses from chapter 2:17-18, which will become the memory verse.

Question 2: What kinds of people did Nehemiah recruit (vocation, status in society, gender, place of birth.)?

1. Ruling leaders: from Persia, from surrounding areas and cities, from Jerusalem
2. Gender: Men and women
3. Religious leaders: local priests, high priest, priests from surrounding regions, Levites, temple servants
4. Families: sons and daughters, grandchildren
5. Vocations: perfumers, goldsmiths, merchants, gatekeepers

Question 3: Try to bring in a Bible with a map or share an online map with the group. The Common English Bible has an excellent map. Looking at a map of Israel during the time of Nehemiah, identify where the workers came from.

1. NW (Gibeon)
2. N (Mizpah)
3. NE (Jericho)
4. S (Beth-haccarem, Tekoa)
5. SW (Beth-zur, Keilah)

Question 4: There was a great diversity: social classes, occupations, men and women, locations of those coming in to work. This diversity better represents the whole people of God and could lead to greater unity later on. Unlike Nehemiah, those listed were all insiders, having lived in the area all their lives. Nehemiah could draw on their knowledge of the situation and not be accused of forcing change as an outsider. This long list suggests that Kingdom change comes as a community listens to and partners with the Lord. Nehemiah 's strategy was to prayerfully recruit and work alongside a diverse group of knowledgeable insiders who would partner together and with the Lord to bring change.

Question 6: Nehemiah was prayerful, courageous, full of faith, humble, and dependent on the Lord.