



The Visual Gospel

GOLD AVENUE CHURCH



A Resource for Making Followers of Jesus Christ

1. The pain of human heartache and the sting of evil, destruction, and death which mark human history do not bear witness to God's loving design, but to a world that is not as it should be. Yet, God is healing this world, one person at a time, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our faith in him.
2. Jesus Christ is God incarnate! As the only true way to know God, Jesus calls all people to become His disciples, following Him in obedient faith. He also calls His followers to disciple others, even as He tells each of us to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Here is the story of that good news.
3. Out of an overflow of love and for God's glory, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created this world and all that is in it, from nothing. God created the human family in his own image and likeness, intending us to live and love in relationship with God, each other, our selves, and the rest of creation.
4. With great generosity, God assigned human beings deep and fulfilling purposes on the earth. Like prophets, we are to name God's intentions and advance his purposes. Like priests, we offer ourselves to mediate God's presence and declare God's glory through our joyful submission and worship. Like kings, we are to exercise the loving rule of God over every corner of creation.
5. Yet, with reckless abandon, our first parents cast off God's loving rule, plunging the world into rebellion and inviting darkness to reign. As we've followed in their footsteps, no corner of the world has been spared from the devastating effects of human crookedness.
6. Removed from the presence of a loving God who will not dwell with anything impure, and consigned to eventual death, we've lost so much. Disconnected from our Heavenly Father, and no longer aware of our intrinsic value, we live as orphans seeking to find or create an identity for ourselves.
7. Having welcomed evil through our rebellion, we now live under its dominion and with its bitter consequences. Often, our work is toilsome and futile; our relationships are strained and broken; our purpose is elusive. We experience brokenness in our relationship with God, others, ourselves, and the rest of creation.



8. Rather than declaring God's glory, advancing God's intentions, and exercising God's loving rule, we've come under the influence of Satan—the ultimate rebel and ruler of this dark world. By our pride, deception, greed, and rebellion, we position ourselves to be oppressed. We are truly in bondage to our sins, as well as to Satan.
9. We are also unquestionably stuck. Not only do we experience the bitter consequences of our brokenness and rebellion, but we have earned for ourselves a just punishment for our sins. Because God is perfect in goodness and purity, we owe God a righteousness that we are not able to supply; we simply cannot redeem ourselves, nor can we heal this world. Left to ourselves, we are destined to the hell of eternal separation from God and all that is good.
10. Yet God does not leave us to ourselves! From the moment sin enters the world, God is merciful, promising and working for restoration. Even as God is candid with our first parents about the consequences of their rebellion, he graciously promises a deliverer to eventually crush Satan and all that sin has unleashed.
11. While the human family spirals deeper into chaos and rebellion, God embarks upon a long road of redemption: he cleanses the earth through a flood, he calls Abraham and from him a nation of people, and then God promises that through them, he will bless the whole earth.
12. God pledges himself to this people with loving faithfulness as he delivers them from the cruelty of bondage to slavery in Egypt in a way that foreshadows human deliverance from their slavery to sin. God calls these people to be, "a kingdom of priests, a holy people," and teaches them to worship and live as people who, once again, reflect his glory and goodness to the world.
13. Rather than reflect the light of God's presence and goodness to the nations around them, these people display the stubborn tenacity of sin. Rejecting God as their King, they are unable to have a transformative effect on the world; instead they reflect the brokenness and rebellion of the world in ever-increasing measure.
14. With unmatched patience, God spends long centuries raising up leaders who, with his Spirit upon them, call his people to return to God. These prophets, and occasionally, priests, and kings, repeatedly implore God's people to submit to his Kingship and live faithful lives of righteousness, justice, and holiness.



