



**Lazarus' Tomb in Bethany**

# **Miracles with Meaning: The Miracles of Jesus in John**

**Seven Bible studies from John  
To help you understand Jesus power in your life.**

**By Rev. Mark R. Etter**

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## Bible Studies in this series

<p><b>Creation and Fall</b> – 6 studies to look at the creation and fall of mankind. We will look at the perfection and plan of God’s creation and how man tarnished the creation with sin.</p>	<p><b>Jesus’ Miracles in John’s Gospel</b> – 7 studies on the miracles of Jesus in the gospel of John. Each miracle has a meaning that tells us something important about Jesus’ person and ministry.</p>
<p><b>Noah: Man and Mission</b> – 6 studies on the Flood. We will see the grace of God and the obedience and trust of Noah. God makes a new beginning in a fallen world.</p>	<p><b>Jesus’ parables in Luke</b> – 6 studies on the parables of Jesus in Luke. We will look at the meaning behind some of these familiar parables and see patterns for our lives.</p>
<p><b>Storm Shelter Psalms</b> – 6 studies on some of the psalms to turn to when life hits you hard. Wrestle with the psalmist as he learns to trust the Lord in difficult times.</p>	<p><b>Upper Room Conversations</b> – 6 studies on the conversation that Jesus had with the disciples around the last supper table. Learn what was so important to Jesus that He just had to share it with the disciples.</p>
<p><b>Revival in Nehemiah</b> – 6 studies on the second half of Nehemiah. The walls were rebuilt. Now it was time to rebuild a people who was down and distant from the Lord.</p>	<p><b>Galatians: Rules versus Grace</b> – 6 studies with Paul in the heart of the gospel. In an age when people want to force us to follow their rules, Paul wants us to see the power of grace.</p>
<p><b>Daniel: Godly Living in a Pagan World</b> – 6 studies to encourage us as we live in a world that has become harsh to God. It will make all the difference to keep our faith in tough times.</p>	<p><b>Paul’s first missionary journey</b> – 6 studies on the conversion and first journey of Paul. See Paul as he grows and learn what the life of the Christian was meant to be.</p>
<p><b>Power of Prayer</b> – 6 studies on the power and help that we receive in prayer. Follow the saints in their prayers and learn from them how valuable prayer can be for you.</p>	

## Introduction

They were more than just miracles. They have meaning for those who were willing to look below the surface. Why did Jesus turn water into wine quietly, so only a few knew the miracle was His? Why did Jesus put mud on the blind man's eyes? Why did He wait four days to go and raise Lazarus from the dead? Those questions hint at the deeper meaning of each of the seven miracles in the gospel of John. John chose these seven miracles out of the dozens of miracles that Jesus did during His three-year ministry. The miracles demonstrate the depth of Jesus power but are also connected to His teachings. If you pay attention to the actions of Jesus, you gain an intimate look at Jesus and His ministry. These are more than miracles. They look into the mind and heart of our Lord.

All of us have times in our lives when we could use a miracle. Our struggle is that most of us don't know how to ask for a miracle. We are seldom patient enough to let Jesus work more than simple miracles in our lives. As we study the seven miracles of Jesus in the gospel of John, we learn about how, when, and why Jesus still works miracles for His people. We see the depth of His workings in the lives of His people. In our times of trouble, we will learn to look for more than healing or help for the immediate problem. We will want a miracle that changes our lives. We begin to want to be like the blind man who saw things that others could not understand. We want to be like the man who wanted healing for his son and got a legacy that changed his family. We will ask Jesus for a gift that will care for all our needs and revolutionize our lives rather than help us with the problem we are facing at the moment.

The seven miracles challenge us to look beyond the surface of what is happening to understand how Jesus works in the lives of those He loves. As you study each miracle, read them and imagine that you were there and were the one needing the miracle. Let the miracles teach you patience with Mary so that you let Jesus do the miracle in His own time and His way. Let the miracles have an impact on your family and friends as they did for the Nobleman. See with Mary and Martha that miracles are not just about us but show God's glory to the world if we let them. Often, we reduce miracles to the healing of the body when Jesus wants to give us so much more. These miracles will change your picture of Jesus as your Lord and change the way that you ask for miracles in your life. You will learn to ask for the full measure of Jesus's love for you and what He can bring to your life.

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### Theme

- Sometimes, you just have to ask.  
Contagious faith can leave a legacy  
Grace is for everyone.  
We have scarcity when we don't look to Jesus.  
Faith expects Jesus to work miracles for us  
O Lord open our lips that others might see  
Miracles are about God's glory, not just our pain.

## **How to use this Bible study**

Each of the seven chapters contains an introduction to help you get the big picture and is followed by thirteen questions to help you dig into the truth. The questions will help you understand what is going on and apply it to your own lives. The leader's guide provides answers for the questions that can be used in a Sunday Bible class or a small group. In a small group setting, you may find it helpful to copy the four-page leader's guide for each person. In a large setting, it may be easier to copy the student guides provided in the back of the book so that each of the members of the class has a student guide for personal use. The leader guide could then be used by the teacher to guide the discussion. Notice that there are also three questions at the end of each lesson that can either be discussed as you meet together or assigned for people to think about in the coming week.

My prayer is that you and the members of your group or class can grow through these studies. The answers in the leader's guide may challenge you to find deeper meaning and application for your lives. Often we try to overcome problems in life by ourselves. The goal of this study is to help you understand the deeper meanings behind each of Jesus' miracles in the gospel of John so that you might have the full power of Jesus in your life. Each miracle is done in a particular way and time so that those He healed received more than just healing or help. Often we want Jesus' help and want the pain to end quickly. Realize that Jesus may want to use our pain to teach us or to bring us blessings that we have not even thought about. Let these studies guide you into deeper truths about your Lord. As you study, realize that many of the questions have no single answer but are meant to help people find God's help in your trials. If you need to take more than one week per lessons, do so and enjoy the discussion and the learning. The miracles of Jesus are worth more than just a passing glance.

### **Bibliography**

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May the Lord bless you as you learn and grow in His grace.

## **1. Water to wine – Trusting that Jesus will help.**

**John 2:1-11**

**Big idea: Sometimes, you just have to ask.**

Sometimes, if you want Jesus to work miracles for you, you have to ask. Mary knows that there is a problem at this wedding, and she goes straight to Jesus. Joseph is gone, and so Mary turns to her eldest son. She has watched her boy for thirty years. A mother knows His heart and may have an inkling of His powers. She also learns that solutions must come in His time and in His way. It was clear that Jesus did not want to reveal His power yet. When He did so later, people came for the miracles and often didn't listen to His teaching. He would do a miracle because He cared, but He would do the miracle quietly so that few knew who had helped the family with new wine.

How bad does it have to get before you ask? Do you pray before the doctor's checkup or only if the diagnosis is terrible. Do you pray at the beginning of a vacation or only when you are stranded with a broken vehicle? The wise will call on the Lord every day and not wait till things get so bad that they need a miracle. In that way, we give Jesus time to provide us with the best solution at the best time. Sometimes that is hard. We get busy and forget to ask till the simple problem has become a crisis. Sometimes it takes a crisis before we think of Jesus. Prayer needs to be a daily discipline so that we learn to trust Jesus in big problems and small.

Why do some Christians often live without the blessings of Jesus? It may be that they don't ask and don't trust Jesus enough to wait for His help. They stumble through life trying to get by with their abilities. There is a better option. It is to spend time each day in prayer. Take time to get to know Jesus better so that you can trust Him with your life. Take time to ask Him for help and answers when the problems are small. Things are better for those who come to Jesus daily in prayer because Jesus gets a chance to help them with more in their lives and to deal with many problems before they become so hurtful. Don't just cope with life; let Jesus bring His blessings to your life.

### **1. Describe a memorable wedding you attended. What was one thing that stands out in your mind about that wedding?**

Besides my wedding, I will always remember the wedding ceremonies of my two daughters. Few men get to walk their daughter up the aisle and then perform the service. I sang for their weddings as well. I will never forget the look on their faces as they stared into the eyes of their new husbands. I was so excited that they found such wonderful men to spend the rest of their lives. Let the group share their wedding moments. There may even be a few disasters that make the wedding memorable. I have had those in my ministry like the groom that passed out at his wedding or the couple that forgot the marriage license and so the wedding had to be delayed a half hour so they could get it.

**Read John 2:1-11**

### **2. Verse 1-2. What is the occasion for this miracle? Who was there with Jesus?**

Jesus and six of his disciples were invited to a wedding in Cana, a town about nine miles north of Nazareth and the home of Nathanael (John 21:2). Only John mentions Cana in the gospels. The other occurrence is in John 4, where Jesus heals a nobleman's son. Wedding feasts could last as long as a week and included the whole town. This celebration may have been the wedding of a relative of Jesus or a close family friend since Mary seems to know that there was not enough wine before most of the guests do. While Jesus was busy with His ministry, He included a wedding in His travels because people were important to Him.

**3. Verse 3. What problem did Mary bring to Jesus? Why does she approach Jesus with this news?**

Running out of wine was a major disaster at a wedding. A week-long wedding feeding most of the village was a significant undertaking. To fail to provide for your guests would be a social disgrace that would haunt the couple for years since it broke the unwritten rules of hospitality. Did Mary only share information, or did she expect that Jesus would do something about it? She may or may not have expected a miracle, but was looking to her son to help her and the family out. Although she may not have been sure what Jesus would do, she trusted Him to help with the problem.

**4. Mary turned to Jesus because of the relationship that she had with Him. What have you recently asked Jesus to do for you, and why did you think that He would help?**

It is experience and trust that cause us to pray to Jesus when we find ourselves in crisis. The news that the wine was running out was devastating. Mary may have had experience with Jesus being able to help her in stressful situations. Joseph was probably dead, and so Mary turned to her oldest son. If anyone could help, it would be Jesus. Experience is also a great teacher for us. When we find ourselves struggling, we can look back at the times that Jesus has answered our prayers and find the confidence to bring another problem before Him. We trust Him based on the love that He has shown and the help that He has given.

**5. How bad does it have to get before you turn to Jesus for help?**

Let the group stew over this question. Often people wait till someone is almost dying or they have been fired from a job before they turn to the Lord for help. Jesus becomes the avenue of last resort. They turn to Him when all other attempts at solving the problem have failed. The wise turn to Jesus whenever they find that life gives them choices or when the problem first starts. Jesus is the friend that they trust and who will help them find answers and solutions. The first group needs a mighty miracle because things have gotten so bad. The second group depends on Jesus each day and avoids much of the panic and heartache that others face.

**6. Verse 5. Mary was not promised any help from Jesus in verse 4. What did she do that showed her trust and confidence in her son?**

Jesus made it clear in verse 4 that His life followed its time table. There were a proper time and place for Jesus to reveal who He was. Mary still believes that her son will help and she tells the servants to “Do whatever He tells you.” Her words show that she was willing to let Jesus take control of the situation and that she trusted Him to help. Her respect for Jesus and her willingness to follow Him even though she had no idea what He was going to do show us how we need to open ourselves up for God’s miracles in our lives. We bring the need but trust Jesus to help us in the right way at the right time.

**7. Why is it important to obey Jesus and follow Him when we face crisis rather than questioning what He tells us to do?**

To impose our solution on Jesus is to say that we are wiser than He is. We never know how Jesus will help us, but we can be sure that His solution is better than ours. No one could have guessed that Jesus was going to solve the problem by turning water into wine. Jesus wants to help His children, but His children need to trust Him rather than trying to manage Jesus. We need to bring our needs in prayer and to live with His values while we wait for His solution. We can’t break His commandments to get what we want. If we’re going to have God’s help, we need to open our lives and follow His ways so that He can work His miracles.

**8. Verse 6. What size are the water jars that Jesus commands be filled with water? What is their common purpose?**

The text tells us that the water jars held from 20-30 gallons of liquid. They were filled to the brim, providing as much as 180 gallons of wine. The amount of wine would be plenty for the rest of the week. Interestingly, Jesus used what was at hand. The stone water jars were a familiar object in Jewish towns where they were typically used for the ceremonial washing of hands. Any time the Jews ate, they would pour water on their hands to cleanse them and wash away the impurities of everyday life. It was good hygiene and also served to remind them of their need to keep themselves pure.

**9. Verse 10. What is the master of the banquet's response when he tastes the water turned into wine? What do you think the bridegroom thought when he was chastised for saving the best wine till last?**

It was customary for the host to serve the best wine first and inferior wine to be served later. The master comments that the best wine has been saved until last. Jesus didn't make a wine that will barely do; He makes the best. It is a surprise to the master, and I am sure that it was a surprise to the bridegroom who probably had no idea where the wine came from either. Notice that Jesus does the miracle quietly. He could have created wine in a manner in which everyone knew where it came from like the feeding of the 5000, yet we know that it was not yet his time. Jesus did the miracle in a way that only the servants and the disciples knew the origin of the wine. He helped out His mother and the bridal couple but did not draw attention to himself.

**10. What does the amount and quality of the wine created by Jesus tell you about how the Lord can provide for your needs in life?**

Jesus gives the best, and Jesus lavishly takes care of His people. People often look everywhere but heavenward for happiness and help. They don't expect that God cares enough to provide more than the basics. The gift of 180 gallons of fine wine shows the depth of His love for others and His power to do anything well. Jesus does not give second-best answers. His love for us is impressive. He wants to provide us with the best even when we have to wait for His time and way. If you have been waiting for help, why go anywhere else and deny yourselves the best?

