Anchored in Christ

A 6-Week Journey Through Trust, Faith & Servant-Leadership

VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION

In an age defined by relentless deadlines, shifting priorities, and mounting pressures on work, family, and faith, many of us find ourselves wrestling with questions of purpose, resilience, and identity. This six-week study is rooted in the journeys of Jesus and His closest companions. We will explore how first-century disciples navigated storms of doubt, danger, and disappointment, and how their example speaks powerfully into the 21st-century world. Each week we'll tackle a distinct theme drawn from the Gospels and Epistles, connecting ancient truths to modern struggles:

1.Trust in God When Times Get Tough

Discover how Peter's faltering faith on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22–33) and the psalmist's refuge in God (Psalm 46) equip us to lean on divine strength when career setbacks, relational conflict, or personal loss threaten to overwhelm.

2. Faith in God During Perilous Times

Learn from Jesus' rebuke of the storm (Mark 4:35–41) and Hebrews 11's heroes of faith how to stand firm when economic uncertainty, health crises, or cultural upheaval rise against us.

3. Guidance from the Holy Spirit When Our Minds Are Troubled

Explore John 14's promise of the Spirit as Advocate and Philippians 4:6–9's blueprint for prayerful peace, so that anxious thoughts and day-to-day distractions give way to clear direction and inner calm.

4. Cultivating Gratitude When Life Seems Still

Reflect on Mary's choice to sit at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38–42) alongside Paul's command to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:16–18), learning how thankfulness in the quiet seasons reshapes our outlook and renews our hope.

5. Waiting on God's Timing & Blessings

Draw strength from Isaiah 40:28–31's promise of renewed wings and John 11's delay in raising Lazarus, discovering how patient hope in God's perfect schedule builds character and prepares us for breakthrough.

6. Following Jesus as Disciples Who Serve Others—Even in Need

Embrace the servant-heart of John 13's foot washing and Paul's joy in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9–10) to find the paradox that our greatest impact comes when we give generously, even while depending on God's grace ourselves.

Throughout these gatherings, we'll engage Scripture, share real-life applications, and bond in honest fellowship—addressing challenges unique to men: the pressure to provide, the struggle to lead with humility, and the desire to balance personal need with sacrificial outreach. By tracing the footsteps of Jesus and His disciples, you'll gain practical tools for living out faith, hope, and love in the very midst of life's complexities. Join us as we strengthen one another to trust, to wait, to serve, and to thrive under the steadying hand of our Savior.

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SESSION 1

Trust in God When Times Get Tough

Matthew 14:22–33



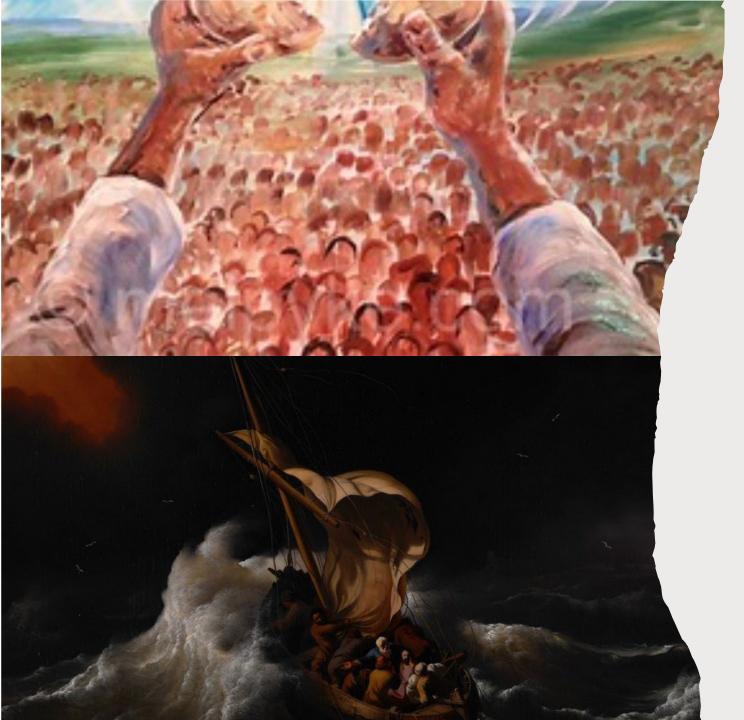
The Importance of Always Trusting In God When Times Get Tough

Trust is the lifeline that carries us through life's fiercest storms. When uncertainty looms—whether in the form of personal loss, unanswered prayers, or global upheaval—our natural impulse is to grasp for control or retreat into fear. Yet Scripture calls us to a different posture: to fix our eyes not on the storm's fury but on the One who commands the wind and waves (Mark 4:39).

This study on **Trust in God When Times Get Tough** invites you to explore the rich biblical witness of God's unshakable faithfulness. From the psalmist's declaration that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1) to the disciples' crisis on Galilee's waters (Matthew 14:22–33), we will journey together through the narratives, parables, and promises that underpin a trust worth holding onto.

Whether you find yourself navigating small daily anxieties or life-altering trials, may these pages encourage you to lean into God's steadfast character, deepen your prayer life, and discover the peace that transcends every tempest. As you learn to anchor your hope in His unchanging nature, you will find that even the darkest nights can become arenas of profound encounter with the One who ever whispers, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).





Matthew 14:22-33

- 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.
- 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,
- 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.
- 25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26
 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified.
 "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.
- 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."
- 28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."
- 29 "Come," he said.
- Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"
- 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"
- 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Setting

- This event happens right after the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13–21). The crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15), so He dismissed them and sent His disciples ahead by boat.
- Jesus withdrew to a mountain to pray alone (v. 23), showing His dependence on the Father and the importance of prayer in ministry.
- The disciples, meanwhile, faced a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

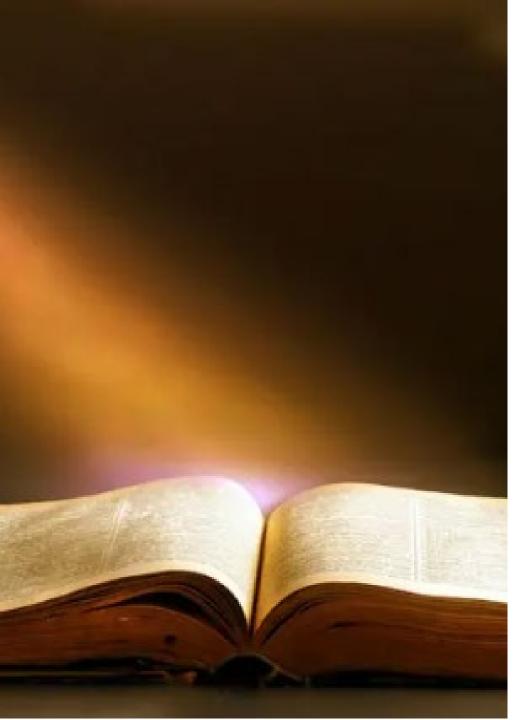
 This body of water was notorious for sudden, violent winds due to its location between hills and its low elevation.

The Disciples' Fear

- The disciples were experienced fishermen, yet the storm left them exhausted and fearful (v. 24).
- Seeing Jesus walking on the water in the early morning hours ("shortly before dawn," v. 25), they were terrified and thought He was a ghost—a common belief in Jewish culture when something supernatural appeared in times of danger.