15. Even as it becomes clear that his people cannot produce this righteousness in their own strength, Old Testament prophets begin to herald the coming of a Messiah who will crush evil, deliver people from their sins, and fill them with the very Spirit of God. The Messiah will be a Prophet who speaks the true words of God, a Priest who brings healing and makes full atonement for the sins of his people, and a King who ushers in a new, worldwide era of righteousness, joy, and peace.
16. In the fullness of time, Jesus, the Messiah, began to do all that was prophesied about him. God the Son became human: Jesus is fully human, and yet, still fully divine. Reversing the pattern of our first parents, Adam and Eve, Jesus lived the life we were created for. He modeled perfect trust, loving submission, and intimate union with God the Father.
17. Conceived by and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, Jesus began his widespread, public earthly ministry of ushering in God's kingdom only after the Holy Spirit came upon him for power at his baptism. Jesus embodied, proclaimed, and advanced the kingdom of God on the earth by healing and delivering the bodies and souls of all who came to him. Jesus showed the world God's intention to restore all of life and creation to once again live and flourish under his gracious rule.
18. In Jesus, we see the full image and likeness of God! Rich in mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, yet unwavering in truth, justice, and righteousness; Jesus clarifies that all of God's laws and all of God's prophets point to this: loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.
19. As the only true way to know and relate to God, Jesus calls all people to follow, and therefore to re-shape their entire lives around him. He redeems and restores each man, woman, and child who learns to love and obey him more than they love their own life. This requires humility and repentance.
20. Jesus models this love for and obedience to God the Father through his own life by allowing himself to be unjustly crucified; through his death, Jesus makes payment for sin and reconciles all who believe in him with God the Father. Jesus also liberates his followers from Satan and all the powers of darkness.
21. Rising from the dead, Jesus inaugurates a new creation where sin and death no longer reign! He is the first fruits of this new creation; his resurrection is a promise of ours to come. As our descent into and rising out of the waters of baptism signify, our old self has truly died with Jesus, and a new life, in Christ, has begun; we are a new creation!



22. True faith in Jesus brings us into the most glorious inheritance: adopted as dearly loved children of God the Father, all guilt and shame are washed away as we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. Filled with his Spirit and united to him, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Our entire inheritance is rooted in Jesus' perfect performance, and not in our own. This grace produces a joyful willingness to reject sin and grow in true devotion to Christ.
23. Jesus is Lord! Having received all authority in heaven and on earth, Jesus fully restores our identity and purpose. As the Father sent him, Jesus commissions his followers to spread the good news of God's reign and make disciples of all people. Jesus promises his continual presence as we embody, proclaim, and advance his kingdom in the power of his Holy Spirit.
24. From heaven, where Jesus now reigns, he sends the Holy Spirit to draw people to repentance and faith in him, move us to righteousness, fill us with joy and peace, empower us for witness to others, and bind us together in love with the community of all those who trust in and obey him. Our lives are now filled with fresh purpose and meaning as we join God in his mission to renew all things.
25. In his death and resurrection, Jesus not only heals our relationship with God the Father, but also with each other. Just as we receive grace generously from God, so we are to extend it to every other person. As we are restored in the image of God, we are brought to unity and community as one family of God. There are to be no dividing walls of hostility.
26. God's grace produces a willingness to forgive others as we have been forgiven by God. Although not all forgiveness leads to reconciliation, God's children reflect our Father's image by forgiving sins and learning to bless even our enemies.
27. As we increasingly yield ourselves to the one who has saved us, his life flows through us to family and friends, strangers, and enemies alike. Jesus' love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are increasingly ours as we are renewed in the image and likeness of God. God's laws—his ways—are truly written on our hearts.
28. Along with these fruits of God's Spirit, all true followers of Jesus Christ grow in love for and submission to the Holy Bible as the Word of God. Through the Bible, God himself feeds, instructs, warns, guides, counsels, and comforts us.



29. Followers of Jesus also grow in the joy of direct communion with God through prayer. Prayer involves bringing worship and thanksgiving, confessing sins and receiving forgiveness, learning to not only lament the brokenness within our lives and the world, but also to join with Jesus in his ministry of intercession.
30. Even now, we share in Jesus' reign. The work of intercessory prayer is a primary means by which we exercise our delegated authority to shape the earth for God's glory. As we intercede, the Holy Spirit works with and through us to pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
31. Prayer is always to be partnered with godly action--positively impacting the cities and nations in which God calls us to live by caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, standing against injustice and oppression, and representing Jesus, who is restoring all things.
32. In all of this, the Church has an incredibly high calling. As the body of the Lord Jesus on earth, we are to be a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God in its fullness: humble, loving, holy, just, righteous, gifted, and full of worship.
33. For fulfilling our part of this calling, God generously provides us with spiritual gifts. These are talents that seem to flow out of the unique way we image God. They are also supernatural expressions of the Holy Spirit given for specific ministry needs. God also provides particular people as gifts to lead, teach, care for, encourage, and build us up in Christ.
34. These gifts and Christ's continual presence are necessary because life in a world that is in rebellion against God is very difficult for followers of Jesus. Our bodies break down; the chaos and brokenness of the world affect us deeply; we are constantly tempted toward indulging our old, sinful selves, and we experience sustained pressure from the kingdom of darkness.
35. Yet, Jesus promises a reward to all who overcome: to all who through faithful endurance, persevere to the end. This requires being prayerful, alert, and full of the Holy Spirit because Jesus warns that his return will be preceded by a period of increased wickedness and great deception. During this period, the love of most will grow cold, and many will turn away from the faith; they will betray and hate one another.