**11. Verse 11. What did the disciples learn about Jesus from this miracle that caused them to put their trust in Him?**

If you let Him, Jesus will amaze you. I suspect that the disciples followed Jesus up to this time because of His teaching (John 1:20-42). Here their eyes were opened and they saw his concern for others and His ability to offer miraculous help. They had a chance to see that Jesus was more than just a prophet. Jesus was breaking down the limits that we often put on Him. Our minds believe that He can do miracles, but our hearts often doubt His willingness to help us. This miracle inspired confidence in Jesus for the disciples. The help that Jesus gives to us should give us the confidence to keep asking for more.

**12. What does this miracle teach you about coming to the Lord for help? What help will He give, and why should you ask Him for help?**

We often do not ask the Lord for help in prayer because we don't trust Him or think that He will respond. Mary asked Jesus for help, and He answered because He cared for her and the bridal party. He cares for us, and we need to trust that he will give the best answer when the time is right. Why stumble through life trying to cope with problems when we have a friend who wants to help us and who can move heaven and earth to help. As we look at this miracle, we need to learn to believe in Him as the disciples did and come to Him when life is broken.

**13. Does Jesus still do miracles? Will He do miracles for you if you asked Him?**

It is one thing to believe that Jesus can do miracles. It is another to have the courage to ask that Jesus would do a miracle for you. Mary is an example for all of us. She trusted Jesus to help and opened the

doors for Him to do the miracle in His way. We often limit Jesus to the past instead of trusting Him in the present. We often expect God to work on our time table and conclude that if Jesus doesn't work a miracle in our way and in our time that He doesn't care. Jesus does do miracles today, and he will do them for us if we will trust Him and let Him help us in the way that He knows is best.

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. How critical does it get before you ask Jesus for help? Are you one of those who waits till they are desperate, or are you a person who comes to Jesus first?

Deep 2. What limits or opens up your life for Jesus to be able to do miracles? How are we often our own worst enemy when it comes to getting Jesus' help?

Deep 3. Sometimes, Jesus does miracles very publically in our lives. Other times, He does them quietly. Why would Jesus help either way in your life?



## **2. Nobleman's son – Giving more than healing.**

**John 4:46-54**

### **Big idea: Contagious faith can leave a legacy in a lost generation**

Contagious faith can leave a legacy in a lost generation. When Jesus goes to Cana, He encounters a nobleman who has a son close to death. With a confidence born in crisis, the man calls upon Jesus to heal his son. Jesus grants his request. His son, 20 miles away in Capernaum, has been cured. The man takes Jesus at His word, and confidently begins the trip home. At home, he tells the story of what has happened, and the rest of his household comes to faith. Crisis faith becomes confident faith and finally contagious faith. The faith of the father changes the whole family. Jesus not only gave healing to a child. By helping the man grow in his faith, Jesus changed the direction of the entire family.

The church is losing its children. We often blame it on the culture and the media who seem to be against the church and our beliefs. Children have been conditioned to think that church is boring and that the church isn't relevant today. The problem isn't the culture; it is that the church and parents are often silent about Jesus. Parents have let children put activities like soccer, scouts, and music ahead of the church. Parents have failed to teach their children the basics of faith wanting to leave that up to the church while they sip coffee on a Sunday morning. Children notice what is essential for their parents and build their lives to reflect the values of their parents. How can children have faith in Jesus when they don't know Him?

So how do we reach this lost generation? The answer is more straightforward than you think. You influence them by showing your faith. I picture the father in this story going home and telling everyone in detail about Jesus. His son gained more than healing. His son obtained a strong faith that would trust in Jesus for life. He received it because He saw his father's actions and caught the joy and power of his father's story. When was the last time you told your family about a miracle that happened to you? The generation does not have to be lost in space. Jesus continues to do beautiful things for us. Parents who show their faith in their lives and tell children how special it is to know Jesus will have a contagious faith that impacts family and friends around them.

### **1. How does the church help children to believe?**

We could begin answering this question by looking at the programs that other churches use to help children to believe. We often think of exciting programs with lots of fun, activities, and music for Sunday school. Many churches have sports programs that attract children. Others have groups that take the children on trips or involve them in mission activities. What is the draw for these activities, and what is the benefit? Do the events include the parents, or do parents drop their kids off? The question is just a start to begin the discussion of what we want the children to believe about Jesus and how do we get there?

### **Read John 4:46-54**

### **2. Verse 45. Now that Jesus is back from Judea, what motivates the people to want to see Jesus?**

Jesus had been absent from Galilee for about six months. He had been in Judea and Samaria performing miracles and perhaps some of the people had seen him performing miracles in Jerusalem. Now they wanted Jesus to deliver wonders here in Galilee as he had done further south. Some may have wanted to see the spectacle. Others may have had family members who needed to be healed. The hometown boy had returned. Sadly, Jesus faces a familiar struggle. The people don't want His teaching as much as miracles. They want Him to do marvels to prove Himself, or they will abandon Him.

**3. Verse 46-47. Who comes to Jesus while He is in Cana, and what does the man want Jesus to do for him? How far has he come with his request?**

The man is a nobleman who is perhaps a member of Herod's royal court. He lives twenty miles away from Cana in Capernaum, and he has a child who is deadly sick. He hears about the miracle worker who has returned to Cana, and so he travels to ask Jesus to come and heal his son. Realize that this man is at wit's end. He has probably tried all the cures that were common in his day, but nothing has worked. He has faith born of crisis. He is hoping against all hope that this traveling rabbi could heal his son because he has heard what Jesus was able to do in other places. He was about to lose his son and saw no other recourse but Jesus.

**4. Verse 48. When people seek out Jesus, what do they desire from Him? What does it say about the condition of faith among the Jews and in our day?**

Jesus is not rebuking the nobleman but lamenting the spiritual condition of the people who do not share the nobleman's faith. We often talk about seeing is believing, and that would be the case here. The people had heard of Jesus' miracles but wanted to see them for themselves. Such feeble faith is infectious. One person demands signs, and soon others have doubts as well. It also passes from one generation to the next. If parents do not believe or have doubts, their children will as well. It was something that Jesus had encountered again and again in His ministry. The only thing that would overcome this epidemic was people who would boldly tell how Jesus had helped them and had done miraculous things. It was the power of the early church as people witnessed to one another about Jesus.

**5. Verse 50. How does Jesus respond to the man's request? How does this response require faith?**

The man probably thought that he would have to beg Jesus to help his son. The words must have taken the man by surprise for they are not a dismissal but are a granting of the man's request. I picture the man stopped in his tracks wondering if he heard Jesus correctly. The words convey the simple truth that Jesus had healed the man's son, who was 20 miles away from where they were standing. The response expected the man to have faith stronger than the crowd. He had to believe what he could not see. He had to accept that a miracle had happened just because Jesus said it had. Jesus was helping the man to grow in his faith. He went from crisis faith to confident faith. He went from faith out of a need to faith because Jesus said so. It was the faith Jesus was looking for (John 20:29).

**6. Verse 50. How does the man respond to Jesus' words? How does his response contrast to the response of the crowds (v.48) to Jesus?**

We have to admire the man's faith. Jesus said that a miracle happened and you can go. The man hears those words and leaves Jesus satisfied. Notice that the text tells us that this is the seventh hour or 7 PM. The man has to stay overnight and set out in the morning. It was dangerous to travel in the dark. He has to wait to find out if the miracle has happened. He is different from the crowd in two ways. His faith came from need since his son was dying. Their confidence often came from a desire to see the spectacle and be entertained. Secondly, his faith grew to trust Jesus and believed because he said so. They wanted proof and would not accept what they could not see.

**7. Verse 50. How much did the man's life change when he accepted that Jesus had done a miracle? What would he have lost if he did not believe?**

There comes a moment when we all pass or fail. Jesus was forcing the man to believe in the words of Jesus without seeing them. The words of Jesus stretched the man's faith more than the miracle alone could have done. If Jesus had gone the 20 miles to Capernaum, the man's faith would not have grown as much. The healing forced the man to grow in his faith. It gave him a powerful impetus to believe because

of the healing of his son. He would have lost a lot if he had gotten cold feet and tried to do something else to get Jesus to come to Capernaum despite what Jesus had said. His faith would never have been as powerful, and He may have lost the chance to witness to the family and friends.

**8. Why is it not enough to say we believe? Why do we have to act on our belief to have the benefits of God's miracles?**

Faith takes action. It is easy to say one thing and live another. Words are cheap, but efforts have meaning. Faith allows us to step out on an impossible ministry because we believe that God will help us do what we can't do by ourselves. Faith will enable us to make sacrifices because we are confident that the benefits to us and others are worth it. If you say one thing and do another, others will see the hollowness of your actions and ignore what you say. If you follow through with actions backing up your words, people will notice, and they will be more likely to want to be part of that ministry or believe in God.

**9. Verse 51. How did the nobleman know that it was Jesus who had done the miracle?**

It was the time of the healing that was the proof that connected the miracle to Jesus. The servants said that the fever left the boy at the exact time that Jesus had told the father that his child was well. That could be no coincidence but was proof that the healing was not accident or wishful thinking. He had believed Jesus in Cana, and now that faith was confirmed by what he heard and what he would see when he came home. Jesus had done the miracle just as He had said.

**10. Why does Jesus often not do miracles in such a way that is easy for us? Why will He stretch us and make things harder?**

It would have been far easier if Jesus could have arranged to be in Capernaum or could have gone to the man's house to heal the son. The point of the story is the growth of faith for a nobleman. Crisis faith becomes confident faith and then contagious faith in a matter of two days. Jesus helps the man grow in a way that an uncomplicated miracle could not. Often God does the same to us. He takes away the chaff that keeps us from a strong faith. Jesus delays solutions giving us time to pray, study, and ponder God's will. The greatest gift was not the healing of the nobleman's son but the faith that he and his household had as a result of it. God wants to give us both gifts as well. The healing and help come in such a way that we grow in faith as well as get assistance.

**11. Verse 53. What impact does the miracle have on the nobleman's household?**

The miracle produced faith in the whole household. Undoubtedly, the father had believed that the son would improve gradually. That is what it often means when a doctor tells us that we will get well. There was a seemingly full recovery. Picture the father embracing the son and telling everyone about Jesus and how Jesus had done a miracle. He would share with them what Jesus was like and about the things that he had seen Jesus do. The father would repeat the story to others in Capernaum as they asked him how it was that his son was now well. His witness would bring the family and others that he knows to have faith in Jesus. When the gospel changes one person in a family, others notice and often come to faith as well.

**12. Verse 53. How much does contagious faith affect our family? What happens to their children if parents are not excited about faith?**

The nobleman not only believed that Jesus could heal, but he obeyed our Lord believing that Jesus had healed the son. Such faith is contagious. We see it in the person who will tell you over and over how Jesus healed their cancer or saved them from the car wreck. As they go over the details, again and again, you come to accept that what they say may be right. You start believing because of the power of their faith. Children are especially susceptible to the belief of their parents. They notice how your faith affects how you live and who you are. They often want to be like mom or dad, and so they want the faith that made a

parent who they are. When a parent is not excited about faith or doesn't think that Jesus is worth the effort and the time, children will have that attitude as well.

**13. The church has lost a generation of children. What does this text show you is the key to bringing our children to the Lord?**

The key to raising a generation of children active in their faith is their parents. Strong parents will overcome even a weak church education by showing their children what it means to be a child of God. Weak parents can often overcome a healthy church education system by keeping them from worship or Sunday school and showing them that none of that matters in the end anyway. We often blame the culture, but the real problem for many kids are broken families and busy lives so that Jesus is not in the home and so that no adults are modeling what Jesus means to them. The father believes and believes strongly in this text. His faith is contagious, and it is hard for others not to believe when he keeps telling the story over and over again.

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. When you bring a problem to God in prayer, do you tend to believe that God will help or do you keep worrying about the issue and want proof that God will help?

Deep 2. What are some miracles that God has worked in your life? Who can you tell your story of miracles?

Deep 3. When you were a child, who was the one who showed you what it meant to be a Christian? Why did you accept their word?

### **3. Healing at the pool – Grace without thanks.**

**John 5:1-18**

**Big idea: Grace is for everyone.**

There was no reason for Jesus to visit this desolate place. The pool of Bethesda was where the sick and the lame gathered, hoping for a miracle. One can imagine the smell and groaning of the people. It was a place that most of us would have avoided, but pure grace and love brought Jesus to this place. Jesus saw an invalid lying by the pool and was moved to help. There is no indication that the man believed in Jesus or that he ever cried out for help. The lame man would even make excuses when Jesus asked if he wanted to be well. The compassion of Jesus was greater than the man's excuses. Jesus is full of grace and mercy for even the lowliest people. It doesn't matter whether they appreciate it or not.

Opportunities for mercy are around us all the time. A man is begging along the street as you visit the city. An earthquake is shaking people on the other side of the globe. You can't help them all. Jesus didn't even try. You can help one or two because the love of Jesus makes you stop. Like Jesus, you are touched by their plight and want to help them because Jesus has helped you. The love of Jesus has changed you and filled you with mercy and empathy. God's people are people of grace, just as Jesus was. Sometimes you do it publically so that you can speak of the mercy of God when they ask why you care. Sometimes, you do it quietly like shoveling a walk when no one is looking. Grace is not about credit or praise. It is about Jesus and passing His love on to others.

Sadly, not every act of kindness will bring someone to faith or even give a word of thanks. This miracle brought persecution from the Jews because Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. People of grace don't stop helping because of a lack of results. They know that you can't judge your kindness with the results that you see. God may be working changes that may take years to bear fruit. That is ok because you didn't show love for them to get praise. You did it because you have felt God's grace in your life. You know that every person in your world is someone that God loves. As you do acts of kindness and mercy to them, you do it for the Lord. Show love and leave the results up to the Lord. You may be just one of a dozen acts of kindness that the Lord is orchestrating to warm up a frozen heart. Let Him work miracles because you loved and did the unexpected act of grace.