Jesus' Assurance

- Jesus calms them with His words: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (v. 27).
- The phrase "It is I" in Greek (ego eimi) echoes God's self-revelation as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), subtly pointing to His divine identity.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

Peter's Step of Faith

- Peter, often bold and impulsive, asks Jesus to let him come out on the water (v. 28).
- He walks toward Jesus but becomes afraid when he sees the wind and begins to sink (v. 30).
- Jesus saves him immediately, rebuking his doubt: "You of little faith ... why did you doubt?" (v. 31).

The Climax: Worship

- When Jesus and Peter get into the boat, the wind dies down (v. 32). This shows Jesus' authority not just over food and healing but also over creation itself.
- The disciples respond with worship, declaring: "*Truly you are the Son of God*" (v. 33). This is one of the clearest confessions of Jesus' divinity in Matthew up to this point.

Historical and Theological Significance

- **For the disciples:** This miracle revealed Jesus' identity in a deeper way—He is not just a teacher or prophet, but Lord over creation.
- For Matthew's readers: This account reassured the early church facing persecution and storms of its own. Jesus is present, powerful, and worthy of worship.
- For us today: The passage illustrates the tension between faith and fear—when eyes are fixed on Christ, we walk securely; when distracted by life's storms, we sink. Yet Jesus is always ready to reach out and save.

In Summary:

Matthew 14:22–33 is not just about a storm at sea—it's about who Jesus is. Historically, it showed the disciples that He is divine, sovereign over creation, and worthy of worship. Spiritually, it teaches believers that faith looks to Christ, even in life's storms, and that doubt and fear are met by His saving hand.



Feed-and-Pray Narrative

Immediately after Jesus miraculously feeds the five thousand (Matt 14:13–21), we find Him sending the disciples away by boat while He withdraws alone to pray.

- Physical Provision Meets Spiritual Communion: The feeding miracle demonstrated Jesus' compassion and power to meet the crowd's most basic need—hunger. But He doesn't linger in the crowds. He "went up on the mountain by Himself to pray" (14:23), signaling that His authority over creation flows from intimate communion with the Father.
- Setting the Stage for Divine Intervention: By structuring the walk-on-water episode as the sequel to the feeding, Matthew invites us to see a holistic portrait of Jesus: He is both Provider (He feeds us) and Intercessor (He prays for us). When the wind-whipped sea threatens to drown the disciples, it is the same Son who fed them who now stands against the storm—having first drawn strength from the Father in prayer.
- Application Today: In our own lives, God often meets our physical or practical needs just before calling us into deeper dependence on Him in prayer. The union of "feed and pray" teaches that sustained ministry and miraculous provision alike issue from a heart devoted to communion with God.

Application for Christians Today



Navigating Life's Storms

"Storms" can be financial pressures, health crises, relationship breakdowns, or global uncertainties. Like the disciples, we are often overwhelmed when we focus on the "wind" rather than the One who commands it.

Take-away: Cultivate a habit of lifting your eyes to Jesus in prayer (Matt 14:23), especially when waves crash around you.



Stepping Out in Faith

"Come" - Peter's invitation remains for us. When God calls, we're invited to step into the unknown by faith (new job, unfamiliar ministry, difficult decision).

Take-away: Obeying Christ may involve risk, but even if faith falters, His hand is there when we cry, "Lord, save me!"



Dependence on Christ's Power

"Victory" - Just as Jesus walked on water by the Father's authority, our victories over sin, anxiety, and discouragement come through His power, not our own.

Take-away: Regularly remind yourself of Christ's past faithfulness (journaling answered prayers) to bolster confidence in His ongoing care.



Corporate Worship & Testimony

"Truly you are the Son of God" - The disciples' worship in the boat models how encountering God's miraculous work compels us to praise and to bear witness.

Take-away: Share your "storm stories" in small groups or with unbelieving friends as evidence of Christ's real-time compassion and authority.

Bringing It Together

Matthew 14:22–33 is not only a gripping rescue story but also a richly layered theological portrait.

- O Through the **Feed-and-Pray Narrative**, we see that miraculous provision and prayerful devotion are inseparable.
- o In the **Disciples' Formation** motif, the crisis becomes the classroom where faith is forged.
- And in the **Christology** lens, Jesus' mastery over the elements reveals His divine nature and elicits our worship. For Christians today, these threads weave into a single tapestry: Jesus both feeds and rescues, teaches and transforms, and reigns supremely—inviting us to trust Him above all.





Discussion Questions

- 1. When life's storms rise, do you react more like the disciples, paralyzed by fear or like Peter, willing to step out in shaky faith? What "ghosts" in your life might actually be places where Jesus is drawing near? *Matthew 14:26*
- 2. What "winds" distract you from keeping your eyes on Jesus causing you to sink in doubt—and how might your faith look different if you trusted His presence more than your circumstances? *Matthew 14:30*
- 3. The disciples' response to the calming of the storm was worship what storms has Jesus already carried you through that should move you from relief to true worship? *Matthew* 14:33

SESSION 2

Faith in God During Perilous Times

Mark 4:35-41



The Importance of Always Having Faith In God During Perilous Times

Perilous times test the very foundations of our faith. Whether beset by personal crises, societal unrest, or sudden upheavals beyond our control, we are called to stand not on the shifting sands of circumstance but on the unshakeable rock of God's promises. Throughout Scripture, we see that true faith is refined in the furnace of adversity: Noah entrusted an impossible ark (Hebrews 11:7), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced fiery trials (Daniel 3), and the apostles persevered under persecution and prison (Acts 5).

This study on **Faith in God During Perilous Times** will guide you through these heroic examples and the teachings of Jesus, who calmed the storm with a word (Mark 4:39) and invited His followers to trust Him even when the waves threatened to engulf them. As we explore biblical narratives, practical applications, and heartfelt reflections, may your courage be renewed, your hope strengthened, and your faith deepened—so that when the next storm darkens the horizon, you will stand firm, proclaiming with unwavering confidence that our God is greater than every gale.





Mark 4:35-41

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves broke into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Setting

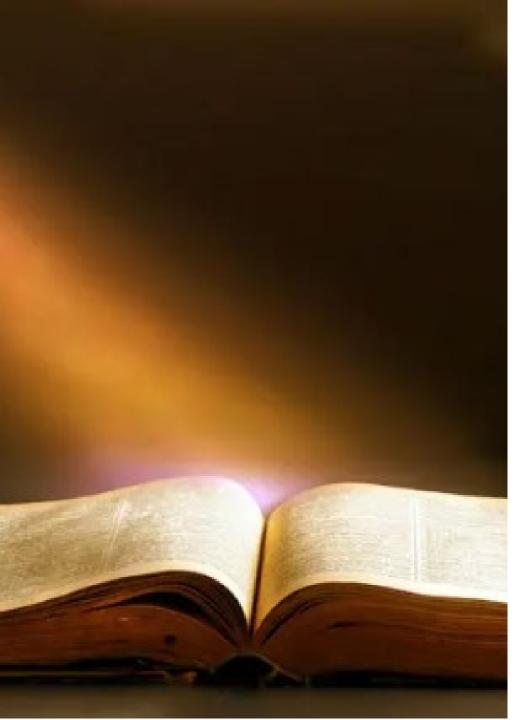
- This event happens after a long day of Jesus teaching parables by the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:1–34).
- The Sea of Galilee, though called a "sea," is a freshwater lake, about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. Because of its geography—low in elevation and surrounded by mountains—it was prone to sudden and violent windstorms.
- The disciples, many of whom were seasoned fishermen, were used to these conditions, but this storm was severe enough to fill the boat with water and cause fear of sinking.