36. This period will culminate in the revealing of a man of lawlessness: one who will not only oppose Jesus Christ, but will also exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped. He will have the power to deceive many through counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and will delude all who do not love the truth.
37. However, after the good news of the kingdom of God has reached all nations, Jesus will return, and he will overthrow the lawless one. Jesus will then proceed to destroy all rulers, authorities, and powers that resist God, eliminating each of God's enemies as He ushers in his kingdom in its fullness.
38. All people will be resurrected. Believers will receive new, glorified bodies. And Jesus, our merciful high priest, will judge the living and the dead. The righteous: those who have faith in and obey Jesus, will receive a rich welcome into Jesus' eternal kingdom, while the wicked: those who reject Jesus and persist in evil, will be assigned a place with Satan and his angels, and will be forever separated from God and all goodness.
39. Followers of Jesus who are saved by faith in God's grace alone will experience a judgment of our works; this means that there will be an inspection of our lives to see what of our motives, work, and ministry are of eternal value. While for some this will be quite sobering, for others it is incredibly hopeful as Jesus promises great reward to those who make sacrifices for him and his kingdom in this life.
40. After Satan, sin, and evil have been completely overcome, even death will be destroyed. Finally, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more! Jesus will hand over the kingdom to his Father and welcome all his followers into a renewed heaven and earth. In this new creation the presence and glory of God will be full and unhindered. A great banquet awaits as God will once again dwell with his people, and everything will be set right! Hallelujah!

Lesson # 17

Jesus-Anointed for Ministry



The Gospel Tool

17. Jesus Models and Fulfills Role *Conceived by and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, Jesus began his widespread, public, earthly ministry of ushering in God's kingdom only after the Holy Spirit came upon Him for power at His baptism. Jesus embodied, proclaimed, and advanced the Kingdom of God on the earth by healing and delivering the bodies and souls of all who came to Him. Jesus showed the world God's intention to restore all of life and creation to once again live and flourish under His gracious rule.*

Definitions

Please read these definitions in preparation for this Bible study

Anoint:

To set apart for special purposes; to give everything necessary for fulfilling those purposes.

Kingdom:

A sphere of royal power, kingship, dominion, or rule. The right and authority to rule over an area.

Kenosis:

Self-emptying. Refers to the way in which Jesus set aside certain Divine attributes in order to live as fully human (ie. Jesus incarnate was no longer everywhere present, as God is.)

Bible Study

Begin by praying; ask God to open your mind and heart to understand and respond to His Word.

Biblical Background

In the Old Testament, as God worked to bring His promised redemption to the world, He regularly put His Spirit "upon" certain individuals. This meant that He gave them the power and abilities needed to advance His purposes. Examples include: gifting 70 elders to both prophecy and share Moses' burden of governing (Numbers 11), enabling Othniel to judge Israel and set them free from oppression (Judges 3), and empowering Gideon to defend God's people against overwhelming military attack (Judges 6). In these and many other cases, the Bible says, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon" a certain person and this resulted in that person saying or doing something to advance God's purposes in that moment of history.

...continued on the next page



...continued from previous page

Two lessons ago, we learned that the promised Messiah would Himself be a Spirit-anointed Prophet, Priest, & King. Read Isaiah 61: 1-3, and describe what Jesus, the Messiah will be anointed to do:



Jesus Anointed with the Holy Spirit

Read Luke 3:21-23

Observation

According to Luke, what is happening to Jesus while John is baptizing Him?

Interpretation

At this point in Jesus' life, He has done nothing miraculous or powerful. Remembering that Jesus is fully human, consider and describe the possible impact of God the Father giving this affirmation before Jesus' public ministry begins.