#### **1. What is something unexpected that a stranger did for you? How did that act of kindness influence your life?**

Most of us have had strangers help us at the mall or along the highway. There is even a recent commercial showing one person doing an act of kindness which spurs that person into showing compassion. The chain goes on through six or so people until several people have another person. It is supposed to show how kindness can be contagious. Let the people in the group share how compassion from someone influenced their life.

**Read John 5:1-18**

#### **2. Verses 2-3. Where does the miracle happen and how do you picture this place looking? What does this visit tell you about the nature of Jesus?**

Bethesda was a pool in the northeastern part of Jerusalem at the sheep gate and north of the temple. Archaeologists have discovered two pools in this area. One of the pools is 55 feet long and has five arches over it with a porch beneath each arch like the description given here. It must have been a dismal place with large numbers of sick and lame gathered in one spot hoping for a miracle. One can almost hear the moaning of the scores of people hoping for a miracle. You can imagine the smell of an area filled with the dying and inadequate restroom facilities. There was no real reason for Jesus to visit this place other than

pure grace. He saw the man's terrible condition and His heart was moved to help. Ironically, Jesus's miracles often got in the way of sharing the message, but people's needs touched him, and He reached out to help.

**3. Verse 6. What is Jesus's question to the man? What might make the man answer "no" to Jesus's question?**

Jesus's question is a simple one. "Do you want to get well?" Jesus' question shows that He doesn't force himself on people. We may pray that Jesus acts in a friend's life, but Jesus will not do so if He is not invited. Jesus also knew that not every sick person wants to get well. This person may not have wanted to lose the income that he could make as a beggar. He might have been scared of going out and working for a living. It might be tough to care for himself after 38 years of life in which others had to care for him. Not everyone wants help. Sometimes, it is easier just continuing to feel sorry for yourself.

**4. How comfortable are you talking with elderly or disabled people? What can we learn from Jesus' example in the text?**

Let the class be honest about how they feel at the nursing home or when they see the beggar in the street. Most of us are not comfortable at either place. Jesus builds bridges in the text and is an example to us as we think of those who are struggling. He goes to where the lame man was. Jesus could have used a different gate into the city to avoid the Pool of Bethesda. He takes the time to talk with the man. He speaks to him directly showing concern, not pity or disdain. Finally, Jesus offers help at a specific need for the man. We often extend general offers like "call if you need me" that no one accepts. Jesus shows His compassion by offering to help with something that the man needs.

**5. What excuses does the man make for his present condition? What do you think he is hoping that Jesus will do for him?**

You would have thought that the man would have enthusiastically responded that he wanted to be healed. Instead, he gives excuses. He assumes that Jesus knows that healing only comes if you can get into the pool first. He had been in this sad condition so long that he had given up hope of ever being healed. After 38 years, the man's condition had become a way of life. His excuses justify his situation for him. Perhaps, he hopes that Jesus will somehow stay with him and help him in the pool when the waters stir. It is the only way he sees of healing coming to him. Interestingly, the lame man never asks Jesus for a miracle. The text does not indicate that he believes in Jesus or that he asked anything of Jesus. It was Jesus that came to him.

**6. Verse 7. The man makes excuses. What do you think it has been like for him as he has laid there for 38 years?**

Let the group ponder on having a handicap for such a long time. We live in an era that tries to help disabled people lead a normal life. In Jesus' day, lame people tried to get along the best they could. There were seldom jobs or families in their lives. This man makes excuses, perhaps because he feels useless and without options. Such an experience over a long time would have an effect of paralyzing the man's mind and emotions as well as his body. Picture yourself day after day lying watching the water and the other people will illnesses. The few times that he saw the waters stir would soon cause him to feel hopeless because he could never get to the pool before someone else.

**7. Verse 8. What is Jesus's command to the man? What does it take for the man to make him actually follow this command?**

Jesus showed love, but it was not the kind of help that the man was expecting. He told the man to do something that he had not done in 38 years. Surely he couldn't follow Jesus' command. Surprisingly, the man who had offered excuses did the impossible that Jesus had challenged him to do in faith. Something in the words of Jesus prompted the man to get up when he was not able to make it to the water for decades. The key is faith. Jesus had brought the man to a response of faith. The command was designed to help the man recognize that the cure was complete and permanent. He didn't have to work his legs slowly. Jesus had cured him completely.

**8. Verse 8. As you pray, do you expect Jesus to answer your prayers? If He tells you to get up and walk, do you have the faith to do so?**

This question is meant to make the group think. Jesus promises a lot in the Bible, but we often take those promises for granted. We know Jesus can heal the sick, but we often don't feel confident that He will restore us when we ask in the hospital. The lame man was next to the pool, but he never expected to make it to the pool to be healed like other people. Challenge the class to pray about the promises of Jesus. It is one way that we can affirm what Jesus is saying to us. It can strengthen us so that we believe that Jesus will help just because He says that He will. We may have to wait for the healing to come in His time, but we can have confidence that Jesus will give us what we need.

**9. Verse 12. Why are the Jews upset about the miracle of the man's healing?**

The day of the healing was Sabbath. One could argue that if the waters stirred on a Sabbath that no Jewish leader would have been upset since that must have come from God. Here was a man who was healed, and they could not explain how Jesus had accomplished the miracle. The healing broke their concept of how things should be done. Sadly these men were closed to the way that the Lord worked. They were more concerned in their rules than in the suffering of a human being. The Old Testament never prohibits the carrying of one's bedroll. The Jews were upset because they saw it as a violation of the rules for work on a Sabbath. Perhaps, Jesus pointedly did the miracle on the Sabbath because He saw the Sabbath as a day to do good for others.

**10. Verse 12. When do we need to follow the rules, and when do we need to give grace as we celebrate what the Lord has done for others?**

We can learn a lot about God's rules from looking at how Jesus treats the Sabbath. First, we need to see that all of God's commands like the Sabbath were made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). We see Jesus using the Sabbath for the benefit of others as He did several healings on that day. He does, however, say that the commandments are in force (Matt. 5:17-20) and should be fulfilled because God meant for them to help us to live a better life. As we think about the commandments, they must be a benefit for the people around us. It is not helpful to point out everything that someone says is wrong or play judge over someone's life based on the commandments. Use the commandments to be a blessing to you and others. Warn people when sin threatens to drag them down and forgive when people are sorry for what they have done.

**11. Verse 15-16. How did the man repay Jesus's kindness? Why do you suppose that he did what he did?**

When accused by Jews of working on the Sabbath, the man seemed more eager to blame Jesus than to praise God for being healed. After he found out the name of the man who healed him, he seemed anxious to let them know it was Jesus. He was intimidated by the Jewish leaders. The fact that Jesus warned the man about continuing to sin may speak to attitudes that the man had. Nowhere did Jesus forgive the man's sins as he did with the sick man lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1f) He also does not "see" the truth as the blind man does in John 38-39. Sadly, there is no evidence in the text of belief in Jesus or was grateful for the miracle.

**12. Why should we continue helping people when there is a danger that they will not thank us or may even make things difficult for us?**

Let the group consider what would happen if we stopped doing anything that we didn't have a guarantee of success? We would have to stop watching our favorite sports team because they lost the last game. We would stop going shopping because we didn't find the item of clothing or flavor of yogurt we wanted. We even would stop going to the gym because we haven't lost ten pounds. There is no guarantee of success in life. Now imagine what the world would look like if everyone stopped loving others or showing grace just because it didn't always work. What a cruel world that would be. There is a reason that Jesus was a person of grace. His continual grace even when it broke someone's rules about the Sabbath is the reason that the world is as good as it is. Now it is our turn to love because He loved us. Give grace like Jesus and make your world a better place with His love.

**13. How are you blessed by giving God's grace to others? In what way is giving help a chance to receive mercy from the Lord?**

Let the group wrestle with the idea that giving grace benefits us. We see it all the time but often don't acknowledge it. The person that we show kindness to can quickly become a new friend or someone who helps us in our time of need. Giving of ourselves develops skills and spiritual gifts that God has given us. I have known a lot of people who didn't think they could play the piano or who have learned to teach children to learn to enjoy such activities because they tried them for the Lord. There is also a feeling of satisfaction that comes from the Lord when you have shared His grace. Finally, as we share grace and kindness with others, we often find that the Lord continues to bless us even more. We are doing God's work, and God will make sure that we have what we need to do His work.

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. How has Jesus shown Himself to be gracious in your life? How do you think the loving nature of Jesus has improved your life?

Deep 2. Why do you think some people are more concerned about keeping the rules than about caring for the needs of others? What effect do you think such legalism has on people?

Deep 3. What would the world be like if there were no grace from Jesus or His followers? Would you want to live in such a world? Why or why not?



#### **4. Feeding 5000 – Look to Jesus when times are tough.**

**John 6:1-14**

**Big idea: We have scarcity when we don't look to Jesus.**

It has been six to twelve months since the miracles of John 5, and now the crowds are following Jesus wherever he goes. They are desperate and cry out for healing and help. Jesus takes the disciples to a remote place for rest, and yet the crowds still follow. In this deserted place, where will He find food for 5000 men and their families? It is a crisis that overwhelms the disciples. They do not look to Jesus nor remember the miracles that Jesus has already done. Finally, Jesus shows the solution that the disciples have failed to grasp. Out of an offer of a boy's sack lunch, a miracle happens. Jesus blesses this meager offering, and soon, everyone has more than enough food. The scraps that are collected after the people have eaten show how great a miracle this was. This miracle shows how our simple offerings can be blessed by Jesus to do far more than we would expect.

We live in a world where people believe in scarcity. People wonder if they will have enough for retirement or if they get ill and need a doctor. Fear and worry plague our society because we never know how much will be enough. In times of uncertainty or shortages, we seldom think of Jesus except as a last resort. Too many Christians pray but don't expect Jesus to help. Like the disciples, we have seen Jesus do miracle after miracle in our life but don't believe Jesus will do more. Like the boy in the text, we need to offer Jesus what we have and let Him bless it so that it is enough. Instead of hoarding our possessions, we need to entrust them to Jesus. We will have our daily bread as He blesses what we have given Him. We will even have enough to share with others trusting that He will take care of us. No amount of money will make us feel comfortable. Having a God who controls all and provides for His people is the only answer to the fears of scarcity.

In times of trouble, our first instinct is to ask what we can do. We run through all the options we can think of before we take time to pray. God only gets consulted when things are desperate and not as the first response. We hinder God's answer to our need. We haven't learned to trust God with our life and our future. The wise will be in constant prayer and study of God's word. There you will find the answers that you need before things get bad. You will lean on the Lord when troubles are small and develop habits that take you through adversity. You will learn to be generous with what the Lord has given you. The feeding of the 5000 happened as the Lord used the lunch of a boy. As God's people trust the Lord to continue to provide for them, they will share what they have and watch the Lord multiply their gifts for the church and the community. God's people overcome scarcity when they share His blessings and learn to trust the Lord to provide for the future.

#### **1. What are your favorite foods for a picnic?**

Answers will vary. Foods may include simple foods like sandwiches and chips or more elaborate foods like fried chicken and baked beans. It often depends where we are having a picnic. A grill out on the back deck with a table there allows for more elegant cuisine than a picnic in the park or when you are out camping. My favorite is to grill out at the campsite while my wife Joan cooks over the propane stove. There is nothing like cooking by the mountains or at a wooded campground.

#### **Read John 6:1-14**

#### **2. Verse 1-2. Where was Jesus and why did the crowd follow Jesus into this remote place (v.1-2)**

Jesus left Jerusalem and traveled north up the Jordan River valley to the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee a few miles from Bethsaida. It has been six to twelve months of miracles and teachings since the miracle of John 5, and now the crowds are following Jesus wherever he goes. The masses follow Him to

this remote place because many are desperate for miracles. Others come because they have heard of His miracles and want to see this miracle maker for themselves. What was supposed to be a time of rest becomes a day of healing and teaching.

**3. Verse 2. When are you most likely to seek out Jesus? Do you seek Him daily or talk to Him as a friend or just when you need Him for a problem?**

The reaction of the crowd is often duplicated today. Some Christians have daily prayers and Bible study times. Others seek Jesus out only when the crisis has hit, and they need His healing or help. They cry out to the Lord in the hospital or when the cupboard is empty. Scarcity often brings a crisis. We would wish that Jesus would help people so that they never have problems, but it is usually a crisis that makes us finally pay attention to Jesus. The crowd got more than healing that day. They got a miracle, and they got a message that could change their lives. When people are hurting, Jesus does more than heal their body; He ministers to their soul. It is best to talk to Jesus first, but Jesus may let you be driven to listen by difficulties if you don't come at other times.

**4. Verses 5-6. What question did Jesus ask Philip? What purpose did Jesus have in asking the question?**

Jesus asks Philip where to get food for the crowd. Philip was from Bethsaida, which was nearby. It would seem a logical question to ask the local where people might get food. This question was, however, a test of Philip's faith. Throughout scripture, God tests people so that their faith might grow stronger. Jesus asked for a rational solution knowing that there was none to get Philip to think of a heavenly solution based on all the miracles that he and the other disciples had seen by this point. He wanted Philip and the others to take notice of what He was about to do. Jesus often puts us in stressful situations, so that we turn to God for help. Such tests force us to see the limitations of what we can do without God and how much God can do through us if we turn to Him.

**5. When have you experienced a situation with no easy answers? What do you think God tries to teach His people by putting us in such circumstances?**

If you want to challenge a child, you give them problems that stretch their learning. God could make our lives easy as Christians, but how would we ever grow? In times of frustration, we are to look to Jesus for solutions. Like the disciples, tough times help us see how little we can do without the Lord. The disciples didn't have the resources, and we don't either. If we look to the Lord, we see how He can do amazing things through us. He will organize and provide what we cannot control. He will provide the resources to get the job done and will send the Holy Spirit to work on the hearts of those we want to touch. God can do the impossible.