The Disciples' Fear

- The disciples cry out, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (v. 38).
- This reflects both their terror and their misunderstanding of Jesus' identity and power. They saw Him as a rabbi, not yet fully grasping His divine authority.

Jesus' Authority Over Nature

- Jesus rebukes the wind and the sea with the words: "Peace! Be still!" (v. 39).
- Immediately, the storm ceases and there is a "great calm." This demonstrates divine authority, echoing Old Testament themes where only God has power over creation (see Psalm 65:7; Psalm 107:28–29).
- By commanding nature directly, Jesus reveals Himself as more than a teacher—He acts with the authority of God Himself.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Disciples' Astonishment

- After the miracle, the disciples are filled with awe and fear: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (v. 41).
- In Jewish belief, control over the sea symbolized control over chaos and evil. Their question points to a growing realization: Jesus is not merely a rabbi or miracle worker—He shares in God's identity.

Historical and Theological Significance

- **For the disciples:** This event was a revelation of Jesus' divine authority, teaching them that He is trustworthy even when circumstances seem overwhelming.
- For the early church: Mark wrote to believers facing persecution in Rome. This story reassured them that, even in chaos and danger, Christ rules over the storms of life.
- **For us today:** It illustrates the contrast between human fear and divine power. Faith does not mean storms won't come—it means Jesus is present and sovereign in the midst of them.

Summary:

Mark 4:35–41 shows Jesus as Lord over creation, the one who brings peace in chaos. Historically, it taught His disciples that their safety was not in their skill or strength, but in Him. Theologically, it reveals that Jesus shares in God's authority, and that faith in Him is the antidote to fear.



Theological Themes

Immediately after Jesus miraculously feeds the five thousand (Matt 14:13–21), we find Him sending the disciples away by boat while He withdraws alone to pray.

Jesus' Sovereignty Over Creation

By commanding wind and waves, Jesus displays divine power (echoing God's creative commands in Genesis 1).

The Question of Faith

Jesus' rebuke ("Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?") highlights that spiritual security depends not on calm seas, but on trust in Him.

Revelation of Identity

The disciples' stunned question—"Who then is this?"—is Mark's invitation to see Jesus not merely as Rabbi or miracleworker, but as Lord over nature itself.

Application for Christians Today



Storms as Faith-Forming Moments

"Life's sudden crises (health scares, financial emergencies, relational breakdowns) can feel like a capsizing storm. Rather than awaken Jesus in anxiety, we're called to remember His presence—even when He seems "asleep."



Invitation to Deeper Trust

Jesus challenges us: "Have you still no faith?" Modern believers can cultivate peace not by eliminating problems, but by fixing our eyes on Him in prayer and Scripture.



Worship Through Wonder

The disciples responded to the calm with fear—and worship. When we recognize Christ's supremacy, our natural reaction shifts from panic to reverent awe and praise.



Community **Encouragement**

Just as the disciples cried out together, congregations can bear one another's fears in prayer groups, reminding each other of Jesus' power to still any storm.

Bringing It Together

Mark 4:35-41 is not only a gripping rescue story but also a richly layered theological portrait.

In one dramatic episode, Mark presents Jesus as Creator-King, challenges our misplaced security, and unveils His true identity.

For modern Christians, the message is clear:

the storms we face are opportunities for encountering the One whose voice stills both sea and soul—and whose lordship demands our unwavering faith and worship.





Discussion Questions

- 1. When the "storms" of life hit, do you find yourself crying out like the disciples, "Lord, don't you care?" and what does that reveal about where your trust really rests? *Mark 4:38*
- 2. Jesus asked, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"—what situations expose the gap between what you say you believe about Jesus and how you actually respond when life feels out of control? Mark 4:40
- 3. The disciples were astonished that even the wind and waves obeyed Him—what in your life right now feels too chaotic or uncontrollable to submit to Christ's authority, and what would it mean to surrender it fully to Him? *Mark 4:41*

SESSION 3

Guidance from the Holy Spirit When Our Minds Are Troubled

John 14:15-27



The Importance of Always Seeking Guidance From The Holy Spirit When Our Minds Are Troubled

In moments when our minds swirl with anxiety, doubt, or confusion, we may feel adrift, longing for clarity, peace, and a sure guide. The New Testament assures us that the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised as our "Advocate" and "Helper," is everpresent to lead, comfort, and counsel us (John 14:16–17, 26). Yet knowing intellectually that the Holy Spirit is with us does not always translate into experiencing His gentle guidance amid life's cacophony.

This brief exploration, **Guidance from the Holy Spirit When Our Minds Are Troubled**, will draw upon biblical promises and practical practices to help you recognize and respond to the Spirit's voice. You will discover how prayer, Scripture meditation, and a heart posture of listening can open your inner ear to His wisdom, bring calm to racing thoughts, and empower you to navigate challenges with divine insight. May this preface spark a renewed expectancy for the Holy Spirit's leading and a deeper trust in His unfailing presence.



John 14:15-27

15 "If you love me, keep my commands.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever

17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[a] in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you.

26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.





Historical Context of The Scriptures

The Setting

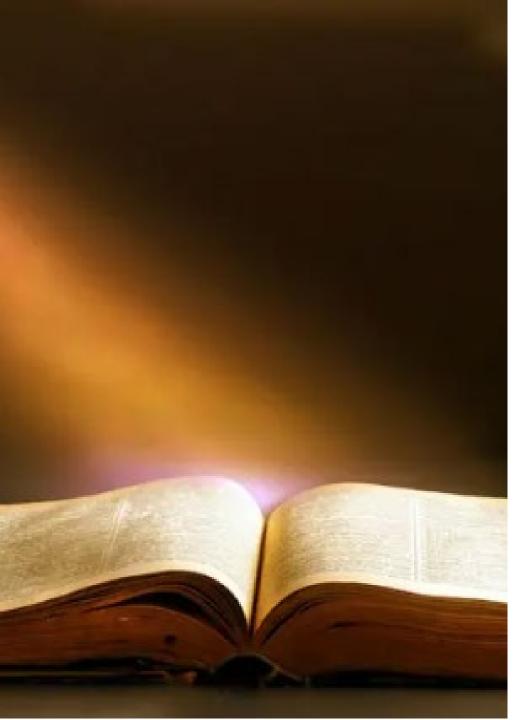
- These words are spoken during the **Last Supper** (John 13–17), just hours before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion.
- Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure. They are troubled and fearful about losing Him (see John 14:1).
- The discourse is both a **comfort** and a **commission**: He reassures them of His presence through the Spirit and calls them to faithful obedience.

The Call to Love and Obedience (vv. 15, 21, 23–24)

- Jesus links love for Him with obedience to His commands: "If you love me, keep my commands."
- In Jewish thought, love for God was always expressed through obedience (Deut. 6:5; 11:1).
- Jesus makes this personal—obedience to **His** teaching is the sign of true discipleship.