Application

Honestly reflect: how much of your sense of identity comes from "doing" for God? If all your works and service are stripped away, will you still believe and receive God the Father's love and affirmation wholeheartedly?

Describe a time when you sensed the Holy Spirit coming upon you to anoint you with power for sharing in Jesus' ministry? If you cannot recall a time, have you asked Him for this empowering?

Biblical Background

God's choice of the form of a dove to represent His Holy Spirit is noteworthy. Doves are not easily tamed and will only come to rest upon people who are at peace.





Read Luke 4:14-21

Observation

Immediately after being clothed with power from the Holy Spirit, Jesus is led into the desert where He fasts and resists Satan's temptations. What does Luke describe happening when Jesus returns to Galilee?

Read Acts 10:37-38

Observation

As Peter describes Jesus "going around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil," what does he point to as the source of Jesus' abilities?

Interpretation

If Jesus is fully Divine, why do you suppose it was necessary for God to "anoint him with the Holy Spirit and power" for ministry? (*Hint: See the definition of Kenosis, from the Definitions section, and read Philippians 2: 6-7 below.*)

Application

Consider Isaiah 61: 1-3, Luke 4: 14-21, and Acts 10: 37-38 together; name the common thread. How are you impacted by what you observe in these passages?

Philippians 2:6-7*

"Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

*from the ESV

Jesus Brings the Kingdom with Power

In this next portion of our study, we are going to observe how Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit to powerfully advance the Kingdom of God in both word and deed. This motif of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus with power is in contrast to Lesson 16's study of the inward, or infilling motif of the Holy Spirit shaping Jesus' character for godliness in all things.

Read Luke 4:22; 31-44

Observation

According to verses 22, 32, and 36, how do the people respond to Jesus' words?

According to verse 43, what reason does Jesus give for His coming and going?

Verses 33-34 portray Jesus' words bringing Him into direct conflict with the kingdom of darkness in the middle of a worship service. What do verses 35-37 say about the result of this clash?

Describe how you see power at work through Jesus in verses 39-41.

Interpretation

Does Jesus seem to care more about people's bodies or their souls? Explain.

Spend several minutes imagining and then describing Jesus' impact on the families who encountered Jesus in Capernaum. What have they received back? How have their lives been changed? What might they be feeling?

Carefully consider and describe the possible results of Jesus' ministry if He had spoken powerfully, yet had been unable to heal and deliver from evil. What might people have felt then?

What are the results of Jesus being powerful in both word and deed?

Application

In John 14: 12, Jesus makes an astounding, unqualified claim: *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. They will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father."*

Assess and record: to what degree do your words and your deeds bring the kinds of transformation and restoration that Jesus brought?

Assess and record: To what degree are you familiar with and growing in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit?

Restoration Begins With the Inbreaking of The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is referenced 43 times in the Gospel of Luke alone. The central theme of Luke is the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God: God entering into and transforming every dimension of human life through Jesus Christ!

Page through the rest of the Gospel of Luke, paying attention to each of the Bible section headings/stories. Notice how the Kingdom of God is breaking in and God is beginning to restore shalom through Jesus.

As you skim, record and describe three examples of Jesus bringing restoration below.



1

2

3

Read John 14: 9-10.

What does everything you have seen of Jesus in this lesson communicate about the heart of God toward humanity? What is God like?

Spiritual Discipline: Fasting

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” *Matthew 6: 16-18.*



Background

Fasting, according to the Bible, means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for a specific time and purpose as a means of humbling oneself before God.

In the Bible, fasting often occurs when there is a need for a spiritual breakthrough due to the burdens of life. These burdens could be emotional, circumstantial, relational, ministry related, directional, or any other kind. We notice Jesus fasting in Luke 4, immediately after His baptism, at the very beginning of His earthly ministry. We see Daniel in the Old Testament fasting by limiting his diet to vegetables and water.

Exercise:

Unless you have a medical condition that makes fasting unsafe, consider a short fast limiting your intake to water or liquids only for a single meal or a single day, choosing to use that time for prayer asking to more fully share in the heart of God toward all humanity.

Depending on how you answered the earlier questions about whether your words and deeds bring kingdom transformation, you might also spend time specifically asking God for more of the empowering work of His Holy Spirit in your life.