**6. Verse 7. What is Philip's answer? Did he answer Jesus' question?**

Philip answers that it would take eight month's wages (200 denarii) to feed the crowd and that the disciples didn't have enough. He responded with a bit of hopelessness. The crowd was large, and Philip couldn't figure out how they would possibly manage it. Philip was responding that Jesus's question of "where" didn't matter. The disciples didn't have the "how" to accomplish what Jesus wanted. Sadly the how and the where were standing right before Philip. He never considers that Jesus who had already turned water into wine (John 2) and provided a miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5) could provide the answer to the problem that they faced. This question was a test, but Philip hadn't yet come to see Jesus as the great provider.

**7. Verse 7. Sometimes, Jesus puts us in difficult situations where there is no rational answer to the problem. What do you suppose He is trying to teach us?**

The child of God knows that impossible is not in God's vocabulary. The Lord who could feed the 5000, could raise Lazarus from the dead, and could walk on water has no limitations. Impossible situations will frustrate us, but they force us to look to the Lord for help and depend on him for solutions. In the process, we begin to understand both the depth of God's love for us and His ability in even the hardest situations. We learn to ask Him first in every circumstance. God often allows hardship so that we stop trying to manage without Him but learn to trust Him when the going gets rough. With Him, we can do far more than we could ever accomplish by ourselves.

**8. Verses 8-9. What part does Andrew play in the miracle that is about to happen? How does his answer compare to Philip's?**

Andrew must have overheard the conversation between Jesus and Philip. He answers Jesus' question of "Where will we get food?" with the offer of a boy's sack lunch. The loaves would have been small, which explains why there are five. The fish were pickled fish that were a topping for the bread. While Philip brings the boy, he immediately adds that the meager lunch would not feed many of the crowd. Like Philip, he never thinks about Jesus being able to provide for the people. His offer of a boy's lunch is meant to show how hopeless the situation is. How would you feed even the twelve disciples with this small amount of food, let alone the crowd before them? Ironically, Jesus will take this offer and bless it to provide for the people.

**9. Verse 9. The boy offered his meager resources, and Jesus blessed it. When have you seen our Lord take the insufficient resources that you and I have and work an unexpected miracle with them?**

Often we withhold what we have because we do not expect that it will be enough. If we offer nothing to God, there is nothing to use. The simple sacrifice of the boy showed more trust than the disciples had shown. Giving away the lunch in what seemed a hopeless cause meant that he would not get to eat. Imagine how the church could grow and prosper if each person gave just 5% of their income for the ministry. Scarcity comes when we forget God. Generosity provides plenty for all. Let the class tell stories where the Lord has taken a small offering and turned it into a bounty that was more than enough. If the group has no stories or is unwilling to share them, ask what this story would have looked like if the boy had refused to share his lunch.

**10. List the miracles that Jesus has done for you recently. How can such a list help you trust the Lord in a way that the disciples didn't do in the text?**

The question calls us to remember that our God can do the impossible so that when a crisis comes, we turn to Him instead of thinking that there is nothing anyone can do. If the disciples had remembered how Jesus turned water into wine (John 2) or delivered a miraculous catch of fish (Mark 5), they would have turned to Jesus for help. As we think about the many times that Jesus has worked miracles in our lives, we are also more likely to turn to Jesus for help. Challenge the class to make a list of God's blessings and add to it each day. Let the Lord's actions of the past give each of us confidence for the future.

**11. Verses 10-11. When the disciples have given up on the idea of helping the people, what does Jesus do in verses 10-11? Why do you think that He gives thanks?**

Jesus has everyone sit down, announcing that something special is about to take place. Then He took the loaves and gave thanks before distributing the food. Our Lord took charge and gave everyone a visual lesson about turning to Him amid problems. Jesus could have said thanks that He had five loaves and two fish. Jesus might have thanked the Father He had the chance to teach through this miracle. Jesus could have been merely saying thanks as a way of honoring the Father and teaching us to praise God when He does wonders in our lives. Thankfulness always helps us appreciate what God has done for us.

**12. Verses 11-12. Why do you think that Jesus had the disciples distribute the food and collect the scraps in the baskets?**

Serving the food and cleaning up the scraps helped the disciples see first-hand how much food had come from five loaves and two fish. The twelve disciples had a chance to see the abundance of food as they took basket after basket of bread and fish to the thousands of people seated on the lawn before them. Jesus was letting them participate in the miracle just as He often allows us to participate in the miracles that He does for His church. The scraps collected were far more food than they had at the beginning. By having the disciples gather the scraps, the miracle could make a lasting impression on all of them. He wanted them to learn to trust Him in every situation.

**13. How does this miracle show the concern that Jesus has for hurting people? Why should this miracle teach us to turn to Jesus when we are struggling?**

It is Jesus that sees the crowd and has compassion (v.5). The disciples want to send the people away to fend for themselves (Matthew 14:15). This miracle is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. It is meant to show Jesus as our helper in times of trouble. We need to realize that there is no scarcity with Jesus. He will take the little that we have and make it enough. He will help us if we take the time to call out to Him. Unlike the disciples, we need to see the many miracles that Jesus does in our lives and build upon them so that we trust Him for even bigger miracles when we find ourselves in need. Have the group talk about needs that they want to bring to Jesus in the coming days.

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. When have you been in crisis and had difficulty trusting Jesus? What made it hard to give your problems to Jesus?

Deep 2. When have you seen generosity from other Christians through difficulty? How was the Lord able to use that generosity to work miracles?

Deep 3. What challenges are you facing that you can bring to the Lord right now? What have you learned about the Lord and yourself through these times of crisis?

## **5. Walking on water – Knowing Jesus will help me.**

**John 6:16-21**

**Big idea: Faith expects Jesus to work miracles for us**

It was evening, and Jesus encourages the disciples to get into a boat and escape the crowd after the feeding of the 5000. They must have been on a high after seeing Jesus do a miracle that hearkened back to God feeding the people in the wilderness during the exodus. Within hours of the miracle, a storm catches the disciples on the lake. They feared for their life, yet none of the gospels speak of any of the praying to God or calling out Jesus' name. None of them look for Jesus or seem to expect that He will come. Faith is a mindset that expects the Lord to act. Here in the boat, their faith failed them. After having seen Jesus feed thousands, they never considered that God would listen to their prayers and help them.

We read the scriptures and believe that Jesus did the miracles that are described in the Bible. We may wonder what it would have been like to be there as He fed the masses or walked on water. We may even pray for someone with cancer, hoping that God will act as He did in the Bible. Do we pray for ourselves when we are in trouble? Do we believe that Jesus will help us if we call on Him? It may be that our job is eating us alive. Perhaps, we have a pain that we worry about as we schedule a doctor's appointment. Few will pray as we face the worries and cares of life. Even fewer seem to believe that God is going to do something miraculous for them. We never doubt that God can do miracles. We don't expect that miracles can happen to us. Our faith lets us down just as it did the disciples in the boat. Faith has learned by watching God, again and again, help us to expect that He will help us today as well.

We must learn from the help that Jesus gives. Faith is more than believing that Jesus did miracles long ago. It understands that He will help me when I ask for help in prayer. We must not be like the disciples who saw a great miracle and never made the connection that Jesus would help them, too. Imagine what life would be like if you were able to believe so that you left the results in His hands. Imagine how it would help when you had struggles in your job or family and could lay all those cares on Jesus for His solutions. God wants us to pray with confidence believing that He can do the impossible and that He will do the impossible for us. Faith expects that Jesus will help and enables us to go boldly forward in every crisis believing that Jesus is beside us to help us every step of the way.

### **1. Describe a time that you were on a boat in the middle of a lake or the ocean. What were your fears and joys on that journey?**

I remember my first ocean cruise. The water seemed so vast and the darkness at night let me see the stars in a way that is almost impossible on land. I was able to see constellations I had learned about in astronomy class that I had never seen with the naked eye. There was a fascination, but there was also fear for I knew that I couldn't swim to shore and the waves on a reasonably calm night were still two stories tall. Let the class share their experience. The fear of the water is often something that many have even though there can be beauty there as well.

**John 6:16-21**

### **2. Verse 16. What is the context for this miracle? What has just occurred before the disciples get into the boat? What do you think their feelings were at this point?**

It was Jesus who had compelled them to get into the boat (Mark 6:45) because the people who had been fed at the feeding of the 5000 wanted to make Jesus king (John 6:15). Jesus withdrew from them and made sure that the disciples were out of harm's way. I picture the disciples on a high because of what they had seen and heard. Jesus had done a miraculous feeding that reminded everyone of God feeding the crowds in the wilderness during the time of Moses. Now they were setting off for Capernaum where Jesus

had done many miracles before this time. It was a great day to be a disciple. Have the class recall times where they were fresh off a significant victory in their life. What did they feel and how was the world rosy for them?

**3. Verse 18. What trouble occurred as the disciples rowed across the lake? What real dangers did they face?**

The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide at its widest points. They had rowed three miles, and it was dark (v.17), and the waters were growing rough and the wind was against them (v.18). One imagines that a storm had come up against them and was tossing the boat around. The other gospels make it seem like they feared for their lives. What is sad is that none of the accounts of this miracle mention the disciples praying for help or calling out Jesus' name. They rowed as hard as they could while being afraid and wondering if they would survive. None of them seemed to expect that Jesus would help. The darkness had created fear and doubt on a day that had started out with celebration and faith.

**4. Verse 18. How do you respond to the storms in your life? How soon do you cry out for Jesus?**

I have watched many people talk about the miracles that Jesus does in the Bible but never expect that a miracle could happen for them. They face a crisis at their job that is eating them alive, and they never take time to pray. They have health problems and might ask others to pray, thinking that it can't hurt. We struggle with the oars of our boat and never think of Jesus. It is amazing how we believe that Jesus can do miracles, but seldom feel that He can do them for me. Discuss how the members of the group have dealt with problems. When did they first ask Jesus to help? Was it when the problem was first developing or was Jesus their last hope? Don't be too hard on yourselves. The disciples didn't do well with this either.

**5. Do you believe in miracles? Do you accept that Jesus will do a miracle for you if you ask for His help?**

We hear about miracles regularly. A statue at a Catholic Church cries. A friend has cancer that completely disappears. A car swerves in front of you and misses you by inches. People declare those to be miracles. Do you believe it? Most of us accept that the miracles recorded in the Bible were indeed miracles. Our question is whether God will do a miracle for me if I ask. That causes us to hesitate to ask for God's help when we face troubles. Like the disciples, we see others get miracles but struggle to ask for help from Jesus when we have needs. Take time to honestly discuss whether you believe you will get what you ask when you pray. Do you struggle because you think God doesn't want the things you do or do you struggle because you are not sure that God will help you if you ask? Be honest and confront any unbelief. What do you miss if you don't even ask God for help?

**6. Verse 19. After the disciples had rowed for a few hours, what did they see and how did they react?**

After rowing for three or four miles, they suddenly saw Jesus approaching the boat walking on water. Jesus had walked miles across the raging waters to come to them. One can imagine Jesus appearing out of the darkness as a vague shape before the feeble light of any lantern that they have begins to illuminate his face. A boat arising out of the night might have seemed reasonable, but a form walking on top of the water was a scary sight. At first, they think that they see a ghost (Mark 6:49) for they didn't expect to see Jesus come to them. They didn't expect Jesus to appear and were not prepared for Him when He did come.

**7. Verse 19. How would you react if Jesus appeared to you tonight? What turns fear into faith when you see Him?**

Many people in scripture have God or an angel appear to them, including Moses at the burning bush, Isaiah in the temple, and Mary in her room. Fear is a natural emotion when you see God or His

messengers in all of their glory. Take time to honestly discuss what you would feel if the Lord appeared to you while you were in the country or alone in your room tonight. What will turn fear into faith is to have a deep relationship with God. Moses was afraid at the burning bush, but he learned to be comfortable with God and had many other meetings with God over his life. When you know the love that God has for you, His divine power is not quite as scary.

**8. Verse 20. How does Jesus calm their fears? What are they eager to do once they know that it is Him?**

Through the dark when they can't easily see His face, He speaks to them so that they may recognize His voice. I picture Jesus seeing their distress from the hills where He was praying. He could have waited till they arrived in Capernaum so that they could do ministry together again. Here, he shows that He cares enough to help them unasked. One can picture their fear melting when they heard the familiar voice calling out to them with words of comfort. They heard Him before they saw Him and invited Him into the boat so that they might have His encouragement even more. Just having Jesus in the vessel made them feel safer.

**9. Verse 20. How does the "voice" of Jesus still bring calm to the Christian in times of trouble? Where do you seek out that voice in your life?**

I have seen the voice of Jesus come to people when a friend or even a stranger comes and reads a devotion and prays with you. It is as if Jesus suddenly was there. It can also be when a stranger helps you out because you are stranded on the side of the road. The voice of Jesus has a calming effect and often comes when you didn't call Him. Let the class think about all the fear and worry that we often face when we don't have to. The expectation that Jesus will help when you are sick or when you are facing a problem with your spouse or kids takes a burden off your shoulders and gives you peace. Spend time talking about how you might find Jesus in personal or small group bible study or in times of prayer. Think of people who might be the voice of Jesus to you as well. God uses many avenues to help us in our times of need.