The Promise of the Advocate (vv. 16–17, 26)

- Jesus promises to send "another Advocate" (Greek: *paraklētos*), translated as Comforter, Helper, Counselor, or Advocate.
- This is the **Holy Spirit**, described as the "Spirit of truth."
- Unlike Jesus' physical presence, the Spirit will be with them **forever**, living **in** them.
- The Spirit will **teach** and **remind** them of Jesus' words, ensuring the continuity of His mission after His departure.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

Assurance of His Presence (vv. 18-20, 23)

- Jesus promises: "I will not leave you as orphans." In Greco-Roman society, orphans were vulnerable and unprotected—Jesus assures them they won't be abandoned.
- His resurrection ("because I live, you also will live") will prove that His life secures theirs.
- The intimacy is profound: "I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you." This expresses the deep union between the Father, Son, and believers.
- For those who love and obey, the Father and Son will "make our home" with them—a radical promise of divine indwelling.

Peace Beyond the World (v. 27)

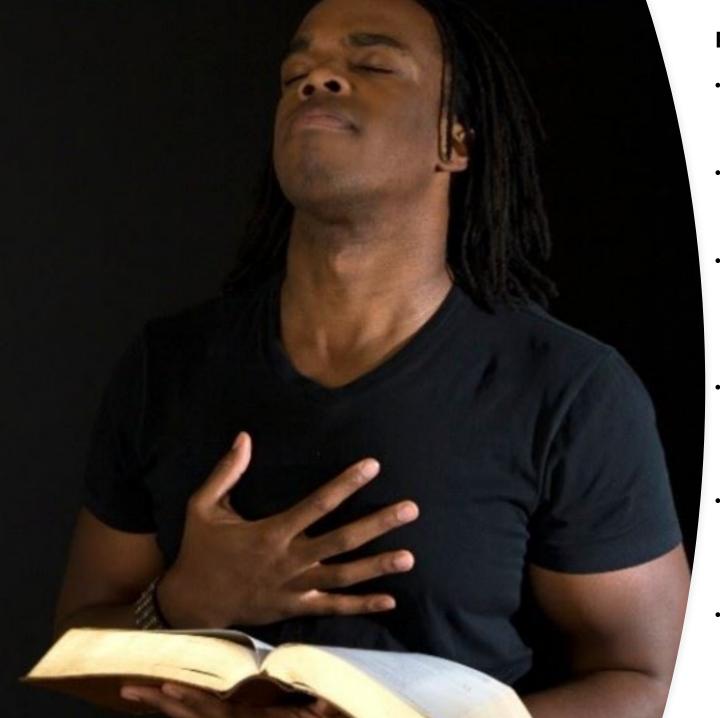
- Jesus contrasts His peace with the world's peace.
- Roman "peace" (Pax Romana) was built on military strength and political control, but Jesus gives peace that is internal, enduring, and rooted in His presence.
- His words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid," directly respond to the disciples' fear of His departure.

Historical and Theological Significance

- **For the disciples:** These words prepared them to face persecution and uncertainty after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.
- For the early church: It explained the Spirit's role in guiding them, reminding them of Jesus' teaching, and sustaining them under trial.
- **For us today:** It emphasizes that the Christian life is not about struggling in our own strength, but about Spirit-empowered obedience and peace.

In Summary

In John 14:15–27, Jesus reassures His disciples that His departure is not abandonment. The Spirit will come as their Advocate, guiding and empowering them. True love is shown in obedience, and true peace comes from Christ, not the world. This passage anchors believers in the reality that we are never left alone—the Father, Son, and Spirit dwell with us.



Presence Over Panic

- Centering Scripture: Before you even get out of bed, quietly repeat a verse like "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5) to remind yourself of Christ's constant presence.
- "Jesus in the Room" Check-In: When anxiety hits, pause for 30 seconds, close your eyes, and say aloud, "Jesus, I know You're here with me." Let that truth soak in before reacting.
- **Breath Prayer:** As the wind of worry rises, inhale while thinking, "Holy Spirit," then exhale, "fill me," anchoring your awareness in His nearness.

Prayer as Portal to Peace

- **A-Z Gratitude List:** Each morning or evening, write 5–10 things from A to Z for which you're thankful, then offer one-sentence prayers of thanks for each. This reframes your heart before the day begins (or before sleep).
- "Stoplight" Prayer Breaks: Whenever you hit a red light (or any unexpected pause), use it to pray briefly: "Father, I lift this next meeting/fear to You." Over time, these microprayers become second nature.
- **Prayer Journal "Safe Space":** Keep a dedicated notebook. Pour out your worries in writing, then write a short prayer asking God to guard your heart (Phil. 4:6–7). Date each entry so you can later trace how He answers.

Application for Christians Today



Love Expressed Through Obedience

Jesus links love for Him with keeping His commands. Love isn't only emotion, it's action.

Take-away: Christians today show love for Christ by practicing forgiveness, loving their enemies, living with integrity, serving others, and faithfully following His teachings



Receiving and Depending on The Holy Spirit

Jesus promises the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would teach, guide, and strengthen His followers.

Take-away: Instead of relying only on personal wisdom or strength, Christians can pray daily for the Spirit's guidance, listen for His conviction, and trust His power in moments of weakness, decision-making, or witness



Experiencing Christ's Presence

Jesus assures His followers they will not be left as "orphans." Through the Spirit, He and the Father make their home with believers.

Take-away: Christians today can rest in the reality that they are never alone—God's presence dwells within them. This truth gives courage in hardship, confidence in service, and peace in uncertainty.



Living In Christ's Peace

Unlike the world's temporary or fragile peace, Jesus gives a deep and lasting peace rooted in His presence and victory.

Take-away: Christians can respond to stress, fear, and conflict differently—choosing prayer over panic, trust over worry, and forgiveness over resentment, knowing Christ's peace steadies them.

Bringing It Together

John 14:15–27 assures us that the Holy Spirit is our indwelling Advocate—teaching, comforting, and granting peace.

Philippians 4:6–9 shows us how to cooperate with that promise through prayer, thanksgiving, and focused thought. Together, they equip Christians today to navigate mental and emotional storms by relying on the Spirit's guidance rather than our own unaided strength.





Discussion Questions

- 1. If love for Jesus is proven through obedience, what specific area of your life shows whether you are obeying Him or resisting Him right now? *John 14:15*
- 2. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as our Advocate and Guide how often do you actually seek His direction before making decisions, and what might change if you truly depended on Him? *John 14:26*
- 3. Jesus offers peace the world cannot give what in your life robs you of peace, and how would trusting His presence reshape the way you face it? *John 14:27*

SESSION 4

Cultivating Gratitude When Life Seems Still

Luke 10:38-42



The Importance of Always Cultivating Gratitude When Life Seems Still

Gratitude Shifts Focus From Busyness to Presence

Martha was distracted by "many tasks" while Mary sat at Jesus' feet. Gratitude in still moments helps us focus on the presence of Christ rather than being consumed by what isn't happening or what we think we must do. Instead of resenting the stillness or wishing for more activity, gratitude turns our eyes toward God's nearness.

Gratitude Guards Against Anxiety and Restlessness

Jesus gently told Martha "You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed or indeed only one" (vv. 41–42). Gratitude anchors us, reminding us that the "one thing" that matters most Jesus' presence is always available, even in quiet or uneventful seasons.