Fasting for
“ Spiritual ”
Breakthrough

Wrapping It Up



Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one that had been foretold and eagerly awaited. It is interesting to notice the Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' life. The Holy Spirit is united to and fills Jesus from birth, giving Him perfect, sinless character, as we learned in Lesson 16. In this lesson, we learned that Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him and filled Him with Kingdom empowerment for ministry.



Jesus' ministry is marked by signs of power. Jesus embodies, proclaims, and advances the Kingdom of God. His words are spoken with authority, and people regularly find his teaching amazing. His words are accompanied by deeds that are equally remarkable. He has authority over nature and over evil spirits. He has the power to heal broken bodies and all types of sickness. Crowds flock to Jesus and the good news of the gospel spreads from town to town and from friend to friend.



Restoration begins with the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. As the rule and reign of God comes to an area through Jesus' ministry, bodies are made well, people are restored into community, the hungry are fed, and the mourning of suffering families is turned to joy as the lame walk and the dead are raised. The prophet Isaiah had spoken hundreds of years earlier, with a message of hope that a Messiah would come and have the Holy Spirit upon Him to preach good news, bind up broken hearts, and bring release for the captives. Jesus ushers in His Father's Kingdom, and the fulfillment of these hopes begin to take place. Praise be to God!

Lesson # 18

Like Father-Like Son

The Gospel Tool

18. Effects of Jesus' Relationship & Role

In Jesus, we see the full image and likeness of God! Rich in mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, yet unwavering in truth, justice, and righteousness, Jesus clarifies that all of God's laws and all of God's prophets point to this: loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Definitions

Please read these definitions in preparation for this Bible study

- Mercy:**
Lenient treatment, by which one does not receive what is justly deserved.
- Compassion:**
Sympathetic awareness of suffering, coupled with a desire to alleviate it.
- Forgiveness:**
The removal of one's debt.
- Truth:**
That which is real in actuality or fact.
- Righteousness:**
Acting in accordance with God's right and holy ways.
- Justice:**
God's righteous judgments, which always work to restore shalom.

Bible Study

Begin by praying; ask God to open your mind and heart to understand and respond to His Word.

Jesus: The Full Image & Likeness of Father God

Observation

What do each of the following passages teach about the relationship between Jesus and God the Father? About how Jesus represents God?

John 14:7-10	Colossians 1:15, 19	Hebrews 1:3

...continued from previous page



Every passage in each of the four gospels should be read through the lens of how God is revealing Himself through Jesus. Read John 11: 1-37, and then focusing on verses 32-37, answer: what is Jesus revealing to us about God? What is God the Father expressing through Jesus?

Interpretation

If you were a news reporter writing an article about Jesus' representation of God the Father, what would the title of your article be?



Application

Do you find it easier to relate to God the Father or God the Son? If one over the other, why do you think that is?

How are you impacted by what you just learned about the connection between the Father and the Son?

Six Characteristics of God & His Kingdom

Although Jesus models and demonstrates many characteristics of God and His Kingdom, we are going to focus on six that are among the most central: mercy, compassion, forgiveness, truth, righteousness, and justice. Let's explore a story together where each is on full display.

As background, know that the Romans who occupied Israel at the time of this story would not allow the Jews to execute someone.

Read John 8: 1-11

Observation

What are the teachers of the law and Pharisees attempting to do? How?

Spend time imagining and then describe some of the many things that the woman hauled in front of Jesus, and a crowd, might have been feeling and thinking.

Jesus' reply to the men who are questioning Him in verse 7 is profound. What does it highlight?

As you consider Jesus' response to the religious leaders, coupled with His short interaction with this woman, how do you see God's mercy, compassion, forgiveness, truth, righteousness, and justice (see definitions from the beginning of the lesson) at work?

Mercy:

Compassion:

Forgiveness:

Truth:

Righteousness:

Justice:

Wonder and Marvel

In Jesus we see the fullness of God's mercy and justice on display! The kindness and forgiveness of the Lord makes a way for human repentance and restoration. God always works to restore shalom. God brings restoration without lowering His demands for truth, justice, and righteousness. God never stops being merciful, compassionate, and forgiving. All of these attributes come together in Jesus Christ.



Application

Recall what you imagined of the woman's experience in front of the crowd. How similar is it to what you have felt and experienced as you have sinned or as others have sinned against you? Have you experienced the fullness of Jesus' truth and mercy?