**10. When have you felt alone and in need of God's voice or presence in your life? Where did you find God's voice speaking to you?**

We forget the light of Jesus when darkness covers our lives. It is easy to believe Jesus can and will do miracles when things are going well. It is a little harder when, like the disciples, we are in the storms of life. It is often in those moments that God speaks to us. It may be the kindness of a friend or God's clear witness in a Bible study or devotion. He still speaks out to us in our despair. We have to be listening and invite Him into the boat in our lives. Let the group share some times when they felt Jesus speaking to them. How did they know it was Jesus? The disciples had built a relationship with Jesus so that they knew the sound of His voice. How will you grasp the message is from God? Can you compare the words to scripture and find out if it is the voice of your Lord?

**11. Verse 21. What miracle happened just as Jesus stepped into the boat? How would that miracle have shown His power and His care for them?**

The text tells us that the boat immediately reached the shore when Jesus stepped into the boat. It was one more miracle from Jesus to care for and help His struggling disciples. He had walked on water showing He was the master of nature. Now He worked another miracle ending the futility of the night and bringing the disciples to safety. The boat moved effortlessly across the two or so miles that they still had to travel to get to Capernaum. I think that it was an exclamation point to show that Jesus would do miracles for them. He had fed thousands who were hungry. Now they saw that He would care for them as well. The question was whether they would remember what Jesus had done and would call for help expecting Him to answer their prayers.

**12. Verse 21. How might Jesus still use miracles to encourage us to trust Him?**

The surgery goes well, and Jesus repairs your heart. You lose your job but find out that you have been hired for a better job the next day. Miracles do happen, especially when you have lifted your needs to God in prayer. In those moments, we understand that God still listens and cares for us. As we connect the prayer to the answer, our faith gets stronger and stronger. We have the confidence to expect that the Lord will answer our prayer and the patience to wait until God does so. We may even learn not to wait so long before we ask for God's help the next time. Discuss times that you have had God answer your prayers. Use this as a time to witness to one another that God doesn't just do miracles for people in the Bible. He still helps people like us.

**13. How is believing God will help you different than just accepting God can do miracles? What difference does it make in your life?**

Faith is more than just believing Jesus can help. It understands that He will help you. You pray with an expectation that Jesus will answer your crisis. You know He will give you the best solution even if that is not the solution that you were specifically asking. Now you will be calm when they wheel you into surgery or when you may lose your job. You have given the problem to Jesus and know that He can and will do what you can't do. Faith in miracles opens up possibility. Believing He will do wonders for you is faith. Discuss the outcome that such confidence can make in your life. How do you get that faith if your faith right now is weak? Are you open to Jesus' teaching so your faith will grow?

For now or later - taking the next step

Deep 1. What fears or struggles are you facing that need God's help or comfort?

Deep 2. How will you seek the voice of Jesus so that you might calm your fears?

Deep 3. What can you do to grow in your faith so that you expect Him to help whenever fears and struggles arise?



## **6. Healing the blind man – Helping people to see.**

**John 9:1-41**

**Big idea: O Lord open our lips that others might see**

He couldn't let go of the truth. The Jews didn't want to believe that Jesus could heal. They tried many ways to discount the miracle of the blind man given his sight. They tried to deny that it was the blind man who could now see (v.9). They denied that the man was ever blind (v.19). In spite of all the denials, the man could not deny the truth. "I was blind, but now I see" v.25. His healing put the Jews in a bind. They tried to deny what was undeniable because the miracle showed everyone that Jesus was from God (v.33). One has to admire the man for continuing to tell the truth throughout the interrogation. In the end, his patient witness cost him as he was thrown out of the synagogue (v.34)

You and I know the simple truth about Jesus since we have experienced his love and help in our lives. Most Christians can tell you of answered prayers for healing or help in painful situations. They can tell you about the blessings that Jesus has brought in their lives and the joy that He gives them. Our testimony is often hard for non-Christians to hear. They want to bend the truth and write off our healing as just good doctors or a solved problem in life as a mere coincidence; we have to stand firm as the blind man did. We need to give God credit publically for the astonishing things that He has done.

It will only be through our witness that people will see how loving and kind Jesus is just as we do. Many people don't respect the truth of the Bible. They are conditioned to think that the Bible is full of fabricated stories. Some will listen to our personal stories. If we were cured of cancer or walked away from a car accident, they will find it hard to deny that we are alive when we could be dead. Giving glory to Jesus for the miracles that we experience is one way of showing those we know that Jesus makes a difference in life. Our stories show them the truth and help us understand the workings of Jesus in the lives of His people just as they did for the blind man. Don't let the world change or silence your story. Tell how Jesus has helped you so that they may see Jesus with new eyes.

### **1. How would your life change if an accident took your sight?**

Our eyes are something that we seldom think about until something happens to them. Having been around several blind people, I have noticed how blind children even stumble with the concept of what a blue sky looks like or the red in a fire. Losing your sight means losing the ability to drive or to see the faces of new people. Let the class close their eyes and describe what they would miss most if they lost their vision.

**Read John 9:1-41**

### **2. Verse 2. How did the disciple's question show their blindness? What is Jesus' answer for them and us?**

In Jewish culture, people believed that sin was the cause of all suffering. If something was blind or lame, the person or his parents did something that disability was the punishment for it. While it is true that sin causes the imperfections that man and the world experience, it is wrong to think that a specific sin caused the problem that any person might have. Children have handicaps at birth, and people are susceptible to cancers and heart attacks that are unconnected to their lives. Jesus' answer to the disciples was that we should all help those who have such handicaps. We should not condemn them or treat them as objects of scorn. We need to show mercy and offer help. If we are the one with the handicap, we need to ask the Lord for the strength to overcome our weakness so we can be a help to ourselves and others.

### **3. Verse 11. After Jesus healed the blind man, what was the only thing that the blind man knew about Jesus? How do the means of the miracle affect the man and slowly bring faith?**

When questioned in verse 11, the blind man only can tell others that the name of the man was Jesus. He can't tell them what Jesus looked like or where Jesus has gone. It may seem like a dirty trick to put mud in a blind man's eyes, yet it forced the man to go and wash his eyes as Jesus asked. Realize that the man is healed but does not have faith at this point. Throughout this chapter, the faith of the man will grow as people confront him, and he slowly understands more and more about Jesus. He will be challenged by friends and by religious leaders to tell his story over and over. In the process, he is forced to ponder about Jesus and the miracle of sight.

**4. If asked, what do you think your friends and neighbors know about Jesus?**

Have the members of the group put themselves in the blind man's spot. Jesus has done something special for you. How do your friends react? What do they know about Jesus? Our society knows far less about Jesus than it did ten years ago. A lot of people would not accept that something good happening to us came from Jesus. Few would know many of the stories or healings of Jesus. We still act in the church like the world knows the story of Jesus and wonder why they don't seek Him out in hard times. Take time to decide one thing that you would want friends who don't know Jesus to know about Him.

**5. Verse 17. When forced to describe Jesus, what did the blind man say? Why do you think he called him that?**

The blind man was dragged before the Pharisees. When the man told his story, the Pharisees doubted the truth. They wondered how a sinner who had healed on the Sabbath could produce such miracles. When they turned to the man again, the blind man called Jesus a prophet. It was like he was frantically searching for a category to put Jesus in. Perhaps, having thought about it, the man proposed that Jesus must be a prophet since many of the Old Testament prophets performed miracles. His answer would have been a safe one since there were even Jewish teachings that permitted a prophet to break the laws of the Sabbath. Notice how the man is not intimidated by the threats of the Pharisees. His profession of Jesus as a prophet put the Jews in a bind. It forced them to acknowledge the miracle as coming from God or prove that this was an act of Satan or his angels. The blind man still didn't know Jesus, but he was beginning to see what they refused to see, namely that Jesus was unique and was from God.

**6. Verse 17. If someone asked you to describe Jesus, how would you respond? What is the basis for your answer?**

Christians have a variety of answers for who Jesus is. Some of us focus on Him as our savior or on a time when Jesus healed us or helped us. Much of our answer depends on our experience and people's need. We must have an answer because we are often the only way that people come to know who Jesus is. Our witness should not be profoundly theological because our friends often would not understand it. Base your answer on your experience just as the blind man does in the text. People will find it harder to refute, and those who need a savior and friend will be more open to a message about how Jesus cared for you and will care for them. If you don't have an answer, take time to think about and write down what you might say to a friend.

**7. Verse 27. How does the blind man react when others refuse to accept what is plain to see?**

You have to give the man credit. His faith spoke even though so many around him didn't want to believe. He knew that they were mad. He knew that they could punish him, but they could not silence him. He told what he understood and accepted the consequences. His faith spoke and would not be silenced. He had told them his story in verse 15 and doggedly stuck to the truth. His question puts an end to the debate. The last thing that the Jews wanted to be was a disciple of Jesus. It was also clear that they wished for any means to prove that Jesus could not have done a miracle even though it was the only explanation as the man who was blind could see and was not willing to "bend" the truth to fit their needs.

**8. Verse 27. Why is it so important that we be willing to stand up for the truth of Jesus in our lives?**

Many don't know about Jesus today because Christians are afraid to speak the truth. We are silent, like the parents in the story. Jesus does great miracles in our lives, and we keep the miracle to ourselves. We are afraid of those who will ridicule us for believing in Jesus or for speaking about the benefits of the Christian life. Most of us will not be comfortable having a debate about couples living together or about abortion around the water cooler at work. What we should be willing to talk about is the blessings of Christian marriage or a Christian family. Tell friends and family about how Jesus is an essential part of your life and about the benefits that He brings. We see too many funerals of friends and relatives who we have a sneaking suspicion that they will not be in heaven because no one, including us, ever talked to them about Jesus. "O Lord, open our lips so that others can see."

**9. Verse 33. When questioned further, what does the man believe about Jesus and why?**

The blind man gives the obvious conclusion. God is the giver of all good things. The blind man had been blind and now could see. Would anybody but someone from God have that power or do such a kindness. The blind man is refuting the arguments (v.16) that this miracle could not be from God. He is also stating what the Jews were unwilling to see. Isaiah had predicted (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, and 42:7) that the Messiah would bring sight to the blind. It would be a sign of His coming since there is no record in the Old Testament of any person healed of blindness. His confession was too much for them. They could not refute what he said, and so they expelled him from the synagogue in their pride. They were not willing to see the truth right before them.

**10. Verse 34. Why can't the Jewish leaders see the miracle before them? Many today have the same problem. What do you think it would take to convince them to believe in Jesus?**

The truth was right before them. The Jewish leaders had tried to claim it was a trick, and this man had never really been blind (v.18). They had tried to paint Jesus as someone coming from Satan (v.16, 29). They had sought to make the man change his confession (v.17, 26). None of it worked. They could not accept the truth because they didn't want to believe in Jesus or admit even the possibility that He was from God. Many people today reject Jesus simply because He doesn't fit in with their beliefs. How many times have you heard someone say, "I can't believe in a God who would . . ." When Jesus doesn't fit in with their belief system, they reject Jesus. Sadly, it often takes a tragedy of some kind where Jesus is their only hope for them to look to Jesus and come to faith. Even then, some would rather die than reach out to Jesus.

**11. Verse 38. After talking with Jesus a second time, what does the man come to believe? How is that different than what he professed earlier in the day?**

It is not enough to believe that Jesus is a prophet or a man of God. We need to accept that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, to be born of God (1 John 5:1). Jesus returns to the man to give him the greatest of all gifts. Jesus begins with a question, and the man ends with faith in Jesus as his Lord and Messiah. His worship of Jesus shows that his eyes are fully open, and he sees that Jesus is divine. Earlier, the blind man had professed that Jesus had done a miracle. Through the day of questioning, he had come to see that Jesus must be from God. Now, looking at Jesus with his own eyes and a changed heart, he is willing to see Jesus as Messiah. One has to believe that Jesus did the miracle in this manner so that the unbelief of the Jews would confront the man and grow an unshakeable faith. The faith was a gift even more glorious than physical sight.

**12. Jesus condemns the blindness of the Jews in verse 39. What will cause a more substantial judgment, and who do you see receiving that judgment in our world?**

The Pharisees of all people should have seen Jesus as the Messiah. They knew the Old Testament and the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Jesus fit those prophecies perfectly, but their jealousy of his popularity and stubbornness in their ways made it hard for them to accept the simple truth. Many have chosen blindness in our society. Some theologians bend the reality of the Bible to fit their own ideas. There are longtime Christians who walk away from the Lord because they don't feel God did enough for them in their time of need. Surely they will receive a harsher judgment than a person in a remote village of Africa who never has a chance to hear about Jesus. One wonders what they will think on the last day when the sheep and the goats are separated (Matt. 25), and they end up on the wrong side of the aisle horrified at what they have lost.

**13. Jesus says, "The blind will see, and those who see will become blind." How does that truth play out in the text and in life today?**

In a single day, the man went from being a disabled outcast to a worshipper of Jesus. Ironically, it was the constant questioning that forced the man to see who Jesus was. It was the same questioning that showed how blind the Jews were as well. Take time to listen to those who are speaking to you in life or on the media. What is the framework of their beliefs? Many start from a faulty framework making it very hard for them to accept the apparent truth around them. They won't see the damage that sins like abortion bring. They won't accept the blessings that Jesus brings. Take time to talk about bias you see in our culture and media. What are the faulty rationales such bias brings?

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. What do your friends and neighbors have to come to know about Jesus before they can come to faith? How can you help them know Jesus better?

Deep 2. When have you faced opposition to the truth in the Bible? How did you handle it, and how do you wish that you would have handled it?

Deep 3. How does the blindness of the world around you affect your life? The blind man is kicked out of the synagogue for speaking the truth. Have you paid the price for your faith?