Gratitude Teaches Contentment in Stillness

Mary discovered what was "better" time at Jesus' feet. Gratitude turns stillness into opportunity for worship, reflection, and renewal instead of boredom or frustration. Gratitude transforms the still seasons from "wasted time" into holy time where God shapes us.

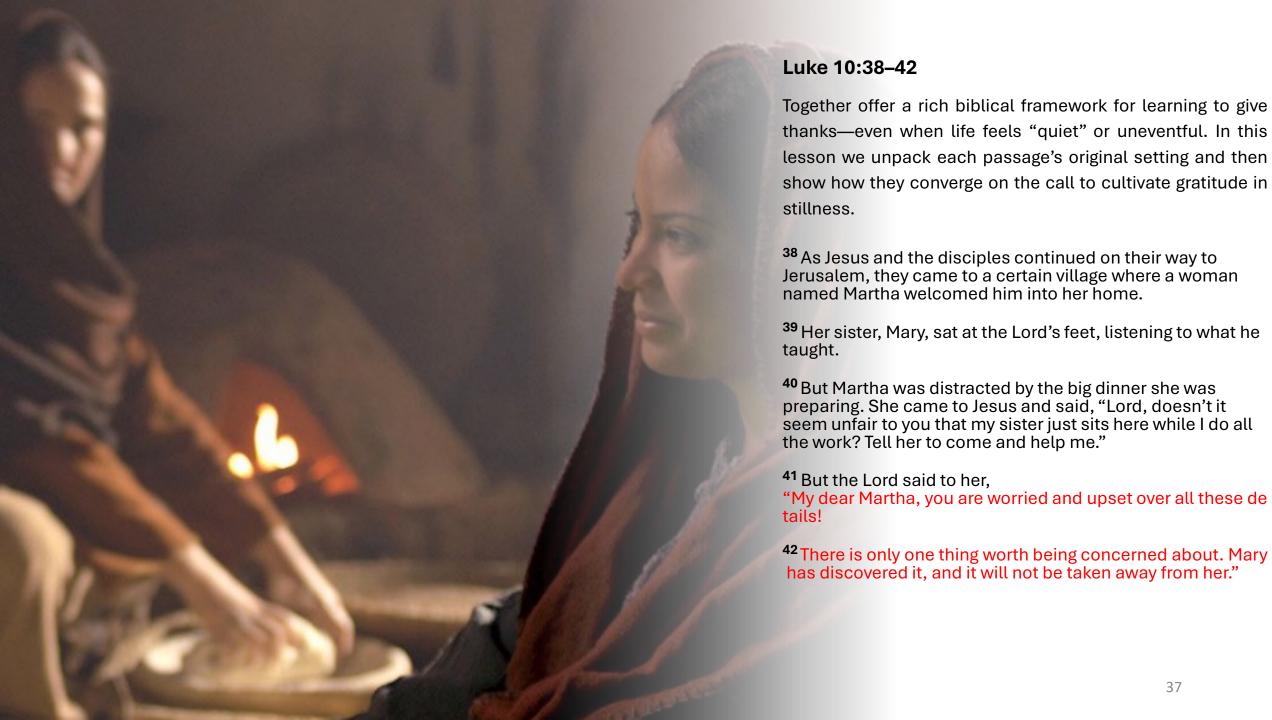
Gratitude Keeps Us From Comparing

Martha compared herself to Mary, feeling her service was overlooked. Gratitude breaks comparison by reminding us each moment with God is a gift, whether we are active or still.

Gratitude Makes Stillness Fruitful

Mary's stillness was not inactivity—it was devotion. Gratitude recognizes that being with Jesus is never wasted time. When life slows down, gratitude helps us receive the moment as preparation for what God will do next.







Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Setting

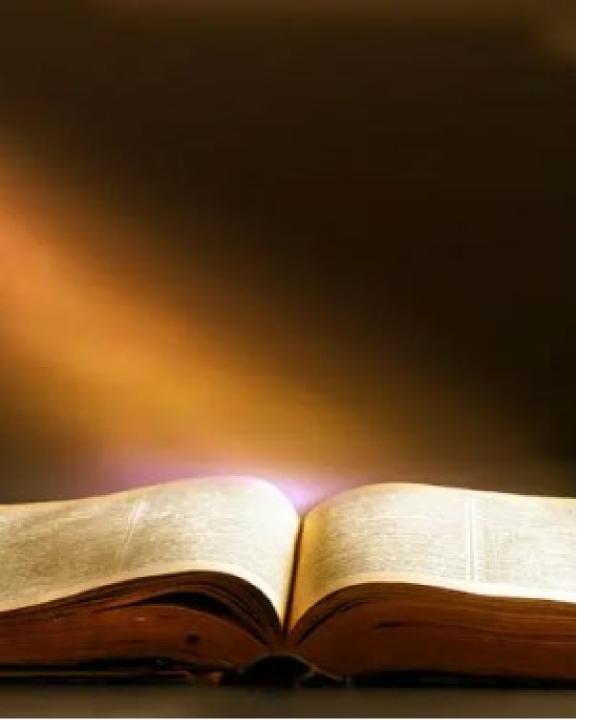
- Jesus was traveling toward Jerusalem with His disciples, teaching along the way (Luke 9:51 sets the journey context).
- He stopped in a village (traditionally understood as **Bethany**, near Jerusalem) at the home of **Martha and Mary**, who were sisters of Lazarus (John 11).
- In Jewish culture, hospitality was a sacred duty, especially for honored guests like rabbis. Hosting Jesus meant great responsibility.

Martha's Role

- Martha took the traditional role of host: preparing food, arranging the house, and ensuring everything was in order.
- Her busyness was not wrong—hospitality was highly valued in Jewish society. But her focus on "many details" distracted her from the most important thing: being present with Jesus.

Mary's Role

- Mary broke cultural norms by sitting at Jesus' feet.
- In that culture, "sitting at the feet" of a teacher was the posture of a disciple—a role usually reserved for men.
- Luke highlights Mary's hunger for Jesus' teaching, showing that the kingdom of God breaks social barriers: women, too, were welcomed as disciples.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

Jesus' Response

- Jesus gently rebukes Martha: "You are worried and upset over all these details."
- He affirms Mary: "There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it."
- Jesus is not condemning service but teaching **priority**: spiritual nourishment and fellowship with Him outweigh busyness and distraction.

Historical Significance

- This passage reflects a tension familiar in the early church: the balance between **serving** (active ministry) and **listening** (spiritual devotion).
- It underscores that discipleship is not limited by gender or social role—Mary's choice to learn from Jesus is validated.
- It highlights a countercultural truth: in God's kingdom, being with Jesus is more essential than doing for Jesus.

In Summary:

In Luke 10:38–42, Martha represents the cultural expectation of busyness and service, while Mary represents the radical choice of discipleship, choosing to sit at the Lord's feet and listen. Jesus teaches that devotion to Him takes precedence over distraction, even good and important tasks.



Give Thanks in All **Circumstances**

- Keep a jar and slips of paper on your kitchen counter. Each evening jot one thank-you note—big or small—and drop it in. At month's end, read them aloud.

"Thank-You" Text Marathon

 Challenge yourself to send five brief thank-you texts in a day: to a co-worker, neighbor, family member, or service provider (barista, mail carrier). Multiply

Reframe the Tough Stuff

- When you face a setback, ask: "What can I be thankful for in this?"—then list at least one glimmer (lesson learned, character growth, unexpected

Application for Christians Today



Follow Jesus' Example of Prayer and Thanksgiving

Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to pray (Luke 5:16). Even before big moments, He gave thanks (John 11:41; Matthew 26:27).