Consider your own response to other people's sins. Do your words and actions show the same balance as Jesus? If not, do you tend to emphasize sharing God's truth, righteousness, and justice, or do you tend to emphasize showing God's mercy, compassion, and forgiveness? Why do you think this might be?

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for God's revelation of Himself in Jesus, and ask God to grow you into the fullness of representing all of His characteristics.



Mark your calendar for 6 months from now and look to see how God is answering this prayer.

Love is the Goal of the Law & Prophets



Background

Remember, God had given His covenant people laws in order that they might worship and live as those who reflect His glory and goodness to the nations around them. However, by the time of Jesus' arrival, religious teachers had distorted and added to these laws in a way that greatly burdened people. Jesus restores the heart of God's laws.

Read Matthew 22:34-40

Observation

In your own words, what does Jesus name as the greatest of all God's commands? The second greatest?

Interpretation

What does "Loving your neighbor as yourself require?"

What does it mean to love one's self? What does this require? (*Hint: Consider Lesson 3, and God's original design*)

What does it mean for all of the God's laws and all the writings of the Biblical prophets to "hang upon" these two commandments?

Application

From your knowledge of the Bible, or from your memory of perusing the sub-headings in Luke's gospel last lesson, describe how you see these two commands: love for God and love for others, at work in Jesus' life?

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you review the last week or two in your mind's eye, showing you: have I demonstrated love for God above all else? Have I demonstrated love for others as I love myself?

Record what comes to mind in this space.

Thank the Holy Spirit for His transformative work; ask Him to continue growing love for God and others within you as a response to His grace.

Spiritual Discipline: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term meaning “divine reading.” It is a method of *s l o w l y* and prayerfully reading scripture to encounter the Living Lord.



Exercise:

Please follow the steps provided, using *Luke 7: 36-50*.

*The Steps of Lectio Divina**

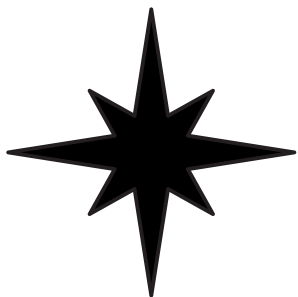
Quiet yourself in the presence of the Lord and offer a prayer to the Holy Spirit for inspiration and guidance: “Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to listen to your Word.”

1. Lectio: Read the text slowly and prayerfully, constantly listening for a specific word that God has prepared for you. You may want to re-read the same text multiple times to help quiet yourself interiorly and focus on God’s voice. Listen and receive the Word that God speaks to you.
2. Meditatio: When a word or phrase strikes you, stop and rest with it. Repeat the word or phrase to yourself. Allow it to speak to you in a personal way by pondering the Word in your heart and reflecting on what it means.
3. Oratio: Prayer is your response to God’s Word. It begins a dialogue with God that comes from your heart. Formulate a prayer as a response to God. What do you want to say to the Lord in response to the Word spoken to you? Enter into this loving conversation with God.
4. Contemplatio: Rest in God’s presence and receive His transforming embrace. Sit still with God. Be content and at peace with a wordless, quiet rest in God, which brings joy to the heart.

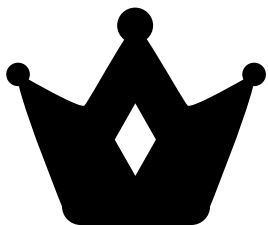
*(conceptionabbey.org)

After you have completed this activity, use the space provided below to write a few sentences describing your time with the Lord.

Wrapping It Up



We gaze at a newborn and wonder, “who do they look like?” We laugh with joy when we see that same family dimple in the chin of our niece or nephew. When we gaze at Jesus, His life and ministry, we are seeing an exact reflection of our Heavenly Father. God’s heart and God’s power are on full display through His Son, Jesus Christ.



We can find six characteristics of God and His Kingdom that are repeated throughout scripture. In looking at the story of a woman caught in sin, and how Jesus interacts with her, we see an exact representation of how Father God looks at each of us, caught in sin, and in need of a Savior. He engages us with mercy, compassion, forgiveness, truth, justice, and righteousness. His mercy and justice meet and are both fulfilled on the cross.



Our response to His great love is to repent, receive His love, and in turn, show love. From the writings of the Ten Commandments, we notice that God calls for love: love God and love our neighbors. The prophetic messages of the Old Testament were calls for God’s people to return to the God who chose them and made a covenant of love with them. Love was the goal of Jesus’ life, and He completely and perfectly fulfilled the law and every call of the Father for humanity to image His love. It is our privilege and goal to grow up in the likeness and love of Christ Jesus.