## **7. Raising Lazarus – It is not all about us.**

**John 11:17-47**

**Big idea: Miracles are about God's glory, not just our pain.**

You can feel their pain. The two sisters wished that Jesus could have been present to heal their brother. To their credit, both sisters never waiver in their faith in Jesus' powers. They express their grief and a feeling that it was not God's will or Jesus would have been there. The problem for both is that they still see the miracle as just about them and their pain. They don't see the big picture. Ultimately, the miracle was all about God's glory. Jesus has been praying about his friend's death for some time. He waited two days so that tomb-bound Lazarus could not be in a coma or a trance, but had to be dead. Jesus upped the ante so people could get a sense of God's power. Instead of healing, they saw a miracle of life and death.

You have been praying for weeks, but Grandma's cancer came back. You have prayed about a promotion and found out that you were passed over for the job. You shrug your shoulders and make do. You figured out that it just wasn't God's will. You figured that it was wrong to get your hopes up. What is God's will? We often assume that our desire is also God's will. What if God had something greater in mind? In the text, the miracle caused people to put their trust in God at a place only two miles from where Jesus would die. Often God waits so that the sick person or others might grow in their faith. He might wait so that people learn from the trial. He usually doesn't cause the problem or pain but will use it for our benefit if we trust Him.

Miracles are not just about us. Miracles happen so that people put their faith in God and have salvation. Miracles are to give God glory so that more people see Him as Lord. Never give up on God. We often stop praying because we figure that it is over. Just because we didn't get what we wanted quickly doesn't mean we should stop praying. Keep praying for God's will and asking if helping you can help others. Think beyond yourself when you need help. How can a miracle for you lead someone in your family closer to the Lord? How can a miracle in your life open up possibilities for ministry to others? Miracles are not just about your pain; they are about God's glory. God can do so much more than we ever imagine. As we let God do God-sized miracles in our lives, the world can be changed.

### **1. How do you feel when a friend lets you down?**

This question is an opportunity to share your feelings about a moment when you were disappointed. There are often reasons why people let us down. They may not have it in their power to keep promises, or they may have been held up by troubles of their own. At other times, we do find people are not dependable or take their commitments too lightly. Share situations rather than talking about people. Let the group talk about how one feels at those moments. It will help you understand how the sisters felt as Jesus seems to let them down.

**Read John 11:17-47**

### **2. Verse 17. Describe the scene in Bethany. Who is there? How long has Lazarus been dead? What do you think the mood is like on that day?**

Bethany is only two miles from Jerusalem, allowing many people from that city to come out and pay their respects to the family at Lazarus' death. An extended period of mourning was an essential part of each funeral. Lazarus had only been dead for four days, and often the body was buried the same day as the death since bodies decomposed quickly in the warm climate. The weeping of the sisters and the Jewish crowd must have been great (v.33). It would likely have been a spectacle with all the people and all the crying.

### **3. Verse 21. How does Martha greet Jesus? What does it say about her emotions and her relationship to Jesus?**

Martha's words seem both accusatory and wishful. She may have realized that Jesus could not have come much earlier. The timetable in the story leads one to believe that Lazarus dies soon after the messenger left to find Jesus. Lazarus would have been dead by the time that Jesus hears about his sick friend. To their credit, both sisters never waiver in their faith in Jesus' powers. They express their grief and a feeling that Jesus could have healed Lazarus if He had been able to be there on time. Maybe they were resigned that it was not God's will or Jesus would have been there. Notice that they still see the miracle as just about them and their pain. Jesus will help them discern the big picture.

### **4. Verse 21. How do you feel when Jesus doesn't answer your prayer in the way you wanted? What do we need to remember at those times?**

Like the sisters, we may feel disappointment or loss when a miracle has not happened. We are still in pain because of our illness or the illness of someone we love. We may have missed an opportunity we were hoping that God would grant. It is easy to feel that God let us down. It is easy to wonder if there is any reason to pray when we find ourselves needing help in the future. We judge God too harshly. He is not on our timetable. He is not our slave who we can order to take care of our needs. He is our Lord. This text will show us that He often has wanted to give us more than we know. We need to trust Him to help us in a way that is better than we ever expected.

### **5. Verse 25. What does Jesus promise Martha? What do you think she thought that He meant by that?**

Back in verse 4, Jesus had responded to the sister's message that Lazarus's sickness would not end in death. (Even though Lazarus had died from the illness that was not where it would end.) In verse 23, Jesus promises that Lazarus would "rise again." It never seems to have entered their minds that Lazarus would walk out of the tomb that day even though Jesus had raised at least two other people by this time. Jesus is telling them what He is about to do, but it is something that seems impossible, and so they never entertain the idea. They probably think that Jesus means that their brother will rise on the last day as every believer will. Jesus continues by telling them how the resurrection will happen in verse 25. He is the master of life and death. He can raise the dead here on earth, and he will raise all people at the last day. Those who believe in Him will live in eternity. It is a simple way of saying that nothing is too hard for Jesus. Just believe.

### **6. What does God promise about illness and pain in scripture?**

We often believe what we want to think is right rather than looking at the real words of scripture. Scripture does not promise to do as we desire, but what is best for us. Would God want to give you a job that is not right for you? Could God allow someone to die because He knows they will be miserable if they live? God uses trouble and pain as a tool. He works on His timetable and in a way that often gives us better than we ask. He regularly gives us solutions that will be beneficial to others and not just to us. God has a worldview; we have a narrow and immediate view. The wise will trust God and ask for His will and not their own. Look for scriptures that promise God's help and care. Talk about what some of these passages say.

### **7. Verse 35. What do the tears of Jesus tell you about His character?**

Most of us never think about God crying. The gods of the Romans and gods like those of the Muslim or Hindu would not cry. It would be beneath them. Here is the heart of Jesus for those He loves. He knows that Lazarus will soon be alive. He also sees how much pain the death of Lazarus has caused Mary, Martha, and the others. The lesson is that we have a God who cares. He cares when a person dies without

faith. He cares when one of His children is hurting from illness or a loss in their life. Such a picture should make us bold to come to Jesus in prayer. He understands and has felt the sadness that we feel in life. We can depend on Him to help and to give us the care that we need. No other religion can say that about their God. Be honest in your prayers. Share both your needs and your emotions for Jesus truly understands.

**8. Verse 39. What does Jesus ask the sisters to do that is very difficult? Why is obedience necessary?**

Imagine opening up a tomb when the body has had four days to decay. The smell would be awful, and some might consider it to be an insult to the dead. It all came down to trust. Martha had declared her faith in Jesus even confessing that Jesus was the Messiah. Now Jesus asks to do something, and she questions his request. How would Lazarus come out of the tomb if they didn't remove the stone? It was truth time and trust time. Martha had to put the situation in Jesus' hands even if Jesus was asking something that didn't make sense. Would she obey and allow the miracle to happen, or would she get in the way and make it harder? The text says that she obeyed and Jesus gave the command for the dead to rise. Sometimes Jesus expects us to trust Him in tough situations if we are to have the miracles that we desire.

**9. Verse 39. How is obedience vital to answered prayer? How do we often get in the way of God's solutions?**

In our prayers, we often expect Jesus to obey us when it should be the opposite way around. We need to realize that Jesus expects us to keep the commandments. How can He work a miracle if we have been lying or cheating to get what we want? He may also ask us to do something challenging that takes exceptional trust. God may ask you to interview for a job you are not sure you want. God may ask you to take on a ministry that scares you. Those who trust God will see miracles come at times that those with feeble faith will not. They will see God use our discomfort and trouble to work a miracle that is bigger than us. They will see God impact a group of people instead of just one person. Our obedience opens up doors for God to touch lives. Let the group talk about times that they had found submission necessary if God was going to work and times when their disobedience and lack of trust got in the way of God's blessings.

**10. Verse 40. How is the miracle about God's glory as much as it is about their pain over Lazarus' death?**

While Jesus had been praying about his friend for some time, the more significant impact of this miracle was letting people see the power of God so that people believed and gave glory to God. Notice that while Lazarus was probably dead by the time that the messenger came to Jesus (v.14), Jesus waited two more days (v.5) before leaving for Bethany. Having been in the tomb for four days, everyone was sure that Lazarus was not in a coma and the miracle gave people a sense of the extent of God's power. By faith, the women would see this display of God's power as they were a part of God's plan. Jesus could have done the miracle without them, but it would be something that the women and all the others who were there would not forget. A man was alive, but even greater was the lesson about God that the miracle could show so that people know who Jesus was.

**11. What would be the effect if every prayer asked for God's glory, not our ease or success?**

The text challenges us to pray differently than we usually do when we find that we are in pain. What if we prayed that every miracle God did for us resulted in His glory? We could ask that people might learn to believe in Jesus from the miracles instead of just taking away their pain. We could ask that the help that Jesus gives us when our car or furnace is broken might somehow become an opportunity for us to witness to the love of our God. Miracles are not about us. Many miracles happen so that people put their faith in God and have salvation. Miracles happen so that this world that thinks a man doesn't need God has a sense of what life could be if they trusted in Him. Miracles are to give God glory so that more people see

Him as Lord. Take some time as a group discussing the effect of letting miracles show God even when they take away the pain.

**12. Verse 45. What is the result of the miracle? What did the resurrection of Lazarus say about Jesus that healing could not?**

The miracle brought many to faith. They had come to mourn the loss of a friend and had received a sign from the Lord. They heard Jesus call God Father and saw God answer with a miracle that was not expected and was one of the greatest wonders of Jesus' ministry. The miracle challenged people with the truth in a way that no mere healing could have done. It was the work of God, and people had to accept it or reject as many did. Since Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem, the talk of the miracle occupied the city and the temple. Pharisees and Sadducees were forced to examine the miracle and deal with the implications of Jesus' power just a few short weeks before Holy Week and Easter. No one could ignore the impressive miracle.

**13 What lessons do you see about prayer in crisis from this lesson?**

This miracle has many lessons, and I would encourage the group to think about what they have learned from the text and this study. I would suggest that you consider these three lessons that I have learned. First, never give up on God. We often stop praying because we figure that it is over. The sisters stopped looking for a miracle when Lazarus died, yet Jesus was not done yet. Just because we didn't get the promotion or Grandma is still ill doesn't mean we stop praying. Trust! Second, we have to obey. Open up your scripture and find out what God wants you to do and then do it. God will send opportunities that we need to take. God will call us to live a Godly character when the world wants us to take shortcuts. Obey God and live as His child. Don't get in the way of the miracle. Finally, ask if helping you can help others. Think beyond yourself when you need help. How can a miracle for you lead someone in your family closer to the Lord? How can a miracle in your life open up possibilities for ministry to others? God's help is not just about your pain; it is about God's glory. The raising of Lazarus is a crucial miracle and one that has many other lessons for all of us.

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. What problem in life do you or someone you love struggle with that God doesn't seem to answer? How could God's help in your life positively impact someone else?

Deep 2. How does it help to know that Jesus cares for people like you and me? How does the fact that Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb impact your prayers?

Deep 3. If you needed to wait for healing and you knew that your healing would help someone else if God waited two weeks, would you be willing to wait? Do you think God would want to wait?



## **1. Water to wine – Trusting that Jesus will help.**

**John 2:1-11**

**Big idea: Sometimes, you just have to ask.**

Sometimes, if you want Jesus to work miracles for you, you have to ask. Mary knows that there is a problem at this wedding, and she goes straight to Jesus. Joseph is gone, and so Mary turns to her eldest son. She has watched her boy for thirty years. A mother knows His heart and may have an inkling of His powers. She also learns that solutions must come in His time and in His way. It was clear that Jesus did not want to reveal His power yet. When He did so later, people came for the miracles and often didn't listen to His teaching. He would do a miracle because He cared, but He would do the miracle quietly so that few knew who had helped the family with new wine.

How bad does it have to get before you ask? Do you pray before the doctor's checkup or only if the diagnosis is terrible. Do you pray at the beginning of a vacation or only when you are stranded with a broken vehicle? The wise will call on the Lord every day and not wait till things get so bad that they need a miracle. In that way, we give Jesus time to provide us with the best solution at the best time. Sometimes that is hard. We get busy and forget to ask till the simple problem has become a crisis. Sometimes it takes a crisis before we think of Jesus. Prayer needs to be a daily discipline so that we learn to trust Jesus in big problems and small.

Why do some Christians often live without the blessings of Jesus? It may be that they don't ask and don't trust Jesus enough to wait for His help. They stumble through life trying to get by with their abilities. There is a better option. It is to spend time each day in prayer. Take time to get to know Jesus better so that you can trust Him with your life. Take time to ask Him for help and answers when the problems are small. Things are better for those who come to Jesus daily in prayer because Jesus gets a chance to help them with more in their lives and to deal with many problems before they become so hurtful. Don't just cope with life; let Jesus bring His blessings to your life.

**1. Describe a memorable wedding you attended. What was one thing that stands out in your mind about that wedding?**

**Read John 2:1-11**

**2. Verse 1-2. What is the occasion for this miracle? Who was there with Jesus?**

**3. Verse 3. What problem did Mary bring to Jesus? Why does she approach Jesus with this news?**

**4. Mary turned to Jesus because of the relationship that she had with Him. What have you recently asked Jesus to do for you, and why did you think that He would help?**

**5. How bad does it have to get before you turn to Jesus for help?**

**6. Verse 5. Mary was not promised any help from Jesus in verse 4. What did she do that showed her trust and confidence in her son?**

**7. Why is it important to obey Jesus and follow Him when we face crisis rather than questioning what He tells us to do?**

**8. Verse 6. What size are the water jars that Jesus commands be filled with water? What is their common purpose?**

**9. Verse 10. What is the master of the banquet's response when he tastes the water turned into wine? What do you think the bridegroom thought when he was chastised for saving the best wine till last?**

**10. What does the amount and quality of the wine created by Jesus tell you about how the Lord can provide for your needs in life?**

**11. Verse 11. What did the disciples learn about Jesus from this miracle that caused them to put their trust in Him?**

**12. What does this miracle teach you about coming to the Lord for help? What help will He give, and why should you ask Him for help?**

**13. Does Jesus still do miracles? Will He do miracles for you if you asked Him?**

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. How critical does it get before you ask Jesus for help? Are you one of those who waits till they are desperate, or are you a person who comes to Jesus first?