Take-away: In stillness, cultivate prayerful gratitude for God's presence, even if there are no dramatic changes. Thank Him not just for what He gives, but for who He is.



See Stillness As An Invitation, Not An Absence

In "still" seasons, it's easy to feel like nothing is happening. Yet God often works in hidden ways (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Take-away: Instead of frustration, Christians can thank God for the pause itself. Gratitude transforms stillness into a time of rest, healing, and preparation.



Experiencing Christ's Presence

Jesus noticed and blessed simple gifts like the widow's two coins (Mark 12:41–44), a boy's small lunch (John 6:9).

Take-away: Write down daily blessings: breath, food, friendships, Scripture, creation. Gratitude for little things trains the heart to see God's hand everywhere.



Offer Worship As Thanksgiving

Gratitude is not just saying "thank you" but living it out in worship, service, and generosity.

Take-away: Use the stillness to serve others, encourage someone, or spend more time in Scripture.

Gratitude moves outward in Christlike love

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Bringing It Together

Luke 10:38-42

Let's rise above all the noise and pursuits of this world and seek those things which have eternal value. Like Mary, let's find that fellowship with the Master and with those who follow Him so that we can learn of Him and become like Him. Through the Word of God, fellowship, and prayer we become rich in our spirit, and God will give us everything we need in abundance.

By weaving these simple practices into your daily routine, you'll train your heart to rejoice, pray, and give thanks—even when nothing dramatic is happening—so that gratitude becomes the steady backdrop of your Christian life.





Discussion Questions

- I. When life feels uneventful or stagnant, do I see it as wasted time or as an opportunity to slow down and notice God's presence more deeply? *Psalm 46:10*
- 2. What small, often-overlooked blessings in my daily life could I thank God for right now, instead of waiting for something "big" to happen?

1 Thessalonians 5:18

3. How might practicing gratitude in stillness prepare my heart to trust God more fully when storms or challenges eventually come? *Philippians 4:11*

SESSION 5

Waiting on God's Timing & Blessings

John 11:1-44



The Importance of Always Waiting on God's Timing And Blessings

God's Timing Reveals His Glory

When Jesus hears Lazarus is sick, He delays going for two days (John 11:6). This seems confusing, even cruel, to Martha and Mary, who wanted immediate healing. But Jesus explains: "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

Waiting Deepens Faith

Martha and Mary's faith was tested: they both said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (vv. 21, 32). The delay turned their grief into an opportunity for greater faith when they witnessed resurrection power.

God's Blessings Go Beyond What We Ask

The sisters asked for healing; Jesus gave resurrection. By waiting, Jesus not only restored Lazarus' health but demonstrated His identity as "the resurrection and the life" (v. 25).

Timing Aligns Us With God's Larger Purpose

The miracle of raising Lazarus prepared the way for Jesus' own death and resurrection, because it led directly to the Pharisees plotting against Him (John 11:53).

God's Delay Doesn't Mean His Absence

Even though Jesus delayed, He was deeply moved by the sisters' grief ("Jesus wept" in v. 35).

Importance:

- God's timing is not about convenience but about displaying His power and glory in ways we may not expect.
- Delays are not denials they are invitations to trust God more deeply.
- God's blessings often exceed what we imagine. Waiting allows Him to give us not just what we want, but what reveals His greater plan.
- God's timing always serves a greater kingdom purpose. Our lives are woven into His larger story.
- Waiting doesn't mean God doesn't care. He walks with us in the delay, sharing our pain while working for our ultimate good.





John 11:1-14 - This passage teaches us about the importance of trusting in Jesus' timing. Although Martha and Mary were distraught over the delay, Jesus had a greater purpose in mind. Sometimes, God's timing may not align with our own, but we can trust that He has a plan and that He will work all things together for good.

- 1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
- 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)
- 3 So, the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."
- 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."
- 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
- 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,
- 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."
- 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"
- 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light.
- 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."
- 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."
- 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."
- 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.
- 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,
- 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

John 11:32-44 - This passage serves as a reminder that God's timing may not always align with our expectations, but it is always for a higher purpose. We can let go of our need for immediate answers and surrender to God's divine plan with patience and faith by trusting in His timing. Cultivating a heart of faith and reliance on God requires us to deepen our trust in His timing.



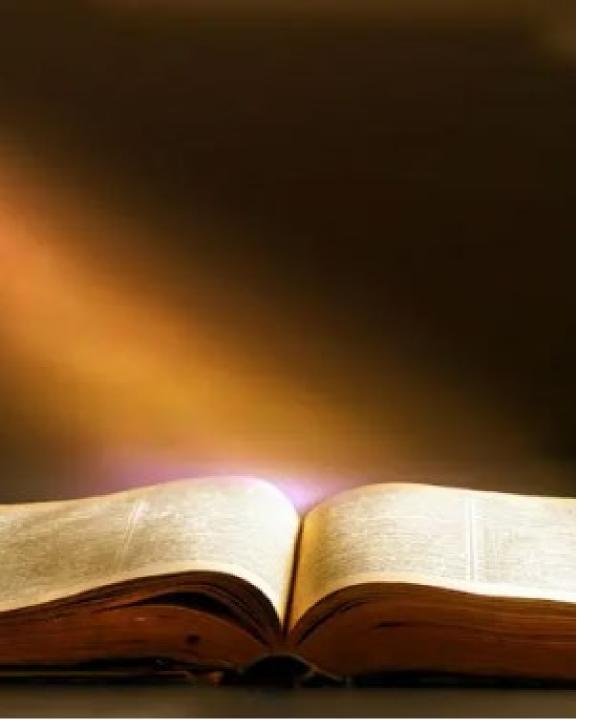
- ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
- ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.
- ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."
- ³⁵ Jesus wept.
- ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"
- ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"
- ³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.
- ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone."
- ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"
- 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.
- ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.
- ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."
- ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."



Historical and Literary Context Of

John 11: 1-44

- **1. Lazarus' Illness & Death:** Mary and Martha send word to Jesus that their brother Lazarus is sick. Jesus delays His departure for two days—Lazarus dies in the interim.
- **2. Jesus' Timing:** Although Lazarus' death seems like a tragedy, Jesus declares the delay "for the glory of God" (11:4) and to deepen the disciples' faith.
- **3. Resurrection Power:** Standing at the tomb, Jesus weeps (11:35) then commands, "Lazarus, come out!" (11:43). The dead man emerges, wrapped in burial cloths—a foretaste of Jesus' own resurrection.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