Discipleship Group

Review of Lessons 17 & 18

Open the time of equipping with a prayer asking God for learning, retention, and the ability to grow more comfortable in talking about the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Building Upon the Foundation

30 minutes

Review Lesson 17: Jesus-Anointed for Ministry

Have a volunteer read section 17 from the Gospel Tool, printed below.

The Gospel Tool

17. Jesus Models and Fulfills Role *Conceived by and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, Jesus began His widespread, public earthly ministry of ushering in God's kingdom only after the Holy Spirit came upon Him for power at His baptism. Jesus embodied, proclaimed, and advanced the Kingdom of God on the earth by healing and delivering the bodies and souls of all who came to Him. Jesus showed the world God's intention to restore all of life and creation to once again live and flourish under His gracious rule.*

The facilitator or group may choose one or more of the following activities:

1. Jesus brings the Kingdom of God with power, as we have studied in Luke 4.

Considering both Jesus' actions and Jesus' words, what did it look like for Jesus to:

- a. Embody the Kingdom of God?
- b. Proclaim the Kingdom of God?
- c. Advance the Kingdom of God?

2. John 14:12

In John 14: 12, Jesus makes an astounding, unqualified claim: *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. They will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”*

- a. Assess and share: to what degree do your words and your deeds bring the kinds of transformation and restoration that Jesus brought?
- b. Assess and share: To what degree are you familiar with and growing in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit?
- c. Have you ever asked for the Holy Spirit to empower you to advance His Kingdom? Are there specific areas or situations in which you require empowerment? Take a few minutes to share and pray for one another.

Review Lesson 18: Like Father-Like Son

Have a volunteer read section 18 from the Gospel Tool, printed below.

The Gospel Tool

18. Effects of Jesus' Relationship & Role In Jesus, we see the full image and likeness of God! Rich in mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, yet unwavering in truth, justice, and righteousness, Jesus clarifies that all of God's laws and all of God's prophets point to this: loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

The facilitator or group may choose one or more of the following activities:

1. Have someone read aloud Mark 12:28-34.

Love was the goal of Jesus' life and the goal of the law and the prophets. As you think back to this portion of the Bible Study, discuss:

- a. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Give a practical example of each.
- b. As you reflect on your Christian life so far, how much of your spiritual growth has been shaped around an effort to grow up in love? Share and discuss.

2. Read and Respond

Read the statement below from Lesson 18, and discuss your responses as a group.

“Every passage in each of the four gospels should be read through the lens of how God is revealing Himself through Jesus.”

As you read John 11: 32-37, how did you answer the questions:
What is Jesus’ revealing to us about God?

What is God the Father expressing through Jesus?

What is another gospel story where God reveals Himself through Jesus?

Building Bridges 15 minutes

Neighborhoods and workplaces offer many opportunities to love our neighbors. Can you think of a situation that you have encountered in your neighborhood or workplace where someone has done something wrong, perhaps broken a rule or irritated you in some way? Without naming any names, share an example or two and then discuss these things:

1. How did I respond (or how did I think about responding)?
2. With love as my goal, how might I respond differently next time?

Conversely, how have you seen your neighbors or coworkers model Jesus’ love to you? How was it clear that they were showing love in Jesus’ name? Share your insights and stories so that we can all grow and be inspired!

Building Essentials ^{15 minutes}

Facilitators: you may opt to break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 or remain in a larger group for this portion, depending on your location and circumstances. Zoom groups have the option of using the meeting rooms feature.

Facilitators: choose one or more of the following activities.

Scripture Memory

Take turns reciting Romans 6: 23 and John 3: 16-17 from memory to one another. When you recite your verse, use the format of scripture reference, then the verse, then state again the scripture reference. (*We want to keep these verses fresh on our minds, so keep reviewing regularly on your own at home.*)

Personal Accountability and Encouragement

Take turns sharing about your experience of practicing the Spiritual Disciplines of either [*Fasting*](#) or [*Lectio Divina*](#). Do you sense that you are growing in your intimacy with and enjoyment of God?

Prayer for the Lost and for Effective Witness

Share any updates from your prayer list. Pray for each member of your group to be strengthened in faith and love to share the gospel.