Deep 2. What limits or opens up your life for Jesus to be able to do miracles? How are we often our own worst enemy when it comes to getting Jesus' help?

Deep 3. Sometimes, Jesus does miracles very publically in our lives. Other times, He does them quietly. Why would Jesus help either way in your life?

## **2. Nobleman's son – Giving more than healing.**

**John 4:46-54**

### **Big idea: Contagious faith can leave a legacy in a lost generation**

Contagious faith can leave a legacy in a lost generation. When Jesus goes to Cana, He encounters a nobleman who has a son close to death. With a confidence born in crisis, the man calls upon Jesus to heal his son. Jesus grants his request. His son, 20 miles away in Capernaum, has been cured. The man takes Jesus at His word, and confidently begins the trip home. At home, he tells the story of what has happened, and the rest of his household comes to faith. Crisis faith becomes confident faith and finally contagious faith. The faith of the father changes the whole family. Jesus not only gave healing to a child. By helping the man grow in his faith, Jesus changed the direction of the entire family.

The church is losing its children. We often blame it on the culture and the media who seem to be against the church and our beliefs. Children have been conditioned to think that church is boring and that the church isn't relevant today. The problem isn't the culture; it is that the church and parents are often silent about Jesus. Parents have let children put activities like soccer, scouts, and music ahead of the church. Parents have failed to teach their children the basics of faith wanting to leave that up to the church while they sip coffee on a Sunday morning. Children notice what is essential for their parents and build their lives to reflect the values of their parents. How can children have faith in Jesus when they don't know Him?

So how do we reach this lost generation? The answer is more straightforward than you think. You influence them by showing your faith. I picture the father in this story going home and telling everyone in detail about Jesus. His son gained more than healing. His son obtained a strong faith that would trust in Jesus for life. He received it because He saw his father's actions and caught the joy and power of his father's story. When was the last time you told your family about a miracle that happened to you? The generation does not have to be lost in space. Jesus continues to do beautiful things for us. Parents who show their faith in their lives and tell children how special it is to know Jesus will have a contagious faith that impacts family and friends around them.

### **1. How does the church help children to believe?**

**Read John 4:46-54**

**2. Verse 45. Now that Jesus is back from Judea, what motivates the people to want to see Jesus?**

**3. Verse 46-47. Who comes to Jesus while He is in Cana, and what does the man want Jesus to do for him? How far has he come with his request?**

**4. Verse 48. When people seek out Jesus, what do they desire from Him? What does it say about the condition of faith among the Jews and in our day?**

**5. Verse 50. How does Jesus respond to the man's request? How does this response require faith?**

- 6. Verse 50. How does the man respond to Jesus' words? How does his response contrast to the response of the crowds (v.48) to Jesus?**
  
- 7. Verse 50. How much did the man's life change when he accepted that Jesus had done a miracle? What would he have lost if he did not believe?**
  
- 8. Why is it not enough to say we believe? Why do we have to act on our belief to have the benefits of God's miracles?**
  
- 9. Verse 51. How did the nobleman know that it was Jesus who had done the miracle?**
  
- 10. Why does Jesus often not do miracles in such a way that is easy for us? Why will He stretch us and make things harder?**
  
- 11. Verse 53. What impact does the miracle have on the nobleman's household?**
  
- 12. Verse 53. How much does contagious faith affect our family? What happens to their children if parents are not excited about faith?**
  
- 13. The church has lost a generation of children. What does this text show you is the key to bringing our children to the Lord?**

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. When you bring a problem to God in prayer, do you tend to believe that God will help or do you keep worrying about the issue and want proof that God will help?

Deep 2. What are some miracles that God has worked in your life? Who can you tell your story of miracles?

Deep 3. When you were a child, who was the one who showed you what it meant to be a Christian? Why did you accept their word?

### **3. Healing at the pool – Grace without thanks.**

**John 5:1-18**

**Big idea: Grace is for everyone.**

There was no reason for Jesus to visit this desolate place. The pool of Bethesda was where the sick and the lame gathered, hoping for a miracle. One can imagine the smell and groaning of the people. It was a place that most of us would have avoided, but pure grace and love brought Jesus to this place. Jesus saw an invalid lying by the pool and was moved to help. There is no indication that the man believed in Jesus or that he ever cried out for help. The lame man would even make excuses when Jesus asked if he wanted to be well. The compassion of Jesus was greater than the man's excuses. Jesus is full of grace and mercy for even the lowliest people. It doesn't matter whether they appreciate it or not.

Opportunities for mercy are around us all the time. A man is begging along the street as you visit the city. An earthquake is shaking people on the other side of the globe. You can't help them all. Jesus didn't even try. You can help one or two because the love of Jesus makes you stop. Like Jesus, you are touched by their plight and want to help them because Jesus has helped you. The love of Jesus has changed you and filled you with mercy and empathy. God's people are people of grace, just as Jesus was. Sometimes you do it publically so that you can speak of the mercy of God when they ask why you care. Sometimes, you do it quietly like shoveling a walk when no one is looking. Grace is not about credit or praise. It is about Jesus and passing His love on to others.

Sadly, not every act of kindness will bring someone to faith or even give a word of thanks. This miracle brought persecution from the Jews because Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. People of grace don't stop helping because of a lack of results. They know that you can't judge your kindness with the results that you see. God may be working changes that may take years to bear fruit. That is ok because you didn't show love for them to get praise. You did it because you have felt God's grace in your life. You know that every person in your world is someone that God loves. As you do acts of kindness and mercy to them, you do it for the Lord. Show love and leave the results up to the Lord. You may be just one of a dozen acts of kindness that the Lord is orchestrating to warm up a frozen heart. Let Him work miracles because you loved and did the unexpected act of grace.

**1. What is something unexpected that a stranger did for you? How did that act of kindness influence your life?**

**Read John 5:1-18**

**2. Verses 2-3. Where does the miracle happen and how do you picture this place looking? What does this visit tell you about the nature of Jesus?**

**3. Verse 6. What is Jesus's question to the man? What might make the man answer "no" to Jesus's question?**

**4. How comfortable are you talking with elderly or disabled people? What can we learn from Jesus' example in the text?**

**5. What excuses does the man make for his present condition? What do you think he is hoping that Jesus will do for him?**

**6. Verse 7. The man makes excuses. What do you think it has been like for him as he has laid there for 38 years?**

**7. Verse 8. What is Jesus's command to the man? What does it take for the man to make him actually follow this command?**

**8. Verse 8. As you pray, do you expect Jesus to answer your prayers? If He tells you to get up and walk, do you have the faith to do so?**

**9. Verse 12. Why are the Jews upset about the miracle of the man's healing?**

**10. Verse 12. When do we need to follow the rules, and when do we need to give grace as we celebrate what the Lord has done for others?**

**11. Verse 15-16. How did the man repay Jesus's kindness? Why do you suppose that he did what he did?**

**12. Why should we continue helping people when there is a danger that they will not thank us or may even make things difficult for us?**

**13. How are you blessed by giving God's grace to others? In what way is giving help a chance to receive mercy from the Lord?**

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. How has Jesus shown Himself to be gracious in your life? How do you think the loving nature of Jesus has improved your life?

Deep 2. Why do you think some people are more concerned about keeping the rules than about caring for the needs of others? What effect do you think such legalism has on people?

Deep 3. What would the world be like if there were no grace from Jesus or His followers? Would you want to live in such a world? Why or why not?

#### **4. Feeding 5000 – Look to Jesus when times are tough.**

**John 6:1-14**

**Big idea: We have scarcity when we don't look to Jesus.**

It has been six to twelve months since the miracles of John 5, and now the crowds are following Jesus wherever he goes. They are desperate and cry out for healing and help. Jesus takes the disciples to a remote place for rest, and yet the crowds still follow. In this deserted place, where will He find food for 5000 men and their families? It is a crisis that overwhelms the disciples. They do not look to Jesus nor remember the miracles that Jesus has already done. Finally, Jesus shows the solution that the disciples have failed to grasp. Out of an offer of a boy's sack lunch, a miracle happens. Jesus blesses this meager offering, and soon, everyone has more than enough food. The scraps that are collected after the people have eaten show how great a miracle this was. This miracle shows how our simple offerings can be blessed by Jesus to do far more than we would expect.

We live in a world where people believe in scarcity. People wonder if they will have enough for retirement or if they get ill and need a doctor. Fear and worry plague our society because we never know how much will be enough. In times of uncertainty or shortages, we seldom think of Jesus except as a last resort. Too many Christians pray but don't expect Jesus to help. Like the disciples, we have seen Jesus do miracle after miracle in our life but don't believe Jesus will do more. Like the boy in the text, we need to offer Jesus what we have and let Him bless it so that it is enough. Instead of hoarding our possessions, we need to entrust them to Jesus. We will have our daily bread as He blesses what we have given Him. We will even have enough to share with others trusting that He will take care of us. No amount of money will make us feel comfortable. Having a God who controls all and provides for His people is the only answer to the fears of scarcity.

In times of trouble, our first instinct is to ask what we can do. We run through all the options we can think of before we take time to pray. God only gets consulted when things are desperate and not as the first response. We hinder God's answer to our need. We haven't learned to trust God with our life and our future. The wise will be in constant prayer and study of God's word. There you will find the answers that you need before things get bad. You will lean on the Lord when troubles are small and develop habits that take you through adversity. You will learn to be generous with what the Lord has given you. The feeding of the 5000 happened as the Lord used the lunch of a boy. As God's people trust the Lord to continue to provide for them, they will share what they have and watch the Lord multiply their gifts for the church and the community. God's people overcome scarcity when they share His blessings and learn to trust the Lord to provide for the future.

**1. What are your favorite foods for a picnic?**

**Read John 6:1-14**

**2. Verse 1-2. Where was Jesus and why did the crowd follow Jesus into this remote place (v.1-2)**

**3. Verse 2. When are you most likely to seek out Jesus? Do you seek Him daily or talk to Him as a friend or just when you need Him for a problem?**

**4. Verses 5-6. What question did Jesus ask Philip? What purpose did Jesus have in asking the question?**

**5. When have you experienced a situation with no easy answers? What do you think God tries to teach His people by putting us in such circumstances?**

**6. Verse 7. What is Philip's answer? Did he answer Jesus' question?**

**7. Verse 7. Sometimes, Jesus puts us in difficult situations where there is no rational answer to the problem. What do you suppose He is trying to teach us?**

**8. Verses 8-9. What part does Andrew play in the miracle that is about to happen? How does his answer compare to Philip's?**

**9. Verse 9. The boy offered his meager resources, and Jesus blessed it. When have you seen our Lord take the insufficient resources that you and I have and work an unexpected miracle with them?**

**10. List the miracles that Jesus has done for you recently. How can such a list help you trust the Lord in a way that the disciples didn't do in the text?**

**11. Verses 10-11. When the disciples have given up on the idea of helping the people, what does Jesus do in verses 10-11? Why do you think that He gives thanks?**

**12. Verses 11-12. Why do you think that Jesus had the disciples distribute the food and collect the scraps in the baskets?**

**13. How does this miracle show the concern that Jesus has for hurting people? Why should this miracle teach us to turn to Jesus when we are struggling?**

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. When have you been in crisis and had difficulty trusting Jesus? What made it hard to give your problems to Jesus?

Deep 2. When have you seen generosity from other Christians through difficulty? How was the Lord able to use that generosity to work miracles?

Deep 3. What challenges are you facing that you can bring to the Lord right now? What have you learned about the Lord and yourself through these times of crisis?



## **5. Walking on water – Knowing Jesus will help me.**

**John 6:16-21**

**Big idea: Faith expects Jesus to work miracles for us**

It was evening, and Jesus encourages the disciples to get into a boat and escape the crowd after the feeding of the 5000. They must have been on a high after seeing Jesus do a miracle that hearkened back to God feeding the people in the wilderness during the exodus. Within hours of the miracle, a storm catches the disciples on the lake. They feared for their life, yet none of the gospels speak of any of the praying to God or calling out Jesus' name. None of them look for Jesus or seem to expect that He will come. Faith is a mindset that expects the Lord to act. Here in the boat, their faith failed them. After having seen Jesus feed thousands, they never considered that God would listen to their prayers and help them.

We read the scriptures and believe that Jesus did the miracles that are described in the Bible. We may wonder what it would have been like to be there as He fed the masses or walked on water. We may even pray for someone with cancer, hoping that God will act as He did in the Bible. Do we pray for ourselves when we are in trouble? Do we believe that Jesus will help us if we call on Him? It may be that our job is eating us alive. Perhaps, we have a pain that we worry about as we schedule a doctor's appointment. Few will pray as we face the worries and cares of life. Even fewer seem to believe that God is going to do something miraculous for them. We never doubt that God can do miracles. We don't expect that miracles can happen to us. Our faith lets us down just as it did the disciples in the boat. Faith has learned by watching God, again and again, help us to expect that He will help us today as well.

We must learn from the help that Jesus gives. Faith is more than believing that Jesus did miracles long ago. It understands that He will help me when I ask for help in prayer. We must not be like the disciples who saw a great miracle and never made the connection that Jesus would help them, too. Imagine what life would be like if you were able to believe so that you left the results in His hands. Imagine how it would help when you had struggles in your job or family and could lay all those cares on Jesus for His solutions. God wants us to pray with confidence believing that He can do the impossible and that He will do the impossible for us. Faith expects that Jesus will help and enables us to go boldly forward in every crisis believing that Jesus is beside us to help us every step of the way.