Jesus' Response

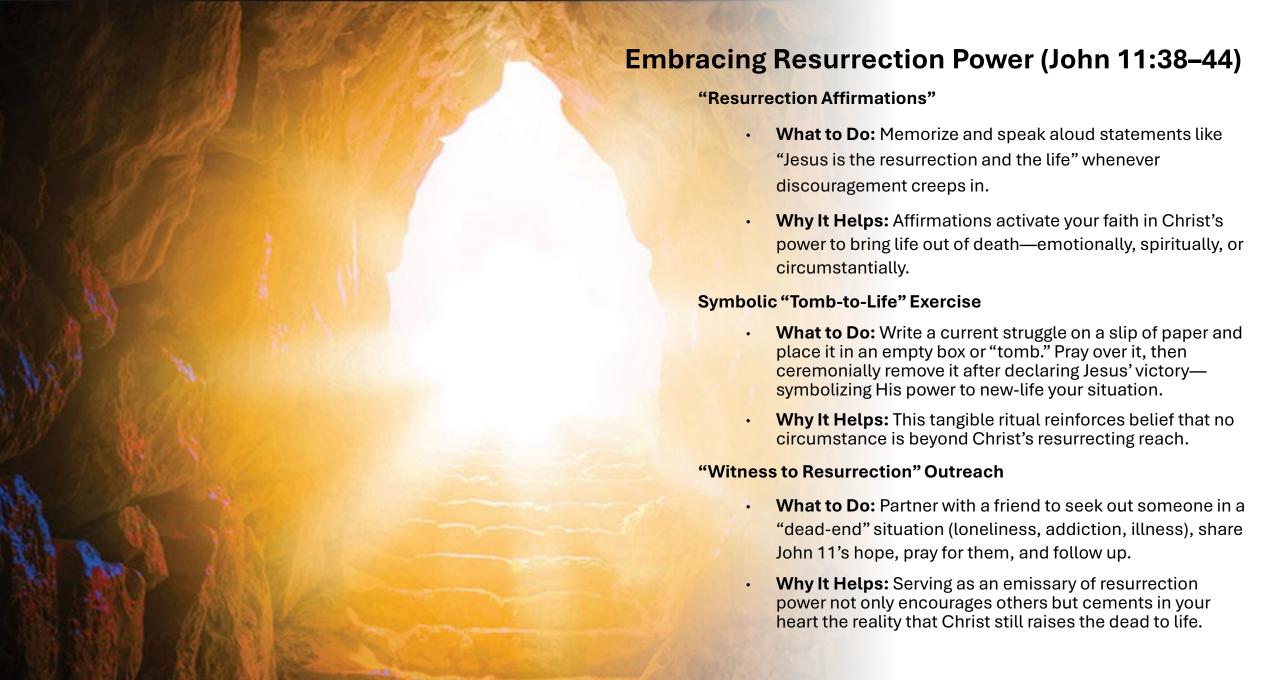
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In Summary:

In Luke 10:38–42, Martha represents the cultural expectation of busyness and service, while Mary represents the radical choice of discipleship, choosing to sit at the Lord's feet and listen. Jesus teaches that devotion to Him takes precedence over distraction, even good and important tasks.



Application for Christians Today



Trust Jesus' Power over Life and Death

Jesus declared: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." (John 11:25).

Take-away: Christians can face death, our own or loved ones' with hope, knowing Jesus has authority over it. His power doesn't just bring physical life but eternal life.



Believe, Even In Delays and Disappointments

Martha and Mary felt abandoned because Jesus delayed. Yet His delay set the stage for a greater miracle.

Take-away: When prayers seem unanswered, Christians can hold onto faith that God is at work in ways they cannot yet see. His timing may bring a greater testimony.



Invite Jesus Into Our Deepest Grief

Jesus was moved by the sorrow of Mary and the mourners; "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

Take-away: Christians don't need to hide pain or pretend to be strong.
Jesus enters our grief with compassion, bringing comfort and hope.



Live As Witnesses of Resurrection Power

Lazarus came out of the tomb alive, and many believed in Jesus because of this sign (v. 45).

Application today: Christians are called to live as evidence of Christ's power—transformed from spiritual death to new life—so others are drawn to believe.

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Bringing It Together

Isaiah 40:28-31

Waiting on the Lord is not wasted time but sacred preparation for His life-giving work. Isaiah teaches us to soar on "wings like eagles" through patient hope; John reveals that even the hardest delays—death itself—are preludes to resurrection power in Christ.

By weaving these practices into your daily routine—sacred pauses, journaling, service, and peer support—you'll cultivate a faith that stands firm, not despite the world's fast pace, but because you've learned to wait on the One who orders every moment.





Discussion Questions

- 1. Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb, what "tombs" of fear, sin, or hopelessness might He be calling you out of right now, and what keeps you from stepping into new life? *John* 11:43–44
- 2. Martha almost resisted rolling the stone because of the stench, what "stones" of doubt or unbelief in your life need to be moved so you can witness God's power more fully?

 John 11:39
- 3. Many believed in Jesus because of Lazarus' resurrection, how is your life today serving as evidence of Christ's resurrection power to those around you? *John 11:45*

SESSION 6

Following Jesus as Disciples Who Serve Others—Even in Need

John 13:1-17

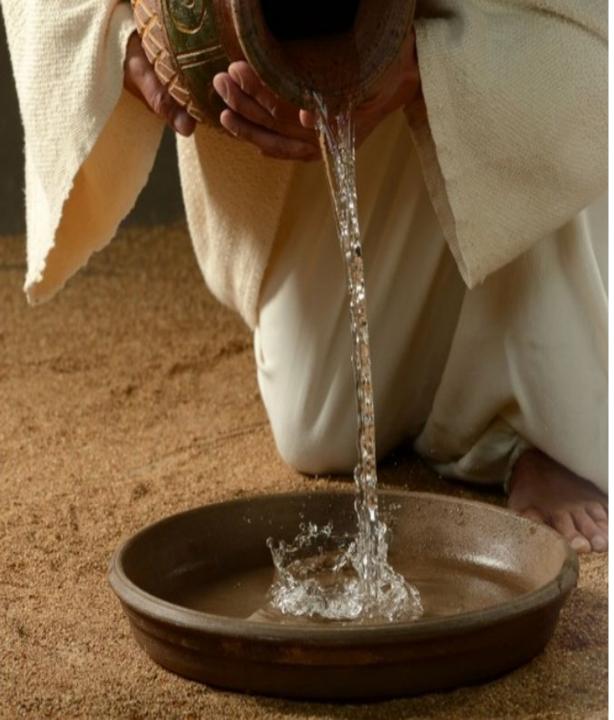


The Importance of Always Following Jesus as Disciples Who Serve Others – Even In Need

The call to follow Jesus extends far beyond belief, it summons us into a life marked by humble service, even when our own needs press in. From the Upper Room to the cross, Jesus modeled for His disciples that true greatness is measured not by status but by willingness to stoop low (John 13:1–17). Yet in the rhythms of modern life, balancing career pressures, family responsibilities, and personal struggles, it can feel impossible to pour out for others when we ourselves thirst.

This study on Following Jesus as Disciples Who Serve Others – Even In Need invites you to step into the tension of giving and receiving grace. Drawing on the apostle Paul's reliance on Christ's sufficiency in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9–10) and the early church's commitment to mutual care (Acts 2:44–47), we will explore how our frail strength becomes the stage for God's power and love to shine. May these pages encourage you that, as you serve from your own vulnerability, you embody the very heart of the gospel and discover that in Christ, giving and receiving are two sides of the same blessing.





John 13:1-10 - Significantly, this intimate scene prefigures the cross: the One who washes feet will soon lay down His life to wash away sin. For Christians today, John 13:1–10 remains a clarion call to embody servant-love in every relationship—welcoming the Savior's cleansing forgiveness and offering humble, compassionate care to all around us.

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."