**1. Describe a time that you were on a boat in the middle of a lake or the ocean. What were your fears and joys on that journey?**

**John 6:16-21**

**2. Verse 16. What is the context for this miracle? What has just occurred before the disciples get into the boat? What do you think their feelings were at this point?**

**3. Verse 18. What trouble occurred as the disciples rowed across the lake? What real dangers did they face?**

**4. Verse 18. How do you respond to the storms in your life? How soon do you cry out for Jesus?**

- 5. Do you believe in miracles? Do you accept that Jesus will do a miracle for you if you ask for His help?**
- 6. Verse 19. After the disciples had rowed for a few hours, what did they see and how did they react?**
- 7. Verse 19. How would you react if Jesus appeared to you tonight? What turns fear into faith when you see Him?**
- 8. Verse 20. How does Jesus calm their fears? What are they eager to do once they know that it is Him?**
- 9. Verse 20. How does the “voice” of Jesus still bring calm to the Christian in times of trouble? Where do you seek out that voice in your life?**
- 10. When have you felt alone and in need of God’s voice or presence in your life? Where did you find God’s voice speaking to you?**
- 11. Verse 21. What miracle happened just as Jesus stepped into the boat? How would that miracle have shown His power and His care for them?**
- 12. Verse 21. How might Jesus still use miracles to encourage us to trust Him?**
- 13. How is believing God will help you different than just accepting God can do miracles? What difference does it make in your life?**

For now or later - taking the next step

Deep 1. What fears or struggles are you facing that need God’s help or comfort?

Deep 2. How will you seek the voice of Jesus so that you might calm your fears?

Deep 3. What can you do to grow in your faith so that you expect Him to help whenever fears and struggles arise?

## **6. Healing the blind man – Helping people to see.**

**John 9:1-41**

**Big idea: O Lord open our lips that others might see**

He couldn't let go of the truth. The Jews didn't want to believe that Jesus could heal. They tried many ways to discount the miracle of the blind man given his sight. They tried to deny that it was the blind man who could now see (v.9). They denied that the man was ever blind (v.19). In spite of all the denials, the man could not deny the truth. "I was blind, but now I see" v.25. His healing put the Jews in a bind. They tried to deny what was undeniable because the miracle showed everyone that Jesus was from God (v.33). One has to admire the man for continuing to tell the truth throughout the interrogation. In the end, his patient witness cost him as he was thrown out of the synagogue (v.34)

You and I know the simple truth about Jesus since we have experienced his love and help in our lives. Most Christians can tell you of answered prayers for healing or help in painful situations. They can tell you about the blessings that Jesus has brought in their lives and the joy that He gives them. Our testimony is often hard for non-Christians to hear. They want to bend the truth and write off our healing as just good doctors or a solved problem in life as a mere coincidence; we have to stand firm as the blind man did. We need to give God credit publically for the astonishing things that He has done.

It will only be through our witness that people will see how loving and kind Jesus is just as we do. Many people don't respect the truth of the Bible. They are conditioned to think that the Bible is full of fabricated stories. Some will listen to our personal stories. If we were cured of cancer or walked away from a car accident, they will find it hard to deny that we are alive when we could be dead. Giving glory to Jesus for the miracles that we experience is one way of showing those we know that Jesus makes a difference in life. Our stories show them the truth and help us understand the workings of Jesus in the lives of His people just as they did for the blind man. Don't let the world change or silence your story. Tell how Jesus has helped you so that they may see Jesus with new eyes.

### **1. How would your life change if an accident took your sight?**

**Read John 9:1-41**

**2. Verse 2. How did the disciple's question show their blindness? What is Jesus' answer for them and us?**

**3. Verse 11. After Jesus healed the blind man, what was the only thing that the blind man knew about Jesus? How do the means of the miracle affect the man and slowly bring faith?**

**4. If asked, what do you think your friends and neighbors know about Jesus?**

**5. Verse 17. When forced to describe Jesus, what did the blind man say? Why do you think he called him that?**

- 6. Verse 17. If someone asked you to describe Jesus, how would you respond? What is the basis for your answer?**
- 7. Verse 27. How does the blind man react when others refuse to accept what is plain to see?**
- 8. Verse 27. Why is it so important that we be willing to stand up for the truth of Jesus in our lives?**
- 9. Verse 33. When questioned further, what does the man believe about Jesus and why?**
- 10. Verse 34. Why can't the Jewish leaders see the miracle before them? Many today have the same problem. What do you think it would take to convince them to believe in Jesus?**
- 11. Verse 38. After talking with Jesus a second time, what does the man come to believe? How is that different than what he professed earlier in the day?**
- 12. Jesus condemns the blindness of the Jews in verse 39. What will cause a more substantial judgment, and who do you see receiving that judgment in our world?**
- 13. Jesus says, "The blind will see, and those who see will become blind." How does that truth play out in the text and in life today?**

**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. What do your friends and neighbors have to come to know about Jesus before they can come to faith? How can you help them know Jesus better?

Deep 2. When have you faced opposition to the truth in the Bible? How did you handle it, and how do you wish that you would have handled it?

Deep 3. How does the blindness of the world around you affect your life? The blind man is kicked out of the synagogue for speaking the truth. Have you paid the price for your faith?

## **7. Raising Lazarus – It is not all about us.**

**John 11:17-47**

**Big idea: Miracles are about God's glory, not just our pain.**

You can feel their pain. The two sisters wished that Jesus could have been present to heal their brother. To their credit, both sisters never waiver in their faith in Jesus' powers. They express their grief and a feeling that it was not God's will or Jesus would have been there. The problem for both is that they still see the miracle as just about them and their pain. They don't see the big picture. Ultimately, the miracle was all about God's glory. Jesus has been praying about his friend's death for some time. He waited two days so that tomb-bound Lazarus could not be in a coma or a trance, but had to be dead. Jesus upped the ante so people could get a sense of God's power. Instead of healing, they saw a miracle of life and death.

You have been praying for weeks, but Grandma's cancer came back. You have prayed about a promotion and found out that you were passed over for the job. You shrug your shoulders and make do. You figured out that it just wasn't God's will. You figured that it was wrong to get your hopes up. What is God's will? We often assume that our desire is also God's will. What if God had something greater in mind? In the text, the miracle caused people to put their trust in God at a place only two miles from where Jesus would die. Often God waits so that the sick person or others might grow in their faith. He might wait so that people learn from the trial. He usually doesn't cause the problem or pain but will use it for our benefit if we trust Him.

Miracles are not just about us. Miracles happen so that people put their faith in God and have salvation. Miracles are to give God glory so that more people see Him as Lord. Never give up on God. We often stop praying because we figure that it is over. Just because we didn't get what we wanted quickly doesn't mean we should stop praying. Keep praying for God's will and asking if helping you can help others. Think beyond yourself when you need help. How can a miracle for you lead someone in your family closer to the Lord? How can a miracle in your life open up possibilities for ministry to others? Miracles are not just about your pain; they are about God's glory. God can do so much more than we ever imagine. As we let God do God-sized miracles in our lives, the world can be changed.

### **1. How do you feel when a friend lets you down?**

**Read John 11:17-47**

**2. Verse 17. Describe the scene in Bethany. Who is there? How long has Lazarus been dead? What do you think the mood is like on that day?**

**3. Verse 21. How does Martha greet Jesus? What does it say about her emotions and her relationship to Jesus?**

**4. Verse 21. How do you feel when Jesus doesn't answer your prayer in the way you wanted? What do we need to remember at those times?**

5. Verse 25. What does Jesus promise Martha? What do you think she thought that He meant by that?
6. What does God promise about illness and pain in scripture?
7. Verse 35. What do the tears of Jesus tell you about His character?
8. Verse 39. What does Jesus ask the sisters to do that is very difficult? Why is obedience necessary?
9. Verse 39. How is obedience vital to answered prayer? How do we often get in the way of God's solutions?
10. Verse 40. How is the miracle about God's glory as much as it is about their pain over Lazarus' death?
11. What would be the effect if every prayer asked for God's glory, not our ease or success?
12. Verse 45. What is the result of the miracle? What did the resurrection of Lazarus say about Jesus that healing could not?
- 13 What lessons do you see about prayer in crisis from this lesson?

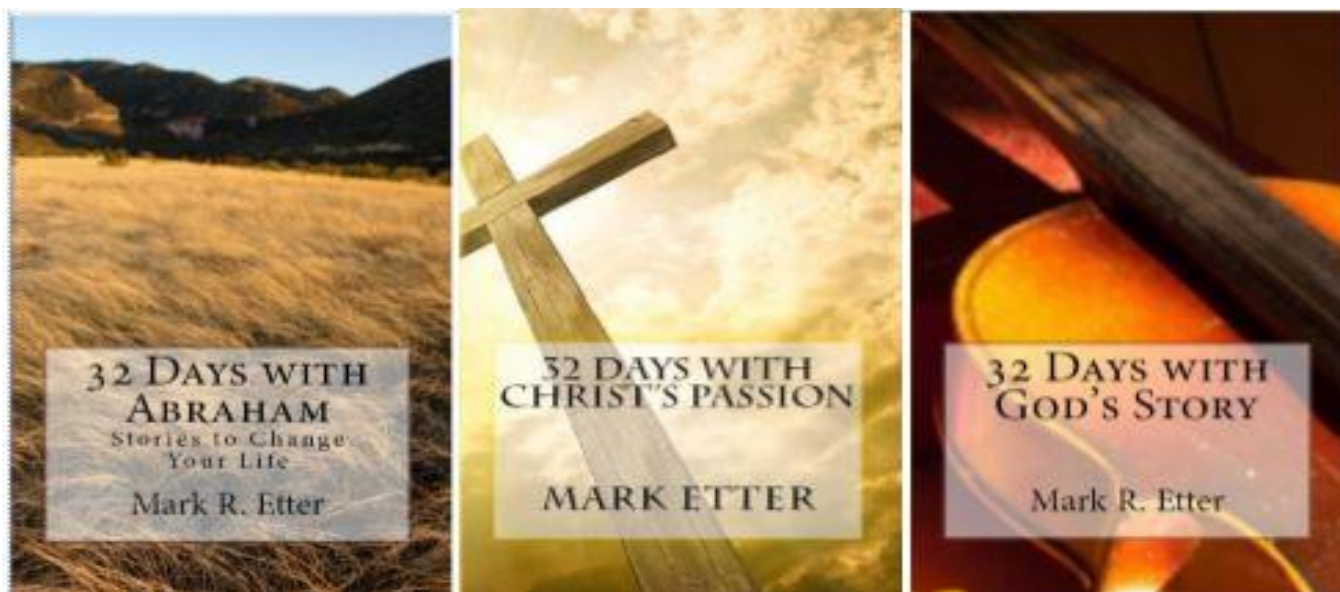
**For now or later - taking the next step**

Deep 1. What problem in life do you or someone you love struggle with that God doesn't seem to answer? How could God's help in your life positively impact someone else?

Deep 2. How does it help to know that Jesus cares for people like you and me? How does the fact that Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb impact your prayers?

Deep 3. If you needed to wait for healing and you knew that your healing would help someone else if God waited two weeks, would you be willing to wait? Do you think God would want to wait?

## Also Available from Rev. Mark Etter



**32 devotions to grow your faith and 12 reproducible Bible studies to share in your church or small group available on Amazon in softcover or Kindle**

These three books are designed to be a tool that brings you closer to Christ. Each book has 32 devotions with depth to help you dig below the surface and understand the context. Each devotion is based on a single story and lays out the events in an organized way to help you comprehend the deeper meanings in the passage and then apply them to your life. Each book also includes twelve bible studies that are meant to be shared. You can copy the student guides for your church or small group bible studies. The student guides are formatted for easy reproduction. Each Bible study is connected to one of the devotions and to a leader's guide so that you can feel confident leading others to understand God's word. The hope is that you enjoy the book with its devotions and studies and let the Holy Spirit change your life through them. God is ready to sit down with you through these studies and change your life.

### **About the author**

Rev. Mark Etter has been a pastor for over thirty-five years and is currently the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Erlanger, KY. Rev. Etter has published several books of Adult Bible studies and numerous devotions and youth studies with Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. He has been active in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as an LWML counselor, evangelism chairman, coach for pastors and circuit counselor. He is currently serving part-time as a regional facilitator for the Ohio District of the LCMS. He and his wife, Joan, have three grown children and two grandchildren.

# Did you know?

*How well do you know the miracles of Jesus? Here are seven questions that are answered in this study. The page and question number in this study are given after each question.*

1. Why is it important to obey Jesus when we face a crisis rather than questioning His answers (Page 6, Question 7)
2. How did the nobleman know it was Jesus who healed his son from afar? (Page 11, Question 9)
3. Why would the Jews be upset when Jesus healed someone? (Page 15, Question 9)
4. Why does Jesus sometimes put us in difficult situations where there seems no answer? (Page 18, Question 7)
5. Do you believe Jesus would do a miracle for you if you asked? (Page 22, Question 5)
6. If someone asked you to describe Jesus, how would you respond? (Page 26, Question 6)
7. What does Jesus ask the sisters of Lazarus that required faith and obedience? (Page 31, Question 8)

Studies are reproducible so that only one copy of the study is needed by the class or small group. You have flexibility when the class you thought was going to be 15 suddenly becomes 25. You are free to copy and distribute the two-page student guides for a large formal class or the four-page leader's guide for a small group. The focus is to get deep into the text and apply the lessons to your life. Each of the six chapters contains an introduction to help you get the big picture and is followed by thirteen questions to help you dig into the truth. Look for the other studies in the series and may the Lord bless your time in the word.