John 13:11-17 - Jesus promises blessing for those who embrace this path of obedient love: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." For Christians today, John 13:11–17 isn't merely a historic footnote but an enduring charge: to serve sacrificially, to love without calculation, and to lead by gentle example, confident that such humility honors the One who came not to be served, but to serve.

11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.

13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.



Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Timing

- This takes place just before the Passover Festival, during the Last Supper in Jerusalem (John 13:1–2).
- Jesus knew His crucifixion was near "the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father" (v. 1).
- This moment sets the stage for His final teachings and acts of love before the cross.

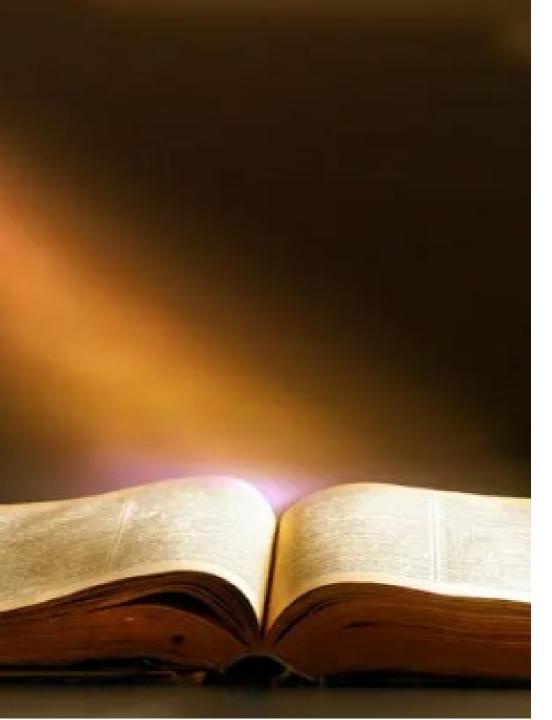
The Cultural Context of Foot Washing

- In first-century Palestine, people wore sandals on dusty roads, so foot washing was a daily necessity.
- It was considered the work of servants or slaves, never of masters or teachers.
- For Jesus, the revered "Teacher" and "Lord," to kneel and wash His disciples' feet was shocking and countercultural. It inverted social expectations of honor and shame.

The Significance of Jesus' Action

- Jesus deliberately "took off his outer clothing" (v. 4) and wrapped a towel around His waist taking the posture of the lowest servant.
- Peter resisted (vv. 6–8) because it seemed inappropriate for the Messiah to stoop so low.
- Jesus explains that this act symbolized spiritual cleansing ("Unless I wash you, you have no part with me," v. 8) and modeled humble service.

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Historical Context Of The Scriptures

The Betrayal Undercurrent

- The text notes that Judas had already been prompted to betray Jesus (v. 2, v. 11).
- This shows that Jesus' love extended even to the one who would hand Him over. His humility wasn't selective, He washed all the disciples' feet, including Judas'.

The Teaching for the Disciples

- **Jesus clarifies the lesson:** "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (v. 14).
- **He set an example:** greatness in God's kingdom is not about power, but about service (echoing Matthew 20:26–28).
- He stresses mutual humility and service as the defining marks of discipleship.

The Historical and Theological Weight

- For the disciples: This radical act reframed leadership, honor, and love in God's kingdom.
- For the early church: John highlights this story (instead of the bread and cup, which the Synoptic Gospels record) to emphasize love, humility, and sacrificial service as central to Christian identity.
- **For us today:** The passage teaches that no task of service is beneath a follower of Christ. Authority and discipleship are expressed through humility, not domination.

In Summary:

In John 13:1–17, Jesus overturns cultural norms by washing His disciples' feet, modeling the humility and love that should define all who follow Him. Historically, this act was shocking in its context; theologically, it points to both spiritual cleansing and the call to servant leadership.



Sacrificial Generosity

"Last Dollar Offering"

- What to Do: When you feel financially stretched, commit a small percentage (e.g., 1–2%) of your tightest month's income to a benevolence fund—demonstrating trust that God will meet your needs even after you give.
- Why It Helps: Reorients Values Sacrificial giving—even of "last dollars" or scarce time—pushes us beyond consumer-driven mindsets to a posture of trust and downside risk for God's kingdom.

"Hospitality in Hardship"

- What to Do: Invite a single friend or struggling family over for coffee or a simple meal—even if you're on a tight budget—showing that generosity isn't measured by abundance but by the willingness to share what you have.
- Why It Helps: Deepens Compassion Hospitality in hardship and skill-sharing put us face-to-face with neighbors' real needs, sharpening Christ's heart for the poor and marginalized.

"Skill-Sharing in Need"

- What to Do: Offer free use of your gifts (tutoring, car maintenance, resume help) to someone in your community while you yourself are juggling commitments—trusting God to replenish your time and energy as you extend help.
- Why It Helps: Multiplies Impact Small, consistent acts of generosity ripple outward—encouraging recipients to "pay it forward" and creating a culture of Christ-like self-giving.

Application for Christians Today



Lead Through Humility, Not Position

Jesus, the "Teacher and Lord," stooped to do what servants did.

Take-away: Whether in family, work, ministry, or community, Christians can lead by example rather than by authority alone. Humility builds trust and reflects Christ more than titles or status.



Serve Without Selectivity

Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples including Judas, who would betray Him, and Peter, who would deny Him.

Take-away: serve even those who may hurt, reject, or misunderstand them. True servant-love doesn't discriminate.



Value People Over Pride

Foot washing was "beneath" the dignity of a master, yet Jesus embraced it to show love.

Take-away: Today, Christians can put aside pride to meet the real needs of others whether that means small acts of kindness, dirty work, or unnoticed service.



Redefine Greatness As Service

Jesus said: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (v. 14).

Take-away: In a culture that prizes status, comfort, and recognition, Christians are called to see greatness in serving others, not in being served.

Bringing It Together

John 13:1-17

At the heart of Christian discipleship lies the paradox that Christ's followers are called to serve others most profoundly when they themselves are in need. In "Grace-Fueled Service," discipleship becomes less about our capability and more about God's glory—drawing others not to our strength, but to Christ's sufficiency in us.

By putting these into practice, caring for one another, sharing God's faithfulness, giving sacrificially, and intentionally pausing for spiritual renewal, you'll cultivate a lifestyle of humble service and resilient dependence on Christ, even amid your own needs.





Discussion Questions

- 1. What tasks, roles, or people do you secretly feel are "beneath you," and how might Jesus' example of washing feet challenge your pride in those areas?

 John 13:4
- 2. If Jesus served even Judas, the one who betrayed Him, who might God be calling you to serve today even if it feels uncomfortable, undeserved, or risky? *John 13:14*
- 3. Jesus' love was shown through action, not just words how can you demonstrate love in a tangible, sacrificial way this week to someone who doesn't expect it? *John 13:15*

Music Credits

Song 1 – Trust In God (Featuring Mark Gutierrez) Aware Worship – Calvin Nowell

Song 2 – **My God** – (Featuring Big Yeet) *God Made Muzic*

Song 3 - Holy Spirit – (Featuring Big Yeet) God Made Muzic

Song 4 – **Every Praise –** (Featuring Hezekiah Walker)

Song 5 - **Give It To God-** (Featuring @Killwillc)

Song 6 – Goodness Of God – (Featuring CeCe Winans)

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A 6-Week Journey Through Trust, Faith & Servant-Leadership

VOLUME 1

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